

# News from the Plains



Volume XI, No. 1

Newsletter of the Oregon-California Trails Association

January 1997

## On the Trail of The Donner Party - 150 Years Later

*(Readers of the Reno, Nev., Gazette-Journal have had a front row seat on history during the 150th anniversary of the legendary Donner Party tragedy. Since last May, three days a week, veteran reporter Frank Mullen Jr. has been providing a detailed accounting of the Party's adventures. The final Donner Party encampment of the winter of 1846-47 was just 35 miles up Interstate 80 from present day Reno. Every day, thousands of travelers pass within a few yards of the Donner Party Memorial. Mullen's efforts have brought to life the people it remembers. In this special report for News From The Plains, Mullen tells how the series came to be and the impact it has had on him and on his readers.)*



*Left to right, Graphic Artist Mark Bartley, Photographer Marilyn Newton and Reporter Frank Mullen with some of the 80 books they have used in preparing the Donner Party series for the Reno Gazette-Journal.*

by Frank Mullen Jr.

I have become unstuck in time.

Writing a year-long Sesquicentennial series on the Donner Party with episodes thrice-weekly in the Reno Gazette-Journal, took its toll.

Tamsen Donner, James F. Reed, Charles Stanton, Patrick Br en, William Eddy, Lewis Keseberg, Mary Graves, Luis the Miwok Indian and other ghosts invade my dreams. When I travel the Nevada desert or hike the Sierra paths between Reno and the high camps, wagon ruts and rust on the rocks where iron rubbed remind me they were here.

When I walk desert traces and visit Great Basin campsite, I half expect to see the pioneers pulling over the next pass. When I visit Donner Lake State Park in the snow, my eyes search for bloody footprints and the debris of wagons, long turned to dust.

The unfortunate emigrants are as close as a Ponderosa pine; their suffering as clear as the waters of Donner Lake.

It didn't start that way.

In 1995, after doing several history-related stories for the Gazette-Journal, I mentioned to the top editors that the 150th anniversary of the Donners' walk across the continent was coming up. They asked me what we could do.

"I think it's possible to do a day-by-day account of their journey from the time they jumped off into the wilderness at Independence, Mo., May 12 to April of the next year when Keseberg, the last survivor, was brought off the hill," I told them.

"We can run it like an ongoing news story, in real time," I said. In 150 years, I reasoned, all details of the emigrants' trek must be carved

*See "Unstuck In Time," Page 11*

## From the Editor's Desk . . .

The challenge in front of me as the new Editor of *News from the Plains* is daunting. In the first place, I have to fill the scholarly shoes of Will Bagley, whose work in these pages and elsewhere has been much admired. More important, I feel a



tremendous sense of responsibility to the membership of OCTA.

First, introductions are in order. I am the product of two of the most noteworthy migrations in American history. My great-great-grandfather was part of the first Mormon settlement Salt Lake City in 1847. My father's family was chased westward out of the Oklahoma-Nebraska Dust Bowl in the 1930s,

settling in California's San Joaquin Valley. Those roots gave me an appreciation for western history and the spirit of emigration that built the West. It's an appreciation renewed every time I travel over the Sierra Nevada and wonder at the challenges faced by wagon trains 150 years ago.

I tell you that so you will know that I do have a sense of the history that OCTA represents. Professionally, I come to this assignment with three decades of journalism and writing behind me (and hopefully more in front of me). I've been a writer of one sort or another for 30 years and, while I don't bring Will Bagley's erudition to this publication, most of the time I can

write comprehensible sentences. I probably know less about trails than 95 percent of my readers, but I think I know what people want to read about.

I approach *News from the Plains* sort of the way the editor of a community newspaper would. OCTA members are the community and this is your newspaper. I'm going to give priority to news about what's going on in OCTA, along with a healthy portion of news about people and events that are important to OCTA members.

I can't do that alone, of course. I'll need your help. I work for you, the members of OCTA. If you see something I need to do, let me know about it. These pages are your pages. They are open to you. Drop me a note. Suggest a story. Tell me if I made a mistake. Let me know what you like or don't like.

There are going to be a lot of fun things happening over the next few years. We're just wrapping up the 150th anniversary of the Donner Party tragedy. In 1997, it's 150 years for the Mormon Trail and just around the corner is the 150th anniversary of the start of the California Gold Rush.

There's going to be a lot going on and OCTA members will be right in the thick of it. And hopefully, with your help, *News from the Plains* will be your ticket to increasing your enjoyment of the festivities.

I think we're off to a good start with this issue. There's a lot more ahead. Read, enjoy and let me know what we can do to make it better for you.

—Bill Martin

### Submission Guidelines

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

Material is due 30 days prior to publication dates.  
Material is best sent either on a computer disk (in DOS or text format)  
but make sure you include a hard copy.  
Material can also be sent via e-mail.

Pictures are welcome and appreciated but cannot always be returned.

If you have any questions, please call Editor Bill Martin at (702) 747-2860 or e-mail him at [words@worldnet.att.net](mailto:words@worldnet.att.net).  
**Next Deadline Is March 1, 1997**

### NEWS FROM THE PLAINS

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## From The President . . .

Winter has come and a white mantle of silence has settled over much of the trail. However, those in the southwest find this a particularly pleasant time on the trails. While those of us in the north spend the winter weeks dreaming and reading about the trail, they are out hiking, mapping and marking. Work continues year-round on the overland emigrant trails.

As you will note elsewhere in this newsletter, the mid-year meeting of the Board of Directors will be held at OCTA headquarters in Independence on Saturday, March 22, from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. All committee chairs and directors are asked to submit a report of their activities to headquarters by March 1. The reports will be copied and sent to the directors reading prior to the meeting. The meeting is open to all members of OCTA.

Vice President Roger Blair has issued a call for nominees to the board of Directors. This is also a time to be thinking about submitting the various award nominations to Awards Chair George Ivory. I ask that chapters think about the people in their areas eligible for these nominations and contact

Roger and George as soon as possible.

If you have not responded to Publication Chair Rose Ann Tompkins' survey on the *Overland Journal* and the *News From The Plains*, I urge you to do so. Editors Marilyn Holt and Bill Martin are both concerned with what you would like to the publications to be. If you have an opinion, please share it with the publications chair.

This fall it was particularly disheartening - especially to National Preservation Officer Tom Hunt and the members of the California-Nevada Chapter - to learn that the land speed record run was permitted on BLM-held land in the Black Rock Desert (north of Reno). This was a trial attempt and the racers say they will be back next summer. The Black Rock Desert is one of the few remaining pristine viewsheds of the trail. OCTA members need to continue to voice their support of Tom Hunt's efforts to prevent this kind of intrusion.

I hope you have all enjoyed the holidays and are resting up while awaiting the greening of the grass on the prairie.

-- Jacqueline Lewin, President

### OCTA T-Shirts/Sweat Shirts

*Now available*

**In addition to those listed in the new catalog on page 26, we now have the following available:**

#### **Tee-Shirts in Turquoise or Brick**

**XL - \$14.95    XXL - \$19.95**

#### **Sweat Shirts in Burgundy**

**XL - \$24.95    XXL - \$29.95**

Registered OCTA logo on the left front pocket  
Two-color map of the western trails printed  
on the back of each shirt.

### Mid-Year Board Meeting

The mid-year meeting of the Board of Directors will be held on March 22 at the OCTA headquarters adjacent to the National Frontier Trails Center in Independence. The meeting will commence at 8:30 a.m. and end at approximately 5 p.m.

All committee chairs and directors are asked to submit a report of their activities since August to Jeanne Miller at headquarters no later than March 1. The staff will need time to copy and distribute all the reports to the various directors for reading prior to the meeting.

If members have any items which they would like to be brought before the board for consideration, they should please contact President Jackie Lewin. Members are invited and welcome to attend the meeting.

## OCTA Calls For Nominations To Board of Directors

The OCTA Nominating and Leadership Committee is calling for nominations for the election of four members to OCTA's Board of Directors at its upcoming meeting in Pocatello, Idaho, in August 1997. The terms of present directors Roger Blair, Ross Marshall, Kathleen Roubal, and Jeanne Watson will expire in 1997.

According to OCTA bylaws, any current member is eligible to be nominated to serve on the Board. Also, any member may submit the name of one or more nominees. Written nominations, including signed endorsements from three active members for each nominated individual, are required. Each nomination should include a brief description of the nominee's qualifications, experiences and trail-related activities.

The nominee must submit a signed statement of his or her willingness to serve. Nominations and suggestions should be submitted by April 1, 1997. Ballots will be mailed to the general membership in May. Please send nominations and suggestions to: Oregon-California Trails Association, P.O. Box 1019, Independence, Mo 64501-0519

## Annual Fund Raising Drive Off To A Good Start

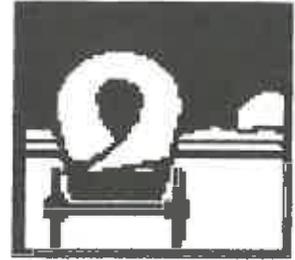
OCTA has received 134 responses to this year's Fund Raising Drive. Results reported by OCTA Treasurer James E. Budde include \$3,768 for the Endowment Fund, \$1,457 to the Annual Fund and \$1,975 for specific Designated Funds, for a total of \$7,200 (as of November 30). A special thanks to members who have chosen to help OCTA "move on." A list of contributors follows:

Antoine Primeaux	Arlene L Roberts	James K. Graves	Dr. & Mrs. Allan L. Mattern
Ardis and Jim Everett	Robert & Barbara Kabel	Robert & Barbara Kelly	Mrs Edward Dart
Jo Anna Dale	Norman J. Barker	Marilyn Pummell	R. A. Robinson
Paul & Lois Mattes	Robert W. Rank	Richard Higgins	Arthur C. Hope
Eva Allen	Mr & Mrs Ray Sayre	R. M. Granum	Dr. & Mrs. C. Crane Jr.
Mr & Mrs Archie Gordon	Virginia Nelson	Michael & Marcia Philbrick	Albert B. Farris
R. L. Gall	Mr & Mrs Richard Davis	Allen T. Hjelmfelt Jr.	Judson M. Parsons
Clovis M. Robertson	Malcolm E. Smith Jr.	Linda J. Cook	Howard Cramer
Tom Ronk	Wayne & Eula Thompson	Robert H. Jones	David K. Smoot
Jim & Jan Rhine	William E. Eaton	Princess & Adelard Everton	Bucky Green
Jean Smith	Rose Ann Tompkins	Jim & Margie Sheik	Milton T. Williams
Nicholas Ifft	Chip Gash	Roy Welton	Mr & Mrs Will Butler
Norm & May Fiock	Tom & Mary Triplett	James Myers	Lloyd A. Robinson
Albert L. Norris	James B. Herring	David & Wendy Welch	Fran Taplin
Gene Serr	Martin H. Schloo	W. E. Givens	Robert & Alice Shellenberger
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Charles F. Risley	Carl & Sue Jacobson	Rita Cleary	Bill & Molly Ledeboer
Alex Magness	Lois Anne Dove	Martha R. Barnes	Robert R. Hutchinson
Willard Renner	Bradley B. Garretson	Dick & Micki Kazanis	Ken & Dorothy Tompkins
Harriet & Charlie Lewis	Jim King	Carl McDonald	Lee Underbrink
Garth Kendig	Keith Palmquist	Paul Sawyer	Ruth V. Eckenburg
Robert & Margaret Carey	Clifford H. Fiscus	Arlene Hartin	Margaret F. Grace
Tom James	Charles M. Little	Robert & Betsy Wright	Mrs. Willis L. Burnhan
John D. Stewart	Elvin O. Walker	Jim & Margaret Bowers	Glee Willis
John H. Rebenack	Nelson S. Weller	Clarice Crowle	Hilda P. Jones
James G. Stearns	Tom McCutcheon	Joann & LeRoy P. Jackson	James T. Owen
David A. White	Gene & Charlotte Thompson	Carol Ann Buss	Dennis C. Wentland
Jeanne S. Miller	Henry & Phyllis Harding	Richard & Aileen Kennon	Deann Wilson
James H. Reynolds	Gerald & Patricia Joy Phillips	Daisy Barber	



# WAGON WHEELS ON THE INTERNET

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



## Jumping Off Only Takes the Right Provisions

By Bill Martin

The Internet may be a launching pad into the 21st Century, but it also works in reverse. It has given trail hounds and history buffs an exciting vehicle through which they can explore our western heritage and the opening of the nation.

As Internet access continues to grow at phenomenal rates, more of us are learning that the World Wide Web is dotted with sites which offer opportunities to indulge our curiosity, research our roots or simply add to our personal database of knowledge about things new and things old.

But how do we find them? For many of us, just getting started is a highly intimidating prospect. Well, take it from one who recently decided to stick a toe into the Internet waters and got sucked in whole, it's much easier than it looks.

You need a computer with a modem and you need an Internet service provider. I'm not about to make any suggestions either on computers or providers. There are many, many acceptable options. If you are totally in the dark, ask a friend. I will say

that as far as access is concerned, if you are paying more than about \$20 a month for unlimited time on the Internet, you're getting ripped off.

Once you are plugged in, head straight for OCTA's web page, at <http://bobcat.etsu.edu/octa/>

OCTA has been on the leading edge of this computerized trails information age and its Web page not only provides information about the organization, but also serves as a jumping off point for those who want to explore on their own. When you visit, you will find links to trail history, books, trail sites, historic diaries, OCTA chapters, trail preservation, other databases and much, much more.

Because of the interest in the Web, with this issue of *News From The Plains*, we are introducing a new feature for those who want to know more. Each issue will carry a list of sites we think will be of interest to OCTA members and others. (You can find this issue's list on Page 6.)

Some of these will be pulled off the Overland Trails list, while others will be recommended by readers and others. If you find a site you think OCTA members will be interested in, pass it on. Send to me at [words@worldnet.att.net](mailto:words@worldnet.att.net). I'll include a selection of the best in the each upcoming issue.

## A Short History of OCTA On The Web

by Lesley Wischmann

About a year ago, at the mid-winter Board meeting in St. Joseph, the OCTA Board voted unanimously to take our organization into cyberspace. In response to a proposal submitted by Lesley Wischmann, Public Relations Chair, the Board voted to authorize Lesley to develop an OCTA website and also voted to officially sponsor the Overland Trails mailing list.

As you might remember, the Overland Trails mailing list was begun about two years ago by Lesley Wischmann and Dr. Bob Wier of Texas, whom many of you met when he put on the internet workshop at Elko.

The mailing list, which announced itself initially as being "loosely affiliated" with OCTA, provides a forum for internet discussion of any topic related to the overland emigrant trails. In the past, we have had interesting discussions on such topics as what is an oxen, what was the origin of "seeing the elephant," and pets on the trails.

In addition, many subscribers have shared the stories of their emigrant ancestors.

The mission of the mailing list did not change when OCTA officially assumed sponsorship, but the formal link between the organization and the list has made it easier to make new subscribers aware of the organization and its goals. Of course, subscribers do not need to belong to OCTA to participate but many have chosen to join when they learned about our organization.

To subscribe to the mailing list, send the following message (and nothing else)

*subscribe overland-trails yourfirstname yourlastname*  
via e-mail to: [listserv@bobcat.etsu.edu](mailto:listserv@bobcat.etsu.edu). Within a day or two, you will receive an automated reply giving you all the information you need to take part in our discussions.

The other recent venture into cyberspace came in early June when the OCTA website went on-line. The original site was created by Lesley Wischmann with Bob Wier doing all of the technical work. Since then, the site has undergone substantial revisions and additions. Lyn Ryder of Niwot, Colorado, and Dr. Bob Munkres of Muskingum College in Ohio have been particularly helpful in adding to the substance and visual appeal of the site.

During the first six weeks the website was on-line, it was visited by more than

(Continued On Next Page)

## HOT LINKS ON THE INTERNET TRAIL

*Here are some suggestions from trail buffs and OCTA members on Websites of interest:*

**From Lesley Wischmann:**

Most of the good websites I know of (which are relevant to the trails, of course) I have hyperlinked to our site (<http://bobcat.etsu.edu/octa/>). So you could start with some of those (look under "Trail Links")

**From Bob Wier:**

Here are a couple of pointers to map type information available on the Internet. The most easily used is at: <http://www.mit.edu:8001/geo>

The most comprehensive (for the USA) is

<http://www-nmd.usgs.gov/www/gnis/gnisform.html>

A nice summary of internet mapping resources is:

<http://www.csuohio.edu/CUT/mapswww2.htm>

**From Tom Crews:**

Here are several web sites that may be of interest:

The University of California's MELVYL library system is a tremendous research resource. It can search the UC union

catalog (materials at all UC campuses plus other locations including the California State Library in Sacramento, the Sutro Library in San Francisco, and the Bancroft Library at UC Berkeley), the California Academic Libraries List of Serials (periodical titles at California academic libraries), and other databases and Internet resources.

<http://galen.library.ucsf.edu/lib/sys/mel/index.html>

Jim Janke's Old West Page is a very comprehensive source of Old West stuff. The Old West of this page is defined loosely as the legend and reality of 19th Century America west of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers and anything and anybody associated with it, past and present.

<http://www.dsu.edu/~jankej/oldwest.html>

Phil Bansner maintains a web page that deals with things philatelic. I have found it to be a great source for books that deal with western history including trails and in my case the Pony Express. I think that anyone interested in Western History would find this page to be of interest.

<http://www.philbansner.com>

And finally one must not overlook the Pony Express Home Page at <http://www.ccnet.com/~xptom>

### ... More on the Web

*(Continued from Previous Page)*

5,000 people! Since that time, our visibility has continued to grow. Each week, we receive between 5 and 10 requests through the site for brochures, bookstore catalogues, teacher materials, or general information.

Currently, you can find information on the site about some of the marked sites and graves, the conventions, the bookstore, the Overland Journal, COED and the OEN database, preservation alerts, trail facts, trail stories, stories of individual emigrants, addresses for tourism sites along the trail, links to related websites, and trail photos.

We are currently working on a clickable map which will allow people to "travel" along the trail and gather information about the various sites, complete with photos and relevant diary quotes. We are also trying to work on ways to get information from the chapters on the site in a timely manner.

You can visit the website at <http://bobcat.etsu.edu/octa/> And check back frequently as we are continuously trying to add new information. If you have something you would like to contribute -- a trail story, an account of your favorite emigrant, photographs, suggestions for other links -- please feel free to send your information to Lesley Wischmann at [jansen@plains.uwyo.edu](mailto:jansen@plains.uwyo.edu) I would also be happy to hear from people through the regular mail -- 712 South Second Street, Laramie, WY 82070.

Join us on-line. The emigrants seem to be thriving there!

**From Lyn Ryder:**

I just found a really neat site - will fit right in with the 2000 convention in KC (but I guess that's a way off!). Anyway the site is: <http://www.1856.com/>

This is a blurb from the page: "The Arabia Steamboat Museum Homepage Unbelievable treasures and fascinating history await. Explore our museum and learn how the handsome steamer Arabia prospered on the rivers, perished in 1856 and was finally rediscovered 132 years later, precious cargo intact. This exhibit, in Kansas City, MO, is many things: history, ingenuity, tragedy, adventure, perseverance, preservation and a tribute to the pioneer spirit."

**Finally, here's a recent Overland Trails Posting:**

"We are a group of genealogists researching our California ancestors. Our primary goal is to discover and make other members aware of any and all sources of information regarding these early pioneers and residents.... We are doing this through the use of the NORCAL GENEALOGY GROUP Mailing List."

To subscribe, send an E-mail message to [MAISER@rmgate.pop.indiana.edu](mailto:MAISER@rmgate.pop.indiana.edu). In the body of the message, type SUB NORCAL. There is no charge for membership. Any questions, send e-mail to [k.tessendorf@worldnet.att.net](mailto:k.tessendorf@worldnet.att.net).

*Got a tip on a hot Web site for trail buffs? Send it to us at [words@worldnet.att.net](mailto:words@worldnet.att.net). We'll include it in the next issue of News From The Plains.*

# Where Is Your Research Hiding?

by Rose Ann Tompkins  
OCTA Publications Chair

Last year, OCTA welcomed Marilyn Holt of Abilene, Kansas as the new editor of the *Overland Journal*. Among her experience for this position, she has been an assistant editor with the Illinois State Historical Library and director of publications for the Kansas State Historical Society. In addition, Marilyn has had articles published in journals and magazines and is the author of the book, *The Orphan Trains, Placing out in America*.

OCTA's contract with Marilyn states, "OCTA agrees to supply to Editor in a timely manner a sufficient number of publishable articles with the understanding it is not the responsibility of the Editor to generate such articles, although Editor will do what is

*"If your research is hiding in your computer, on the shelf, or in your head, how about sharing it with all of us?"*

reasonably possible to assist and expedite this process."

Certainly, Marilyn has been doing what is "reasonably possible" to find good articles for the *Overland Journal*. Perhaps we as OCTA members need to be doing more to keep our end of this bargain. Where is your research hiding? She cannot publish what she does not have.

With this in mind, I am going to review again the aspects involved in *OJ* articles. The focus of the journal is on some feature of the emigrant trails or the overland migration in the West. An article must reflect some form of original research or interpretation, not be just a compilation of secondary sources. Original research would include any one or combination of the following:

- Articles that are based substantially on primary, written source material, both published and unpublished. This would include diaries, journals, reminiscences, letters, newspapers, government reports and other archival material. This original research will understandably make use of and have reference to secondary sources, but the main supporting evidence should be taken from primary sources. An exception to this would include articles that interpret, evaluate or analyze secondary sources.

- Articles that are based on non-literary evidence drawn from field research or personal interviews; or from technical areas such as archaeology, geology, geography, cartography or statistics.

- Articles that are themselves primary sources and are supported by primary and secondary sources such as an unpublished emigrant diary edited and annotated especially for the *Overland Journal*.

Any article, whatever its subject, should exhibit original

ideas and convincing documentation. These requirements are not to imply that the *Overland Journal* is written only by and for academic specialists—although their contributions are welcome. It is designed for the lay reader; someone who is interested in the western overland trails and the migration experience.

If you have been studying some phase of trail history or experience and wish to write about it, please contact the *Overland Journal* editor, Marilyn Holt, to discuss the idea. It is best to write or call with an inquiry rather than sending a manuscript unannounced.

Sometimes, trail enthusiasts have done wonderful primary research but are unaccustomed to writing for publication. The editor can perhaps help you put an article together. After all, valuable research should not be lost, and the *Overland Journal* would like to share new material with its readers. If your research is hiding in your computer, on the shelf, or in your head, how about sharing it with all of us?

To receive a copy of author guidelines for the journal or to make inquiries, contact Marilyn Holt, 902 N. Buckeye, Abilene, KS 67410. Phone: (913) 263-1572

## Award Nominations Sought

All chapters as well as individual members are asked to consider nominations for the 1997 OCTA awards, to be presented at the August Convention in Pocatello.

Nominations should be in the form of letters providing details on each nominee and why he or she deserves the award. The following are the categories of OCTA Awards:

**Meritorious Achievement Award**, OCTA's highest award, made to those individuals or organizations who, over a long period of time, have made significant contributions to (1) identification, marking or awareness of important emigrant trails or (2) strengthening OCTA as an organization. Usually only one or two such awards are made each year.

**OCTA Certificate of Appreciation**, given to individuals who make a particular effort to achieve short-term goals, such as marking a specific trail or site, obtain funding for a special project, publications of important new historical information, etc.

**Volunteer of the Year Award**, given to one individual who, within the last 12 months, undertakes and achieves a worthy goal that brings credit to their own chapter or to the objectives of OCTA.

Letters and background of nominations should be sent to **George Ivory, Awards Chairman**, Oregon-California Trails Association, 970 East Woodoak Lane, Salt Lake City, UT 84117. Nominations must be received no later than June 1, 1997.

## Howell Contributors Gather For Photo



*On August 12, 1849, Elijah Preston Howell recorded in his diary, "We continued down the Canon [Emigrant Canyon] - the road being very rocky with deep sand and rather dangerous to waggons for a few miles to a large rock on the right, under the shade of which I have set and written several of the last pages." A group of modern trail travelers "set" in the shade of this same rock and read the words that Howell had written exactly 147 years and three days earlier.*

*While co-editing Howell's diary for the first publication in OCTA's Emigrant Trails Historic Studies Series (ETHSS), trails super-sleuth Don Buck recognized the very rock that Howell was describing. During the recent Elko convention, Buck led contributors to the Howell diary project to the rock, where they posed for a group photograph.*

*Present were, from left to right, co-editors Susan Badger Doyle and Donald E. Buck, and contributors Roger Blair, Rose Ann Tompkins, and Randy Brown. Only contributor Tom Hunt, who had planned to attend but canceled at the last minute due to a death in the family, was absent.*

*Howell's diary is the first publication in OCTA's ETHSS. Copies may be obtained through OCTA headquarters. The next series endeavor is the 1854 diary of Winfield Scott Ebey, which will be available in summer 1997.*

*— Roger Blair*

## OCTA Heads East **Artifacts On Exhibit**

By Jeanne H. Watson

Three artifacts from the Paden Collection, given to OCTA in 1983, are included in an exhibit that opened at the Daughters of the American Revolution Museum in Washington, D.C., on October 10, 1996.

"Bound for the West: Women and Their Families on the Western Trails, 1840-1880" will continue through April 28, 1997.

The OCTA loan was made possible by the National Frontier Trails Center with the help of Anna Bell Cartwright, NFTC Curator; Jane Mallinson, a member of both OCTA and the DAR; and Jeanne Watson, OCTA Board member and chairman of the Collections Committee.

Exhibited with several other cooking utensils, an iron kettle from OCTA helps show how women fed their families during the overland journey, with this explanation: *"Although cumbersome and heavy, cast iron pots were almost indestructible and supplied the needed depth for boiling or stewing. The iron pot could be suspended over the campfire's flames or placed directly on the hot coals."*

Also on exhibit are a horn scoop and the small teapot found near a campfire site along the trail by Irene D. Paden in the 1930s. These are part of a collection of trail-related artifacts given by Mrs. Paden's son, Dr. William Paden of Alameda, Calif., to OCTA and on exhibit at the NFTC museum. The scoop and tea pot are accompanied by an 1852 comment from Mrs. B.G. Ferris: *"Like the march of armies, each train has left sad memorials of its passage ... bones of oxen and mules, broken fragments of wagons, cast-off implements of agriculture."*

Besides quotes from women's dairies, the new DAR exhibit includes documents, maps, guide books, clothing, photographs and a restored full-size Virginia freight wagon, plus contents. Major themes are "Bound for the West," "Following the Trail," "Arrival and Settlement," "In the Far Distant West," and "The End of the Trail."

The DAR Museum is located at 1776 D Street NW, Washington, D.C., and is open from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday and 1-5 p.m. on Sunday. Admission is free. For more information, call (202) 879-3241.

OCTA members visiting the Nation's Capital during the next few months might also enjoy seeing "Stories of the People," the first exhibit on the National Mall presented by the National Museum of the American Indian.

The exhibit features 190 objects telling the stories of six tribal and regional groups and is located in the Arts & Industries building of the Smithsonian Institution.

**Make Plans for Pocatello  
August 13-17 ... See Page 17**

## Trail Sesquicentennial **"Mormons Are Coming"**

by George Ivory

During the winter of 1846-47, between 12 and 15 thousand members of the LDS Church were huddling in temporary shelters along both sides of the Missouri River and back across the new State of Iowa as their leaders made plans to begin an epic migration into the Rocky Mountains to find a new home.

The Sesquicentennial of the beginning of that migration will be observed this year all along the Mormon Trail. Trail sites will be visited this spring and summer by thousands of descendants of the Mormon Pioneers and by thousands of others who are interested in the history of this migration.

Many OCTA members trace their roots this migration and many, especially in the Utah Crossroads Chapter, will be heavily involved in this celebration.

Major events and observances will be held all year long along the trail. Here are a few listed for your information:

- A recently completed replica of the "Kanesville Log Tabernacle" in Council Bluffs
- A soon to be completed new visitor center at the Winter Quarters Cemetery in Omaha.
- The LDS Church is purchasing a portion of the "Sun Ranch" at Devils Gate in Wyoming
- The LDS Church is creating a visitor center at the Sun Ranch and will conduct "Handcart" tours into Martin's Cove from that site.
- A combined wagon train, including Handcart Trekkers, will leave Omaha/Council Bluffs on April 17 to arrive in Salt Lake City on July 22 (Call 1-800-552-6191 for participation information).
- Sons of Utah Pioneers tour in six buses will follow trail and arrive July 22 in Salt Lake.
- Mormon Trail Bicycle Tour from Nauvoo, Illinois to Salt Lake City from June 12 to July 7 (Call 1-402-477-9968 for participation information).
- PBS documentary two-hour special "Trail of Hope" to be aired in July.
- New historical book series from Arthur H. Clark Company with Will Bagley as Editor.

In addition there will be events almost daily in Utah to celebration this Sesquicentennial year and Utah Crossroads OCTA members will be helping tell the story of the Mormon Migration.

Members will also help maintain some control over trail use and activity to minimize damage to important, but delicate, sites as thousands of people try to "love it to death."

If you thought the trail was busy in 1993 when we celebrated the sesquicentennial of the Oregon Trail you better watch out. In 1997 "The Mormons Are Coming" and more people will visit the trail in one summer than traveled through in all 30 years of migration before the railroad was completed in 1869.

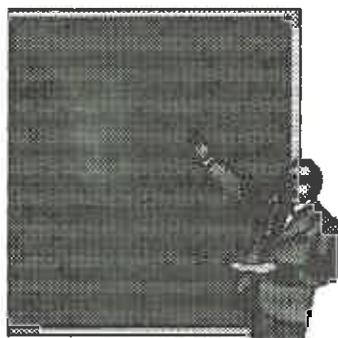
1997 Nominees Sought**OCTA Salutes Innovative Educators**

*Nominations for OCTA's Outstanding Educator Awards are due March 15, 1997. The citation will recognize exceptional contributions to the teaching of the history of the overland migrations for work done between 1995 and 1997. Awards will be given at the elementary, middle, high school and college level. Winners will receive free registration and one day's room and board at the 1997 National Convention in Pocatello. For nomination forms or additional information, contact OCTA National Headquarters (P.O. Box 1019, Independence MO 64051-0519), or William E. Hill, OCTA Education Award, 91 Wood Road, Centereach, NY 11720-1619. Phone (516) 585-2592. At the 1996 convention in Elko, several outstanding educators were recognized. The following article tells their stories.*

The westward movement of the 19th Century has traditionally been an important element in our classrooms. That importance is elevated as we mark significant milestones in history. The winter of 1996-97 marked the 150th anniversary of the Donner Party, America's best known pioneer tragedy. In 1997, we will mark both the 175 anniversary of the Santa Fe Trail and the 150th anniversary of the Mormon Trail. In 1999, we will observe the 150th anniversary of the California Gold Rush. All of those events will provide additional material for classroom instruction as students are taught the importance of our heritage as a nation.

During the past few years, OCTA has helped to recognize some of the educators who have so effectively brought the westward movement to life. Last year, three recipients were honored at the convention in Elko and recognized for developing programs that went above and beyond the normal teaching of westward migrations.

**Janel E. Anderson of Florence, Colorado**, teaches third grade in Eastern Fremont Elementary School. Her project involved the use of a number of teaching techniques and projects as she introduced her students to the Oregon Trail. Naturally, her students studied methods of travel on the Trail, landmarks and geography, pioneer clothing, goods and games. But they also developed hands-on projects related to the topics studied. For example, some students made wagon models, while others made pioneer foods for all to sample.



Dolls were made of cornhusks and clothing was made for both boys and girls. The study culminated with the transformation of Janel's classroom into a one-room schoolhouse, like that which would have been attended by children in the mid-1800s, and the transformation of the

school yard into the Oregon Trail. The re-creation was complete with landmarks and special activities at each major landmark, such as asking students to develop lists of what to bring on the trail and the discussing of the different methods used to cross a river. When the unit was over, her students had a greater appreciation of what it was like to be an

emigrant on the Oregon Trail. They had learned about the emigrants' motivation, hardships, the geography of the west, foods, dress and music.

**Janet E. Camagna of San Jose, Calif.**, teaches eighth grade social studies, ceramics and French at Monroe Middle School. Her project involved a month-long study of the Oregon and California Trails by "at risk" students. The activity was a three-part project. One aspect was based on the study of a local cemetery and the study of some of the people buried in it. As the case would be, many of those buried in the cemetery were individuals who played prominent roles in California's early history. The second phase allowed for students to develop and research topics on their own. Student-selected topics included cooking and pioneer foods, methods of travel, panning for gold, the Pony Express, quilting and whittling. The third phase required the students to make presentations to their class and to the Argonauts Historical Society of San Jose.



**Bruce D. Berst of Casper, Wyoming**, teaches social studies at Natrona High School. The program he developed for the Post Secondary/Adult Education level involved creating a living history project that recreated military and civilian life at the Platte Bridge Station (Fort Caspar). This site was important to Mormons heading to Utah and others going to Oregon or California and the pioneer campsite included both wagons and handcarts. Volunteers were recruited to depict the variety of people, such as soldiers, trappers and pioneers that were at this site 150 years ago. The daily activities, such as hunting and cooking, tending livestock and repairing wagons were reenacted. As a result, the public had the opportunity to acquire a greater understanding of life on the trail and at the Fort.

These three educators stressed more than just reading or lecturing. Hands-on experiences and the integration of a variety of skills -- art, language, math, science, music, geography, and more. As a results, their students now have a much better idea of what the emigrants of 150 years ago experienced as they migrated across the U.S. And a better appreciation of their heritage.

## “Unstuck In Time” With The Donner Party

(continued from page 1)

in stone or set in bronze. I would read a few books, chart dates and create an accurate, running narrative of their activities.

My mouth was not connected to my brain.

Read 60 books involving the Donners and you'll get 60 variations. Simple matters, like when or where things happened or who they happened to, become debates.

Even survivors' eyewitness accounts differ. Thick layers of myth were added for 15 decades.

I kept reading and found more questions. Mileages don't tally. Timetables do not compute. Often-told stories have no basis in fact and "facts" fall apart when compared to other sources.

So I cross-referenced and followed trails and found campsites. I interviewed historians, authors, museum curators, scholars, trail buffs and archaeologists. Photographer Marilyn Newton and I rode reenactment wagon trains and visited museums from Chimney Rock, Neb., to Fort Bridger, Wyo., to Grantsville, Utah, and Sutter's Fort, and the Bancroft Library in California.

It is the people that stick in my mind: The members of the Donner Party, other 1846 pioneers like Edwin Bryant, and the modern Donner enthusiasts.

I talked to authors like Will Bagley, Kristin Johnson, Jack Steed, Chuck Dodd, and the late Joseph King. Archaeologists like Don Hardesty of the University of Nevada, Reno and OCTA members like Paul Sawyer, George Ivory and Don Wiggins also helped me keep abreast of the latest research.

"They're up there yonder on that ridge," said Wiggins, slipping into the present tense as we followed an 1840s trail into Reno. "They're comin' down that slope."

He had become unstruck in time.

Wiggins' research resulted in a story about how the Donner trail markers may be in the wrong places in the Reno area.

Bill Pugsley, a Reno man who walked the Hasting's Cutoff last summer with the help of Utah and Nevada OCTA chapters, helped supply information about distances and timetables.

Early on, I searched for a detailed drawing of the legendary Pioneer Palace car. There weren't any, but Kristin Johnson and others had researched the wagon's lore. Our newspaper artist, Mark Bartley, used their accounts and other research to portray what the Reed family prairie schooner might have looked like.

We set out to retell history, but we may have made a contribution to the study of the Trail.

California Trail Days, reenactments and the local Donner buffs — including teachers and their students — helped the story come alive with pictures, chautauqua performances and audio recordings, available by phone, of pioneer diaries.

Our series sparked interest in the Donners and encouraged some readers to do their own investigation. They want to learn more.

So do I. I've got more questions than ever.

In doing the project, I learned history is never carved in stone or cast in bronze. It is fluid and changing, as flowing as the Truckee River and as near as wagon ruts and ox shoes I saw in the desert.

One event that stands out is the reunion of Donner Party descendants held during Trail Days.

After a presentation on James Frazier Reed, a descendant of the Graves family passionately questioned an actor and James Frazer Reed III about whether Reed was a hero or a murderer. He described Reed's killing of John Snyder as though it happened yesterday.

"And your two daughters are spoiled!" the Graves descendant told James F. Reed III.

He was apparently speaking of Virginia and Patty Reed, in their graves for nearly 100 years.

*This is an example of the stories Frank Mullen Jr. has written three times a week since last May about the Donner Party expedition, assisted by Graphic Artist Mark Bartley and Photographer Marilyn Newton.*

### Foster kills Luis and Salvador while others turn their backs

JAN. 10, 1847 — Today Luis and Salvador lie dead and butchered for their flesh by people they risked their lives to save.

The seven white survivors of the Forlorn Hope party, again out of food, followed the Indians' bloody footprints in the mud. William Eddy will say the two men and five women came upon the Miwoks as they were lying, exhausted and near death, beside a stream.

Foster, who had earlier proposed killing the Indians for food, took his rifle and approached them. Eddy and the five women walked away, faced the woods, and heard two gunshots.

Foster will tell Eddy that Luis understood the terrible need to die so that others may eat.

Captain John Sutter, who sent "his two good boys," as he called the *vaqueros*, to help the



pioneers, will dispute the story. He will say the pair were gathering acorns when Foster shot them.

The crime is double murder, but no court will ever hear the case. In 1847, Indians are casually killed in punishment of theft or just for sport.

Lansford W. Hastings, among others, shot Indian passersby for target practice. Peaceful "Diggers" were considered fair game.

Nearly 15 decades later, author Joe King will look for records of the two unsung heroes. He will find baptismal documents at Mission San Jose.

His theory: Luis was Eema of the Ochehamne group of Miwoks and would have been 19 years old



A Miwok

in 1847. Salvador was Que Yen of the Cosumne group and would have been 28.

Their murders will remain unpunished because many whites considered them less than human. The name Miwok comes from the tribe's word "Miwu," which means human being.

One hundred fifty years after their deaths, they will have no monument, except their tribe, which will endure.

Meanwhile at the high camps, snow falls. Life has settled down to days of half-sleep and meals of boiled hides, which always simmer on fires. At the Graves/Reed cabin, families are at odds over food and space.

Tonight, the snow falls faster.

— By Frank Mullen Jr.

## Mattes Memorial

In the July, 1996, issue of *News From The Plains*, OCTA announced the establishment of a Memorial Fund in honor of **Merrill Mattes**. All donations received by OCTA were to be expended on behalf of the Mattes Library at the National Frontier Trails Center in Independence, Missouri.

Numerous individuals and several chapters have contributed to this worthy cause. As of November 30, a total of \$2,660 had been received, of which \$2,415 had been used to purchase books to expand the existing collection in the Mattes Library.

We wish to thank those individuals and OCTA chapters whose contributions will help keep the memory of Merrill Mattes alive in future trail research.

—Jim Budde, OCTA Treasurer

## Home On The Range

A forum entitled "*Home on the Range: Migrating Cultures, Histories and Literatures in Kansas*" will be held at Fort Hays State University April 11-12, 1997.

Possible topics include Culture and Cultural Conflicts, History, Literature, Education, Women in the West, Kansas As A Thoroughfare, Migrating Arts, Politics, Land Use, The Myth of the Frontier and Religion on the Plains.

For details, contact Mark Schuhl at the Fort Hays State Department of Modern Languages, 600 Park, Hays KS 67601, Phone (913) 628-5382.

### **New for the California Gold Rush Sesquicentennial!**

234 pages with 3 page front foldout, hardcover, full color, coffee table size (9" x 12"); 494 color and 25 historic pictures; fully indexed. ISBN 0-9653443-0-4

A book after my own heart! Photos, photos, and more photos! Here's a book that takes you quickly along the trail west, and then immerses you in all the splendor of the gold country. Kelly provides just enough information for you to savor the uniqueness of the trip west, but the real gold mine is in his photo essay about the various gold towns that sprung up overnight during the gold rush and the treasures that still remain for us to see and explore today.

William E. Hill, historian, teacher, and author of various student activity books and the "Yesterday and Today" series of books on the westward emigrant trails.

## **CALIFORNIA'S GOLD RUSH COUNTRY**

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Well-known Gold Rush era towns of Coloma and Columbia are joined by other towns and lesser known, lost or forgotten, locales of the region.

California's Gold Rush Country is the product of three years of

extensive travel by OCTA member and photographer and writer Leslie A. Kelly. His travel stories and photography have appeared in more than 80 magazines, numerous coffee table books, calendars and other publications in the US, Japan and Europe.

California's Gold Rush Country will be available for shipment on or before March 1, 1997. Order your copy today to assure timely delivery!

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## Bozeman Trail

Over 30 individuals and organization representatives took part in an informational meeting on the Bozeman Trail in October in Sheridan, Wyoming. The meeting was sponsored by the Frontier Heritage Alliance.

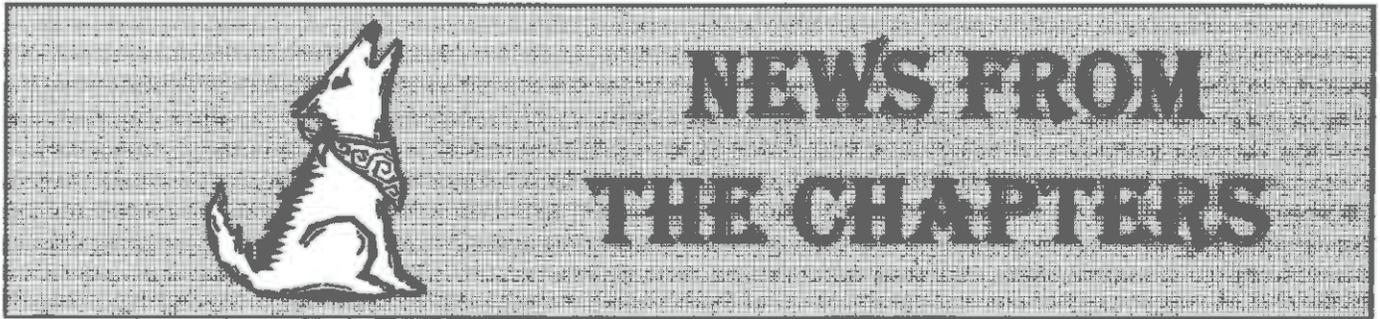
Board Member Dr. Roger Blair represented OCTA. Also present was OCTA member Dr. Susan Badger Doyle, a member of the Interim Board of the Frontier Heritage Alliance.

Organizations taking part included the Montana Historical Society, the National Park Service, various Montana and Wyoming state agencies, the National Historic Trails Center, the Fort Phil Kearny/Bozeman Trail Association, Big Horn County Historical Society, Jim Gatchell Museum, Chief Plenty Coups State Park, the Big Horn Mountain Country Coalition and others.

Participants decided to proceed with plans for a Bozeman Trail Symposium, to be planned by Doyle, and to do an inventory mapping all historic sites on the trail. A meeting with Native American organizations is also planned and a newsletter is in the works.

Other ideas discussed included producing a brochure, signing the Trail, compiling a database and resource directory and obtaining national historic designation for the Trail.

Anyone interested in becoming involved with the Bozeman Trail project or with the Frontier Heritage Alliance should write to the Alliance at 1004 Big Goose Road, Sheridan, WY 82801, or phone (307) 674-4954. —Mary Ellen McWilliams



## Wyoming

### Independence Rock Threatened

This has turned out to be a typical Wyoming winter. Wide variances in temperatures; snow that wears you out blowing back and forth; and just enough breaks in the severe weather that we can escape outdoors and avoid cabin fever.

The weather doesn't slow activities that pose threats to trail segments in Wyoming, however. Oil and gas development in southwest Wyoming just seems to keep on expanding and a recent government evaluation predicts thousands of new gas wells over the next decade or so. Along with the wells are roads, pipeline rights-of-way and lots more people impacting trail resources.

An internationally known landmark is also threatened by vandalism. Independence Rock located some 60 miles southwest of Casper has been one of the most popular tourist stops along the trail in Wyoming. It is fairly easy to climb on the rock and examine hundreds of emigrant names.

Perhaps that is why new names are cropping up and incidents of attempted theft of rock panels have occurred. Can you imagine people actually trying to chisel out chunks of rock with emigrant names inscribed on them? Or carving their modern names next to or sometimes over 150-year-old names?

The rock is a State Historic Site, but does not have any full-time staffing actually on duty at the site. The rock is part of a highway rest stop complex.

A fundraising drive has been started that will provide a temporary custodian/interpretive specialist who would actually live at the site during the spring, summer and fall months. A trust fund has been established that will be used exclusively for Independence Rock protection. Send your contributions to Independence Rock Protection Fund, Box 1596, Evansville, Wyoming 82636. If you have questions, feel free to contact Pat Thompson, Superintendent, at (307) 577-5150.

The Wyoming Chapter of OCTA respectfully urges those who can donate to please contribute to this important initiative.

— Tim Monroe

## Southwest

### Southern Trail Mapping

A week of mapping October 11-18 in southwest New Mexico was preceded by a chapter outing. On Friday, Oct. 11, Don Buck and I met with representatives of the BLM in Las Cruces. We discussed a number of topics of mutual interest, then we spent several hours looking for trail remnants in their collection of 1930s aerial photographs. This gave us useful information for the week ahead.

Saturday was the chapter outing, a hike up "Hunter Draw," the location of the wagon road where it left the Rio Grande Valley. Ten chapter members and five guests met at Percha Dam State Park and made the hike. Although the day was unseasonably hot and there was no shade to speak of, we were able to complete the hike with no casualties.

We followed the trail trace to the top of the draw, then across to the area where the trail dropped into the next arroyo. As a result of the aerial photos we had seen on Friday, we found the exact place the trail dropped off the mesa top.

On Sunday, the mapping group of Don Buck, Rose Ann Tompkins, Richard and Marie Green, Jack Root, and Dave Hollecker began their mapping week, armed with historic maps, trail diaries, GPS & CB units, water bottles and other assorted paraphernalia. We drove up Berrenda Creek arroyo to the base of where the trail had dropped off the mesa.

There we spent considerable time looking over the area and photographing it. Rust was observed on many, many rocks. It would appear that as wagons slid down this rocky hill, the loose rocks were heavily abraded by the iron wheels. Artifacts found included a pail, horseshoes, ox shoe with nails, large square nail, chain link and harness ring. The abundance of artifacts on this section of trail could lead to the conclusion that it has not been discovered by souvenir hunters. May it continue in its obscurity. The artifacts were photographed and returned to their resting places.

Monday found Dave, Jack and Richard driving through Cooke's Pass, while Don and I spent the morning flying the trail with Mike Ellis, a New Mexico State University professor, and his Cessna 180. We spent two and a half hours flying between the Rio Grande and Vista Tank (south of Separ), observing trail traces

(continued on next page)

## MORE NEWS FROM THE CHAPTERS

*(continued from previous page)*  
all along the way.

By evening all six of us were camped at City of Rocks State Park. The wind came up and made it difficult to do very much, but Dave had a small B&W portable TV and several watched Monday night football. Roughing it only goes so far!!

Tuesday, Oct. 15 we spent re-mapping the area on the Goat Ridge quad. We found additional evidence of trail we had not found earlier, including evidence that the trail had forked. One fork went to the hot springs near City of Rocks, while the other headed straight west. Research has been showing that some emigrants made a stop at this hot springs; today it is a commercial place called Faywood Hot Springs.

On Wednesday, we packed up camp and went to Cow Springs to remap that quad. We walked the trail east of the Cow Springs Ranch, again finding additional evidences of trail. In the afternoon, we mapped the area west of the ranch. The day ended in Hay Draw, west of Cow Springs, where we dry camped.

Thursday, we returned to Las Cruces at BLM to view aerial photos and were able to correlate some of our findings from the flying on Monday with the aerial photos in the BLM files. On the last day, Don and I went to the springs on the west side of Playas Lake where the trail came out of the lakebed. Then we attempted to follow the trail towards Whitmire Pass.

This completed another mapping trip, one that added additional information to our slowly growing pile of information. This is tiring work, but rewarding. And, as always, the scenery is magnificent. Our souvenirs? Additional mapped trail, photographs, memories and a couple of cow skulls. What more can you ask for?

—Rose Ann Tompkins

## Northwest

### Fort Steilacoom

About 35 members gathered for the October 19 Northwest Chapter meeting in Quarters 2 of old Fort Steilacoom. The featured presentation was Ray Egan's dramatic presentation on Willis Boatman and the history of Fort Steilacoom and the surrounding area.

Weldon Rau, Willis Boatman's great grandson, provided additional perspectives on his ancestor's Oregon Trail journey. There were also enthusiastic presentations by OCTA members describing their travels and research activities. This included talks by Pat and Jack Fletcher, Suzanne and Chuck Hornbuckle, Vic Bolon and Connie Johnson.

In September, Weldon Rau, Vic Bolon and Dave Welch

traveled sections of the Oregon Trail (and various cut-offs) from the Green River to the Idaho/Oregon border. Karen and Bob Rennells provided outstanding tours of the Green River crossings and the Sublette Cutoff west from the Green River. Ostensibly, the purpose of the trip was to gather information for Weldon Rau's forthcoming book on trail travelers in the year 1852, but that did not preclude a visit to the City of Rocks to commune with some of the ghosts of Dave Welch's ancestors who traveled this piece of the California Trail.

Plans for next year's Northwest Chapter tours, hikes and seminars are nearly complete. This will include a four wheel drive trip on the Meek Cut-off lead by Lowell Tiller, a trail hike from LaGrande to Hilgard park across a beautiful segment of the Trail in the Blue Mountains, a fall seminar in Walla Walla and an auto tour of the Cowlitz-Tumwater-Steilacoom Road (the northern extension of the Oregon Trail). Details can be obtained from either Glenn Harrison or Dave Welch.

Finally, plans for the Pendleton Convention in 1998 are moving ahead quickly. Tours and hikes will be essentially finalized next summer. Trail segments are to be re-surveyed and prospective areas for possible marking during the convention are being identified. See you in Pendleton in 1998!

—Dave Welch

## California-Nevada

### "Trails of the Gold Rush"

Preliminary plans for the 1999 OCTA convention the chapter will host in Chico, Calif., were discussed at the chapter's annual board meeting held in Sacramento.

The theme for the convention is tentatively set as "Trails of the Gold Rush," commemorating the 150th anniversary year of the great migration to the California gold fields.

The Elks Lodge in Chico has been secured, according to chapter president Bill Rupp, and early planning calls for possible tours of the Lassen Trail, the Feather River-Beckwourth Trail and a visit to the famed Empire Mine in Grass Valley. Post-convention tours could include a bus trip over the Beckwourth trail from Reno to Chico and from the Humboldt Sink to Placerville for high clearance vehicles.

A midwinter symposium is scheduled February 8 in Nevada City and the chapter plans an outing in Bakersfield March 8-9 which will include a tour of historic Fort Tejon, a visit to the nearby Tule Elk Preserve, and a talk by author and history buff Jeffrey Glover on "Alexis Godey, Forgotten Frontiersman."

Chapter members participated in several late fall events, including repair of the trail through Upper High Rock Canyon and dedication of a monument on the Applegate-Lassen Trail over Fandango Pass in northeast California.

—Patricia Loomis

## STILL MORE NEWS FROM THE CHAPTERS

### Gateway



*Gateway member Dave Martin steadies the driver as the students place a Carsonite marker at the 1849 Courter-Ritchey Cemetery, located on the trail in northeast Kansas.*

### Kanza

#### Special Days in Kansas

Sunday, October 13, was one of Kansas' special fall days with warm sunshine and just a hint of breeze, plus fall colors splashing the landscape, and the KANZA chapter of OCTA met for a mini-trek at Scott Spring Oregon Trail Park.

It is at this site that Ernie White has constructed a metal covered wagon with bronze oxen at almost life size. It is an art expression to behold and shows his love for the pioneers which have gone before us.

Glen and Yvonne Larson brought their homesteader's covered wagon, outfitted to represent travelers on their way to new horizons. Ernie White had made coffee pots and a portable campfire grill which the early pioneers could have used as well for making coffee.

The group caravanned to the Rachel Huninghake pasture, north of Westmoreland, Kansas, to view the decorative iron fence and marker Ernie White had made and installed at the S.M. Marshall grave site. The inscribed portion of his grave-stone is preserved in the Kansas State Historical Society Museum at Topeka. The base of the stone has remained in place in the pasture since 1849. Mr. Marshall, of Wadesboro, Kentucky, died of cholera and his wish was that he be buried on a promontory facing Kentucky, where he had left a young wife. His fellow travelers carved the stone which survived years in the pasture before the top portion broke off. The stone was moved to a protected place because of its delicate condition. The group walked some of the traces of the yet visible ruts, visited the rock bottom stream crossing nearby and practiced plant identification. Vern Osborne presented Mrs. Huninghake a land owner's certificate to express our appreciation of her sharing the rich history of the area with the group.

— Marian Bradley

### On the St. Joe Road

The Gateway Chapter, along with the St. Joseph Museum and the St. Joseph School District Gifted Program sponsored a field trip along the first day's travel of the St. Joe road of the California Trail.

Thirty students and parents took part in the tour. Gateway members Marilyn Taylor and Jackie Lewin led the tour assisted by Mary Knab, Sarah Elder, Dave Martin, Suzette McCord-Rogers and Wolf River Bob Breeze. Joann Wann is the teacher who requested the field trip as part of a unit of study on the Oregon-California Trail.

The students also helped with marking of the trail by placing four Carsonite posts.

The tour began at Wyeth Hill overlook where the two St. Joseph Missouri river ferry crossing sites are in view. Next the students went to these ferry sites at Riverfront Park in St. Joseph and Bellemont Landing near Wathena, Kansas. While climbing the Missouri River Bluffs on the Kansas side, the students paused to place a trail marker. Other stops included the 1849 Courter-Ritchey Cemetery, located on the trail, and the Mosquito Creek Campground. The campground is where hundreds of people camped after their first day's travel toward Oregon or California. It is located at a little over three miles north of Troy, Kansas. The students experienced the rough terrain of eastern Kansas by walking on a portion of the trail near Mosquito Creek., the day's temperature was below freezing, but the hearty, young pioneers were tough.

As part of an education program, the Gateway Chapter Plans to encourage the participation of various student and adult groups in the placement of trail markers.

# Cajon Pass: Vital Trail Link to Southern California

*(From 1829 until about 1848, the original Spanish Trail was a looping 1,100-mile path from New Mexico to Southern California, threading through Colorado, Utah, Arizona, Nevada enroute. The western section was developed by the Mormons after 1848 for wagon travel between Salt Lake City and Southern California. Near the western terminus of the Trail was 4,190-foot Cajon Pass, after which travelers dropped into the San Gabriel Valley and Los Angeles.)*

by Jack Nelson

As one drives at a high rate of speed over the modern Interstate 15 freeway now traversing Cajon Pass, there is a little time to conjure up what may have gone on before.

"Trail People," especially, should take the time to try to visualize what the Pass must have been like in the days before "concrete canyons" leveled off hills and filled in gullies. Let us take a trek back into time.

Cajon Pass (from "El Cajon," literally "the box") is one of the few breaks in the San Gabriel and San Bernardino mountain ranges which bisect Southern California. It is one of the few natural access routes between the low coastal plain and the high desert. During pre-white contact and even afterwards coveted abalone shells were a much-traded item between the coastal people and those living as far east as the Rocky Mountains and beyond.

The Spanish entered California in the 16th Century and Cajon Pass was to play a vital role in the development of the entire Southern California area. While Spanish-dominated settlements were developing in California, the same situation was occurring in New Mexico. The two areas were separated by a thousand miles of very hostile country. Beginning in the 1770s and over the next several decades, short sections of a trail to become known as The Old Spanish Trail were known and traveled, primarily extending out from the New Mexico end of the eventual route.

A Mexican trader named Antonio Armijo has been recognized as the first to lead an expedition from Santa Fe to Los Angeles in 1829-30. By opening a route which was refined and realigned over the years, it solved a few problems. Trade goods needed by merchants at each end of the Trail were supplied. Two far flung political entities were tied together during what was to become troubled times and Catholic Church ties were made easier. The Old Spanish Trail, never more than a pack mule route, existed as a commercial trade route until 1848.

Cajon Pass, as a thoroughfare, while seeing its early heavy traffic during the heyday of Mexican Trade, became a virtual beehive of activity as a route for escaping horse and mule thieves during the late 1830s and 1850s, as thousands of riding animals were stolen from the large California herds for later sale in the East. After a chase up Cajon Canyon, through Horse Thief Canyon, across Summit Valley to reach the

Mojave River, the chasers and the chased would usually wind up either getting away or killing off as many as a thousand head of stock from thirst or exhaustion.

The Pass played a significant role as the location of a buffer zone for outposts and small ranching settlements in an attempt to deter Indian raids during the 1820s to as late as the 1860s. The notorious renegade Ute Chief Walker (Wakara) led countless horse stealing raids into the San Bernardino Valley, usually escaping through the Pass with impunity. The editor of a Los Angeles newspaper estimates that losses from Indian horse stealing raids between 1849 and 1853 amounted to well over \$300,000. With the death of Wakara in 1855, the raids lost much of their steam. Skirmishes occurred between the Indians and settlers through the Cajon Pass area until the last big battle at Rabbit Dry Lake in January of 1865. The last "white man" to be killed in the Pass area was a traveler, ambushed by Desert Indians near the Los Flores Ranch in 1869, thus ending the Indian Wars.

With the demise of the Old Spanish Trail as a commercial pack train route around 1850, a new era began. While several

families crossed the trail from New Mexico to California beginning in the 1840s, they traveled with the trade caravans. With the settlements in Utah came a need for an access route to California. The route of the Old Spanish Trail from the communities of Utah quickly turned into wagon roads and the trail became known as the Mormon Trail. New access routes were established in the Cajon Pass area to accommodate wagon traffic and the old "mule track" died.

The Old Spanish Trail, never more than a track in time, lasted only a short thirty years. Begun by Indians as a hunting-trading route, it was used by Spanish priests and explorers for searching and proselytizing, by Mountain Men seeking furs and wealth, by Mexican entrepreneurs, soldiers and a few family groups seeking a new home in Spanish California. While the full route of the Old Spanish Trail is known in general, isolated sections of the Trail need much more study. Cajon Pass is one such area.

Jack Nelson, of Grand Junction, Colorado, is President of the North Branch Chapter of the Old Spanish Trail Association.

*"Cajon Pass became a virtual beehive of activity as a route for escaping horse and mule thieves during the late 1830s and 1850s."*

OCTA members who would like more information about the Old Spanish Trail Association can write to the Association at P.O. Box 521, Monte Vista CO 81144.

# 1997 OCTA Convention - Pocatello, Idaho

## August 13-17

by *Michael Bateman and Jim Allen*  
*Convention Co-Chairs*

Idaho OCTA is busy getting ready for your 1997 OCTA convention in Pocatello. We are just finishing our registration material which will be mailed to you in March. Please circle the dates of August 13th through August 17th for a wonderful trails experience.

We feel the strong points of our convention will be the actual trail remnants and new trails that you will be able to see. The convention will begin with pre-tours over the Lander Road and a portion of the Hudspeth Cutoff. Last year a few of us took these tours to prepare for this year and we had a marvelous time. Please consider them carefully as this should be a legendary experience and one you won't want to miss.

### Workshops

Our workshops will begin on Monday with an archaeology field trip under the auspices of **Richard N. Holmer**, Associate Professor and Director of the Center for Environmental Anthropology at Idaho State University, and **Frank Tortorich**, the chairperson of the Archeology Committee. This trip will visit one of the Aboriginal desert sites available on the Snake River Plains. We are working on the details but this should be a great experience.

Other workshops are scheduled for Thursday and include an internet public relations theme under the guidance of **Bob Wier** and **Lesley Wischmann** to help determine how the net can be put to use to further the causes of OCTA. A National Convention workshop with **Mary Ann Tortorich** is scheduled for those chapters getting ready to plan future conventions.

### Papers

Wednesday will be all papers so that you will be completely educated when you head out on tours. The speakers are outstanding with wonderful credentials.

**Peter Boag**, an associate professor of history at Idaho State University, will lead off with "Fort Hall: A Western Crossroads."

**Paul Link**, a Professor of Geology at Idaho State University will discuss the geological story of South Eastern Idaho. His presentations are marvelous.

**Will Bagley** will continue his trail saga started in Elko and discuss Richard Grant and his role in the history of Fort Hall. He will use new information that he located in the Hudson Bay Company archives that weaves an intricate web of intrigue involving Peg Leg Smith and Jim Bridger. If you have or have not witnessed Will Bagley in action, you won't want to miss this presentation.

**Chilton Phoenix** of Idaho State University will discuss "Trails to Rails and Their Role in the Development of Idaho, Montana, and the Pacific Northwest."

**Rusty Houtz** a Native American Indian tribal member, will

discuss the Indian Point of View at Fort Hall. Rusty also constructs beautiful bronze statues that depict western themes. We have invited Rusty to display some of his fascinating work in the bookroom.

**Arthur Hope** is the expert when it comes to finding remnants of the Hudspeth Cutoff and he will enlighten us and might even surprise everyone with a little Andrew Henry history as he grew up near the original Andrew Henry cabin near Rexburg, Idaho.

**Peter T. Harstad** is the distinguished executive director of the Indiana State Historical Society and will discuss The Frederick West Lander story and the Lander Road. This is fascinating information and will be enjoyable.

### Tours

On Thursday we will tour **Fort Hall** and the surrounding reservation area. Don't miss this as it should be the highlight of the 1997 convention and give you a good idea as to why Fort Hall was located at its original site.

Friday and Saturday tours will include **Massacre Rocks State Park** and the parting of the California and the Oregon Trail at **Raft River** in one direction and the **Soda Springs** area and an old Mormon community at **Chesterfield** complete with a tithing house and tithing barn in the other direction. We want to thank Lyle and Carol Woodbury, previous Rancher of the Year Award Winners, for allowing us to visit the sites on their ranch in the Raft River area.

### Special Events

Planned special events include the **opening social** on Wednesday night, **Authors Night** in the bookroom on Thursday, a **barbecue** at The Fort Hall Replica on Friday night, **Awards Banquet** on Saturday night, and a **Sunday Service** at The Fort Hall Replica recreating the first service at Fort Hall where Jason Lee (Methodist), a Catholic and an Indian all prayed for the soul of "Frenchman" who was killed racing horses after Fort Hall was completed.

The **raffle** will be bigger than ever with hand stitched Indian pictures, bolo ties, stitched OCTA -Idaho map, Indian Dream Catchers (wall hanging), floral arrangements and a Queen Size hand-stitched Quilt done by our own Charlene Olorenshaw of Soda Springs Idaho.

Those are our tentative plans and if you all come we should have a great 1997 convention. Please support Idaho OCTA and make this convention the best ever.

**Future Conventions:**  
**Pendleton, Oregon 1998**  
**Chico, California 1999**

## Chuck Graydon

*(Long-time OCTA member Charles K. "Chuck" Graydon of Nevada City, Calif., died November 21, 1996 at the age of 88. A retired Army Colonel, he was author of "Trail of the First Wagons Over the Sierra Nevada. The following was submitted by his friend Charlie Harrison of Nevada City.)*

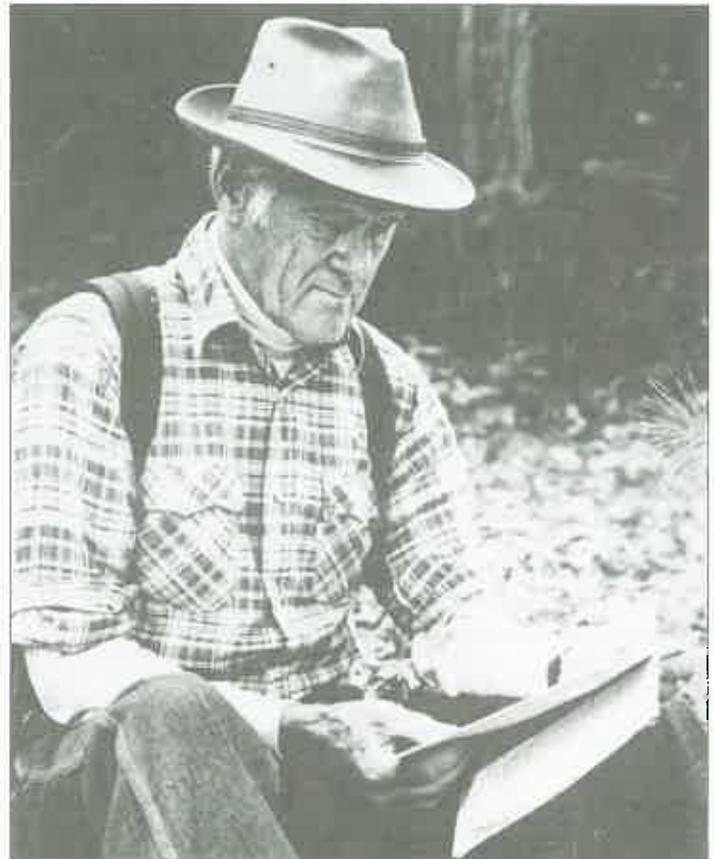
In my 75 years of life on this earth, I have been blessed with the friendship of a number of persons who will leave an everlasting warm and inspirational impression upon my being. Such a person was my old trail tracking buddy, Chuck Graydon.

Chuck was not a person to be drawn into conversation about his past, but on a few occasions around a campfire I was able to hear him relate experiences from deep within a memory going back before I was born. Imagine what memories, both good and bad, would dwell in the mind of a man of such accomplishment.

Chuck entered the U.S. Cavalry in 1928. This man rode horseback as a cavalry trooper on his first duty station in Wyoming. His love of horses and of the outdoors were factors in his advancement in rank. Imagine his chagrin when tanks became the official mount of the U.S. Cavalry. Over the years, he became one of the country's leading authorities on the life and history of the Plains Indians. He also possessed a natural talent for art. His oil paintings of Indians are so life-like that one would not be surprised to hear them speak.

Retiring as a Colonel in 1965, he chose the foothills of the Sierra Nevada as home. He and his wife, Dorothy, lived a quiet country life in a beautiful wooded setting near Nevada City, Calif. This location provided close access to good skiing and mountain passes used by the immigrants of the 1800s. I was privileged to accompany Chuck over a period of several years into and across the Central Sierra as he carefully re-discovered and mapped the route of the first wagons over the rugged terrain. All of this was in research for his book, "First Wagons Over The Sierra." In the miserable heat of summer and the snows of winter the search for traces of the old trail went on.

The years of preparation for writing this book involved hours of study of immigrant diaries and books searching for references to landmarks and recognizable trail features. He had an



exceptional eye for traces of rust on rocky surfaces left there by the scraping of wagon rims that had passed that way many years ago. He was meticulous in his methods of confirming his trail tracing. Never did he accept any part of the Immigrant Trail as the original route until he was convinced by old diaries, letters and other written evidence that his "on the scene" findings were indisputable.

For myself, and I'm sure for others who knew his well, I offer a final salute to one of the finest soldiers, gentlemen, artists, and "man of God's great outdoors" that I have ever been privileged to have been associated with.

— Charlie Harrison

## Pendleton - 1998

Planning is already underway for the Pendleton, Oregon, OCTA convention in 1998. OCTA members attending the convention will have the good fortune to enjoy a performance by The Marv Ross Trail Band, which entertained at the Baker City convention in 1993.

A nine-piece group formed in 1992, the band is led by Marv Ross and features his wife, Rindy, as soloist. Their accomplishments include thousands of concerts presented throughout the West as well as in Japan. They have also produced four albums and provided sound track for two television specials on the Oregon Trail.

See you in Pendleton in 1998.

— Weldon Rau

## Bill Pugsley Update

Bill Pugsley, the Reno man who retraced the steps of the Donner Party (*NFP, October*) completed his 900 mile walk at Donner Lake State Park on October 31, 70 pounds lighter than when he started on July 17.

Writing in the *Reno Gazette-Journal*, Pugsley made it a point to thank OCTA members George Ivory of Utah and Paul Sawyer of Elko, among others, for helping him on his venture..

He concluded: "When I die, if there's an afterlife, I'll go looking for the Donners, Reeds, Breens, Graves, Eddys, Murpheys and the other members of the party. I've got so many questions. And I'd like to shake their hands."

— Bill Martin

# The Reading Trail



by Lyndia Carter

This installment of the reading trail could appropriately be called "Three Twelve-Year-Olds Hit the Southern Trails for the West." These three books share much in common: the age of the main characters, trails much to the south of the Oregon-California-Mormon trails, and problems that must be faced and overcome.

In the 1840's and 1850's, "The West" was a place of hope for a new life for families. But "The West" was a massive land, including everything west of the Mississippi River. Many thousands used the famous trails to head to California to search for gold, to Utah because of their religious beliefs, or to Oregon to acquire land. Others took trails not-so-well-known and traveled to and through places not so widely publicized.

Two of the books discussed here carry us down the Santa Fe Trail with California as our final destination. Our third adventure goes south and west from Tennessee to Texas. These excellent emigration stories are every bit as fun to read and as important to understanding history as stories about the more typical wagon routes. These books are for ages nine to fourteen, but make great read-alouds for the entire family.

All three of these books were based on actual people or were inspired by real diaries. The authors have used their creativity and imaginations to bring the people, events, places and trail experiences to life. When authors do this well, they take us on some of the best adventures of our lives. They stimulate our curiosity and help us learn about our country's past, the lives of those who built our country, and our wonderful heritage. We end up having such a thrilling time between the pages and wrapped up in the characters, that we don't even realize that we are learning some very important stuff!

*White Captives* by Evelyn Sibley Lampman is one of the most fascinating accounts you will ever read. It is based on the real-life experience of Olive Oatman and her sister Mary Ann. The Oatman family in 1851 choose to ignore one of the most important rules of the trail and ended up having to pay the consequences. They venture into unknown hostile country in Arizona alone, with the result that most of the family in murdered by Tonto Apaches. Olive and her sickly younger sister Mary Ann are taken captive and held as slaves in the village. The girls must work very hard and are treated very harshly by the Apaches. Eventually the girls are traded to the Mohaves. In the Mohave village, the girls find kinder treatment, but Olive still thinks constantly of escape. As years pass, Mary Ann seems to become part of the people, but Olive continues to resist. As you read about Olive's life among the Apaches and Mohaves, you learn much about Native Americans. You will be caught up in the life of a teenager who spends five years against her will away from white man's "civilization". It is an exciting story. Evelyn Sibley Lampman is one of my favorite authors of historical fiction for young people. This book is guaranteed to leave you hurrying from

page to page.

*Sallie Fox, the Story of a Pioneer Girl* by Dorothy Kupcha Leland is also about a girl who really lived and traveled west with her family (but in 1858) and whose journey was interrupted by Indian attack. Although Indian attacks on the emigrant trails were not often part of the typical experience, they did happen often enough to keep emigrants scared; some trails and years were more dangerous than others, as well. Sallie Fox's family traveled down the Santa Fe Trail and then experienced severe physical hardships when the wagon train of which they were part decided to take the unproven Beale Wagon Road across Arizona to California. Hunger, thirst, and dangers plague their journey. You wonder every minute if they can make it. Like Olive Oatman, Sallie Fox is twelve and pays a high personal price for her family's decision to go on an untried route, including the loss of her father to the Indians, her own serious wounding, and most of their animals stolen. Near the journey's end, they have no other choice but to turn around and back-track through that same formidable country. The wagon train's retreat across the Arizona desert to Albuquerque is an adventure that keeps you on the edge of your seat. This extraordinary author has done her research well through diaries, memoirs, and letters to keep the story authentic while sensitively taking you full-tilt into the life of this real pioneer girl who has a remarkable adventure with her family. It is a story of courage, love and perseverance and kindness that triumph over extremely difficult circumstances.

After two such action-packed books with female characters, I turn your attention to an outstanding book whose main character is a boy. *Jericho's Journey* by G. Clifton Wisler is all about the Wetherby's wagon journey from Tennessee to Texas in 1852 and Jericho's personal journey growing from childhood into adolescence, overcoming his small size and his personal fears, and learning his strengths. Here is a kid you can't help but love and identify with personally. As Jericho's father tells him, "A journey tests the makings of a man." Jericho through his experiences on the trail and his reactions to those experiences proves himself. It is a journey of self-discovery that makes his twelfth year of life one to remember. The Wetherby family makes a critical mistake by starting too late in the year, which brings on many challenges as the family must combat the weather. This book is wonderfully realistic. The author has based the details of the journey and the descriptions on an 1852 diary, although he has created Jericho and his family as characters to take the journey. The closeness of the Wetherby family, the kindness and friendship of people along the way, and the wonderful personality of Jericho make this a book that teaches important life values while being a great adventure story. I enjoyed every minute of reading and made great friends with a kid named Jericho. I recommend you take the journey with him, too.

*Enjoy life on the reading trail,*

—Mrs. C.

# OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION

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## INSIDE THE NEWS

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