

News From The Plains



Volume XV, No. 2

Newsletter of the Oregon-California Trails Association

April 2001



OCTA Treasurer Marilyn Bryan, left, makes a presentation at the Mid-Year Board meeting in Independence. Also pictured are, left to right, President Dave Welch, Vice President Randy Wagner and National Preservation Officer Dick Ackerman. — Photo by Bill Martin

Support Needed For Trails Legislation In Washington

OCTA members are being urged to contact their elected officials to support legislation authorizing a one-time-only update of the Feasibility Studies for the Oregon, California, Pony Express and Mormon-Pioneer National Historic Trails.

A bill in the House of Representatives, HR 37, was introduced by Nebraska Congressman Doug Bereuter. The Senate Bill, SR 213, was introduced by Utah Senators Orrin Hatch and Robert Bennett. Wording of both bills is identical.

OCTA representatives, including Trails Liaison Committee Co-Chairs Bill and Jeanne Watson and OCTA President David Welch, were in Washington, D.C., the week of March 5 to discuss the legislation as part of Trails Advocacy Week. Also taking part were OCTA members Pat Hardy (also representing the Pony Express), Edna Kennell, Ross Marshall (also wearing a Santa Fe Trails Association hat), and Jim Budde. Two dozen meetings were held with Senators, Congressmen or key legislative aids to promote the legislation.

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OCTA Volunteer Efforts Top \$1 Million Annually

by Bill Martin

Members of the Oregon-California Trails Association donated more than \$1 million in volunteer hours and financial support to trails activities during the year 2000, according to a report presented at the Board of Director's Mid-Year meeting at OCTA headquarters in Independence in early March.

Bill and Jeanne Watson, co-chairs of the OCTA Trails Liaison Committee, said that OCTA members reported financial contributions of \$240,090, but the biggest impact was made through the 56,390 volunteer hours, which were valued at \$789,460.

"The report shows the enormous contribution being made by OCTA members to trails preservation activities," said OCTA President David Welch. "The cash support is important, but the volunteer work being done on the trails shows the true commitment of our members."

"At the same time, these numbers reflect only the hours actually reported to the Liaison Committee," Welch added. "The true volunteer hours by all OCTA members are probably significantly greater. We can all take pride in the work that is being done everywhere to preserve the trails."

The report, which was prepared for the annual Trails Week activities in Washington, D.C., in early March, was part of a two-day Mid-Year meeting which included a one-day work and discussion session and the official Board meeting, both held at OCTA headquarters.

The wide-ranging meeting included a discussion of the financial condition of OCTA, committee reports and a report on progress being made on the Census of Overland Emigrant Documents (COED) program. (See separate reports in this issue.)

During its meeting, the Board:

- Approved a proposal from Education Committee Chair William E. Hill to publish a school activity book, *Following Lewis and Clark's Tracks*, with the provision that the book

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From the Editor's Desk . . . by Bill Martin



Our ancestors left their ruts on the plains 150 years ago. Today OCTA is doing all it can to make sure the evidence stays right where it is, undisturbed for perpetuity.

If anyone ever wants to know why OCTA is the nation's leading trails preservation organization, hand them this issue of *News From The Plains*. From the halls of Congress to the most remote remnants of the emigrant trails, OCTA is making its presence felt.

Whether promoting federal legislation to make sure the trails are protected for future generations, or painstakingly compiling the Census of Overland Emigrant Documents, or marking trails in Kansas and Oregon, or taking the trails experience to classrooms everywhere, or planning "hands-on" convention gatherings, or protecting trails from development in Nebraska and Wyoming, OCTA can be proud of the achievements of its members.

Best of all, it's being done by *volunteers*. The thousands of volunteer hours referred to in this issue's lead article represent only a portion of the time and effort being given by members. It's a remarkable track record of success and we can see the impact of their work extending far into the future.

Still, more needs to be done and OCTA needs more members to do it. Short and sweet, membership has been declining. OCTA had 376 memberships in 1983 and then grew steadily until it peaked at 2,672 in 1997. It has declined each year since and for the years 2000 it counted 2,257 memberships (a slightly misleading figure since an individual membership may include a family of two or more people – so the total number of "members" is higher than "memberships." Still, membership has dropped 15 percent in three years.)

We've written here previously about how members can get more members – gifting someone with a membership is a nice touch – and growing the membership base is vitally important to the organization. More members means more people out working on the trails, more people working with local offi-

cials at the grassroots level to protect trails, and more clout as an organization when we take on big issues such as federal legislation.

You can also help by utilizing one of our best resources – the OCTA bookstore. Virtually every OCTA member we've run across has a library of trails-related books, whether it's just a few volumes or something that takes up several shelves. When you think about adding a new book, think of the OCTA bookstore first. With on-line access (through www.octa-trails.org) and a toll-free number, not to mention hundreds of books and videos and guides to choose from and a 10 percent discount for members, it's easy and it's affordable and it helps OCTA. Spend some time browsing the catalog and we are certain you'll find something you want for yourself or to give as a gift. If they don't have it, chances are they can get it for you. And check out the ad for the bookstore inside the back cover of this issue for special sale items and new arrivals.

Remember, every member you recruit and every book you buy ultimately means additional funding for our mission – preserving the trails.

Finally, a word about the upcoming Board elections. Because of differing deadlines for elections and for *News From The Plains*, we haven't been able to give the candidates for the Board the kind of attention they deserve. In fact, a certain non-OCTA publication has given more notice to the candidates than we have. It shouldn't be that way.

As a step to remedy that, OCTA has approved a special issue of NFP which will be devoted exclusively to the candidates for Board of Directors. It will include statements from the candidates and the ballot. Watch for it in your mail the latter half of May. Choosing OCTA's leadership is one of the most important things members are asked to do each year.

With that, we'll see you in Casper in August.

— Bill Martin



News From The Plains

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Western History Collection

Submission Guidelines

News From The Plains welcomes news, features and photos related to the work of OCTA and its members and to the preservation of our trails heritage. Material is due 30 days prior to publication dates. Material should be sent either on a computer disk (in Word or text format; please make sure you include a hard copy) or via e-mail. Pictures are appreciated and can be sent via e-mail, on a disk (jpg format) or originals for scanning.

Next Deadline Is June 1, 2001

From The President . . .

by David Welch



I just returned from OCTA's Mid-Year Board meeting in Independence followed by a trip to Washington, D.C. to promote trails legislation currently before Congress. I am glad to report that both activities went well.

The board worked its way through a busy two-day agenda with productive discussions. A summary of actions is presented elsewhere in this *NFP*, but the primary decisions concerned finances, legislative initiatives to protect additional routes and cutoffs and COED. Briefly, finances are tight but manageable. The board authorized a committee of OCTA's officers to examine ways of improving the efficiency of our operations to cut costs. The results will be presented to the board in August.

Under the leadership of Bill and Jeanne Watson, the prospects for the legislation to authorize an update of the trails feasibility study to add additional routes and cutoffs seem good, but not certain. This legislation neither requires additional funding nor authorizes land acquisition by the federal government and thus is non-controversial. Please contact your representatives to encourage support of HR37 and S213, the House and Senate versions, respectively.

Chuck Dodd presented an update on COED with recommendations for reorganization of the work. This will help move the project ahead now that most programming is complete. The next phase will emphasize refinement and entry of the backlog of completed trail surveys.

Another topic of discussion was the election of board members. Members at large and board members have expressed unhappiness to me with the way we disseminate candidate information. Because deadlines for candidates to declare for the Board have differed from deadlines for *News From The Plains*, OCTA's official publication has not been able to report on the elections with the completeness that members deserve. This year we will do it differently.

But first, let me discuss candidate information appearing in

folio, Greg Franzwa's newsletter. I have been surprised to learn that some think that *folio* is an official OCTA publication. It is not; the views and opinions expressed are Mr. Franzwa's and his correspondent's only, as Greg would be among the first to tell you.

In the past, Mr. Franzwa has published OCTA candidate information and candidate responses to a set of questions that he prepared and which reflected issues which he felt were important. However, some have felt these questions were "leading" in nature. This approach was evident to those familiar with the issues, but may not have been to those on the periphery. It was suggested that OCTA ask similar questions, but after some discussion, the board realized that it was very difficult to avoid bias. Those who prepare the questions could have considerable influence over the election. It was concluded that it was desirable to bring out the candidate's vision for OCTA, but to avoid involving them in what often are old, divisive issues.

I was also surprised to find that some candidates felt obliged to answer Mr. Franzwa's questions. Certainly this is not the case. Candidates can answer *folio* questions if they wish, but there is no requirement that they participate.

To improve our election process, there will be a special "elections only" issue of *News From The Plains* published in May. It will be devoted to the candidates and their qualifications. Please look at all candidate information carefully. I hope you will consider the candidates' contributions to trail preservation along with special experience and skills that can facilitate OCTA's operations.

While all of this business and politics is part of a well-run organization, at last it is time to begin thinking about real trail activities. I hope that you will be out on the trail soon marking routes and telling the stories of those who made the journey.

See you in Casper.

-- Dave Welch

News From Headquarters . . . by Kathy Conway



The 2001 Mid-Year Board of Directors Meeting took place at the Headquarters Office here in Independence on March 2 and 3. Of various topics discussed, two most "dear" and closely associated to Headquarters were increasing membership numbers in OCTA and bringing in more revenues to the OCTA bookstore. Fortunately, all of us as members can help in both areas. Gift memberships always come in the right size and color! Your local high school history teacher would appreciate such a gift.

Headquarters has initiated a membership drive of its own. Whenever we send or hand deliver an OCTA brochure we put our personal initials in the corner. So far, Suzanne Vinduska (of this office) has six memberships to her credit since the beginning of Don Popejoy's Membership Drive on January 1.

All of us know that what we do as an organization is IMPORTANT - trail mapping, trail marking, supporting legislative trail bills, our COED project, publications, conventions. It follows that by expressing this concept to people that we come in contact with, and then add to this our enthusiasm about OCTA, we are apt to bring in new members and could conceivably double our membership numbers. Let's give it a try!

Take a look at our bookstore ad inside the back cover of this issue and see what you might need to add to your book collection. Remember, it's only a small portion of the books available. Check out the catalog or visit the bookstore on the web. If you have any questions, call headquarters toll free at (888) 811-6282 and we'll help!

-- Kathy Conway

FINANCIAL REPORT, FISCAL YEAR 1999-2000

Oregon-California Trails Association

This report summarizes OCTA's financial position as of September 30, 2000. A comparison is made to the prior year, ending September 30, 1999. OCTA's assets increased significantly during the year due a generous endowment from the Charles Martin family and a successful annual fund drive. Income from dues declined further from its 1998 level and bookstore sales were lower than the prior year.

Statement of Financial Position

	<u>Sept. 30, 2000</u>	<u>Sept. 30, 1999</u>
Assets		
Cash:		
Operating Account	\$ 14,136.18	\$ 2,853.02
Special Publication Fund	16,957.52	15,646.29
Convention Account	4,232.37	35,256.87
OCTA Store Account	<u>1,063.30</u>	<u>9,231.21</u>
Total Cash	36,389.37	62,987.39
Investments (Endowment Funds):		
Money Market Fund	0.00	303,208.28
GKC Foundation Investments-Unrestricted	244,928.69	153,261.02
GKC Foundations Investments-Restricted	248,398.95	0.00
GKC Foundation Investments-Martin-Restricted	<u>202,207.65</u>	<u>0.00</u>
Total Investments	695,535.29	456,469.30
Other Assets:		
Accounts Receivable-Merchandise	4,209.59	2,702.06
NPS Grant Receivable	0.00	4,519.08
Advance-Convention Expense	<u>2,227.21</u>	<u>2,000.00</u>
Total Other Assets	6,436.80	9,221.14
Inventory-Merchandise:		
Total Inventory-Merchandise	30,997.00	33,809.73
Fixed Assets:		
Furniture & Fixtures	8,946.53	8,946.53
Office Equipment	14,030.12	14,030.12
Less: Accumulated Depreciation	<u>(22,976.65)</u>	<u>(22,976.65)</u>
Total Fixed Assets	0.00	0.00
Land-California Hill	6,260.00	6,260.00
Mattes Collection-On Loan to NFTC	0.00	45,928.35
Total Assets	<u>\$775,618.46</u>	<u>\$614,675.91</u>
Liabilities		
Accounts Payable	\$ 721.35	\$ 11,692.23
Payroll Taxes Payable	915.04	1,291.52
Total Liabilities	\$ 1,636.39	\$ 12,983.75
Net Assets		
Retained Revenue Over Expense	\$555,763.81	\$452,906.09
Current Revenue Over Expenses	<u>218,218.26</u>	<u>148,786.07</u>
Total Net Assets	\$773,982.07	\$601,692.16
Total Liabilities & Net Assets	<u>\$775,618.46</u>	<u>\$614,675.91</u>

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Statement of Activities

	BUDGET	1999 - 2000 ACTUAL	OVER/(UNDER)	1998-1999 ACTUAL
Support And Revenue:				
Support				
Annual Dues Income	\$ 89,000.00	\$ 86,705.00	\$ (2,295.00)	\$ 88,770.00
Life Memberships	0.00	750.00	750.00	1,500.00
Donations-Unrestricted	14,920.00	18,170.96	3,250.96	142,903.44
Donations-Restricted	0.00	194,395.63	194,365.63	0.00
Donations-Restricted/Endowment	0.00	3,500.00	3,500.00	0.00
Total Support	\$103,920.00	\$303,491.59	\$199,571.59	\$ 233,173.44
Revenues				
Overland Journal and News From the Plains	\$ 4,979.00	\$ 5,541.00	\$ 1,462.00	\$ 4,079.50
COED Fees	845.00	697.00	(148.00)	845.00
OCTA Sales Revenue (Net of Costs)	34,843.00	14,272.57	(20,570.43)	34,842.58
Special Publications	5,000.00	2,214.25	(2,785.75)	0.00
Convention Revenue (Net of Expenses)	10,000.00	28,532.37	18,532.37	22,566.90
Endow Int & Div Inc, Net Of Fees	22,000.00	15,547.42	(6,452.58)	0.00
Endowment Capital Gains (Losses)	0.00	16,185.88	16,185.88	0.00
Interest Income-Checking Accts.	6,000.00	1,645.29	(4,354.71)	30,800.77
Miscellaneous Income	0.00	59.06	59.06	600.00
Total Revenues	\$ 82,767.00	\$ 84,694.84	\$ 1,927.84	\$ 93,734.75
Total Support & Revenues	\$186,687.00	\$388,186.43	\$201,499.43	\$326,908.19
Expenses				
Officers	\$ 14,600.00	\$ 18,441.02	\$ 3,841.02	\$ 22,971.17
Committees	19,000.00	18,131.68	(868.32)	16,896.60
Headquarters	74,400.00	67,165.88	(7,234.12)	71,484.48
Preservation	7,900.00	10,189.63	2,289.63	9,885.90
Publications	59,250.00	56,039.96	(3,210.04)	56,161.68
Capital Equipment	1,000.00	0.00	(1,000.00)	722.29
Total Expenses	\$176,150.00	\$169,968.17	\$ (6,181.83)	\$178,122.12
Excess of Revenues Over Expenses	\$ 10,537.00	\$218,218.26	\$207,681.26	\$148,786.07
Net Revenue From Various Activities:				
	2000	1999		
Convention	\$ 28,532.37	\$ 22,566.90		
OCTA Store	\$ 16,486.82	\$ 34,842.58		
Publications	\$(49,828.96)	\$(51,572.44)		

BENEFACTORS HELP OCTA FULFILL ITS MISSION

OCTA's Board of Directors has been pleased to receive, on behalf of the organization, contributions that provide an endowment for future activities. The effect of these endowments on the financial statements is to indicate significant revenues in excess of expenditures.

In actuality, the principal amounts of these revenues are not generally available in any one year for use. Instead, these endowments provide an income stream, part of which is available to fund OCTA current year activities.

The cost of OCTA's services to its members and its education, publication, and preservation activities continue to exceed its ability to fund such from dues and convention and bookstore profits. The generosity of our members in providing for endowments and donating to our annual fund drive has permitted OCTA to accomplish the full spectrum of current year projects.

The current fiscal year, which began October 1, 2000, faces a similar challenge. The Board is grateful for the response members will make to ensure the success of its mission through their individual generosity.

— Marilyn Bryan, Treasurer

COED: Progress Being Made, Much Yet To Be Done

(Excerpted from a report on the Census of Overland Emigrant Documents (COED) program presented to the OCTA Board at its Mid-Year meeting.)

By Chuck Dodd & Kathy Roubal, COED Co-Chairs

COED has always had two parts: a *name* search part that is of primary interest to genealogists, and the *other* part, which is of special interest to researchers. When explaining COED, we have always faced a daunting task of communicating that there were these two parts of COED.

People easily comprehend the name search part, but usually have difficulty comprehending the researcher's part, which is the larger and more complicated (and more important) part. To help everyone understand these two parts better, we have created the name "Emigrant Trails Researcher's Tool" to go along with the "Names on the Plains" (NOP) part of COED that serves the name search function.

As of March 1, there were 2,263 documents in the COED database, with approximately 150 documents in the survey queue. This represents a lot of work done successfully and all of us who have worked on COED are justifiably proud.

Obviously, more needs to be done. We cannot know how many documents exist that we do not yet know about. We need to complete our efforts to check the major repositories to find documents we do not now know about and we have not begun to tap the wealth of documents to be found in 19th century newspapers. We hope that we will be able to meet immediate and future surveying needs with two or three more surveyors. If the list of documents to be surveyed is greater than expected, we will have to enlist and train a larger corps of surveyors.

We have fewer than 100 surveyed documents awaiting data entry. Chuck has prepared a new data entry program that incorporates extensive checking algorithms to ensure to the extent possible that only the correct coding is entered for data. This will reduce data entry quality problems we have encountered in the past, although it is impossible to write software that will catch all the problems. The major problem we have for data entry is the identification and enlistment of volunteers for the effort. Enlisting qualified volunteers willing to accept the rules and constraints of the COED database is essential.

The "Names on the Plains" part of COED is the part that supplies information to people (primarily genealogists) looking for references to names of their ancestors or other people of interest. It is therefore the most visible part of COED.

The "Emigrant Trails Researcher's Tool" is the part of COED that trail researchers will use to identify documents that can contribute to their research efforts. Primarily, it is a bibliographic tool. In general, it generates lists of documents the researcher should consult to obtain the information on the trail he or she is seeking. The Emigrant Trails Researcher's Tool is the reason COED was developed. Names on the Plains is a byproduct, although a very important one.

Characteristics of the COED database make the Emigrant Trails Researcher's Tool very complex. It is impossible to anticipate all research needs and it therefore is impossible to construct a tool that will answer any and all research ques-



Chuck Dodd, standing, makes a presentation on the COED project at the Mid-Year OCTA Board meeting. — Photo by Bill Martin

tions. It is estimated that a distributable version of the Researcher's Tool may be able to satisfy about 85 percent of trail research needs. i.e., it will provide access to about 85 percent of COED's full potential. The unanticipated questions, which are actually the more interesting questions, will have to be answered by custom-tailored queries of the database. This means that 15 percent (or so) of COED's potential will always have to be provided on a case-by-case basis, by creating customized queries, requiring a thorough technical knowledge of how the database is structured and how to formulate queries, and a comprehensive knowledge of the contents of the database.

As an example, the firm which has been retained by the National Park Service to develop information on trail alternatives has asked OCTA to use COED to help identify diaries and journals that describe any part of some 59 different routes. The answer to that request may be 1,200 to 1,500 pages long. It shows the power of the Emigrant Trails Researcher's Tool, but also its complexity.

Organizationally and administratively, COED is a complex program that involves or has involved at least 205 volunteers. The key people working on COED have been Kathy Roubal (chair), Chuck Dodd (software), Shann Rupp (assignments coordinator), Don Wiggins (data entry coordinator), Charlie Little, various chapter COED people, and numerous surveyors and data entry people. (Don Wiggins has now "retired" from COED, but his contribution has been immense.) The workload is enormous. If COED were being run as a business instead of a volunteer activity, there would probably be two or three people working full time plus all the volunteer surveying and data entry efforts.

Obviously, there is a lot of work to do on COED, just as there has always been a lot of work to do on COED. The first COED survey was completed in 1987 and COED will never be completed — not as long as we are still discovering emigrant diaries and journals and letters and accounts printed in old newspapers, and research questions are being posed.

Names On The Plains database searches are available from headquarters for \$8 per name for requests from OCTA members and \$10 per name for non-OCTA members.

OCTA Board Mid-Year Meeting

(continued from page 1)

not conflict with planned activities by the Lewis & Clark Heritage Foundation. The book would be similar to OCTA's two other educational activity books, *Reading, Writing and Riding Along the Oregon-California Trails* and *Finding The Right Place*, which covers the Mormon Trail.

- Authorized transfer of \$50,000 from the Unrestricted Endowment Fund to the Restricted Endowment Fund, providing additional shelter for Endowment Fund donors. (Unrestricted funds can be accessed by a two-thirds vote of the Board, while only the interest income from restricted funds can be used.)

- Referred to Board Committee A, headed by Reba Grandrud, a question from the Membership Committee concerning the current one vote per membership standard. Presently, the Family membership category, which may include more than one adult member, receives one vote in OCTA elections, the same as the Individual membership category. A report is anticipated at the August meeting.

- Approved \$1,000 in support to the Nebraska Historical Society for reprinting a Chimney Rock brochure which will be dedicated to OCTA benefactor Charles Martin Sr.

- Officially elected Marilyn Bryan as OCTA Treasurer. The election had previously been conducted via an e-mail vote.

- Approved a slight revision to OCTA's expense reimbursement policy to allow persons eligible for reimbursement who do not seek reimbursement to receive a letter which can be used as a receipt for charitable donation purposes.

- Approved a resolution requiring a complete tabulation of Board election results to appear in *News From The Plains*.

- Approved a resolution which "urges convention planners to consider utilizing calls for papers and parallel sessions so as to increase the opportunity of choice among audience members and to provide greater opportunity for members to present the results of their works."

- Took no action on a proposal from the Education Committee to add \$250 to each of the organization's Outstanding Educator Awards; the proposal was referred to the OCTA Awards Committee, which is currently reviewing all awards and will make a recommendation in August.

- Authorized the Executive Committee, made up of the president, president-elect, treasurer, secretary, National Preservation Officer and chair of Committee A, to examine a possible reorganization of the headquarters office and make a report at the August Board meeting.

- During its study session, heard a report from the Greater Kansas City Charitable Foundation, which administers OCTA endowments, concerning planned giving efforts and the potential for OCTA. The report was informational and no action was taken.

- Asked Committee A to work with the Publications Committee to review current advertising rates and policies for the *Overland Journal* and *News From the Plains* and make a recommendation at the August meeting.

- Also asked Committee A and the Publications Committee to study OCTA's overall publications philosophy. Currently, the Publications Committee is responsible for the *OJ*, the

NFP and publications in the Emigrant Trails Historical Studies Series. Other publications, such as those from the Education Committee, presently do not fall under the scope of the Publications Committee.

- Approved a revised Mission Statement for the Publications Committee.

- Heard reports on plans for the 2001 Convention in Casper, Wyoming, and the 2002 Convention in Reno, Nevada.

- Accepted a report from Floyd R. Brown & Company, Certified Public Accountants, following its review of OCTA's financial statements.

- Was told that the expected transfer of OCTA's ownership in the California Hill property to the Nebraska State Historical Society has been delayed but is expected to be completed in the near future.

- Heard that the Public Relations Committee is moving ahead with a Challenge Cost Share-funded project to develop a 10-12 minute video on the Oregon Trail for use with schools, museums, trails centers, speaking opportunities and other outreach efforts. The project would be completed in 2002.

- Was informed by the Collections Committee that the following items have been donated to the Merrill Mattes Library: An 1849 reminiscence by William Walker Call, donated by Barbara Erden; a 1849 reminiscence by Isaac Booth Dutton, donated by Phyllis Ryerse; a 1859 memorandum book by Biar Curless, donated by Lance Beeson; and an 1849 journal by Royal Tyler Sprague, donated by Barbara Woodrum. In addition, the book *Karl Gregor Bundschu: To and In America, 1851-1892*, has been donated to the OCTA Headquarters Office by William Bundschu.

- Heard a review of a number of options concerning the existing OCTA Statement of Purpose and elected to take no action.

- Heard a report from the Chapters Committee that efforts are continuing to revitalize the Nebraska Chapter. A Chapters Workshop will be held at the Casper convention.

OCTA Member Wins National Book Award

Long-time OCTA member Violet Kimball has won a Spur Award in the category of Best Western Juvenile Non-fiction from the Western Writers of America.

The award was presented for her book *Stories of Young Pioneers In Their Own Words*. (The book may be special ordered through the OCTA bookstore.)

Formal presentation of the award will take place during the WWA convention in Idaho Falls on June 23.

Visit the OCTA Bookstore On The Web — www.OCTA-trails.org

Casper Convention Planning Reaches Final Stages

Look out everyone! The OCTA convention planning committee has great news. All is going according to schedule and the committee is planning BIG things for convention-goers August 12-18, 2001, in Casper, Wyoming.

The registration form is complete and bustin' out with information on all treks, lodging, chow, workshops, tours and entertainment.

The schedule is finalized with three pre-convention treks on Sunday and Monday, including the Cherokee Trail, Ft. Laramie to Glendo, and Rocky Ridge.

On Tuesday, a hike is planned at Independence Rock and there will be living history tours of downtown Casper.

Wednesday includes keynote speakers such as Dr. Fred Gowens and Susan Badger-Doyle, just to mention two. We also have a special presentation from the Casper Mayor for the opening welcome.

Convention attendees will also get a special speak preview tour of the not-yet-opened National Historic Trails Interpretive Center on Thursday, along with workshops and more speakers. There will be more treks on Friday and Saturday and a Saturday night barbecue.



Entertainment includes our own OCTA Trail Band, Dorene Ludwig's presentation of voices on the trails, Buffalo Bear Boycott of Bear Paw Records, optional living history candlelight walking tours of downtown Casper, a reception at the biggest western wear store in these here parts, not to mention a surprise guest that will "blow you away like a tumble weed."

Of course, we also have the traditional great things of the convention like the bookstore, Author's Night, the Awards Banquet and the chapter and membership meetings.

The planning stages are over and the implementation is beginning. We are so excited with all of the fun we have planned for you. This will be a convention you will never forget.

For more information, see our website at <http://w3.trib.com/~rlund/chapter.html> and let the excitement build. When planning

your trip to Wyoming, be sure to bring lotion, as the air is dry and sunblock because the sun is hot and the altitude is 5,123 feet. Our convention will be the best thing you will do all summer.

— Wyoming Chapter Planning Committee

Convention Tours Will Visit Historic Trail Locations

Here's are thumbnail overviews of the tours, trips and treks planned for the 2001 OCTA Convention in Casper, Wyoming. The convention brochure will have more complete details and registration information.

Sunday-Monday, August 12-13

Two-day Cherokee Trail Tour — This is an auto tour starting in Saratoga, WY and following the Cherokee Trail of 1850. It crosses the Continental Divide at Twin Groves, visits the towns of Savery and Baggs, and then to the Little Snake River. The first day also includes stops at Lower Powder Springs and the Malinda Armstrong gravesite. After over-nighting in Rock Springs or Green River, day two starts at Expedition Island in Green River, then visits the Point of Rocks Overland stage station and Sulphur Springs. Limited to 20 vehicles.

Monday, August 13

Fort Laramie to Orin Junction (designed for those coming from the East) — Stops include Mexican Hill, Warm Springs and the North Side Trail. This is a four-wheel drive trek limited to 30 vehicles.

Rocky Ridge & Sweetwater Valley (designed for those coming from the West) — Stops include the Willie Handcart site, Lewiston Lakes, Rocky Ridge and the Sweetwater Valley. This is a four-wheel drive trek limited to 30 vehicles.

Tuesday, August 14

John C. Frémont Tour (The Dam Trip) — A bus tour visiting some of the beauty spots along the North Platte River. Sites

include Frémont's 1842 Hot Springs Gate, Fremont Canyon, the Pathfinder museum and dam, and the Miracle Mile blue ribbon fishery. The tour is not on Pioneer trails, but is on the Fremont and Robert Stuart routes. Tour limited to 80.

Pre-Convention Hike — A three-mile, moderately easy hike to Saleratus Lake, Sweetwater Station, Independence Rock and Devil's Gate.

Friday and Saturday, August 17-18

(Same tours both days)

East Tour — Offers a view of beautiful trail swales and many graves that OCTA has marked. Graves include those of Ada McGill, Martin Ringo, J.P. Parker, Ralston Baker, Mary Kelly Hurley and Joel Hembree (the oldest marked grave on the Oregon Trail). Also will visit Rock in the Glen, the Bissonette Trading Post, river crossings and pristine swales.

West Tour — Starts at Fort Caspar, then to Bessemer Bend, connecting to Emigrant Gap and the South Pass Route. The trip includes a walk through Devil's Backbone, William Clayton's slough, Willow Springs and Prospect Hill, a lunch stop at Independence Rock, and a visit to the Martin Handcart Center at Devil's Gate.

August can be hot in Wyoming (although sometimes it can be cold, too). The tour buses are comfortable touring units with on-board sound, air conditioning and restrooms. Convention organizers suggest clothing appropriate to the day, suitable hiking shoes, hats, umbrellas, sun screen and cameras. Casper is 5,123 feet in elevation, while Independence Rock is 6,028 feet above sea level.

Convention Schedule

(Subject to change)

Sunday, August 12

Pre-convention two-day tour
The Cherokee/Overland Trail

Monday, August 13

Pre-Convention bus tours
Fort Laramie to Orin Junction
Rocky Ridge-Sweetwater Valley

Tuesday, August 14

OCTA Board meeting
Pre-convention hike
Frémont Bus Tour

Wednesday, August 15

Keynote Speaker
Presentation of papers
General membership meeting
Chapter Meetings
"Get Acquainted" reception
Authors Night

Thursday, August 16

Speakers
Trails Center Tours
Workshops
Awards Banquet

Friday, August 17

Bus tours
American Living History Theater

Saturday, August 18

Bus tours
Evening barbeque at Fort Caspar

Convention Committees

Putting on an OCTA convention requires the work of a large number of volunteers who put in an enormous number of hours preparing for the annual invasion of rut nuts and trail trekies. Here are some of the people heading committees for the 2001 Convention in Casper.

Convention Chair – Edna Kennell

Public Relations – Donna Fisher

Food & Local Arrangements – Donna Fisher

Finance – Butch Okes and Arlene Wegner

Book Displays and Exhibits – Butch Okes

Registration – Arlene Wegner

Raffle – Marie Henthorn and Marie McDonald

Tours – Lee Underbrink and Randy Brown

Transportation – Sally Lund, Fern Linton and Lois Salz

Speakers – Ron Lund

Hike – Jackie Ellis, Kathy Orr, Cathy Strong, Levida and Brock Hileman

Silent Auction – Fern Linton

Host ID's – Gail Robinson

Tour Guide Recruitment – Pinky Ellis

Tour Guide Training – Lee Underbrink and Jackie Ellis

OCTA Heads To Vancouver

The Board of Directors has awarded OCTA's 2004 national convention to the Northwest Chapter, with the convention to be held in Vancouver, Washington.

The Board was told that excellent facilities and accommodations are available and a number of chapter members have agreed to work on the convention, with Dave Welch, current OCTA President, serving as convention chair. Suggestions for programs and tours are already being generated.

With a 2004 site secured, the Future Convention Sites Committee headed by OCTA Board member Charles Martin Jr. is now encouraging chapters to host the 2005 and 2006 conventions. The 2001 convention will be held in Casper, WY; 2002 is in Reno, NV; and 2003 will be in Manhattan, KS.

Also at its Mid-Year meeting, the Board heard a report on planning for the Reno gathering from Convention Chair Chuck Dodd.

The convention plans an emphasis on new discoveries and developments on trails in Nevada and California, as well as reports on new technologies such as GPS receivers, low-power radio transmitters for "invisible" on-site interpretation, computers and the Internet.

Planned convention tour sites will include the Dog Valley segment of the Truckee Trail, the Forty Mile Desert, Donner Memorial Park, Stephens Pass and archaeology at Sand Springs Station. Pre- and post-convention tours are expected to include the Fort Hall Road, the Truckee Trail, the Apple-gate Trail and the Humboldt River.

Dates for the convention are the week of August 11-18, 2002.

Lone Elm Campsite Preserved

One of the most threatened trail sites in the Kansas City area, the Lone Elm Campground, has been purchased by the City of Olathe, Kansas for a city park, thereby likely saving it from becoming a residential subdivision. The sale involves the purchase of a 160-acre farm from the Willsey family, recipients of OCTA's 1990 Friend of the Trail award.

Lone Elm Campground is one of the most famous frontier trail camp sites 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 camped there, including such frontier notables as William Becknell, John Frémont, the Donner-Reed party, Kit Carson and Francis Parkman.

The camp was first known as Round Grove, named by the earliest traders to Santa Fe. 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. This great old Lone Elm stood near the creek about one-quarter mile to the southeast.

— Ross Marshall

Membership Report

By Don Popejoy, Membership Chair

As you will note in the Board report in this issue of *News From The Plains*, the question of "one membership, one vote" has been referred to a Board committee for a recommendation, with a report due back at the August Board meeting.

As Membership Chair, I brought this issue to the Board at its Mid-Year meeting. It is an issue which has come up before and there are pros and cons. The matter needs to be resolved, but it will take time and patience. Remember, the OCTA Board and officers have the best interests of the general membership as their top priority.

The Membership Drive which started on January 1 will continue through June 30. During this six-month period, if you bring in three new members you will receive from the OCTA Bookstore your choice of the official OCTA patch or both the OCTA decal and the OCTA bumper sticker. Sign up just four to six new members and receive either the OCTA or Oregon Trail pin. Bring in seven new members and you will receive your choice of William Henry Jackson prints of Independence Rock or Crossing the South Platte, plus a pin or patch.

Also, everyone who meets these levels will get recognition in *NFP* and at the 2001 convention in Casper and you will receive a special sticker to put on your name tag. Remember to initial all applications and brochures you hand out as this is the only way we can track them, or contact either Kathy or I and let us know that you have signed up a new member.

Increased membership is extremely important to the future of OCTA – and to preservation of our trails resources – and it requires the help and hard work of every current member.

The Membership Committee, along with Kathy and the staff at headquarters, the officers and board are working hard to not only bring in new members, but to keep the existing members happy and proud of being associated with OCTA. So, how many people have you contacted in regard to OCTA membership since the Membership Drive started?

On another matter, by the time you read this, spring will be well under way. And with the changing of the seasons comes a new year of Trail excitement. Outings and meetings are planned and trail marking sessions undergo organization, soon evolving into outdoor adventures. Plans for travel are considered and the convention in Casper, Wyoming is just a few months away.

"Ah," you say, "it just doesn't get any better than this." Well, for most of us it doesn't, but for those chapter members who can't get out like they used to, or who don't have the time or money to do all these wonderful trail-related activities, it could be better and it should. The Northwest Chapter, as well as the other chapters, have been confronted with this dilemma many times and some of its members have said they don't feel like members when they can't attend meetings or outings that are either too far away or they are physically not able to participate.

An idea that is not new, but which has been taken seriously
(continued on page 16)

Preservation Officer Report

By Dick Ackerman, National Preservation Officer

OCTA's participation in the City of Rocks lawsuit contributed significantly to the outcome and we can all feel good about that. We had a right to what we were standing up for. (ED: OCTA joined the National Park Service in a court case which resulted from a ban on rock climbing on the Twin Sisters at City of Rocks. See the January *NFP* for details.)

In other preservation areas:

- OCTA is monitoring a drilling application by Condor Exploration in the Horsetrap area in extreme western Wyoming. There are trail ruts nearby, but as long as they stay within the project area it should be okay.

- We are investigating an FMC Corp. haul road proposed near the Cherokee Trail in Western Wyoming.

- Owners of the Rim Rock Ranch near Casper are seeking a public easement to trail remnants and Indian battle sites on the property before they dispose of the ranch.

- OCTA is following plans for natural gas wells proposed by the Wolverine Gas and Oil Corporation a few miles west of South Pass and right along the trail near the Big Sandy Cross (see January *NFP* story). Bureau of Land Management officials are working with us to mitigate possible impacts, but it is too soon to know the eventual impact.

- Nebraska chapter members are continuing to work with the developer of an upscale housing golf course development on the Ox Bow Trail between Omaha and Lincoln, NE. We hope to be able to sign some locations for future trail nuts to identify where the trail was located.

- The Wyoming Highway Department is planning a bypass around Casper over the next few years which has a potential of causing damage to the trail remnants. The local chapter is following the project.

- Plans are to complete the BLM marking of a portion of the Overland Stage and Cherokee Trail routes through western Wyoming by late August or early September. The project, for which OCTA contributed \$5,000, was delayed last summer due to wild fires in the area.

- A proposal to install a water pipe line down East Canyon east of Salt Lake City, which posed a threat to the remnants of the Mormon Trail and the Pony Express Trail, has been dropped. Likewise, a proposal to build a for-profit prison in central Utah on the Hastings Cutoff has been halted.

From a report at the OCTA Mid-Year Board meeting.

First Lady Invites OCTA Author

OCTA member Jane Kurtz was one of 13 children's authors selected by the First Lady for "Laura Bush Celebrates America's Authors" on January 19 in Washington, D.C.

Kurtz is author of *I'm Sorry Almira Ann*, a middle grade novel set on the Oregon Trail. After a formal ceremony at Constitution Hall, Kurtz spoke to students at Garrison School in Washington and signed a special copy of her book, with a golden inaugural seal, for the school's library.



News From The Chapters

Northwest

The new Trail season is about to begin, and the Northwest chapter members agree it's been a long winter.

Several of the chapter members were to get an early start on trail-related activities by going to the OCTA Mid-Winter Board meeting at Headquarters in Independence, MO March 2nd and 3rd. Scheduled to attend were OCTA President Dave Welch, board members Vic Bolon, Tom Laidlaw and Don Popejoy, Susan Badger Doyle of OCTA's Special Publications and Bob Clark, new editor of the *Overland Journal*.

The first meeting of the year was the General Membership meeting on March 10th at the Columbia Gorge Discovery Center in The Dalles, Oregon. After the general meeting, the afternoon was to be spent listening to Susan Badger Doyle talk about the Bozeman Trail. Susan's two volume set *Journeys to the Land of Gold* was published last year and can be purchased at the OCTA Bookstore (www.OCTA-trails.org).

On April 28th and 29th, there will be an outing at Flagstaff Hill in Baker City, Oregon with the Idaho/Montana chapter. On the 28th, the new historical marker "Lure of Gold" on Highway 86 will be dedicated. At 2 p.m. the chapter will install the Ackerman Meritorious Service Award, which was presented to Dick and Trudy Ackerman last year. On the 29th there will be a trail hike along Virtue Flat.

In May, Gail and Muriel Carbiener will lead a group to the Agency Valley Cemetery, just north of the Beulah Reservoir, for a "cleanup." The 11th will be a travel day to get to the cemetery, the 12th a work day (and with Muriel along, you know it will be a work day) and then the 13th a travel day home or where ever.

The one-quarter acre Agency Valley Cemetery, started in 1883, contains the graves of Levi Scott of Applegate fame, and his sons. Also there will be time for a visit to Sarah Chamber's grave site.

Next up will be the May 19th trek to Olympia, Washington where Jack and Pat Fletcher will talk about the Cherokee Trail and there will be diary readings by Jim Tompkins. The afternoon will provide time for a field trip to the Washington State Library of Northwest Research. The Fletcher's book, *Cherokee Trail Diaries*, was published in 1999 and is also available at the OCTA Bookstore.

On National Trails Day, June 2nd and 3rd, Vic Bolon will lead us on a hike to McDonald crossing of the John Day River and then continue on to the Deschutes River crossing. This part of the Trail was marked last year by the NW chapter.

On June 23rd and 24th, Jim Tompkins and Tom Laidlaw



OCTA Board member Tom Laidlaw of the Northwest Chapter portraying fur trader Billy Cannon at Fort Vancouver.

— Photo by Don Popejoy

will take us on a Barlow Road outing. Details are pending.

Also, Dick Pingrey, the chapter's "Red Baron," will take us on a tour of the Naches Trail, which will include a flyover of parts the trail. Details to follow. No parachutes necessary!

The Columbia River Connection: The weekend of September 15th and 16th, Don Popejoy will lead the group to many of the Lewis and Clark sites along the Columbia River. We will meet at The Dalles on the morning of the 15th. Details to follow.

A Joint meeting with the Linn County Historical Society will be on October 21st. A talk about the migration patterns into the Willamette Valley will be given by Mildred Hawkins.

Various other meetings/outings are in the works.

— Don Popejoy

Casper Convention

August 12-18

Visit the website at

w3.trib.com/~rlund/chapter.html

Crossroads

At the January 12 chapter meeting members elected the following officers to lead the chapter during 2001: John Eldredge, President; Steve Berlin, Vice President; Ron Andersen, Secretary; Gar Elison, Treasurer. The new editor of the chapter newsletter, *Crossroads*, is Angie Larkin (one of the Dixie girls). Jerry Dunton will be working with her on publications. Ed Otto is the chapter Trail Preservation Officer.

In spite of the cold weather, 93 members and guests attended the January meeting to listen to Bill Hartley's talk on the "1861-1868 Down and Back Wagon Companies."



Participants at the Utah Crossroads chapter field trip to the

A spring field trip is being planned for May 5-6 or May 12-13 depending on the weather. A 4-wheel drive trip through the San Rafael Swell area of Utah's "Castle Country" is being considered and would follow sections of the Escalante and Spanish Trail routes. The last time Crossroad members explored this area as a group and followed the Spanish Trail from Green River to southwest Utah was in 1992.

Other field trips on the California - Mormon Trail and the Sublette Cutoff in western Wyoming are being considered for fall field trips. OCTA members in other chapters are invited to participate. Information will be published in the *Crossroads* newsletter.

Winter weather has put a damper on trail marking and preservation activities, but the summer months promise to be busy ones.

Several members of Utah Crossroads who are also members of the National Pony Express Association will be participating in the annual Pony Express Re-ride this June.

The annual cleanup at the Donner Spring kiosk on the TL Bar Ranch will take place sometime in May or June. Each year the grass and weeds inside the spring's fenced area must be cut, preservative applied to the fencing and general repairs made to the fence where cattle have tried to break through. The picnic tables have to be retrieved from the ranch hands and relocated to the kiosk area.

Our Carsonite post markers on the Hastings Cutoff/Donner-Reed trail from the spring to Bidwell Pass must be replaced

where vandals have shot up or removed the posts. Under the direction of Roy Tea and Ed Otto, Trails West-type posts are being installed by chapter members at some trail points and sites in Utah.

The Private Fuel Storage (PFS) project to store nuclear waste on the Goshute Indian Reservation in Utah's Skull Valley will not go away. The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission has issued a Memorandum of Agreement which includes the development of a "Treatment Plan" which identifies all historic properties that will be impacted by the project. As a member of the Utah Historic Trails Consortium, Utah Crossroads is reviewing the plan to see if the adverse effect the project's rail spur will have on the Hastings Cutoff/California Trail can be avoided, minimized or mitigated.

The threat to a section of the Hastings Cutoff trail in Timpie Valley has disappeared with the cancellation of a proposed private prison complex in the area.

There is still no organization or foundation willing to accept the 80-acre Goldfleck property deed from the Utah Division of State Parks. The 80-acre section overlooks the historic trail "corridor" in East Canyon and adjacent to existing pristine ruts and swales made by the 1846 Donner-Reed party and the 1847 and later Mormon Pioneer groups. The manager of Goldfleck Properties would like to see a historic foundation or association accept the deed and then develop and manage the property as a historic site, to include displays, exhibits and recreational activities. As the site does not include the nearby trail ruts, the historic attraction for OCTA is limited. Efforts are being made by the Utah Historic Trails Consortium to encourage "deep pocket" organizations or the Department of the Interior to provide funding to acquire the additional Goldfleck property that contains the actual trail route. The development and management of the site, attractive as a "gift" of 80 acres may be, are far beyond the means and resources of OCTA and Utah Crossroads.

An interesting article on the "Roy" rock inscription appeared in the last issue of the *Crossroads* newsletter. This 1814 inscription was discovered by chapter president John Eldredge in the fall of 1993.

Randy Brown, Wyoming's trail sleuth, is compiling a list of all the emigrant, explorer and trapper, rock inscriptions found in Wyoming. We are both convinced there are more 19th century inscriptions yet to be discovered.



Al Mulder, left, and John Eldredge with the "Roy" inscription rock near Aspen Creek, Wyoming. — Photo by Martin Lammers

Gateway

Gateway chapter officers for the year 2001 are President Bob Hamilton of Kansas City, Vice President Marilyn Bryan of St. Joseph, Secretary Mary Jo Sprague of St. Joseph and Treasurer John Atkinson of St. Joseph.

In addition, Suzette McCord-Rogers has been appointed Preservation Officer for the chapter that holds stewardship over the St. Joe Road in Nemaha, Brown, Doniphan, and Atchison Counties in Kansas and the jumping-off towns in Buchanan, Andrew, and Holt Counties in Missouri.

This spring the chapter will continue its efforts in marking of trail in Doniphan, Brown & Nemaha counties. A new project has been launched to obtain interpretive signs to be placed at the Courter-Richey Cemetery and the Iola Cemetery (both in Doniphan County, Kansas).

Meanwhile, Gateway has is working with other local and regional historical groups in sponsoring programs this year. The theme of this joint effort is "Forming the Wagon Train, 2001." Upcoming programs include:

Life in 1850's on the Kansas Border - A portrayal of Julia Louisa Lovejoy's life during the Kansas Border War period by Katie Armitage, in association with the Kansas Humanities Council. This program, co-sponsored by the Doniphan County, Kansas Historical Society and the Native American Heritage Museum, Highland, KS, is scheduled for April 26 in Troy, Kansas.

Nooning in Independence - A tour of The National Frontiers Trail Center with John Mark Lambertson on May 19.

Trail Blazers - A discussion by Mark Kelly on mountain men and the trails in St. Joseph on June 12, sponsored by Gateway and the St. Joseph Historical Society.

Trail Trek - A repeat of the Independence Route tour from the 2000 Convention held guided by Gateway members John Atkinson and Marilyn Bryan. Educators and members of historical associations will be invited guests on July 15

Spanning the Great Platte River Road - A weekend excursion by car caravan on the way to annual convention in Casper, WY. Gateway members plan to view the colossal "Archway" depicting the trail that spans I-80 near Kearney, NE on August 11 & 12. — Marilyn Bryan & Jackie Lewin

March Meeting Draws Big Crowd, Media Coverage

Attendance at the first meeting of 2001 for the Gateway chapter surpassed even their optimistic goals. Historically, attendance at Gateway public presentations was about 30 and Gateway reserved an auditorium seating 65 for its March 6 program. A few days prior to the event, telephone inquiries indicated the auditorium would be too small, so the meeting was moved to a larger room in the hotel seating 100. When 135 people showed up, some quick action on the part of the hotel staff opened an adjacent room that served to accommodate the crowd.

The chapter's theme for the year is "Forming the Wagon Train" in their attempt to co-opt with other community groups to attract new members. The March 6 meeting on the "St. Joe Road to California", featuring Gateway members, Jackie Lewin and Marilyn Taylor, was co-sponsored by the St. Joseph Museum and publicized to museum members. Lewin and Taylor are authors of *A Traveler's Guide, St. Joe Road: Emigration in the Mid-1800s*, which is available from the OCTA bookstore.

Gateway gained the cooperation of the St. Joseph *NewsPress*, which printed a Sunday front-page news story ahead of the meeting about the feasibility study legislation pending in Congress. The story was also carried in four smaller newspapers in communities along the St. Joe Road and publicized on the local TV and radio channels.

Included in the audience were reporters from the *NewsPress* and KQTV. The meeting and its theme of the St. Joe Road was the lead story on the 10 o'clock news that evening and was reviewed on the front page of the local newspaper's Metro Section the next day.

Gateway is anticipating new memberships to result from its advertising efforts.

— Marilyn Bryan

CA-NV

The Southern routes into California and the Butterfield stage road were explored by some 100 California-Nevada chapter members at the March 10 -11 weekend symposium in Temecula, CA.

The group heard talks on the Southern trails and enjoyed an all-day bus trip over parts of the old roads with visits to the historic Warner ranch and Butterfield Stage stations.

One of the highlights of the symposium was the program put on by three-trail experts -- Don Buck, Tracy De Vault, and Rose Ann Tompkins. They explained methods used to

locate the trail from Santa Fe, New Mexico to Warner's Ranch in California, a task that began in 1995.

"The Romance of Ramona" was the topic of one of the talks at the Saturday March 10 session. The ageless novel by Helen Hunt Jackson is still produced annually in an outdoor pageant.

Credit for the success of the annual spring symposium belonged to one very busy and well-organized lady, Joanne Hinchliff of San Jacinto.

— Patricia Loomis

KANZA

The KANZA Chapter has many projects, which are moving along. However, there is one on which we have finished work and that one is keeping the Historic Trails Park west of Marysville at its present location.

The Kansas Department of Transportation, the Union Pacific Railroad, and the City of Marysville are in the planning stages for a \$45.6 million grade separation project located near the Big Blue River. This project will have a big impact on the Historic Trails Park, which is located on the east bank of the Big Blue River.

In the early planning stages we were informed that this park would have to be moved as there would be no access to it. If you have ever visited this site, you would know that the interpretive panels in this park would not mean anything if moved to a new location. This is an on-site historical park, complete with a replica of the river craft/ferry, which operated at this point in the mid-1800's.

Arleta and I told the consulting engineer that we would rather see it blown up than moved to a new site. Needless to say we got busy right away making contacts with key people we knew, who would try to help us save this important site.

We contacted Jere Krakow at the National Park Service Long Distance Trails Office in Salt Lake City, the Kansas State Historical Society, the Kansas Department of Transpor-

tation, and an archeologist with the State Highway Commission in Kansas City. We also notified OCTA's National Preservation Officer, Dick Ackerman and members of our KANZA Chapter.

The Planning Firm of Hanna & Keelan called a special meeting to deal with some of these concerns and we were asked to set up a display which dealt with the trail and other important historic facts about this area. At that meeting, Kay Threlkeld from Salt Lake came to our aid and with help from Yvonne and Glenn Larson, we presented a good clear picture of the importance of this site.

Arleta compiled a list of diary entries that talked about the "Big Blue Crossing" and the numerous persons who are buried at or near the crossing. Glenn provided maps of the area and Kay, Yvonne, and I helped by talking to interested individuals.

At the next meeting, the engineer from the consulting firm of Kirkham Michael stated that the Federal Government mandated the Historic Trails Park be left at the present site and an access road built.

I would like to thank everyone who helped us in saving this Historic Site.

— Ken Martin

Yvonne Larson And Her Traveling Covered Wagon Show

History comes to life when Yvonne Larson of Waterville, Kansas, (a Charter Member of KANZA Chapter) travels with her Covered Wagon.

Her travels began in 1993, when she took her "New Stoughton" farm wagon out of storage and took part in the Echo of Times Past Wagon Train trek organized by Ken Martin. The wagon train traveled from Westmoreland, Kansas, to Hollenberg Station State Historic Site, near Hanover, Kansas.

Hollenberg Station curator Duane Durst saw Larson and her wagon and asked her if she would return with her wagon to the station to talk to a children's group and demonstrate what life was like on the Trail.

That visit led to more appearances. Since then she has taken her wagon to various Living History events in Kansas, Nebraska, Missouri, and Colorado.

Dressed in authentic clothing, which she makes herself, Larson sets up camp with a collection of gear typical of the mid-1800s. The wagon is authentically equipped with bows and cover, tent fly, tar bucket, wagon jack and odometer.

Larson demonstrates cooking over an open campfire with cast iron kettles and tin ware. Sometimes the fire is fueled with buffalo chips. When the weather isn't campfire friendly she stokes up a fire in a small sheet iron stove, simi-



Yvonne Larson with her Living History demonstration. Visible is her wagon and the sheet metal stove.

lar to those used by the emigrants on the Trail.

Larson's camp makes history come alive for groups of all ages. She can be contacted for further information by calling (785) 363-2365 or by e-mail glarson@midusa.net.

— Jim Bradley

Ground Penetrating Radar Used To Locate Graves

by Ken Martin

At the Chico Convention, I visited with BLM Representatives Russ Tanner and Terry DelBene and Jere Krakow of the National Park Service, about some emigrant graves in Kansas. I wanted to know if there was any way to confirm that these sites really were graves.

After returning home, Jere contacted me about a survey being conducted in Iowa along the Mormon Trail. They were going to use Ground Penetrating Radar to locate the foundations of the buildings at the Garden Grove settlement. He invited me and two others to help and observe what they would be doing.

In November, Glenn Larson, Ernie White and I traveled to Garden Grove, Iowa to assist with this investigation. Steve DeVore of the Midwest Archeological Center of the NPS in Lincoln, Nebraska was conducting the survey along with Meg Watters an archaeogeophysicist from Minneapolis.

Early in 2000, Jere started making arrangements with Steve to conduct an archeological investigation utilizing ground-penetrating radar and resistivity measures here in Kansas. In May, Steve traveled to our area and we visited five sites where we wanted to confirm the existence of graves.

At this time we were asked by the NPS to get archeological site forms from the Kansas State Historical Society in order to keep them abreast of the work that was going on. Steve had chosen four sites. One was near the Cholera Cemetery near Louisville, KS and another at the Kemnitz property, both located in Pottawatomie County. The other two sites were in Marshall County, one located on the west bank of the Big Blue River south of Marysville and the other located near the junction of the Independence and St. Joe Roads.

After the site forms were submitted we waited to see when Steve's schedule would allow him to do the survey.

In mid October, Jere informed me that we would begin the work on November 13th. On that date, Steve DeVore brought down a Soil Resistance Meter and a Magnetometer and Bob Nickel, a private archeologist also from Lincoln, NE brought his Ground Penetrating Radar machine.

Other notables attending were: Jere Krakow, OCTA National Preservation Officer Dick Ackerman from Salem, OR, and Randy Theis of the Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, KS.

On Monday, a 20 X 20 grid was laid out on Jim Tessen-dorf's property adjacent to the Cholera Cemetery. The team conducted the survey using all three devices. The second day they laid out a 10 X 10 grid on the Gilbert Kemnitz property and conducted the survey. During the afternoon we were visited by Roger Brazier of Wamego, KS, who is a nephew of Howard Driggs. That evening Ernie and Delia White and Jim and Marian Bradley hosted a supper for the survey crew.

Wednesday found the crew south of Marysville on the Lower Blue Crossing, which is located on property owned by Marc Vering. A 20 X 20 grid was laid out and the crew went to work. That evening they were treated to a chili feed at the

BLM Plans Black Rock Celebration In Nevada

The Bureau of Land Management is making plans for a "Celebration" of the Black Rock Desert-High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails National Conservation Area to be held in June or early July near Gerlach, NV.

The date had yet to be set at press time for *News From The Plains*. Check the BLM Nevada website at www.nv.blm.gov for updated information. Or you can call the BLM in Nevada at (775) 861-6400.

The 795,200-acre conservation area was approved by Congress last December and includes the Applegate-Lassen and Nobles trails corridors and surrounding areas.

The bill, introduced by Nevada Sen. Richard Bryan and endorsed by OCTA, requires the BLM to develop a comprehensive resource management plan for the long-term protection and management of the area in northwestern Nevada. Long-range plans may include an interpretive center.

In an article for *Trail Talk*, the newsletter of the CA-NV Chapter, Chuck Dodd said the legislation caps 40 years of effort to preserve the historic region, starting with a recommendation from an Advisory Board of National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings and Monuments in 1960.

Special protection was later recommended by the National Park Service and, Dodd noted, OCTA member Tom Hunt has been working to get special protection for the trails in the Black Rock/High Rock area since the 1960s, at one point proposing an Emigrant Trail National Historical Monument.

The area, he said, "includes approximately 120 miles of the Applegate Trail in an area that remains almost unchanged from 1846, when the first wagons traveled through it."

Dodd added, "We have a lot of people to thank, and we should thank them."



Martin home.

Thursday found us west of Marysville on property owned by Art Pacha, which is near the trail Junction. Bob Nickels was able to run the Ground Penetrating Radar machine, but because of the cold weather, the other two devices refused to register information. They promised to return when we have nicer weather.

Each landowner was presented a Certificate of Appreciation, designed by Arleta Martin, thanking them for their efforts in preserving the sites and letting us do the investigations on their property. Jere Krakow and Dick Ackerman presented these certificates.

Steve took the information which we gathered to his Lincoln office. He informed us that it would be several months before the results of this investigation will be published.

Membership (continued from page 10)

by the NW chapter, is to have "indoor outings" at places where there might not be any Trail segments to see, walk, or photograph. The NW chapter has held two of these indoor outings this year in areas where more members can come and enjoy getting together with other chapter members for a potluck, diary readings, a guest speaker and just plain socializing.

Another problem of chapter involvement is that of non-participation. Not all members are concerned about attending all the meetings and outings and maybe the general membership meeting in the spring or the national convention in August is enough for them; throw in an outing or two and they are happy. Some members are armchair travelers and they are satisfied with getting the chapter newsletter, the *OJ* and the *NFP*, plus reading many wonderful trail-related books. There are those who want to contribute their energy and time getting involved with trail marking, chapter outings and meetings, as well as being board members or officers of their chapters, but don't know who to contact or how to even begin. Often members volunteer their time and efforts, but are not called on to participate or are often looked over. It seems to them that it is always the same group of people who do it all.

As Membership Chairman, I feel that this is an area that needs to be resolved and can be. You joined your local chapter for a reason and you have a level of participation that you feel comfortable with. If you want more from your chapter, if you want involvement, if you want to go trail marking, if you want to commit your time and energy as a board member or chapter officer, if you want to plan meetings and outings (whether indoors or out), by all means contact your chapter president or any of the officers. You might be surprised at how quickly they accept your offer to help, and if you are not acknowledged right away, communicate again, and again and again if necessary. Similarly, if you have ideas about outings, meeting or events that you would like to do, contact your chapter outings chair. Become involved.

Remember, outings and trail marking efforts are not by invitation only. They are important benefits of membership in OCTA. If you want to be more involved with your chapter find out what's going on, and when, and then.....go to it!

If You're Going To New York

"Heading West: Mapping the Territory," an exhibit illustrating the mapping of the American West, will be on display at the New York Public Library through May 19.

The exhibit includes some 175 maps, atlases, photographs and views from NYLP collections.

If You're Going To Wyoming

The Wyoming State Archaeologist's Office and the University of Wyoming Department of Anthropology will be conducting site excavations on Seminoe's Fort near Devil's Gate and Independence Rock in central Wyoming in June.

Persons interested in volunteering must work a minimum of two days. Contact Dr. Danny Walker for details at (307) 766-5565.

Saving Parran Flat Ruts On the Forty-Mile Desert

By Jim McClain

The scenario begins in the Fall of 1986. The location is on Nevada's Forty-Mile Desert, Carson Route, on a two-mile area of the Carson Sink called the Parran Flat, although the direct threat to the trail really had its cause several hundred miles to the east.

Due to heavy precipitation in the Great Salt Lake Basin in Utah, the Lake had risen to historic levels curtailing sodium production. Due to soaring prices a sort of "salt rush" began.



Evidence of wagon wheels have permanently etched the trail on the Parran Flats. — Photo by Jim McClain

As a result, one of the major sodium producers applied to the BLM for a use permit which, if granted, would have allowed construction of evaporation ponds on the Parran Flat, destroying the readily apparent trail traces (see accompanying photo).

Tom Hunt, then president of OCTA, was notified by a trail buff of the situation. He immediately jumped on the issue. The result -- BLM put the use permit on hold.

There followed months of discussion, for the most part couched in polite terms, between OCTA and the BLM. The major issue was that OCTA had to prove unequivocally that the traces on the Flat were caused by wagon traffic and not, as BLM suggested, by All-Terrain Vehicle's racing on the desert.

A field trip was arranged between BLM archeologists and OCTA trail experts. The key issue was to find artifacts to support the traces, such as ox horns, pottery shards, brass rifle butt plates, lead strips used to mold bullets and wagon wheel hubs. They were found and the issue was resolved.

OCTA had achieved its major responsibility. OCTA was lucky on this occasion, but as National Preservation Officer, Dick Ackerman said recently, "Every OCTA member is a preservation officer."

Incidentally, in 1987 the high level of water in Salt Lake receded, putting the sodium industry back into production. To my knowledge, the company that applied for the use permit on the Parran Flat has never canceled it with the BLM.

Fund Drive Nets \$13,725 For Trails Preservation

Through March 17, OCTA's 2001 Annual Fund Drive had raised \$13,725 for trail preservation, thanks to contributions from 187 individuals. Designated contributions included:

Annual Fund	\$5,655
Archaeology	\$ 265
COED	\$ 105
Education	\$ 220
Endowment	\$3,120
Graves & Sites	\$1,065
Preservation	\$1,310
Special Publications	\$1,535
Trail Mapping	\$ 450

The following contributors are in addition to those listed in the January issue of *News From The Plains*:

Laura Cole
Elmer Eberhardt
Marsha K. King
David K. Smoot
William Nolan
Chuck Martin
Mary Holden
Barbara Bane
Eva Allen

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Lois Dove
Georgette Goslovich
William Hill
Richard Herman
Gilbert Ward

Write Your Legislator!

(continued From Page 1)

Letters to Congressional representatives should not only urge support for the bill, but should also urge them to become co-sponsors of the legislation. As Bill and Jeanne Watson noted, "Even though the trails may not go through your state or Congressional district, the history of these western routes is taught in every school."

Among the impacts of the bills will be:

Oregon National Historic Trail: Add Oregon-bound emigrant routes from the Missouri River west across Nevada, including the Applegate Trail. Add Whitman Mission and other alternate routes in Oregon and Idaho.

California National Historic Trail: Add Cherokee, Yreka and Big Tree Routes and others, plus additional Missouri River routes.

Mormon-Pioneer Trail: Add routes and alternatives from Iowa to Utah used by those who followed after Brigham Young, including hand cart battalions and wagon trains.

Pony Express National Historic Trail: Add a major alternate route west from St. Joseph into Kansas.

Letters to your Congressmen and Senators should be sent c/o House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. 20515 or c/o U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C. 20510.

— Bill Martin

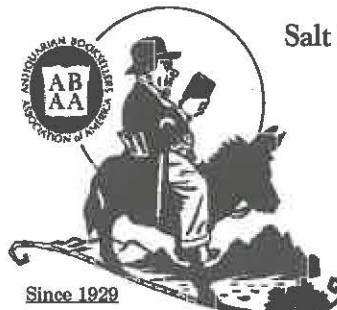
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The Reading Trail . . . by Lundy Carter



We sometimes make the mistake of thinking that childhood is simple and children are free from worry and stress. But that often is not the case, especially for nineteenth century children who took the road westward and certainly for the three girls and one boy who are the main characters in the books this issue and the challenges they faced. One is a native American. One is from Denmark. Another is an orphan. Yet another is adjusting to a stepfather. One has an enormous personal fear to overcome. Two have to find a way to survive in the worst of all possible trail conditions. One is going to Oregon, another to California. Yet another to Utah, and one is staying in Wyoming. Each book has its own unique format and each tells stories of triumph against the odds that will enthrall modern children. In addition, these books give interesting and thought-provoking insights into the emigrants' encounters with Native Americans, which hopefully will help undo some racial and ethnic stereotypes. All three books are suitable for ages nine through early adolescent.

Willow Chase, Kansas Territory, 1847 by Kathleen Duey (New York: Aladdin Paperbacks, Simon & Schuster, 1997; 143 pages) is a phenomenal book, part of the *American Diaries* series about girls from different times and places in American history. The story takes place in about a 36-hour time span, but never once does the action lag. We have probably all read terse diary entries, like "crossed the Platte River today, made 6 miles." We have wondered what many things transpired during those six miles. Our questions are many and our imaginations and previous study are all we have to fill in the details. This story takes us intimately into the mind and experiences of one 12-year-old girl. Willow Chase is scared to death of crossing the South Platte River, and she has reason to be. Her own father drowned the previous year. The crossing, indeed, turns out nearly fatal for her as well. Fortunately, one of her mother's acts of kindness to an Indian proves a lifesaver. There are many excellent features to this book. The characters are well developed and multi-dimensional and Duey incorporates a wealth of information about day-to-day camp routine and responsibilities into the story. Kids have no idea of just how much they are learning while caught up in a plot with plenty of adventure and suspense. Another real plus, Duey very naturally instills values -- she fights prejudice, builds and supports strong family relationships, and helps her character mature in ways that we hope our children, grandchildren and students will. I truly like this book a lot. I really could not resist it and I don't think your kids can either.

Dear Levi: Letters from the Overland Trail by Elvira Woodruff (illustrations by Beth Peck), (New York: Knopf Paperback, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1994 and 1998; 119 pages) is high adventure and touching emotion. The story is written as a series of letters from 12-year-old Austin to his younger brother Levi, who remains in the East. Austin so misses his brother that he writes frequently, filling him in on trail life and happenings. Austin is an orphan who is going to claim his dead father's land in Oregon. Kind people allow him to travel with them and treat him as a son. Unfortunately, heartbreak

and disaster happen often to this family and Austin. On the other hand, Austin is the kind of child that wins the heart of others in the wagon train and us as readers. Boys will especially enjoy his adventures and his friends. Woodruff uses a wide variety of adult types, some good, some bad, that give a fairly accurate cross-section of the personalities that made up wagon companies, so the characters are believable. The story tells of the dangers and difficulties of going west, but it also speaks affirmatively of the human spirit and its ability to face and overcome challenges. Furthermore, it deals frankly with some white people's abhorrence of Native Americans and their cruelty and the unfortunate results (although I thought a reference to a military massacre of four hundred Indians in 1851 quite unrealistic, even though we know such massacres later happened near Ash Hollow and at Sand Creek and Bear River). We trail buffs will notice some problems with distances and times from landmark to landmark, but the kids probably will not even care because they focus on the action, not the geography. This book is a good reading motivator; children will anxiously turn the pages to find out what happens next and they are bound to like the ending.

Kenneth Thomasma is well known for his many books featuring Native American children. He is an excellent storyteller, so I have read and used many of his books. They are definitely an asset to a classroom and to your bookshelves at home. *Doe Sia: Bannock Girl and the Handcart Pioneers* (Grand Rapids, MI and Jackson, WY: Baker Books and Grandview Publishing, 1999; 203 pages) is a gripping story of survival and an Indian girl's compassion and skill in helping an emigrant child stay alive and find her handcart family in the Wyoming snows of 1856. The Bannock girl, 10-year-old Doe Sia, is wonderfully authentic and her personality warms our brain. Her knowledge and survival skills instill in the reader a deep appreciation of Indian intelligence and ingenuity. During a trading encounter between a Bannock group and members of the Willie handcart company bound for Utah, Doe Sia and a Danish emigrant girl, Emma, strike up a friendship. Doc Sia later saves Emma's life when Emma becomes separated from the handcart company in Wyoming. Doe Sia builds a snow cave, gets meat, and finds the way back to the company -- all while the girls teeter between life and death. The girls' struggle to stay alive will fascinate readers. Thomasma's depiction of hypothermia and starvation are riveting and keep the reader wondering how they are ever going to make it out alive and what will happen before they do. Rusty Talbot's illustrations complement the text nicely. I must admit that I was disappointed in Thomasma's portrayal of Emma's Danish background and Mormon roots -- she wasn't as authentic as I had hoped and there were some errors in the handcart history. But as far as the story being compelling drama and the characters being endearing, the book is a great one for kids. It is also a book that teaches important factual survival techniques while being an exciting fictional read. If you cannot find this book in your library or bookstore, write to Grandview Publishing Company, Box 2863, Jackson, Wyoming 83001.

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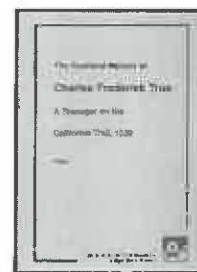
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