



JANUARY  
1994

# NEWS FROM THE PLAINS

THE OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

P.O. Box 1019, Independence, MO 64051-0519 Phone and FAX 816-252-2276

## SOUTHWEST CHAPTER SPONSORS SUCCESSFUL MAPPING WORKSHOP

Article and  
photos by  
Rose Ann  
Tompkins

With the small step of mapping 4.5 miles of the Beale Road, the Southwest Chapter has begun the long process of mapping hundreds of miles of trails. Though it is a drop in the bucket, attendees of the MET (Mapping Emigrant Trails) workshop felt a sense of accomplishment as the weekend ended and they could see their work on two USGS 7.5 minute maps. The attendees came from three states, many traveling long distances to attend.

Don Buck, one of the developers of OCTA's MET program, greeted his fifteen students on Saturday morning,

Oct. 30, 1993, in a classroom at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff. Jim Byrkit, OCTA member and a professor at NAU, saw to it that we had a room with large tables for the classroom part of the workshop. This allowed plenty of room as we tried to put Don's instructions together with the newly revised *Mapping Emigrant Trails* manual, diaries and the pertinent maps (both historical and modern).

With patience, Don went over the parts of the manual we would be using, and explained the methods being used by OCTA's mapping program. After

about two hours of classroom instruction, we headed for the field. In this case it was a portion of the Beale Road northeast of Flagstaff. The chilly morning gave way to a beautiful day of blue sky and mild temperatures as we began walking the ruts and marking the work map each person carried. This portion of the trail is in the cinder cones around

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*Below: Southwest Chapter members Marie Greene, Richard Greene and Marion Carter work on their maps following the field work on the Beale Road.*

*Next NFP  
deadline  
March 1, 1994*

### IN THIS ISSUE:

**1994 Convention:** Updates are on pages 6 & 7.

**Chapter News:** Located throughout this issue. See what we have been doing and what we will be doing.





Above: Don Buck, at left, gathers the group around to discuss ground features.

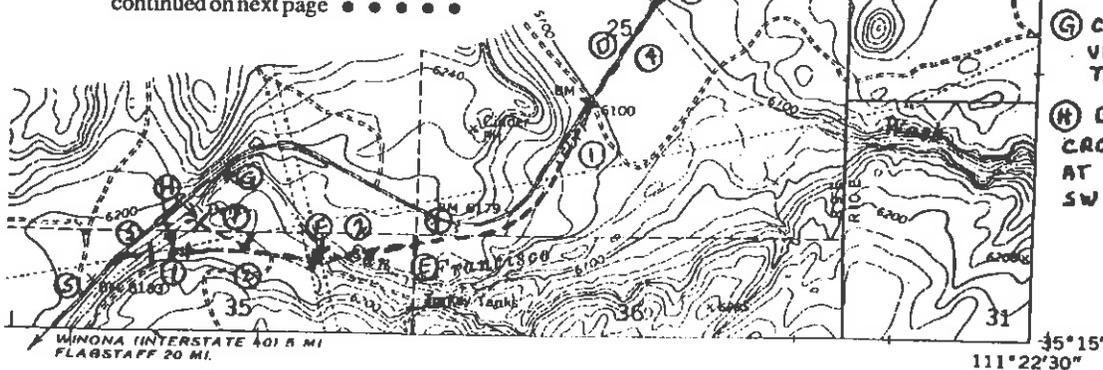
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the San Francisco Peaks, beginning in fairly open country and leading to the pine forest around the area known locally as Turkey Tanks.

A car shuttle was set up so the rut stompers did not have to retrace their steps. As the group finished the first leg of mapping and reached a ridge top, a lunch break was called. Coolers and bags appeared as we sat around enjoying the beautiful day and comparing notes. Evidence of native culture littered the ground in the form of broken pottery. Several native rock enclosures overlooked the vast plain to the east towards the Little Colorado River.

Following lunch, the mapping continued across the ridge and down the other side to a lovely valley. The last stretch of trail went into the pine forest and led to the crossing of the San Francisco Wash. The crossing is located between Turkey Tanks and an area that was known to diarists as Cosnino Caves. The caves are located in a wall of lava rock and are mostly covered now by the debris from highway construction. The tanks are located in the lava rock of the wash bed and were used by

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(A) TRACE FAINT HALFWAY ACROSS FIELD UNTIL GOOD SWALE EMERGES TO FENCE

(B) 3 INCH BRASS MONUMENTS ON TOP OF PIPE, CLOSE TO GROUND INDICATING LOCATION OF BEALE ROAD USUALLY AT 1/4 MILE INTERVALS

(C) BEALE ROAD BRASS CAP MONUMENTS INDICATE BEGINNING AND END OF THIS SWALE

(D) TRAVELERS OFTEN CAMPED IN THIS VALLEY.

(E) TURKEY TANKS WERE WELL KNOWN WATER SOURCE FOR TRAVELERS

(F) ROAD BUILT UP ON NORTH BANK OF WASH, ON SOUTH BANK OF WASH THERE ARE MULTIPLE RUTS.

(G) COSNINO CAVES VISITED BY TRAVELERS

(H) BEALE ROAD CROSSES WASH AT TWO SITES SW OF DAM

This portion of the Sunset Crater East Quad in Arizona was mapped during the recent MET workshop. The margin notes that go with this section of trail are also shown.

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travellers for watering their stock. The tanks appear much the same today. The crossing is evident still with road building on one side leading to the wash and several deep swales leading out the other side.

It was late afternoon by this time, and all headed back to Flagstaff to rest a bit before dinner. We met in the Mt. Elden room at the Woodlands Plaza Hotel for a very nice dinner, arranged by another NAU professor, Lynda Hatch. She was not able to be at the workshop, but did a wonderful job of helping with local arrangements. Dinner was followed by a business meeting and election of officers.

At 9 AM on Sunday morning, we met again at the classroom and spent the morning putting notes on the full-sized maps. As we compared maps and discussed the differences, Don helped with interpretation and coming to a consensus. Then the final maps were made, the ones that will be on file with OCTA.

The area mapped had a variety of trail classifications, along with various other features to be noted. This area of trail has been marked by the Coconino National Forest, but OCTA is putting its detailing on the trail with this mapping.

This core group can now move ahead on their own, showing others in the chapter how OCTA's mapping is done. Jim Byrkit is keeping the final maps on file for the chapter at present. The chapter already owns about half the 7.5 minute maps for the Beale Road in Arizona, however, other routes can be mapped.

Most of the Southwest trails have not been mapped or marked in any way and it is hoped that we can now use this core group to begin mapping in other places in Arizona, New Mexico, Texas and Oklahoma. Many years of work lay ahead, but it has begun!

Read more about the Southwest Chapter on page 18.

MET Workshop planned for Convention - see page 7.

## NOMINATIONS BEING ACCEPTED

The Nominating and Leadership Committee (Charles Martin, Jr., Chairman) reports that four members of OCTA's Board of Directors are to be elected at the annual meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah in August. Suggested candidates and nominations are now being accepted.

Terms expire in 1994 for Gregory Franzwa, Jacqueline Lewin, Kathleen Roubal and William Watson. Franzwa, Lewin and Watson have served two consecutive terms, and therefore are not eligible for reelection at this time. Kathleen Roubal is eligible for reelection, having served only one three year term.

According to OCTA's bylaws, all current members of OCTA are eligible to be nominated and/or to submit one or more suggestions for nomination. Also any current OCTA member may submit one or more written and signed nominations as long as each contains written and signed endorsements from three additional members.

Whether the suggested or endorsed nominee is new, a previous nominee, or an incumbent, the bylaws require that the following material be submitted to the Chairman of the Nominating and Leadership Committee before the nomination can be considered:

- ➔ A brief description of the person's trail qualifications and experience.
- ➔ A brief description of the person's activities.
- ➔ A statement of willingness to serve, if elected, signed by the nominee.

Deadline for receiving suggestions and nominations is April 1. Ballots will be mailed in May.

Nominations should be mailed to:

Charles Martin, Jr.  
640 SW 21st St.  
Richmond, IN 47374

phone - (317) 935-2778



## REVENUE ENHANCEMENT PLAN

By the time you receive this issue of the NFP you will have received a special mailing explaining the purpose and intent of the Revenue Enhancement Plan (REP). I hope that most of you have considered our request for funds and have responded accordingly. OCTA has accomplished a great deal during our first decade and we all realize that much remains to be done if we are to preserve our nation's emigrant trail heritage for future generations.

We are certainly not alone in our efforts to secure additional funding to support our organizational goals. A quick check of your weekly mail will easily verify that there are many worthy organizations that are finding it increasingly difficult to survive in today's environment. OCTA is fortunate to have such a dedicated and supportive membership that has enabled us to achieve such an enviable record of historic trail preservation.

Evidence of your past support abounds, but there is one particular example I would like to update you on. Last spring the Publication Committee announced the initiation of Emigrant Trails Historic Studies Series (ETHSS). It was our hope that these new publications could be financed entirely out of a revolving fund derived from member contributions, rather than relying upon the usual budgetary process. As of November 16th the Special Publication Fund had received in excess of \$5400.00 from member contributions. These results are quite spectacular and the Special Publication Fund is only one of the Funds that is available for your contributions!

It is only through your efforts and generous support of our fund raising drive that we can confidently look to the future. If you have already contributed to our fund raising effort, we can only say thank you. If you have not done so, please consider doing so.

Jim Budde, Treasurer



## MUSIC ANYONE ?

OCTA's own musicians are often heard at the conventions, and Baker City was no exception. This impromptu group is open to anyone with an musical instrument who enjoys playing the old trail tunes. Those present vary, but this Baker City gathering, shown above, included, from left to right: Olive Donaldson, Fred Trende, Mike Bateman, Bob Iverson, Al Mulder, Jim Renner, and Helen Hakanson. Doug Crary, also one of the group, took this photograph of his fellow musicians.

## BOARD MEETING NOTICE

The mid-year meeting of officers and directors will convene on Saturday, March 12, at Salt Lake City to consider all business of the association that comes before it. The one-day session will open at 8 a.m. at the Salt Lake Hilton, site of the August 1994 national convention.

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

## HELP! HELP!

A Valuable RECORDING is lost -  
Do YOU have one??

We were so overwhelmed by the great convention at BAKER CITY that our mike went dead in our video camera. CONSEQUENTLY we have terrific video - but no audio of the WEDNESDAY EVENING COCKTAIL performance of the two musical groups that performed, one group strolled the floor and the other group, OCTA's own string band, performed on the stage. Does any OCTA member wish to share (copy) their taping of that segment? We will gladly reward such a favor by exchanging blank tapes for the precious copy.

MAIL OR CALL (COLLECT)  
(916) 221-5521  
OLIVE DONALDSON  
PO BOX 493053  
REDDING, CA 96049



## From the Editor

Perhaps it is time to outline once again the procedures for submitting items to *News From the Plains*. Although this is not etched in stone, it makes my work much easier. (These suggestions do not apply to the *Overland Journal*.)

Please submit articles in one of two ways.

1. Typed - double spaced, with clean dark print, using a regular typewriter, dot matrix printer or laser printer. I can then scan with an optical character recognition program. This saves having to re-keystroke the item.

2. Computer disk - saved as an unformatted ASCII file. I use a Macintosh IIVX computer and the Aldus PageMaker 5.0 program for layout work.

Photographs reproduce best from a black and white print, but color prints are accepted. Please include a caption, identify persons, and a credit line for the photographer. Please state if you wish photographs returned. I cannot guarantee to do it, but I will try.

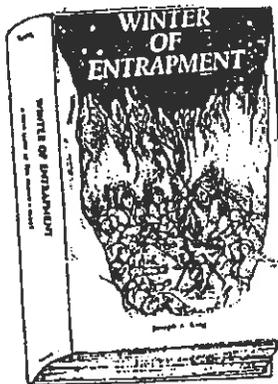
Send all items to me at the address below. Sending them to Headquarters in Independence only adds to the time involved to get them to me, plus there is an additional postage expense for OCTA.

Again, my thanks to all of you who send me items. This newsletter would not exist without you.

Rose Ann Tompkins, Editor  
1125 W. Mission Dr.  
Chandler, AZ 85224  
(602) 963-3565



Hawes Station ruins and trail, Douglas County, Nevada  
This is one of the prints in the exhibit explained below



365 pages, including 5 maps, 33 photos and other illustrations

## DONNER PARTY

At last, the true story of the Donner Party. Major focus on the Irish family of Brecons, all nine of whom survived the winter ordeal in the High Sierras.

Paperback - \$14.95  
Clothbound - \$29.95  
California residents add 8% sales taxes.  
Add \$2.50 mailing, 50¢ additional copies.

### WINTER OF ENTRAPMENT: A NEW LOOK AT THE DONNER PARTY by Joseph A. King

--"King's work is so exciting, so original, and so revealing that we have selected it for the cover story of *The Californians*" (Jul/Aug '92) - Michael Sherrell, Editor.

--"...the definitive work on the Donner Party" - historian Robert Ryal Miller.

--"...the first attempt in a generation to review the story of the doomed wagon train's 5-month, 2,000 mile journey" - Lynn Ludlow, *San Francisco Examiner*.

--"The author not only packs a punch, telling the story with much vigor, but also retains the authenticity of his research" - Michael McCone, Exec. Dir., California Historical Society.

K&K PUBLICATIONS, P.O. Box 564, Lafayette, CA 94549-0564, phone: (510) 934-8196

## Photography print exhibit of the California Emigrant trail

Nevada Historical Society Museum  
Reno, Nevada  
January 20 to May 30, 1994

In this exhibit, more than thirty large scale black and white photographs, along with text panels and found objects along the trail, depict the migration from Independence, Missouri to Sacramento, California. The Nevada and California section is most thoroughly represented. These photographs show undisturbed sections of trail as well as its path through contemporary civilization, both in the cities and rural areas of the American West. A public lecture by the photographer will be held at the Nevada Historical Society, 1650 N. Virginia St. Reno, on Friday, February 25 at 7:00 PM.

This six year project is the work of OCTA member Greg MacGregor, of Oakland, California.

## UPDATE ON CONVENTION SPEAKERS

The response to our "Call for Papers" for presentation before OCTA's 1994 convention at Salt Lake City this August has been a welcome surprise. It shows growing interest in our Utah event among western historians and trails buffs across the country.

Even before the new entries came in, Chairman Gregory Thompson had put together a program so good that no OCTA member could afford to miss it and hope to forgive her/him self. Now consider these latest speakers and titles:

"The Roughest Country You Ever Seen" — Carving a Mormon Wagon Road across the Colorado Plateau," William B. Smart, Utah writer and former editor and general manager, *Deseret News*.

"The Overland Stage West; or through Wildest Frontier from McDonald's to McDonald's," John M. Townley, Director, Great Basin Studies Center.

"Pushing It Too Far: The Drama and Drudgery of the Mormon Handcart Emigrants," Lyndia McDowell Carter, award-winning Utah history teacher and writer.

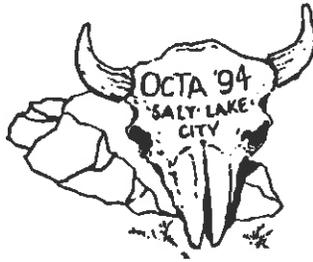
"The Cherokee Trail," original research on a fascinating and little known chapter of the western emigration by Dr. Jack E. Fletcher and Patricia K.A. Fletcher, as told by Pat.

"From California to Utah in 1848: Gold-Rich Saints and the Opening of the Mormon-Carson Emigrant Trail," Dr. Kenneth Owens, California State University, Sacramento.

"On the Heels of the Handcart Tragedy: Mormondom's Forgotten Wagon Trains," Melvin L. Bashore, Senior Librarian, LDS Historical Dept. and Utah writer and historian.

"What Women were Told: Culture in Mid-19th Century America," as reflected in the move west, by Barbara R. Sullivan, English teacher, Laramie County Community College.

These and other recent additions will enhance an already outstanding



program, prepared by Dr. Thompson, University of Utah Libraries, which includes the following first-time plenary papers by two of America's leading authorities:

"The Great Fur Trade Road, 1739-1843: Opening of the Oregon Trail," Dr. Fred R. Gowans, Brigham Young University history professor and noted historian on the fur trade; and

The Mormon Migrations of 1846-68 in Perspective," Dr. Stanley B. Kimball, OCTA founder, recognized Mormon historian and history professor, Southern Illinois University;

Plus original works on the Bartleson-Bidwell Trail, Mormon (Donner) Trail, Hastings Cutoff, Lansford Hastings, Spanish Trail, Pioneer Odometers, Trail North to Montana, Donner-Reed Excavations on the Salt Desert and others.

It all adds up to an outstanding program, one that will offer convention-goers many tough choices. My suggestion is to bring at least two other family members to cover the bases and take notes.

To make sure you don't miss anything, you should also plan to stay at the Salt Lake Hilton where all convention activities and events will be centered.

August in Salt Lake City is a tourist month and the hotel expects to be sold out long before then so make your reservations early. For the \$75 per night single or double occupancy rate, plus tax, you must identify yourself as an OCTA member.

To reserve your rooms in advance, write or call Salt Lake Hilton, 150 West 500 South, Salt Lake City, Utah 84101, 801-5323344 or 1-800-Hiltons.

And we'll see you on August 9-13 at the Crossroads of the West, near the shores of the Great Salt Lake.

Dave Bigler, Convention Chair

## AWARDS NOMINATIONS REQUESTED

To assure recognition for members and organizations who make exceptional contributions in furthering the objectives of the Association, nominations are requested for OCTA's Meritorious Achievement Award, Volunteer of the Year Award and National Certificates of Appreciation. These awards will be given at the August national convention in Salt Lake City.

The coveted **Meritorious Achievement Award**, OCTA's highest accolade, is presented for outstanding achievements of lasting significance in the service of the organization and trail preservation. Recipients may be individuals or organizations, such as agencies, cities, or private groups.

The **Volunteer of the Year Award** is presented for an outstanding contribution by an OCTA member.

**National Certificates of Appreciation** are given to those who have contributed significantly to the achievement of an OCTA goal.

Nominations for these awards should be sent in writing, prior to June 1, 1994, to Awards Chairman:

W. L. "Bud" Rusho

5299 Gurene Dr.

Salt Lake City, Utah 84117

## CALL FOR RAFFLE DONATIONS

Items to raffle at this year's convention are now requested by Utah Crossroads, sponsor of the 1994 gathering at Salt Lake City. The members and friends who donate make the Raffle an especially popular feature of OCTA conventions each year.

Those who wish to give items for the Raffle this year are requested to contact:

Jerry Dunton

2811 So. 2520 East

Salt Lake City, Utah 84109-1831

# MULTIPLE TRAILS KEY SALT LAKE '94 CONVENTION

Jedidiah S. Smith, John C. Fremont, Kit Carson, Bartleson/Bidwell, Hudspeth, Hastings/Donner-Reed, The Mormon Pioneers, just a few names emblazoned in the wondrous history of the Trans-Mississippi West. All passed through the Salt Lake Valley and left visible tracks or descriptions of places convention goers will see in 1994. Only St. Louis and the nearby departure points on the Mississippi can challenge the Great Salt Lake in terms of significant trails, but the nowhere has the blessing of a benign desert climate and population sparsity left so much for modern trail buffs and historians to see.

In addition, few areas have spawned so many dedicated individuals, fascinated with the lore and legend of our historic past. Speakers at the '94 convention have, without exception, been personally able to explore, identify and record, the routes and roads of our pioneers. Having been spared the ravages of fire, floods, and humidity, that have destroyed records and artifacts in so many locales, the Salt Lake Basin has retained a wealth of such material, compounded by a culture that enjoins its members to make and keep journals and revere history. As a consequence, the area has been a treasure trove for researchers and historians.

Convention goers will be amazed at how much will be seen, felt, and experienced, through the descriptions of the presenters and the physical remnants of trails and artifacts.

The Salt Lake Hilton, convention headquarters, is only a stroll away from Pioneer Park where the first of the Mormon wagon train made camp on entering the valley. It is but a few blocks, with available public transportation, to the world famed genealogical services of the LDS (Mormon) Church. Reservations have been made for conventioners to attend a rehearsal of the Tabernacle Choir and a performance on the following Sunday for those who wish to stay over the extra day. Arrangements can be made for scholars to avail themselves of the research facili-



*Above: Roy Tea, one of the presenters for the '94 OCTA Convention, surveys the junction of the Hastings Cutoff and the 49er trail from Delle Springs. This will be included in the trail tours.*

ties at the University of Utah and to secure workshop credits through Brigham Young University.

A host of social activities are scheduled including a pioneer barbecue near the "This Is The Place" monument in Emigration Canyon and an historic dedication of the recently completed Donner Springs Memorial at the base of famed Pilot Peak.

The convention will also mark the reissue of the long out of print, *West From Fort Bridger*, with new additions and footnotes by Will Bagley and

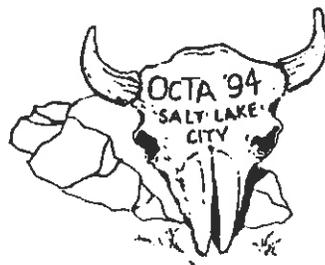
Harold Schindler, and the first printing of a special trail guide published by the Utah State University Press.

Mark your calendars now for August 9 - 14, 1994, and watch for full information coming in the April issue of *News From the Plains*.

Jack Shapiro

## MET WORKSHOP

OCTA's Mapping Committee, chaired by David Johnson, will conduct a mapping workshop on one afternoon at the convention. The workshop will focus on the use of the newly revised Mapping Emigrant Trails (MET) manual, problems mappers have encountered in the field, the use of handheld Global Positioning System (GPS), and how chapters can implement OCTA's MET program, especially with field mapping workshops like the one conducted by the Southwest Chapter at Flagstaff.



## Commemorative Coins



## End of the Oregon Trail

### Coins available in Silver and Bronze

Silver (1 oz.) \$17.00 each  
Bronze \$7.00 each

Prices include shipping and handling  
Make check payable to:  
DSD Sales  
Commemorative Coins  
P.O. Box 5042  
Oregon City, OR 97045-8042  
Please allow 4-6 weeks for delivery



Above: Bill Rupp (left) of Jackson, CA and Merrill Mattes visit after a Rotary luncheon in Littleton, CO, Merrill's hometown. They stand at the rear of the Rupp's trail buggy.  
photo by Shann Rupp

## TRAILS HEAD CHAPTER

## NATIONAL TRAILS PLANNING SEMINAR HELD IN KANSAS CITY AREA

Jim Budde

The Third National Conference on National Scenic and Historic Trails was held at Camp MO-KAN Conference Center in Independence, Missouri on October 24 to 27, 1993. "Connection 93" was the theme of this conference which was jointly sponsored by the Long Distance Trails Office of the National Park Service and the Trailshead Chapter of OCTA. Prior long distance conferences were held in Hartland, Wisconsin, in 1988 and Corbett, Oregon, in 1991.

The trails conference lasted three days and was attended by approximately 80 people. Conference attendees could be divided into three functional groupings of approximately the same size: the federal agencies charged with the administrative responsibility for the National Scenic and Historic Trails (NPS, BLM, USFS), representatives of specific scenic and historic trails (Appalachian, OCTA, Lewis and Clark, Mormon, etc.) and representatives of other trail related organizations (America Hiking Society, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, etc.).

The first day of the conference was devoted to field trips along the various historic trails in the region. Members of the Trailshead and Gateway Chapters hosted these all day trail treks. The remainder of the conference was taken up by workshops which focused on the concerns and problems the trail related organizations and governmental agencies are facing in our altered political and economic environment.

Some of the topics discussed were public and private trail funding, trail planning and administration, trail corridor protection, overlapping trails, trail anniversaries, the National Trails System Act and the need for building effective partnerships and coalitions.

Overall, this was a highly productive conference and OCTA's image as the preeminent historic trail organization has been significantly enhanced in no small part by the generous support of the volunteers from the Trailshead and Gateway Chapters.

Read more about the Trailshead Chapter on page 19.

## GATEWAY CHAPTER

## OUR PATH TO THE PAST

On a windy spring day, Ralph Thornton is drilling holes in a steel post, putting up a new marker at a spot along Highway 77 to show where the Hudspeith Cutoff intersected the California Trail more than 100 years ago.

Ralph is a Burley resident and a member of the Oregon-California Trails Association. He's devoted to preserving what's left of the historic trails in southeastern Idaho. With his wife, Janece, and others in the local chapter of the national association, he has traveled southeastern Idaho finding portions of the trail and marking them for future generations.

Ralph and Janece say they remember that as children they could see parts of the Oregon Trail quite clearly west of Burley. The trail was eventually plowed up for farmland. "You can't keep everything, but we're getting to the point where we have to preserve what we have left," says Janece.

"I think most of us are so interested because the trails are what settled the West and of course our area," she adds. "It's a part of our history, and a very important part because it was the beginning of our history. Anyone who likes history likes to find out what they can about the past, and especially their past."

Janece says it's hard for her to pick a favorite portion of the more than 400 miles of Oregon and California trails and cutoffs in Idaho because she likes them all. But for retired Elba resident Chuck Twitchell, a history buff, it's not as difficult.

"I've been on the Oregon Trail from the South Platte clear to The Dalles," says Chuck. Some of his favorite historic trails are right near home, where ruts from the California Trail can still be seen. Just outside Elba, behind Chuck's house, is a big meadow with a blue spring in the middle of it.

Blue gravel in the bottom of the spring still gives the water a beautiful blue hue. In diaries that Chuck has read, pioneers referred to it as The Big Blue

## HILEMANS FIND EMIGRANT ANCESTORS

"Lovett and Milbray Stephens crossed the plains by oxcart in 1851. As they were coming through the western mountains, they contracted mountain fever. When they arrived at The Dalles, they, with their small baby, were unable to go farther. So, spending their last \$10 for 10 pounds of flour, they decided to remain there 'til death overtook them or they should get well.



Spring. They wrote of camping at the spring for several days, resting themselves and letting their animals graze.

"Have you ever seen a prettier valley than this?" asks Chuck as he looks across the meadow. He points out where the California Trail came from Conner Creek and where ruts can still be seen running roughly parallel to the creek bed. Some travelers liked the area so much that they stayed. Some of Albion's earliest residents were travelers who came west on the trail.

One thing that many people might fail to realize is that the trail could be as much as a mile wide in many areas, says Chuck. "They had to go where there was food and water for their livestock." If grass had been grazed in one area, they had to spread out to find fresh pasture.

Chuck has a heavy cooking pot that his father found along a portion of the trail. What many people might fail to realize, he says, is how small some of the wagons were—about four feet across—and that many people walked most of the way instead of riding horses.

Chuck says that he has always been amazed that a horse could swim across a river while pulling a wagon. "That's always been a real feat."

The future of Idaho's historic trails is in good hands with people like Ralph and Janece Thornton, and Chuck Twitchell, who ensure that the area's remnants of the past are preserved for future generations.

*Taken from an article by Dianna Troyer in the June 1993 issue of Raft River.*

During this time, other people, who supposed the Stephens family would not recover, stole such belongings as they could use and burned the balance. Taking the sick family, they loaded them on a flatboat and pushed them adrift on the Columbia River, supposing death would soon overtake them.

Kind friends who had witnessed the act set out and overtook the family on the raft and saw them safely moored at the dock in Portland on the Willamette River. Their only belongings were the bed they were lying on and the tiny dead baby between them. They never knew where the child was buried." *(From the Sunday Oregonian, March 14, 1993)*

When Brock and Levida Hileman of Casper, WY attended the OCTA National Convention in Baker City, they had no idea the week would end with their making the acquaintance of heretofore unknown third cousins and would be given the above story of Brock's great-great grandparents. Prior to this time all Brock's family knew about Lovett and Milbray Stephens was that they had crossed the trail to Oregon from Missouri in 1851 and that relatives probably lived somewhere in Oregon. Brock and Levida visited the Baker City Museum and in the book, *Baker County History*, found the names and writeup of the pioneer family of Lovett Stephens. They also discovered that some of the Stephens descendants lived in Haines, eight miles from Baker City. They delayed their trip back to Casper in order to find these relatives. They were fortunate to meet three cousins and their families. These families also had done extensive genealogy research and had family records that included the above story of the 1851 emigrants. The Hilemans and the Stephens are now working together to tie together research and records of the two family branches. As a footnote to the above story, Lovett and Milbray had gotten married just a few months before their journey. At the time of their marriage Lovett was 16 and Milbray was 19. Lovett later was able to recover a violin that had been stolen from them at the time of the above incident.

# NEWS FROM HEADQUARTERS

Jeanne Miller, Headquarters Manager

## RETURN MONUMENT TO PARK

The November 1993 Roster has been mailed to all members. As is customary, names, addresses, and phone numbers are listed alphabetically, as well as names by city and state. In addition, OCTA directors, officers, chapter presidents, and committee chairmen are printed on the inside front cover.

Also you should have received our new OCTA catalog (1994) by now. In case you are wondering, the building pictured on the cover is OCTA's national headquarters. The original photo taken by Treasurer Jim Budde included the OCTA sign on the building, but the printing wasn't sharp enough to bring the sign up.

If you have not received either or both of these booklets, please let us know and we'll send them again.

\* \* \* \* \*

### ADDITIONS TO OCTA'S OFFERINGS TO OUR MEMBERS

Order using address, phone or fax on cover of newsletter

#### TOPOGRAPHICAL MAP OF THE ROAD

##### FROM MISSOURI TO OREGON

This set of seven topographical maps are from the field notes and journal of John C. Fremont and from notes made on the ground by his assistant, Charles Preuss. These maps chart the west as it was from the mouth of the Kansas River as it empties into the Missouri River in the present Kansas City, Missouri to the joining of the Wallah Wallah River into the Columbia, Printed in 7 sections.

Set, 7 maps                      \$20.00  
P&H                                      1.75

#### FRONTIERSMAN: Abner Blackburn's Narrative, by Will Bagley

In 1889, retired farmer, seafarer, and pioneer, Abner Blackburn (1827-1904) began an account of his youthful wandering across the North American continent. Historian Dale Morgan once wrote that Blackburn's story is a "Jewel beyond price . . ." Editor Will Bagley includes a careful annotation of Blackburn's life and times, plus an account of the strange fate of the manuscript, suppressed since its composition a century ago.

Hardback, 325 pages,  
14 illus, 3 maps                      \$27.50  
P&H                                      3.00

#### OCTA GOLF SHIRT

Adult sizes, M, L, XL

This pale blue shirt is short sleeved, collared with a placket opening and has an extra long shirt tail. The OCTA logo with "tenth anniversary" is on the heart pocket to commemorate OCTA's first decade.

Each shirt                              \$29.95  
P&H                                      2.00

Just a reminder:

**WHEN YOU RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP, PLEASE GIVE  
US YOUR 9 DIGIT ZIP CODE.**

Thanks

This commentary appeared in the *Centralia (WA) Chronicle* on October 6, 1993, written by OCTA member David James. His great-grandparents traveled over the Oregon Trail to Grand Mound, WA in 1852.

Oregon has been outstanding in its 150th anniversary commemorative events at Baker City, La Grande and Oregon City as well as at The Dalles on the Columbia River. Most historians of what has been called the greatest human migration in history say the trail ended at Oregon City. This is disputed by Washington State historians who call for recognition of the route northward from Portland to Tumwater as the "northern branch" of the Oregon Trail.

This call for recognition of the extension into Washington state isn't new. In 1910, the indefatigable pioneer, Ezra Meeker, set up Oregon Trail markers from the Columbia River to Tumwater. Meeker, then 76, spent the next 20 years of his remarkable long life working for national recognition of the 2,000 miles of "wagon ruts" from their beginning in Missouri.

In 1916, the Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution in Washington state set up Oregon Trail monuments dated 1844, based on the arrival of the Michael T. Simmons party at Tumwater, earlier called New Market. The monuments still standing at Centralia, Toledo, Jackson Prairie, Grand Mound and Tumwater were all dedicated with impressive ceremonies in 1916.

The monuments were made of solid sand-cast concrete, standing five feet high, two feet broad and one foot thick and bearing a bronze plate stating their purpose. These markers were a meaningful tribute to pioneers who had endure hardships through six months of slow meandering across prairies, through mountains and river gorges,

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hardships which claimed the lives of nearly 10 percent of the 300,000 who migrated between 1841 and the 1860s. The markers were placed as close to actual trails as possible after nearly 75 years had passed.

Only the monuments at Grand Mound, Jackson Prairie between Chehalis and Toledo and at Toledo still stand where they were placed 77 years ago. Tumwater has moved its marker once to accommodate street changes and Centralia's has been shifted three times since its first dedication beside the Skookumchuck River bridge on Harrison Street.

In 1927, the city moved the historic stone to a grassy plot at Harrison and Main called Keir Park in honor of W.B. "Billy" Keir, a popular Centralia businessman who had served as mayor and county commissioner.

Street widening to accommodate fast-growing traffic in 1968 forced the Oregon Trail monument off its perch again, this time to the entrance to Fort Borst Park, a good location historically. It stood where the public could see it.

About 15 years ago, for reasons unknown, the marker again was picked up and placed in front of the Centralia Parks and Recreation office adjacent to Fort Borst Park. Here it stands well preserved but also out of sight of park visitors.

Told it was in Fort Borst Park, I hunted from the entrance to the historic Borst House without finding it until told where it was hiding.

This monument is to the memory of such prominent Centralia pioneers as Judge Sidney S. Ford, city founder George Washington, Elkanah Mills, Robert Brown, George Waunch, who was a member of the original Simmons party, Joseph Borst, August Hilpert, James Cochran and many others.

Centralians have been strong supporters of pioneer history. The first recorded reunion of Oregon Trail families in this area was in Centralia in 1912.

Rochester became the home of the Southwest Washington Pioneers Association picnics for some 20 years. Excursion trains carried hundreds of

Centralians to share basket lunches and pioneer tales in Rochester's Lieuallen Grove.

It is time to move the Oregon Trail monument back into public view at

Borst Park. No community in Washington has better reasons to demonstrate its support of the memories associated with this Northern Branch of the Oregon Trail.

## DEATHS

### E. W. Puckett - Charter Member



E. W. Puckett, shown at left on an OCTA tour, died September 28, 1993 in Elizabethtown, KY.

He was quite an enthusiast about the west and was a charter member of OCTA, attending all conventions except the first. Always talking of his travels in the west, he prepared and gave a slide presentation about the Oregon Trail to the children at a local school. He was a quiet, unassuming man, but really "came to life" when he talked about his travels or readings about the west.

As a dedicated family man, he taught his three sons the value of hard work and of doing your best. His family all miss him very much.

Brenda (Mrs. David) Puckett

### John Biegler - Member of Two Chapters

We are saddened by the unexpected death of OCTA member John Biegler of Elko, Nevada. John died suddenly on October 21, 1993, in Elko. John and his widow, Corajean, have been active and enthusiastic members of Utah Crossroads and the California-Nevada-Hawaii chapters of OCTA. John is remembered for his pleasant personality, winning smile, and delightful sense of humor. I was privileged to know him only a few years but we became close friends through chapter activities and trail preservation work.

John's longtime, close friend, Paul Sawyer has given a donation

to Utah Crossroads in John's memory and the contribution will be placed in Crossroads' Trail Marking Fund. When I asked Corajean what we could do for her, she said, "Just keep working on the Trails." This we will do.

We share Paul Sawyer's tribute to John when he said, "The Association has lost an enthusiastic and dedicated friend of the Trails." John's trail work and his support of museums and trail sites preservation will long be remembered, enjoyed, and appreciated by members of OCTA. All who had the joy of associating with John will miss him.

Al Mulder

## SPRING TRAIL TREK

Publicity in the local papers and on local radio stations, as well as libraries and museums, brought many visitors to the Nebraska Chapter trail trek on Saturday, June 12, 1993. Over twenty-five people met at Brule, NE to continue following the trail through this area. Our "trail boss", Bob Berry, and Randy Brown of Douglas, WY, combined their talents and trail expertise to give us a most enjoyable day on the trail.

Our first stop was at Diamond Spring Station on the south side of the Platte River to see remnants of the foundation of what is thought to be the corral. From there, Bob and Randy pointed out the location of the Lower California Crossing. Bob noted the different reactions of the emigrants, some mentioning the ease of the crossing, others the hardships, depending on the condition of the river.

Our next stop was at California Hill, to hike up a portion of the trail and observe the ruts. From there, we viewed the Platte River Valley and direction of the trail as it approached California Hill. The thirteen car caravan, supplied with maps and materials, then angled along the trail ridge to approach Windlass Hill. Hikers left their cars to follow the remaining ridge trail and descend Windlass Hill into Ash Hollow. Dennis Shimmin, park superintendent, joined us for lunch and invited us to return this summer to attend a special presentation honoring the Sesquicentennial featuring an original play, written by Dennis.

After a tour of the museum, we met at the nearby grave of Rachel Pattison. Randy Brown, quoting from his article in the *Overland Journal*, Volume 8, Number 3, 1990, "Buried At Ash Hollow", told us how he deter-

mined that the two unidentified graves next to Rachel Pattison were those of J. C. Keenan and Sanford Johnson. We thank you, Randy, for traveling from Wyoming to make this trail trek a special one for the Nebraska Chapter.

The day closed with a hike on the Cedar Grove Road, the trail that led into Ash Hollow from the northeast, used by a minority of emigrants who had previously crossed the river at the forks and were now following the south side of the North Platte River. Our thanks go to Bob Berry for leading us on a most successful spring trail trek.

## TRAIL DAYS AT GRAND ISLAND

The Nebraska Chapter sponsored a program given by Jim Denney of Omaha at the Stuhr Museum living history trail days on Sunday, June 27. Jim combined a talk on trail history with a slide presentation that emphasized the contribution of state parks and museums along the trail. Because of the large attendance, many local residents are now aware of the Oregon-California Trails Association and are enthused about the national convention to be held in their city in 1995.

Helen E. Sundell

*Below: Jim Denney at the Stuhr Museum, Grand Island, NE*

## BEYOND THE OREGON TRAIL: HOMESTEADING IN NEBRASKA

An exhibit sponsored by the Historical Society of Douglas County March 13 through October 31, 1994

As the covered wagons of the 1850s crossed the grassy plains on their way to Oregon, some of the travelers ceased their journey to begin homesteading in the state with towering grass and spacious blue sky - NEBRASKA! The travelers brought with them a passion for adventure and their gifts of knowledge and creativity necessary for survival on the open prairie. These pioneers kept diaries describing day to day living experiences, which usually began with the construction of a house on the treeless Nebraska plains. Sod was plentiful, and the pioneers rose to the challenge of building homes, using only the earth for walls. Grasses were cleared from the land, a garden plot was plowed and vegetables were planted. As the pioneers awaited the harvest, abounding wild fruits and berries provided a tasteful supplement to their routine cornmeal diet. Families worked together discovering the new land, providing for themselves, establishing

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communities, and further supplying newcomers and travelers with necessary provisions.

In 1854, the Kansas-Nebraska Act opened Nebraska Territory for homesteading. One of the first communities established was Omaha City. Immediately, Omaha was recognized as one of the major outfitting posts west of the Mississippi River. The 1850s found Omaha teeming with excitement as the outfitting business boomed.

The exhibit begins with captivating personal accounts written by

overlanders as they crossed Nebraska on the Oregon Trail. Visitors may trace the original "ridges, rivers and ruts" through pictures and letters as they read of the excitement and despair, of the adventures and inconvenience experienced by the early settlers. Exhibit artifacts brought to the Nebraska territory supplement the story of women in the home through the display of quilts, cooking utensils, candle molds, kitchen gadgets and hand sewn family clothing. Books, slates, autographs, rhymes, poetry and music attest to the importance placed on education and cultural

refinement. Gardening tools and hand-hewn wooden items, both utilitarian and ornamental, show the craftsmanship brought by the men who carved a livelihood for themselves while providing for their families.

The pioneer exhibits are mounted in the restored Victorian Commanding Officer's home, The General Crook House Museum, located on the historic Fort Omaha Campus of Metropolitan Community College.

For additional information, contact: Historical Society of Douglas County (402) 455-9990



Above: Looking west from the Flagstaff Hill Interpretive Center, the Oregon Trail runs from the lower left of the picture towards the center right. Baker City, Oregon and the Powder River Valley are seen with the Elkhorn Mountains in the distance.

Photo by Rose Ann Tompkins

WYOMING CHAPTER

## SEPTEMBER 18 TREK REPORT

It was a cold and cloudy day..but the weather turned out beautiful. Even though there were only a dozen of us we all had a good and rewarding time.

The trek started at the Pathfinder Ranch and proceeded through the U.S. Bird Refuge. This area is unpassable in most years because of the higher waters of Pathfinder that make it an alkali mudbog. We could see the trail plainly in most of this area, now marked with OCTA trail markers. We continued past Buzzard Road on the trail to the Sweetwater Station location. We bypassed Independence Rock and picked up the trail on the other side of it. Here some of the members walked the deep swale of this portion of the trail.

We then went to Rattlesnake Pass where the story of Frederic Fulkerson's grave was presented. [See *News From the Plains*, Oct. 1993] After checking into the Sun Ranch we proceeded to the Martin's Cove monument along the old highway.

Lunch was tailgate style near the Turkey Track ranch. Confusion then occurred between our trail leaders. At this point the trail separates for a few miles. Lee [Underbrink] decided to take the high road and Randy [Brown] decided to take the low one. Lee's idea of high is that of altitude. Randy's idea of high is the road nearest the top of the map. Consequently we traveled the low altitude, high on the map branch, and almost got stuck in a boggy area.

As usual Randy's idea was best because we not only observed another H.G. Nickerson inscription but found a fantastic swale that we did not now about before. This swale is probably two city blocks long and is as large as the main Alcova irrigation ditch.

Jackie Ellis was investigating the long swale when she said "There's a rattler". You could tell Jackie is a sheepwoman because the rest of us would have jumped a mile and screamed the warning, and probably run. Those that saw the snake said it was a large one and gave sufficient warning.

We then traveled to the McIntosh Ranch and climbed into Castle Rock. The Sublet inscription details were read and all could now tell why it reminded the emigrants of a Castle.

The final stop was at the McIntosh ruts. We determined that there were actually seven distinct sets of ruts parallel to each other in the sandstone.

Although some of us had seen many of the sites on this trek, we still found some new ones, which is usually the case when we get out.

*Taken from the Oct. 1993 issue of the chapter newsletter.*

## MORE MARKING COMPLETED

Arco, Idaho, rancher Lewis Rothwell (left) and OCTA member Fred Dykes stand at the end of visible ruts of a segment of Goodale's Cutoff. This is in Champagne Creek valley east of Craters of the Moon National Monument. At Mr. Rothwell's invitation, and with his help, visible portions of Goodale's Cutoff were marked on his property and some adjacent BLM land on October 13.

The Cutoff ruts follow the highway route between Arco and Craters of the Moon for about 4 miles and then turn up Champagne Creek for another mile. With this effort and previous marking by the BLM, this portion of Goodale's Cutoff has been well defined. Also located at this time was the probable site of an emigrant grave. Fragments of old china are scattered on a collection of lava rocks. Emigrant diaries report burials in this area in 1854 and 1862. Forman in 1864 reported that here "some graves of white men were in good preservation piled with stones to keep the wolves from disinterring the bodies".

Fred Dykes



## TRAIL ASSOCIATION MEETS TO ERECT MARKERS

Members of the Idaho Chapter, Oregon-California Trails Association, met at Walcott Park near the Minidoka Dam in October to mark several portions of the Oregon Trail, Northside Alternate.

Although the main Oregon Trail followed the south side of the Snake River, some of the pioneers chose to cross the river near Fort Hall and travel a route which lead along the north side of the river. The two trails rejoined in the vicinity of Mountain Home.

Clair and Virginia Ricketts of Jerome, longtime pioneer trail enthusiasts, had maps of the area showing the course of the trail (sometimes estimated) all the way from American Falls to Mountain Home. Spread out in the

park, the maps gave the members a preview of where they would be going.

One section of the trail marked by the members is clearly visible just west of where the road to the park crosses the main Minidoka Project canal. It leads over the lava rock deposits to the west and back down onto the river. Marks on the rocks, worn by the passage of many steel wagon wheels, can be seen frequently as one walks the trail.

Other segments of the trail between Walcott Park and the Power County line were also marked as members followed it along the north side of the reservoir. East of that point much of the trail has been lost to agricultural development.

*Taken from an article written by chapter member Ralph Maughan, which appeared in the October 10, 1993 issue of South Idaho Press.*

### NEWS FROM THE PLAINS

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Rose Ann Tompkins, Editor

**ONE ENCHANTED EVENING**

For Utah Crossroads members, September is an enchanting time. Autumn in Utah is breathtakingly splendid, and September is when Crossroads has its traditional barbecue dinner meeting and social. The evening of September 25 found approximately 135 Crossroads members and guests at Washington Terrace Park in Parley's Canyon near Salt Lake City (and awfully close to some famous trails, I might add). We were surrounded by the brilliant colors of autumn leaves in the beautiful Wasatch Mountains. The air was crisp but pleasant under the pavilion shelter.

While most of us mingled in pleasant conversation, the dedicated few were slaving away over preparation of the excellent food. Strains of bluegrass music filled the air as our famous and spontaneous trail band blended their talents in lively pre-dinner singing and strumming.

Then we did what OCTA members do best, we formed lines and loaded our plates to overflowing with food.

New friends and old managed to do a lot more visiting and getting acquainted with their mouths full and their stomachs filling as twilight began to settle around the pavilion.

Before we could get to the main event of Fred Gowans, Al Mulder welcomed us and shared his thoughts and feelings for the special times to come this year. Roy Tea got us set for the Mormon Trail—Fort Bridger to Salt Lake 4-wheel drive field trip to be led by LaMar Berrett that was coming up in October (which unfortunately had to be cancelled later because of bad weather and snow on the trail in Wyoming). Dave Bigler spoke about Convention plans, firing us up to produce one heck of a great convention at Salt Lake City in '94. Vern Gorzitze, wearing his Donner Spring Yacht Club commodore's T-shirt, gave an update regarding the preservation project out at Pilot Peak to protect Donner Spring and make it an informative and beautiful historic site. Fred Roe, the recently appointed COED chairman, shared his giant enthusiasm for what Utah Crossroads can contribute to the COED program with the enormous number of trail journals and reminiscences available here.

As darkness deepened, the speaker of the evening came across the room and up to the microphone. Fred Gowans is no stranger to western historians and especially to Crossroads. We are enchanted every time we hear him speak and beg to hear more history from him in his delightful yarn-spinning style. His topic was the "Fur Trade Origins of the Oregon Trail: Part II—The American Fur Trade and Rendezvous." He had started the Oregon Trail topic

for us back in January and took us up to 1811. Now we traveled with Fred along that spider web of paths created by the fur traders, trappers and mountain men from 1811 to 1840 that became the emigrants' Oregon Trail. These were years of exploration, competition, rivalries, dangers, and rendezvous with the opening up the great fur trade road. With Fred talking no one noticed that it was beginning to get cold (like it can in the mountains in the fall of the year). We sat and listened, fascinated. Dr. Gowans has written a forthcoming book with maps to document the fur trade beginnings of the Oregon Trail from 1739 to 1840. He is making the book available at the Salt Lake Convention by preordering. Dr. Gowans is the foremost authority on the subject; don't miss this book!

The final event of the evening was a special honoring of Al Mulder for all his dedicated service to Crossroads. We recognize and honor his strength in leadership and dedication as President. He has made Crossroads a fantastic organization. George Ivory presented him with a copy of "West from Fort Bridger" as a token of our esteem and gratitude. Al for once was almost speechless.

With everything now finished, people realized they were cold. A speedy cleanup and a rush to car heaters completed our enchanted evening of food, fun, facts, and friendship.

Lyndia Carter

**UPCOMING CHAPTER EVENTS**

LaMar Berrett's lecture on the Mormon Trail, The Fort Bridger to Salt Lake Segment, is scheduled for the January 20, 1994, general membership meeting.

The field trip to be led by LaMar Berrett has been rescheduled for May 22-23, 1994, over the route he will be speaking about in January. Weather ought to be better then.

Salt Lake City OCTA Convention - August 1994! We're busy planning and preparing fantastic activities, speakers, field trips, and social events. Plan to join us!



*Above: Al Mulder expresses his delight in receiving his gift at the September meeting. On the left is George Ivory.*

## FRED GOWANS OPENS MINDS TO THE OPENING OF THE OREGON TRAIL

By Lyndia Carter



Above: Hastings Cutoff marker post near Donner-Reed Pass.

Photo by Al Mulder

### TRAIL MARKING ON HASTINGS CUTOFF

Marking the Hastings Cutoff began this fall with placement of carsonite posts at Donner-Reed Pass and west of Hastings Pass. Efforts to mark the trail from Timpie Springs to Bidwell Pass will continue until all accessible sections of the trail have been identified, mapped and marked. A Cooperative Management Agreement between OCTA and the Salt Lake District BLM establishes mutual support to map and mark the Hastings Cutoff and Hensley's Salt Lake Cutoff Trails on public land managed by the BLM in Utah. Mike Duwe, Rocky Mountain Region Long Distance Trails Coordinator of the NPS, recently joined chapter members on a trail marking outing and visit to Donner Spring.

Dr. Fred Gowans completed the history of the fur trade origins of the Oregon Trail during the dinner meeting of September 25, 1993. Dr. Gowans had started the history for Crossroads last January and the members had been looking forward to continuing the saga. For this lecture, the year 1811 was the beginning point with 1840 being the end of the era. The following is a summary of his lecture.

The spring of 1811 saw Wilson Price Hunt in St. Louis preparing to head west to open the fur trade for businessman John Jacob Astor. Manuel Lisa had already been involved with fur trade on the upper Missouri for years and had founded the St. Louis Missouri Fur Company in 1809. Lisa's partner Andrew Henry had remained in the mountains at Fort Henry on the Snake River in 1810 when others had left because of troubles with the Blackfeet Indians. Because Lisa did not know what had happened to his partner, he decided to go looking for him. Also Lisa feared that Hunt would cut into his territory on the upper Missouri although Hunt's plans were to go to the Columbia and cut into British territory.

Therefore, in the spring of 1811 a river race began between Hunt and Lisa, but finally Hunt convinced Lisa he was in fact going to the Columbia country. On the Missouri River, Hunt met Lisa's men Hoback, Robinson, and Reznor who had spent the winter with Andrew Henry. These three men told Hunt about Henry and agreed to guide Hunt's Overland Astorians exactly the way they had just come across Wyoming to avoid the dangerous Blackfeet on the upper Missouri. The route took them along the Hoback River, the Snake River, through Teton Pass, and to Pierre's Hole in Idaho.

The Overland Astorians tried to float the Snake River with little success. They had an extremely difficult time across Idaho and Oregon, but at last made it to Fort Astoria. Robinson, Hoback, and Reznor had gotten them to Fort Henry, but they left the Astorians at the Snake River, taking two of Hunt's

men with them. All five were dead by 1813. Hunt was not a great leader of men and had little control. He had a tough time making tough decisions, although he was honest, a competent clerk, and could get along all right.

Meanwhile, Andrew Henry had met Lisa's group on the Missouri in the summer of 1811. Lisa and Henry decided it was too dangerous to continue trade on the upper Missouri and floated back to St. Louis. The British completely controlled the area because they successfully kept the Blackfeet stirred up against the Americans.

Because it was necessary for the Astorians to report back to Astor, recruit more men, and obtain supplies, Robert Stuart led a trek back across the continent from Fort Astoria. While he was gone, the War of 1812 erupted and Fort Astoria was taken over by the British and Astor's employees there became employees of the British Northwest Company with the fort renamed Fort George. The British used the fort until the Hudson Bay Company built Fort Vancouver on the Columbia River.

The fur trade was a business war between the British and Americans with the Indians along the upper Missouri aligned with the British, while the Americans were successfully trading with Indians along the lower Missouri. Competition was keen. By 1818 hostilities of the War of 1812 were over and in 1820 the Americans again tried trading along the upper Missouri.

In 1821 Ashley in St. Louis began sending American traders to the Indians, with the whites trading for furs, not trapping, using the Missouri River for transport, and setting up trading posts. The Indians would do the trapping and bring the furs to the American posts to trade. The Indians had acquired the skill of trapping with steel traps from the British and the Americans capitalized on this skill.

By 1821 Andrew Henry was the expert on fur trading out west. Henry's good friend was William Ashley, not

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an outdoorsman but a good businessman who had been his partner in the lead mines. In the winter of 1821-22, the two friends formed the Henry-Ashley Fur Company. In the spring of 1822, the famous advertisement appeared and men like Jed Smith, Jim Bridger, Jim Clyman, Tom Fitzpatrick, Hugh Glass, Potts, and Vasquez answered and were hired to open up the trade with the Indians. They were not hired as trappers or mountain men; that would come later. A series of misfortunes would soon open a whole new concept of the fur trade.

1822 was a year of failures. A cap-sized boat left the company heavily in debt. Henry and the men remained in the field trying to succeed. In the spring of 1823, Ashley was bringing them supplies when he stopped to buy horses at an Arikara village and was attacked. Ashley sought military aid and the Arikara were punished. Unfortunately, this sidetracked the company from business and by the end of 1823, they still had no pelts.

The trappers decided to go West and winter with friendly Crow Indians. Henry took half of the company men north to the mouth of the Yellowstone and Bighorn Rivers. The famous Hugh Glass experience happened to members of this group. Twenty-three year old Jed Smith led the other group overland through Wyoming to the Wind River country. Both groups were highly successful. The trapping was good and they traded with the Crow. Jed Smith learned from the Crow of a pass that would take them to the Green River country which was abundant in fur and empty of rival companies.

In February of 1824, Smith tried to lead a group over Wind River Pass and failed. They dragged themselves back and learned of another pass to the south. In March of 1824, Jed Smith and his men crossed South Pass. They "rediscovered" South Pass since Robert Stuart first used it in late 1811. Smith spread the word that it would be suitable for wagon travel, as a pass that could permit people and wagons to go West.

By Smith crossing the Continental Divide, a whole new era was opened—the era of the Mountain Men. Major changes occurred: 1) white men were trapping and trading, replacing the reliance on Indians; 2) no river road was available to take furs out and supplies in so a fur caravan was needed; 3) rendezvous replaced forts for trading; 4) Mountain Men were free to trap wherever they wanted, living in the mountains and opening vast territory and then would sell to the company.

The rendezvous era lasted from 1824 to 1840. The men lived all year in the mountains, trapping in the fall and spring, spending December through March in winter quarters for companionship, protection, and preparation. Rendezvous occupied the summer. Every year a fur caravan came from St. Louis bringing supplies and picking up the furs. In 1825 rendezvous lasted one day and the group there was very small. In 1830, rendezvous was two and one half months long with a huge group of trappers and Indians there. A whole new way of life and doing business was born all because Ashley and Henry had failed on the upper Missouri.

The rendezvous period lasted fifteen years from the first one at Rendezvous Creek on Henry's Fork of the Green River in 1825 to the last one at Daniels, Wyoming, near Pinedale in 1840. The Mountain Men have been rather glorified and romanticized with colorful, often incorrect, legends, but it was a time of great adventure and exploration. These men knew the West well; they were the pathfinders who opened the great fur trade road. This road became the well-defined Oregon Trail of the 1840s, a road made clear by trapper exploration and the ruts of supply caravans.

Back to the saga, Jed Smith crossed South Pass in 1824, dividing his men and directing them to cache their furs and to plan to meet in the summer. It was the germ of plans for the 1825 rendezvous. The men spent the spring trapping and then Fitzpatrick returned to St. Louis to get Ashley to bring back supplies in 1825. Fitzpatrick experienced one of the great mountain man adventures and became a legend.

Ashley agreed to bring in supplies, but was naive about the wilderness. He left St. Louis in November of 1824 and ended up around Denver, then headed north and ended up in the spring of 1825 close to Green River, Wyoming. He floated down the Green River, caching supplies as he went. He found and marked a good spot for the rendezvous, but still kept floating down the Green River to the White River. There he found a mountain man's camp site. He walked back up the Green to the Duchesne River, then up the Strawberry River to Red Creek (all in Utah). He met Etienne Provo, whose camp he'd found, and talked him into going back for the supplies. Ashley went back to the rendezvous site, but Provo decided to trap the area of the Utes and was attacked by Indians along the Jordan River in Salt Lake Valley.

Word of rendezvous had spread through the mountains and on June 30, 1825, all of the men were meeting at the chosen site. The mosquitoes were so bad there, rendezvous was moved twenty miles back up the river to the Burnt Fork-McKinnon area of Wyoming. Ashley traded supplies to the men for their furs and left the next day, going north to Riverton, Wyoming, to the Bighorn, and then to the Missouri. After 1825, however, all fur and supply caravans would follow the South Pass route, which became the Oregon Trail.

The next three rendezvous were in Utah at Cache Valley and Bear Lake, but the beaver were gone from Utah by 1828. All subsequent rendezvous were held mostly in western Wyoming with a few in eastern Idaho. (In 1831 there was no rendezvous because supplies did not arrive.) The last rendezvous was in 1840. It was a very small affair. There was no demand for beaver and the Mountain Men were a thing of the past. But those fifteen years of exploration and supply-fur caravans had opened a road to the West that would soon be a thoroughfare for covered wagons—the great Oregon Trail.

**NEW OFFICERS**

President  
 Sheri Lee  
 Vice President  
 Jim Carter  
 Secretary  
 Patricia Etter  
 Treasurer  
 Harland Tompkins

**NEW EDITORS** of the chapter newsletter, *Desert Tracks*, are Ruth and Jack Root.

**1994 COMING EVENTS**

**FEBRUARY 26**  
 Butterfield Trail outing in central Arizona. Contact person: Doyle Reed (916) 753-2759

**MARCH 19**  
 Trails Symposium, Las Cruces, New Mexico. Contact persons: Jim Carter (505) 522-1189 or Harland Tompkins (602) 963-3565

**MID-APRIL**  
 Gila Trail outing east of Safford, Arizona. Contact person: Betty Lee (602) 428-1196

**ACTIVITIES CALENDAR - 1994**

**APRIL 16-17**  
 Chapter meeting celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Chapter. San Jose area.

**APRIL 23**  
 Johnson's Ranch - Travel by car caravan to Johnson Ranch east of Wheatland. Contact person: Jack Steed (916) 922-7038

**JUNE 4-5**  
 Forty Mile Desert - Highlights will include Boiling Springs and trail traces on the Truckee Route and Salt Creek Crossing, Parran Flat, and the sand dunes on the Carson Route. Contact person: Jim McClain (916) 477-7750.

**JUNE 10-12**  
 Yreka Trail - Contact person: Richard Silva (916) 842-3702.

**SEPTEMBER 17-18**  
 Big Trees Route - Locating and mapping trip. Contact person: Dave Johnson (408) 274-3718.

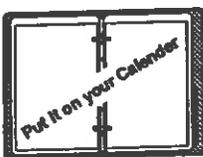
**SEPTEMBER 24-25**  
 Stephens-Townsend-Murphy Party - Dedication to honor Elisha Stephens. Contact person: Jim Rose (916) 265-3754.

BACK, BY POPULAR DEMAND !!!

**TRAILS SYMPOSIUM**

SWOCTA's  
 sometimes  
 annual

Hosted by the  
 Diana Ann County  
 Historical Society





March 19, 1994

at the  
**Good Samaritan Village,**  
 Las Cruces, New Mexico




*Make  
 Travel  
 Plans*




Next  
**NFP**  
 deadline  
*March 1, 1994*

## JIM FISHER SPEAKS TO CHAPTER

On September 11, 1993, sixty-six individuals gathered at the Kansas City Missouri Plaza Library to hear James Fisher speak of his recent experiences along the Oregon Trail.

Fisher and Don Ipock, a photographer for the *Kansas City Star*, traveled the Oregon Trail in the spring of 1993. Fisher's stories and Ipock's accompanying photographs appeared serially in the *Star* and then were printed altogether as one tabloid after the serial printings were completed.

At this chapter sponsored meeting, Fisher related some of his experiences and impressions involved in the project. Around March 26th, management of the *Star* decided on the concept of following the Oregon Trail during the sesquicentennial year of the Oregon Trail. Fisher and Ipock were given one week to research the trail and to make technical arrangements, including renting a van. The writer-photographer team traveled the trail early in April before tourists trekked the trail during this sesquicentennial year, so articles could appear in the *Star* in May. Upon returning to Kansas City, thirty days of writing, producing photographs and editing occurred before the series was completed.

The individual stories and then the resulting compilation of a tabloid proved phenomenally successful. The tabloid has been requested from all over the country. Fisher feels that the articles have been so well received because he could write the history of the Oregon Trail by telling the stories of real people, both living and dead. He feels that this is the way that history can come alive to most people, as the readers can see that these people are not unlike themselves.

Fisher found OCTA headquarters to be a valuable resource for whom to

contact and to interview along the trail. He became enthralled with the new experiences and insights of what became an all-consuming task. He had not known of the National Frontier Trails Center in Independence, MO, until he began to research. Topeka was an eye-opener. Many do not know the founding of Topeka resulted from the existence of the trail. Fisher found that individuals who went to Oregon on the trail as late as 1911, in a wagon or car, are considered trail pioneers by present-day Oregonians. Fisher had not known of much between Topeka, KS, and Portland, OR; but found that the peoples in the areas along the trail possess the down-to-earth values that he admires.

Due to Fisher's exposure to the trail, he has done a couple of pieces on the Oregon Trail for the MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour. The first one showed a modern-day wagon train in western Wyoming. Around the first of September, Fisher flew to Wyoming to do a second piece. Bob and Karen Rennells, longtime OCTA members, took Fisher across the Sublette Cutoff at night. In the past three years, the Rennells have taken 47 individuals across the Cutoff; but never at night. The Newshour piece highlights the grave of Lucinda B. Wright which is about 100 feet from the Oregon Trail's Sublette Cutoff near La Barge, Wyoming. Fisher hopes to do a third Newshour piece on the Barlow Road, the last 100 miles of the trail in Oregon, which is very mountainous and very rough for trekking by wagon. To avoid tipping in this rough terrain, wagons had to go straight up and straight down the mountains.

The Fisher stories have raised an awareness and interest in the Oregon Trail, both locally and throughout the country. Due to the distribution of the tabloid, a Florida man called Fisher to say that he thinks that Lucinda B. Wright, who died along the trail in 1855, is a lady from Clay County, Missouri. Fisher intends to look at the Missouri census of 1850 to see whether he can verify this.

Fisher commends the state of Oregon for recognizing the potential of the sesquicentennial as a significant

draw for tourists. The well-organized promotions of Oregon to tourists has brought \$1 billion dollars into the Oregon economy this year. Fisher wishes that all other states along the Oregon Trail would recognize the value of the economic impact of the trail tourist.

Fisher enjoyed looking at the values displayed by the trail pioneers of a bygone era. While he admires this pioneering courage and fortitude, he takes exception with those who say that modern Americans are not as tough as the pioneers once were. Fisher sees both past and present Americans often have displayed and continue to display an enduring toughness.

Due to the quality of the *Star* serials and the resulting tabloid, OCTA, at the national convention in August, announced that the *Star* would receive one of OCTA's national media awards for promotion of historic trails.

For those who have the time to travel the Oregon Trail, Fisher recommends the allowance of a month to adequately obtain an overview of all the major elements along the trail. He sees the charm of the Oregon Trail as a combination of both the wonderful scenery and the down-to-earthness of the peoples living along the trail.

*Taken from the September, 1993 issue of the chapter newsletter.*

1994  
OCTA Convention  
Salt Lake City, Utah

1995  
Grand Island,  
Nebraska

1996  
Elko, Nevada

1997  
Pocatello, Idaho