

NEWS FROM THE PLAINS

Newsletter of the Oregon-California Trails Association

Native Americans in the Round-Up street parade in downtown Pendleton, Oregon 1912

Spring 2024

Volume XXXIX, No. 2

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Building a Bright Future for OCTA

The year was 1680, the place was New Mexico – Native Americans had revolted, and the Spanish had retreated to what is now West Texas. How wonderful it was in mid-March 2024, to travel to El Paso and learn of this and many aspects of early history and travel in this part of the Southwest. The Southern Trails Chapter did an excellent job planning and hosting the mid-winter Symposium. Knowledgeable speakers, interesting bus tours, and a key note speech by the Commissioner of the International Boundary and Water Commission were key elements. I extend a big thank you to all of those involved in this valuable time together.

Membership was one of the key topics discussed during the board meeting in El Paso. The CA-NV Chapter submitted a proposal for a one-year test of a different approach to membership. The key point is that the chapter will endeavor to recruit members to the chapter during point of contact events for the next year. During this period membership in the national organization will not be required. The board of directors approved this proposal. In addition, the board approved a motion to establish a Membership Task Force, chaired by Mike Smith, to evaluate many aspects of this critical component of OCTA's future growth.

The financial position of OCTA is good leading into FYE September 2024. The Endowment Funds have again performed well and, at the time of writing, exceeded \$2.3 m in value. The budget for FYE September 2024 assumes a loss. This will be offset to some extent by the increased revenues generated by the recent phenomenal growth in the use of OCTA's YouTube channel.

In addition to continued attention to membership growth and financial robustness, OCTA is working toward strengthening the diversity and talent among our officers



Acting President Helen Hankins in front of the statue at the El Paso airport of Juan de Oñate y Salazar (1550–1626). He was the colonial governor of the province of Santa Fe, Nuevo Mexico.

and Board of Directors. A Board Skills Mix has been developed with input from each board member and officer. It is an additional tool that will be available to the Nominating Committee as they work to identify potential candidates for future positions. A review of OCTA's numerous committees is also underway. Recommendations will be developed before the annual meeting in Pendleton.

Development of our Strategic Plan for the period 2025 to 2030 is a key focus in the next year. Listening sessions will be scheduled the second week of May via Zoom for all chapter presidents, committee chairs, members of the board of directors and any other interested members. These will be facilitated by the National Park Service and are intended to indicate which goals in the current plan have been met or exceeded, and which should be included in the new plan. Ideas about new goals that should be added is also an important part of the process. This information will be synthesized in used in the development of a draft plan by Fall 2024.

One of the many benefits of updating OCTA's strategic plan is to update our key organizational goals. This will allow us to update the goals in the Journey of a Lifetime

Capital Campaign. Perhaps, as we plan for OCTA's future, we might consider Bill Holmes' (President CA-NV Chapter) suggestion of changing our OCTA call to action from "Save the Trail" to "Save America's Heritage". As we move forward to rejuvenate this effort, it will be important to more fully engage the Board of Directors and headquarters staff and to hire a full-time fundraiser.

By the time this issue of News from the Plains goes to press, it will be a scant three months until the national Convention in Pendleton. Roger Blair and his committee have already lined up some great speakers and field trips for we life-long learners. I look forward to seeing you all there July 21-25, 2024 in Pendleton, Oregon.

Helen Hankins, Acting President

PRESERVATION



By John Winner
National Preservation Officer
OCTA's mission is to protect the **historic emigrant trails** legacy by promoting public awareness of the trails through research, education and **preservation activities**; by achieving organizational sustainability and by partnering with others.

Perhaps to provide a sense of OCTA's role in preservation, I thought I would devote this article to Nebraska's **R-Project**. Past issues of *News from the Plains* have attempted to keep you informed, but the project and OCTA's role is at a pivotal point. Following the recent Court Judgment, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has issued a draft supplemental environmental impact statement (SEIS) allowing for public comment through April 9, 2024.

Here is a brief recap and where we are:

Over the past decade OCTA has devoted a lot of time and energy including litigation, trying to keep pristine trail segments in Nebraska free from intrusion.

In 2012 Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD) was tasked with a plan to construct a new 225 mile 345 kV transmission line and associated infrastructure that would extend from the power districts Gerald Gentleman Substation which is just south of Interstate 80 near Sutherland, Nebraska to two new 345kV substations. In January 2015 NPPD announced its "Final Route". FWS and NPPD dealt with the content of an environmental impact statement trying to determine what effect the granting of an incidental take permit (ITP), [allowing the project to move forward] would have on the American burying beetle. In the meantime, OCTA and other consulting

parties informed FWS that the "Final Route" would cross directly over, or very near to, pristine segments of the Oregon and California Trails, the Mormon Pioneer Trail and the Pony Express Trail.

In 2017 FWS issued its draft EIS limiting its effects to the beetle. Consulting parties submitted a multitude of comments focusing on other endangered species, the potential for a large development of wind farms and impact to historic trails.

In November 2018 FWS issued its final EIS, acknowledging the project would have a long-term indirect (visual, auditory, and atmospheric) effect on an area known as O'Fallon Bluff exhibiting some of the most clearly defined and preserved segments of the Oregon-California Trails. The transmission towers and overhead lines would become the dominant feature of the landscape.

Then in June 2019 FWS issued an incidental take permit to NPPD, authorizing the project to move forward. The ITP essentially dealing with the American burying beetle only.

Litigation: In July 2019, following the issuing of the ITP, OCTA, Western Nebraska Resources Council, Hanging H East, L.L.C., and Whitetail Farms East, L.L.C. filed a petition for review of agency action by arguing that U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service violated portions of the Endangered Species Act, the National Environmental Policy Act and the National Historic Preservation Act. The case was heard in the United States District Court for the District of Colorado.

On June 17, 2020, U.S. District Judge, William Martinez issued his Final Judgement, vacating the ITP and remanding the matter back to FWS for further proceeding consistent with the order that FWS inadequately considered the effects of the R-Project on the O'Fallon Bluff segment of the Oregon and California Trail and unlawfully excluded potential wind-turbine development.

Early in September 2022 FWS announced they would be preparing a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) responding to the issues that the court cited when vacating the original ITP permit.

In response to the court decision, NPPD would develop a revised Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and ITP permit application.

Responding to the court’s June 2020 remand decision, which stated that the FWS violated the National Historic Preservation Act by not considering other routing alternatives around O’Fallon’s Bluff site, NPPD offered a token re-route moving the transmission line one-half mile east (see photo).

Although moving the transmission line from some pristine trail segments, other trail segments are still impacted along with the indirect effects of visual intrusion. OCTA, NPS and other consulting parties requested the line be moved further east thus avoiding total intrusion.

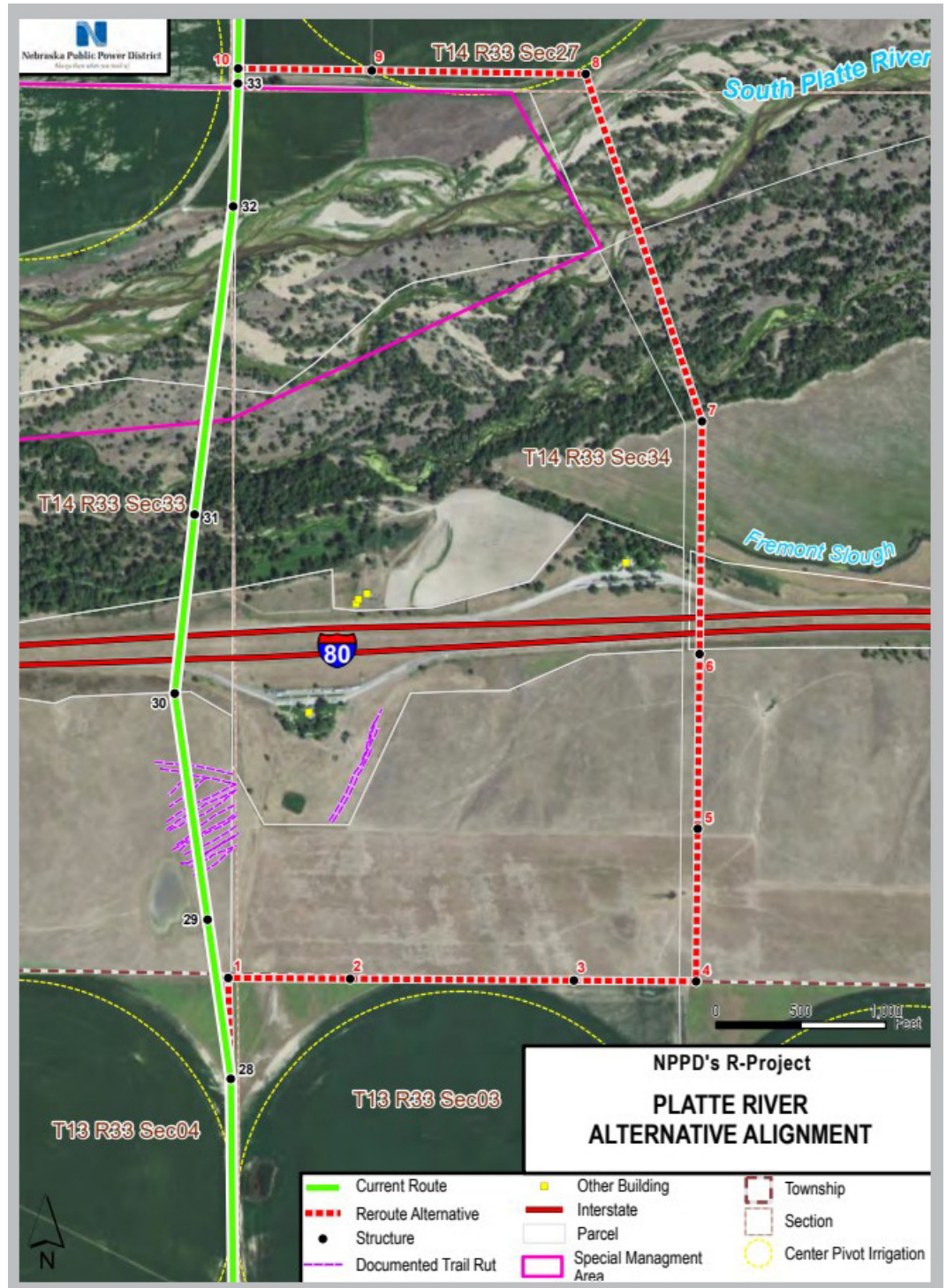
In January 2024, FWS issued their draft SEIS including NPPD revised HCP.

The following is excerpted from the draft SEIS:

In response to the court decision, NPPD developed a revised HCP and ITP permit application. Any reference to the HCP is now a reference to the Revised HCP in this Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS).

Reroute to Avoid/Minimize Effects on Historic Trails. This alternative would reroute the R-Project to avoid the O’Fallon’s Bluff site, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), the Mormon Pioneer Trail’s Sand Hill Ruts Site, which is eligible for listing in the NRHP. The National Park Service National Trails Office (NPS Trails) suggested that to avoid and minimize effects on O’Fallon’s Bluff and the Sand Hill Ruts sites, the proposed

transmission line route should be moved to the far eastern boundary of the routing corridor, as far from these known sites as possible. NPS Trails also suggested that crossing National Historic Trails minimally and in a perpendicular manner and avoiding high potential sites and trail features, such as ruts, are ways to reduce effects. NPPD evaluated multiple routes in the Power Review Board routing corridor that would avoid these resources, including increasing the route’s distance from O’Fallon’s Bluff, historic trails, and an archeological site. These routes were found to be technically or economically infeasible because they introduce some or all of the following conflicts.



- The route would parallel existing transmission lines for longer distances than the proposed R30 Project route, increasing the chances of an event impacting multiple lines, thus reducing the redundancy and, ultimately, the reliability of NPPD's system.
- The route would require a stream crossing over the South Platte River that would be further from existing infrastructure than the stream crossing in the proposed R-Project route. This would require the removal of substantially more trees than the proposed route and would not align with the recommended minimization measure to place stream crossings where existing infrastructure (e.g., bridges) is already present to minimize impacts on waterfowl.
- The route would be closer to more homes and other buildings, increasing human impacts and safety concerns compared to the proposed route. These safety concerns could also result in increased project costs due to the liability of sitting the line close to residences.
- The route would introduce a center-pivot irrigation system conflict and result in operational constraints for adjacent landowners, as these systems cannot operate with a transmission line structure in the way. This would also introduce safety concerns for landowners and related liability for NPPD, should the transmission line be sited close to their property and fall on their center-pivot infrastructure in an emergency.
- The route would require relocation of a cell tower, which would substantially increase project costs due to the high cost of relocating these structures.

This would also increase the liability associated with operation and maintenance of a transmission line near cell towers (e.g., operational interruptions if a cell tower were to fall onto the transmission line; safety concerns for transmission line maintenance personnel). For these reasons, this alternative was eliminated from detailed study in the SEIS.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service draft ESIS conclusion regarding Trails:

“Reroute to Avoid/Minimize Effects on Historic Trail and Archaeological Site (SEIS Section 2.7.2.1) λ Not economically or technically feasible.”

Epilogue: The supplemental environmental impact statement (SEIS) evaluates the environmental consequences of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issuing an incidental take permit (ITP) associated with the Nebraska Public Power District revised R-Project Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) in accordance with the Endangered Species Act. The permit, if issued, would authorize take of the American burying beetle that may occur incidental to NPPD's construction, operation and maintenance of the R-Project transmission line. In response to the 2020 U.S. District Court remand, the NPPD prepared a revised HCP and FWS the draft SEIS. The draft SEIS seems to support the new application for an ITP. Ironically, given the court remand, content associated with the draft SEIS, saving the historic trails and minimizing the indirect effects will be a hard sell. OCTA will continue to look at all options for the final SEIS.

More to come

FROM THE ASSOCIATION MANAGER



This spring, I thought I might turn my column over, in part, to OCTA's Legislative Liaison, Matt Mallinson. OCTA is at an important moment in its history, where we have an opportunity to get not one, not two, but three very important pieces of legislation over the finish line. He requested that I use my

quarterly column to help him promote these initiatives.

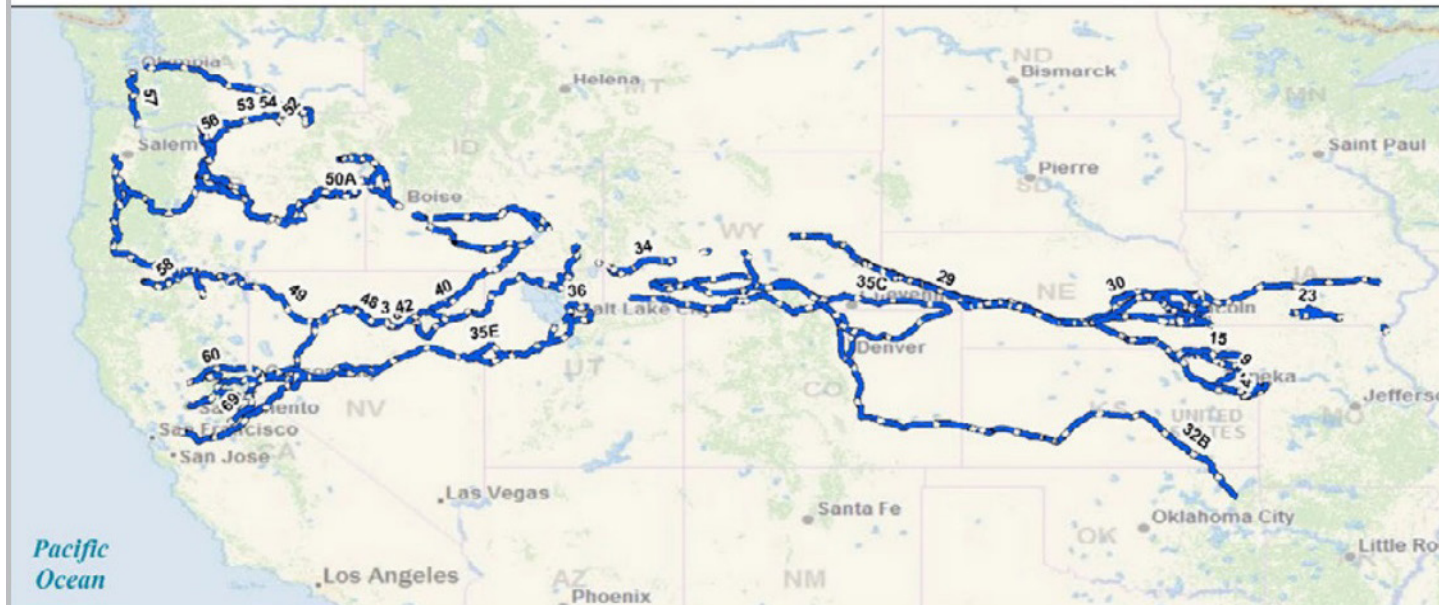
As most of you know, the Omnibus Public Lands Bill of 2009 instructed the National Park Service (NPS) to conduct a feasibility study on 77 additional routes of cutoffs of the Oregon, California, Mormon Pioneer, and Pony Express Trails. In 2019, NPS published its findings, which showed that 26 of these 77 additional routes and cutoffs met the criteria of the National Trails Act.

As you can see, these 26 additional routes and cutoffs represent a diverse geography, impacting all of our trail states and including Oklahoma for the first time ever. Route 32B, the 1850 Southern Route of the Cherokee Trail is the longest additional route included here, jumping off from Tahlequah, Oklahoma, striking the Santa Fe Trail north of Wichita, leaving the Santa Fe Trail at Bent's Old Fort in Colorado and continuing west to Pueblo before turning north along the Front Range to the Laramie Plain, then west across Wyoming until it meets the main branch of the California Trail at Fort Bridger.

Some of these aren't new routes but would simply add more designations to already-existing sections of National Historic Trails. NPS findings also show support for additional routes of the 1846 Mormon exodus across Iowa, five new jumping off points along the Missouri River, the 1841 Bidwell-Bartleson Route, a new alternative route in eastern Nebraska, the Sublette Cutoff in Wyoming, two branches of the Central Overland

26 Eligible Study Routes

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|---|--|---|
| 04. Westport Landing Road | 35C. Central Overland Emigrant Route - Lodgepole Creek Trail | 52. Whitman Mission Route - Three variants |
| 05. Westport Road | 35E. Central Overland Emigrant Route - Simpson Route | 53. Upper Columbia River Route |
| 09. Fort Leavenworth-Big Blue River Route | 36. Weber Canyon Route of the Hastings Cutoff | 54. Umatilla River Route & Columbia River to the Dalles |
| 15. St. Joe Road | 39. Bidwell-Bartleson Route | 56. Cutoff to the Barlow Road |
| 23. 1846 Subsequent Routes A and B | 40. Bishop Creek Cutoff (Bishop Creek Route) | 57. Cowlitz River Route |
| 29. Council Bluffs Road | 42. Greenhorn Cutoff | 58. Yreka Trail |
| 30. 1847 Alternative Elkhorn and Loup River Crossings in Nebraska | 48. Raft River to Applegate Trail | 60. Henness Pass Route |
| 32B. Cherokee Trail - 1850 Southern Route | 49. Applegate Trail (Applegate Trail, or Southern Route to Oregon) | 69. Big Trees Road |
| 34. Sublette Cutoff | 50A. Meek Cutoff - Hambleton | |



in Utah and Nevada, the Weber Canyon Route in the Wasatch Mountains of Utah, the Bishop Creek and Greenhorn Cutoffs in NE Nevada, the Raft River route, the Applegate Trail, the Meek Cutoff, three variants of the Whitman Mission route, the Upper Columbia and Umatilla River routes, the Cutoff to the Barlow Road, the Cowlitz River route along the I-5 corridor in Washington, and in California, the Yreka Trail, the Henness Pass route, and Big Trees Road.

Because the Cherokee Trail is one of the most prominent pieces of trail in this proposed legislation, Sen. John Hickenlooper (D-CO) appears poised to sponsor the bill on the Senate side. We also have the incredibly important support of Trail of Tears Association President Jack Baker of Oklahoma City. Congresswoman Celeste Maloy (R-UT) is willing to do the same on the House side. We have bipartisan support in both Houses of Congress, but we need your help to find co-sponsors for this bill. Watch E-News for future updates, as we hope to have a bill number in the very near future. Staff members from multiple Congressional offices let it be known that Sen. Joe Manchin (D-WV) and Sen. John Barrasso (R-WY), chair and ranking member of the Senate Natural Resources Committee, are working together to create a new omnibus public lands bill that is speculated to be taken up during the “lame duck” period after the election later this year. We would love for this bill to be included

in that omnibus package, and with your help, it will be!

Many routes were denied simply because they fell outside of the period of significance. When Congress amended the National Trails Act in 1978, adding the Oregon, Mormon Pioneer, Lewis & Clark, and Iditarod Trails to the system, they did so by simply drawing single lines from a point of origin to an end point. In the case of the Oregon Trail, the period of significance was limited to 1841-48. The Mormon Pioneer Trail only included those in Brigham Young’s Vanguard Group of 1846-47.

However, when the Act was amended again in 1992 to include the California Trail in the National Trails System, the period of significance was set from 1841-69. The amendment also included numerous Missouri River jumping off points and multiple passes over the Sierra. Since most migration to Oregon happened after 1848, and since most migration to Utah occurred after 1847, we strongly feel that the period of significance should be extended out to 1869 in both cases. This would match the end date for the California Trail and segue into the era of transcontinental rail travel. If we were to get the period of significance extended to 1869 in both cases, many of the routes that were denied because they were developed after 1847 or 1848 would likely become eligible for eventual inclusion into the National Trails System. And once again, Congresswoman Maloy from Utah is willing to sponsor a Period of Significance bill in



the House. We still need a sponsor on the Senate side, and we need your help lining up co-sponsors.

Finally, we feel that the time is ripe to pursue legislation to add the Southern Route to California as part of the California National Historic Trail. We believe that Congresswoman Maloy might also sponsor this bill on the House side, as this legislation would include the Salt Lake City to Los Angeles Wagon Road as part of the Southern Route.

As you can see from the map here, this legislation could significantly impact and greatly increase the mileage of the California National Historic Trail by thousands of miles. We do not have a sponsor for the bill in either House, but we feel that perhaps Sen. John Boozman (R-AR) might be willing to sponsor this bill. He was the lead sponsor on last year's successful additional of the Butterfield Overland to the National Trails System, and with one branch starting in Fort Smith, he seems a logical starting point. Discussions were had with his office, but no commitments were made. We also feel that Senator Markwayne Mullin (R-OK) might be a willing sponsor, as routes cross the entirety of Oklahoma and he's been a huge proponent of all things Route 66 related. Sen. Mullin is also a registered member of the Cherokee Nation, so we are hopeful that he'll also sign on as a co-sponsor of the 4-Trails legislation. Again, conversations were had with his office, but no commitments are forthcoming as of yet. We are hopeful that people will contact their own

elected officials to sign on as sponsors.

Finally, I want to share with you that the OCTA Board of Directors approved Pueblo, Colorado, as the site of the 2025 convention. Pueblo is a very important town for the Cherokee Trail as well as the Mormon exodus of 1846-47, as the so-called "sick detachment" (that also included women and children) who were with the Mormon Battalion wintered in Pueblo before heading north in the spring to hit the Platte River Road and head west to Utah. Wouldn't it be amazing if we showed up in Pueblo in September 2025 not just to enjoy the convention, but to celebrate our legislative wins that will affect Pueblo in a major way? Recently, OCTA staff and volunteers visited Pueblo to search for convention sites and also got to view the new and incredibly beautiful river walk in downtown Pueblo. Numerous statues and plaques commemorating the Goodnight-Loving Cattle Trail adorn the north side of the river walk, while statues and exhibits commemorating the Pike Expedition adorned the west side of the river walk. The El Pueblo Museum is practically a trail museum already, as it richly details the early trail history of this part of Colorado. This is a community that loves and embraces its rich trail history, so let's all work together to get these bills over the finish line.

Again, watch E-News and our social media channels for more information. We will share bill numbers the moment we have them!

Travis Boley, Association Manager

What's Happening with Publications?

The Board was given a Publications Committee Report which included much of what is presented here and it also included a report from our editors. The *Overland Journal* is on schedule and has many articles for the next few issues. *News from the Plains* will be back on schedule. It had been held back to accommodate the mid-year Board Meeting. Comments about the publications are welcomed.

After a brief pause the Publication Committee is now back at work. With the completion of the *Overland Journal Volume 41*, the selection committee is beginning its work to determine the recipient for the Merrill Mattes Award for the best article in last year's journal. Completion of the process should be made before June, with the announcement and presentation of the award at the awards dinner during the Pendleton Convention. As in the past, the many fine articles are sure to make this a difficult task for the reviewers.

The committee is continuing its discussion and a proposal to broaden its responsibilities to include financially the activities of the earlier education activity book publications, *Reading, Writing, and Riding along the Oregon-California Trails*, *Following Lewis and Clarks Track*, *Finding the Right Place*, *Here Comes the Pony*, and also the *Overland Trails Map*. This would primarily include the financial aspects of them. Yet to be determined is the inclusion of the *Student Western Calendar* and its financial costs and income.

The other major function now is to develop a proposed budget for Publications for 2024-25. This should be completed and sent to the Budget Committee before June for its review,

recommendations, and submission to the Board for action during the Pendleton Convention. A quick preliminary review does not see any major increases in costs for the two major publications – the *Overland Journal* and the *News from the Plains*. If the other education items mentioned above are to be included, there should be only a minor addition since most of their recent expenses have already been taken care of. Arrangements have been made for the reprinting of the Oregon-California book and the folding of the map. Both of these actions should provide enough stock for two years' worth of sales. The income from the sales of the special publications is reflected in the bookstore sales.

A future item for discussion is the Graves and Sites book and how to best deal with the numerous additional markings made since the last edition.

Education Publications and Awards

The recipients for the raffles for a class set of activity books are Sara Greene of Wamego, Kansas, and Kristen Fuller from Colorado Springs, Colorado. They requested copies of *Reading, Writing, and Riding Along the Oregon-California Trails*.

The deadlines for the Outstanding Educator Awards and the Student Calendar contest have passed. Based on the entries, which are unknown at the time of this writing, the review and selection of the recipients should now be underway. The recipients are normally notified before June. The calendar should be available for sale at the Pendleton Convention. The award for the Outstanding Educator is usually presented during the convention at the Awards Dinner. *Bill Hill*

Planned Giving - Qualified Charitable Deductions

One of the best things about OCTA are the lifelong friendships with people we see at the trail gatherings. It's always a treat to reconnect with good people that love history and the trails! We're always learning something new or able to reinforce what we already knew. It's a huge investment of time and money to spend five days at a trail gathering somewhere along the trail, and this last visit to El Paso, Texas, was well worth the investment. It's what we do as travelers along the trail!

If you're lucky enough to have a large Individual Retirement Account, we want to be sure you are familiar with the Qualified Charitable Distribution, or QCD's. The Individual Retirement Arrangement (IRA) owners age 70 1/2 or over can transfer up to \$100,000 to charity tax-free each year. It's a great way to give before tax dollars that meet your required minimum distribution requirements, and it won't affect your Medicare Premiums because it doesn't show up as taxable income to you!

These transfers, known as qualified charitable distributions, or QCDs, offer eligible older Americans a great way to easily give to charity before the end of the year. For those who are at least 73 years old, QCDs count toward the IRA owner's required minimum distribution (RMD) for the year.

How to set up a QCD? Any IRA owner who wishes to make a QCD for 2023 should contact their IRA trustee soon so the trustee will have time to complete the transaction before the end of the year.

Normally, distributions from a traditional IRA are taxable when received. With a QCD, however, these distributions become tax-free as long as they're paid directly from the IRA to an eligible charitable organization.

QCDs must be made directly by the trustee of the IRA to the charity. An IRA distribution, such as an electronic payment made directly to the IRA owner, does not count as a QCD. Likewise, a check made (*continued*)

payable to the IRA owner is not a QCD.

Each year, an IRA owner **age 70½ or over when the distribution is made** can exclude from gross income up to \$100,000 of these QCDs. For a married couple, if both spouses are **age 70½ or over when the distributions are made and both have IRAs**, each spouse can exclude up

to \$100,000 for a total of up to \$200,000 per year.

The QCD option is available regardless of whether an eligible IRA owner itemizes deductions. Transferred amounts are not taxable, and no deduction is available for the transfer.

Melissa Shaw, CFP®

Meet Our Members

This edition introduces three new members who are representatives of the cross section of the country. They have been brought together because of their interest in the West and the trails. They are from different parts of the country and have different backgrounds. We have **Pam Potter** from Boeme, Texas, **Jerry Kathan** from Bend, Oregon, and **Terry Clark** from Omaha, Nebraska.

Pam first heard about OCTA from a friend. She noted that she saw it was a successful organization that was doing well in a field in which she had an interest and wanted to learn about its activities.

Living in South Central Texas today, Pam has access to many historical locations. We all know that Texas has a 'big' history, and that its residents are very proud of it. She also wrote even as a child, "Growing up in California, my parents took me camping and fishing and to historical locations. They even took me to see wagon ruts. As we covered the miles in our station wagon, I used to fantasize I was in a wagon traveling across the West."

"My preferred method of travel is on foot or horseback but as I get older, I find myself traveling on four wheels. I have ridden horseback on some trails in California and Nevada including part of the Fremont-Carson Trail. Dirt roads beckon me and I want to know where they go. My Subaru gets me (to) a lot of places but occasionally I go in my friend's truck. I also am fascinated by old cemeteries and have spent a lot of time looking for graves of the famous as well as visiting graves of ordinary people, who carved a path in our Western history. I hope OCTA can help me find new places to go and explore all aspects of the



trails from immigrant, to Indian, to the Pony Express, to stagecoach routes."

"As a board member and past president of the Wild West History Association, my main focus has been on outlaw and lawman history, the wild West, and cowboys. I established the WWHA Facebook page about 10 years ago and am involved with their website, and I am the editor of their newsletter, The Saddlebag. I have also written about and given talks on Western history. I was a member of the Single Action Shooting Society for several years. OCTA and WWHA both have the goal of education and preserving America's past. We need to keep our history alive. "

"I am very steeped in the past. My family came West on a Mormon wagon train from Missouri to California. My heart seems to be off the beaten path and looking for adventure in the wilderness."

It seems to me that Pam has found another organization that can help her "get off the beaten path" and find that "adventure in the wilderness." With all her experience and enthusiasm OCTA should also benefit from her membership.

Jerry's introduction to OCTA came from another source, one of our many YouTube productions. It tweaked his interest, drew him in, and now he is hooked. His interest in history can be traced back to his early years in Calaveras Country, California, and the stories his grandparents told of the early gold mining.



Calaveras was in the foothills of the central part of the gold bearing area of the Sierra Nevada. His great-great grandfather had left New England and was in Sacramento by 1862. One of Jerry's goals is to find out how he got to California. His great grandfather was living in Camp Seco, Calaveras County after the turn of the century where his grandfather and later his father were born. They were involved in various types of mining and were involved in mining and moved around the area as mining fluctuated. Another paternal relative had come to California during the Gold Rush in 1852 by way of Panama and shortly

thereafter returned to New England. Those relatives had settled there before 1750.

Jerry hopes that his membership in OCTA will help him in his quest to learn more about how his relatives exactly got to California, and whether they came overland by one of the trails. He has seen what some of OCTA's volunteers have done, working on known sites, finding new ones, and working to protect them. He hopes that he can get involved as a volunteer working on similar projects.

While he studied some history, archaeology, and anthropology in college, he graduated with a science degree and his master's in environmental education. He worked in the field of Environmental Health and in implementing regulations for food safety, wastewater management, and public drinking water management. His interests broadened to include American history and especially, westward expansion and settlement.

His interests include hiking, camping, hunting, fishing, and traveling to historic sites. In 1992 he and his family moved to Bend, OR and since then he has met many residents whose ancestors came there over the Oregon Trail.

Let's do what we can to help Jerry in his quest.

Terry had never heard of OCTA until June of 2023. He was on Facebook and came across a post about the OCTA July Gering Convention. The more he read, the more he wanted to know about it. The result was that he registered and attended the convention. His own comments say it best, "I really enjoyed the convention in Gering, Nebraska, and especially the speakers, bus trips, and meeting people from all over the United States. I can't say enough (about) how nice everyone was, and what a good job the Gering Convention Center did in putting on the convention. The tour guides on the bus tours were very good, and they knew the history of the places we visited." He was even able to talk with Richard Hunt about his work on social media and



how that brought him to OCTA and Gering.

His interest in the American West started many years ago when he read various books about the west and its exploration. He had visited the St. Louis area and saw the Arch and its museum and the nearby Lewis and Clark Museum and Boathouse. He retired in 2004, bought a motorcycle and started to tour historic sites with his friends. They would stop and read the historic site signs and visit some of the museums. Living in the Omaha area there were plenty of sites both east and west of there.

Over the years he and his friends have traveled along much of the Lewis and Clark Trail especially from Montana to Oregon and Fort Clatsop; followed the Mormon Trail from Nauvoo, Illinois to Council Bluffs and Omaha; taken the Oregon Trail from Kansas City to Rock Creek, Fort Kearny, Ash Hollow to Chimney Rock and Scotts Bluff National Monument, continuing west into Wyoming all the way to Casper and its museums and finally to South Pass; and on another trip they followed much of the Lincoln Highway. It seems Terry has done lots of trail traveling. When asked to identify his favorite site, it was a listing (How can you pick one of so many?) "I really enjoyed all of them." Ash Hollow Historic Park with its fresh spring water and green grass and the pioneer cemetery; the Gering-Scotts Bluffs area & getting caught in a rainstorm at Robidoux Pass; I love Wyoming, so much history and great places to see, from the trails to the National Parks, mountains, deserts, and everything in between. Another favorite place is Oregon, so diverse, no wonder the pioneers were headed there."

His favorite mode of travel used to be by motorcycle, but after an accident he now uses a pickup. He prefers the back roads and finding the hidden gems, the things you never knew about and the real sights and sounds of America.

He now enjoys the OCTA publications with all their information, the quality books, and the YouTube productions.

Terry has lived all his life in the Omaha area. He graduated from the University of Nebraska, married, has two daughters and three grandkids. He worked as a golf cart mechanic and now enjoys his retirement traveling and exploring historic sites, museums, and reading.

Terry sounds just like many of the rest of us rut nuts!

Bill Hill



Marketing/PR Committee

OCTA Marketing/PR Team Continues to Blaze the Trail!

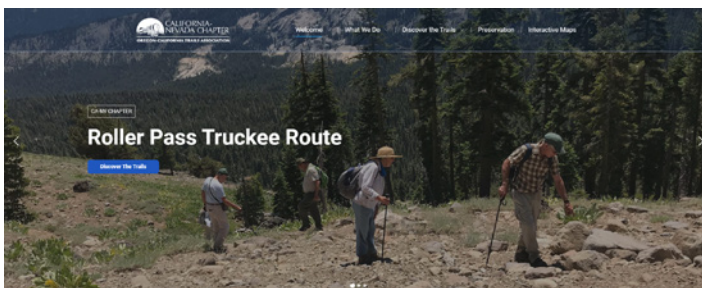
We are excited to relay great news to our readership throughout this article! As most of you are aware our Marketing and PR team are dedicated to expanding a comprehensive social media platform, Google Ads program, websites, and YouTube videos to promote OCTA's core objectives, goals, and mission. As part of our recent expansion efforts our team is planning now to work to take on the Awards committee efforts within the marketing team, and to also work with chapter leaders to help increase membership through marketing and promotions. In addition, plans to keep the momentum of the OCTA YouTube Channel through video productions which went viral for a period in January and substantially increased YouTube revenue for the organization. Find the summary in bold of the exciting news we are sharing in this version of NFP!

- **Online Audience Has Exploded – YouTube Goes Viral**
- **Facebook & Google Ads Continue to Soar**
- **OCTA Store Expands to Google Shopping and More!**

We are elated that Colby Crabtree, Digital Media Intern, has continued to help with Google Ads, social media creation/postings and ads creation, including elevating the OCTA TikTok, Facebook and Instagram accounts with consistent attention to the platforms. Colby also has assisted many chapter leaders in creating new business Facebook pages, training on how to expand their Facebook reach and helped incorporate many new chapter logos for social and chapter websites. The chapter logos creation was done by volunteer, Scott Alumbaugh, who is greatly appreciated for sharing his talents in that endeavor.

Regional Representative Ciara Galbraith created a BYU essay contest regarding the Westward migration that was launched in February on octa-trails.org with contest submissions being accepted in March. We will have more to report about that exciting project in the next edition of NFP. Ciara also has helped with OCTA website updates.

CA/NV Chapter New Mobile-Friendly Website Launches!

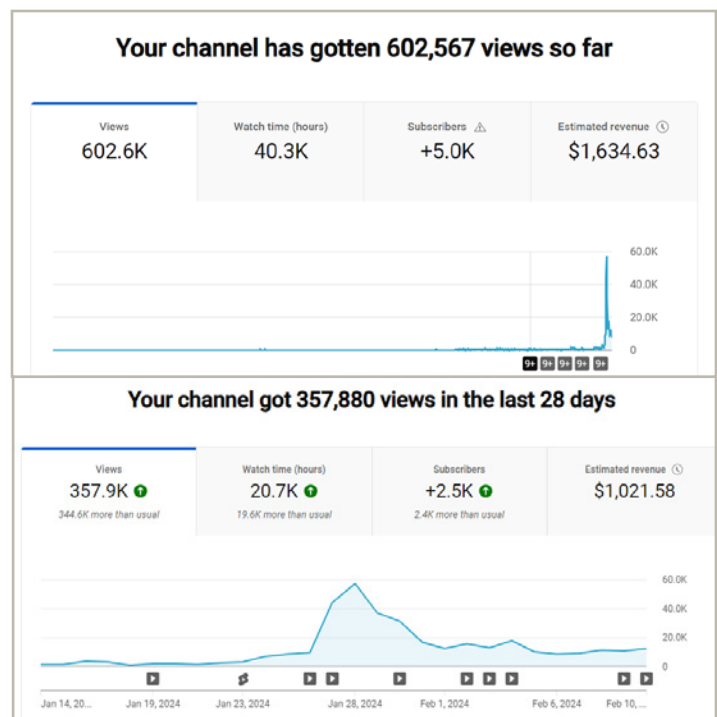


The Bella Media Service team completed the CA/NV OCTA Chapter site at the time of writing this newsletter.

It is incorporated into the octa-trails.org website and can be found at www.canvocta.org. The new site promotes the beautiful OCTA brand colors touting a rich history of the CA/NV emigrant trails, links to NPS interactive maps and mobile apps. It also offers chapter members an opportunity to sign up and pay for events online, submit digital award nominations forms easily, sign up for periodic Trail Talk newsletters and much more. Explore the California and Nevada trails online today!

We are also excited to see the octa-trails.org website rebranding and new home page complete and it is expected to be available to view by the time of this newsletter release or very soon after.

OCTA YouTube Succeeds in Surpassing Goals and Goes Viral!



The OCTA YouTube Channel went viral in January of 2024! I add excitement to that statement because it is what every video production team dreams will happen when they create a YouTube channel. Going viral means that a vast audience is both viewing and connecting with a particular video or videos. As seen in the first stats for all-time growth report frames, OCTA YouTube has received over 602,000 views (>999% increase in the year before), over 40,000 watch time hours (774% more than the year before) and 5,000 subscribers (626% more than the same period the year before), shooting the revenue to the moon with over \$1,600 estimated monthly revenue.

In the next stats view it shows the 28-days report in January when the channel went viral with nearly 360,000 views, 21,000 watch time hours and over 2,500

subscribers and monthly revenue at \$1,021.58.

The updated YouTube subscriber total as of 3/27/2024 is at an all-time impressive high of 6,398!

Among the content on the channel, the top 2 most-watched videos in the last 365 days at the time of writing this article is as follows:

1. Amazing Oregon Trail Swales in Wyoming with interpreter Kylie McCormick

- 85,061 views (how many YouTube accounts viewed the video)
- 1,228,698 impressions (how many times the video was shown to viewers)
- \$226.21 of estimated revenue
- 511 subscribers

2. The earliest photo of an Oregon Trail wagon train with interpreter Clint Gilchrist

- 75,989 views
- 1,208,523 impressions
- \$190.18 of estimated revenue
- 450 subscribers

Other honorable mentions that have reached great expectations are: The Curious Case of Sarah Thomas' Tombstone with interpreter Randy Wise, The South Pass People Don't Know with Clint Gilchrist as interpreter, The Notorious Hog Ranch with Kylie McCormick, and GRAVE DOGS! In Search of a Massacre on the Oregon Trail with Jerry Eichorst.

Ads Drive Results and Growth!

The OCTA Video Team has also dedicated significant efforts to producing and publishing ads. The marketing team is now also publishing YouTube ads. Gina Sifers (Gina) Chairperson volunteered to run 3 YouTube video ads for the Idaho Chapter and helped Richard run two others for OCTA National. Richard Hunt, Video Productions, and Jerry Eichorst, President of the Idaho Chapter helped with the project. The three ads for Idaho reached 22,906 people with over 3,000 views for a budget of \$189 paid by the Idaho Chapter to run promotional ads to promote their chapter.





Intern, Colby Crabtree, has also created excellent promotional video ads that Gina creates ad campaigns for on Facebook/Instagram and reports on the results. The first promotion this year was to spread the word about the El Paso symposium. The team has plans to begin promoting the Pendleton Oregon Conference in the first part of April 2024 targeting our main audience of 45-65+ in the geographic regions where we can draw the most people.

In terms of upcoming content, Richard Hunt will help us with one more push with video content to be run through March before he takes on his new executive

director roll with the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation.

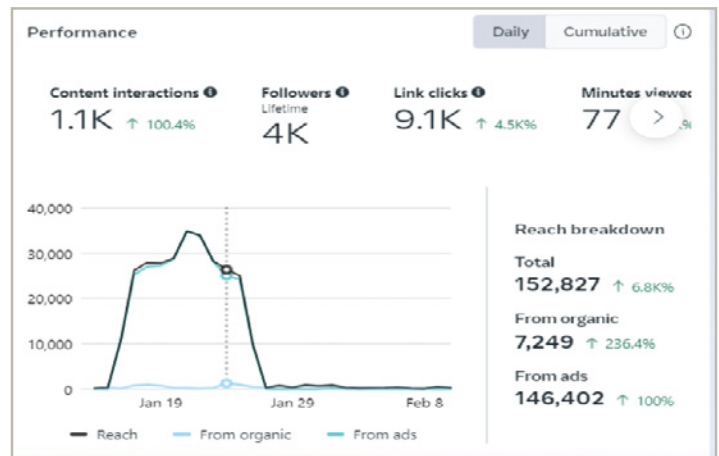
As we welcome in our new intern Chip Ashby, he will be taking on video production lead work and Travis and Chip will be filming speakers in El Paso and a **few other site locations in El Paso, then they are off to Nebraska City at the end of April. In late May, Lassen's Ranch and Johnson Ranch in California and then Elko Trail Days in early June will be filmed.**

Social Media – The Roar in the Crowd!

1		Amazing Oregon Trail Swales in Wyoming Jan 27, 2024
2		The earliest photo of an Oregon Trail wagon train? Dec 26, 2023
3		The Curious Case of Sarah Thomas' Tombstone Nov 3, 2023
4		The South Pass people don't know... Jan 26, 2024

Social media continues to reach a record number of people/followers this year so far, has leveled out and is still seeing exciting, positive results. Facebook and Instagram efforts with the help of the dedicated Marketing/PR team, volunteers, and intern continue to reach more people on the platform than ever before in OCTA modern history.

The first stats in this section are the 28-day report as of February 11, 2024 on Facebook, showing overall total reach, breakdown from organic (reaching accounts without ads and only posts, reels or stories) and paid ad reach. To date and for all time the OCTA page has gained 4,000 followers. Content interactions went up significantly at 100.4% and links clicks up 4,500 % at 9,100



clicks. Overall, to date Facebook OCTA reached a record number of people with a whopping 6,800% increase at a reach of 152,827. The social media team reaches so many people by posting often, posting reels, and from running ads. OCTA Facebook reach when advertising is 2,008.2% higher versus when OCTA runs no ads.

We are elated to report the following results from the Facebook ad promotion to date (Feb. 11, 2024) for the El Paso symposium. The team also ran 2 other YouTube ads and the first one to be published in Spanish (thanks to Travis Boley for the translation) for the El Paso symposium and will be reported in the next News from the Plains. Stay tuned for more GOOD news and results from this team!



- The Ad reached 147,600 Facebook accounts that viewed the ads at least once.
- Received 8,882 clicks (the number of clicks, taps or swipes within the ad that led to advertiser-specified destinations, on or off Facebook.) All links led to octa-trails.org regfox registration page.
- We spent \$149.99 and reached a close equal share of men to women with 45-65+ being the dominant ages that were the most interested.

Our team is dedicated to using a portion of the marketing budget to excel advertising efforts to reach more people to generate greater awareness of OCTA's events, mission, and goals. We can't do it without our members' support so we encourage you to continue to share our social media posts, ads and videos often to help us expand our reach.

Google Ads Grant Continues to Powers Up OCTA's Online Reach!

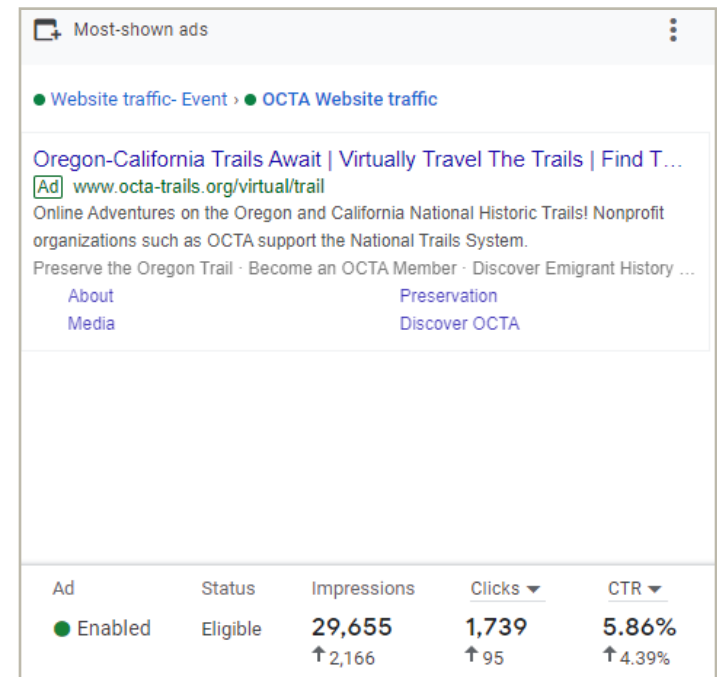
As a recap, Google Ads gives OCTA inkind advertising to run ads on Google search and partner sites. We

promote all of the segments of OCTA, including, preservation causes, westward migration history, store products, genealogy, media, events, donations and new membership calls to action. All of the ads lead readers to various pages of octa-trails.org website to learn more about each of the segments.

Jan 1, 2023 – Feb 11 2024 Google Ads Progress:

Clicks	Impressions	Avg. CPC	Cost
5.32K	80.2K	\$1.93	\$10.3K

- OCTA is running 29 ads
- Results reigning in at 5,320 clicks
- 80,200 impressions (people who viewed the ads and some people who viewed the ads more than once).
- "Cost" of ad spend for approximate 13 months paid by Google: \$10,300.



One of the most-shown ads in 2024 on Google search and partner sites.

Explanation of the report results terms:

- **Impressions:** An impression is counted each time an ad is served and viewed. Impressions help one understand how often an ad is being seen.
- **Click Through Rate (CTR):** Impressions divided by clicks and OCTA CTR is performing to Google Ads grant standards.

The Google Ads program continues to expand OCTA's message and increase traffic to the octa-trails.org website. Our new intern Chip will be helping Gina with the optimization of the account.

**Website Visits Soar Around the Same Time
YouTube Goes Viral!**

The following report shows octa-trails.org the 30 days previous report highlight as of Feb 12, 2024 with a strong correlation to YouTube going viral around the same time in January. Facebook stats also increased significantly in the same viral period.



OCTA Store Now Available on Google Shopping!

Gina added free Google Shopping to OCTA's repertoire of promotional programs in December 2023 to give the ability to show products from the OCTA store on Google

Search Shopping tab to assist in increasing OCTA store sales. The program is now being managed by Ciara Galbraith, Regional Representative. Stats for Google Shopping will be included in the next newsletter.

With recent approval of the team, we have plans for Gina to also incorporate OCTA store products on the OCTA YouTube channel so that products can be shown on YouTube that will lead watchers to the OCTA store. This effort combined with Google Shopping is forecasted to increase OCTA store sales significantly.

OCTA's online presence has continued to expand. We are excited about what we have accomplished as a team through 2024 so far and remain confident that our efforts will continue to produce positive results that lead to substantial growth as we continue to work hard through the rest of this year. We thank all our members, partners, subscribers, volunteers, donors, and followers for all your support.

Gina Sifers, OCTA Marketing/PR Chair and Team

Welcome New Members!

Thomas Armstrong
Caldwell, ID

Elizabeth Avila
Portland, OR

Tara Becker
Elko, NV

William Beecham
Delray Beach, FL

Annie Berlemann
Elbert, CO

Andrea L. Bishop Stout
Springfield, MO

Jen Bowen
Bend, OR

Anthony Bowler
North Las Vegas, NV

Steven Bryant
San Diego, CA

Shaun Comfort
Spicewood, TX

Doran Coonse
Prineville, OR

Shelby L Eaton
Kirkland, WA

Christopher Ford
Portage, IN

Deborah Fox
Everett, WA

Keith Fraser
Centerville, UT

Bill Gallagher
Bement, IL

Michael Hammond
El Segundo, CA

Joel Heisler
Murphy, OR

Robert Keahey
Sunnyvale, CA

Lamar Chet &
Mary Beth Kendell

John Kent
Napa, CA

Marsha Lowry
Pocatello, ID

Kate Marshall
Reno, NV

Bridget McCandless
Independence, MO

Todd Nelson
Kansas City, MO

Kathleen Norman
Peoria, AZ

Wally Pearson
Meridian, ID

Andrew Poultridge
Port Angeles, WA

Bill Pugsley
Lansing, NC

Steph Ratzburg
Cameron Park, CA

Cynthia Rhodes
Whitewater, KS

Laura Rose
St. Paul, NE

Victoria Scism
Garland, TX

Vickie Speek
Port Charlotte, FL

Glorence Stevens
Renton, WA

Bobby Stevens
Colorado Springs, CO

Marci Trimlett
Oroville, CA

David Williams
Baltimore, MD

Douglas Willis
Copalis Beach, WA

Daniel Wills
Huntington Beach, CA

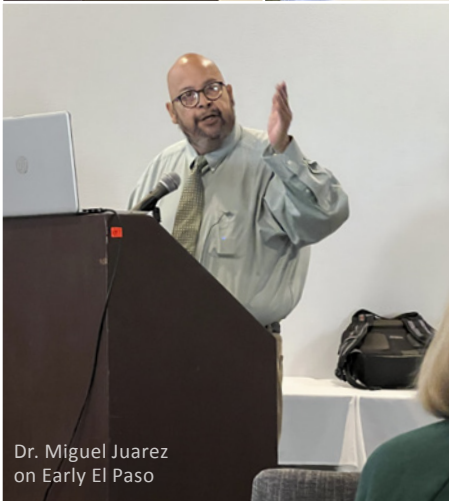
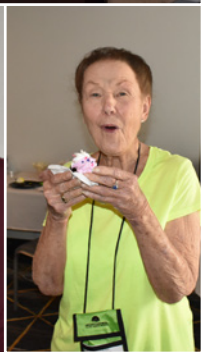
Rosie Zarchin
Ben Lomond, CA

The Southern Trails Chapter Trail Gathering in El Paso

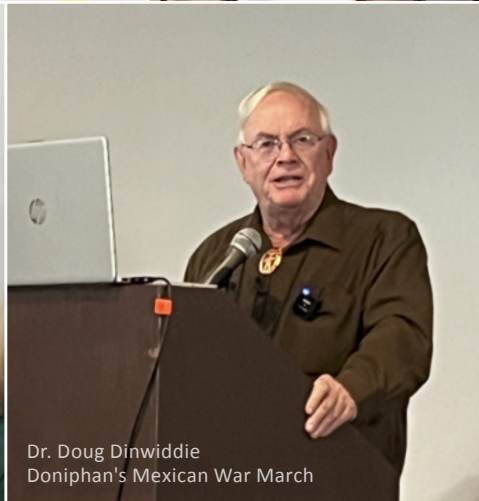
Photos by Roger Blair, Frank Gifford and Jay Lawrence



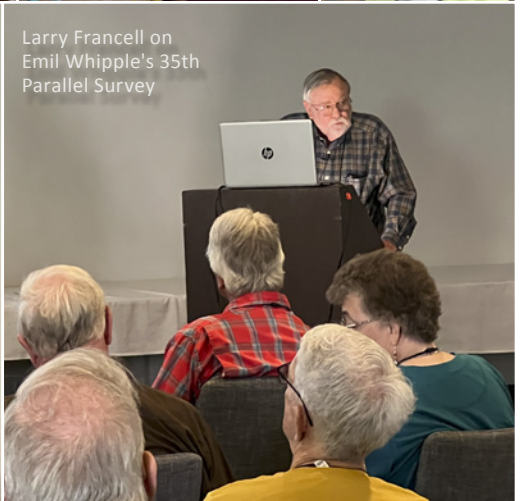
Helen Hankins heading up the Board Meeting



Dr. Miguel Juarez on Early El Paso



Dr. Doug Dinwiddie Doniphan's Mexican War March

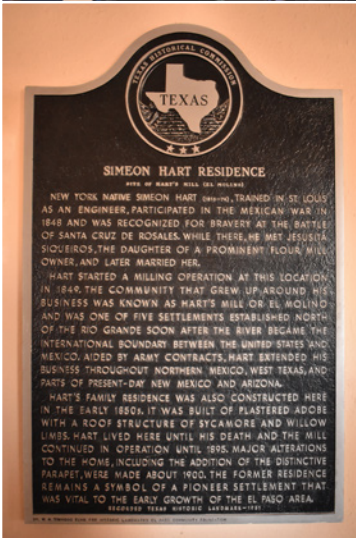


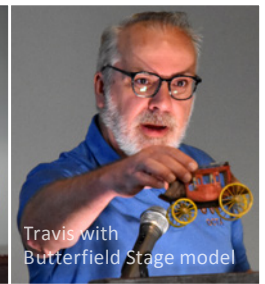
Larry Francell on Emil Whipple's 35th Parallel Survey



Cecilia Bell spoke on Ana Marie Morris





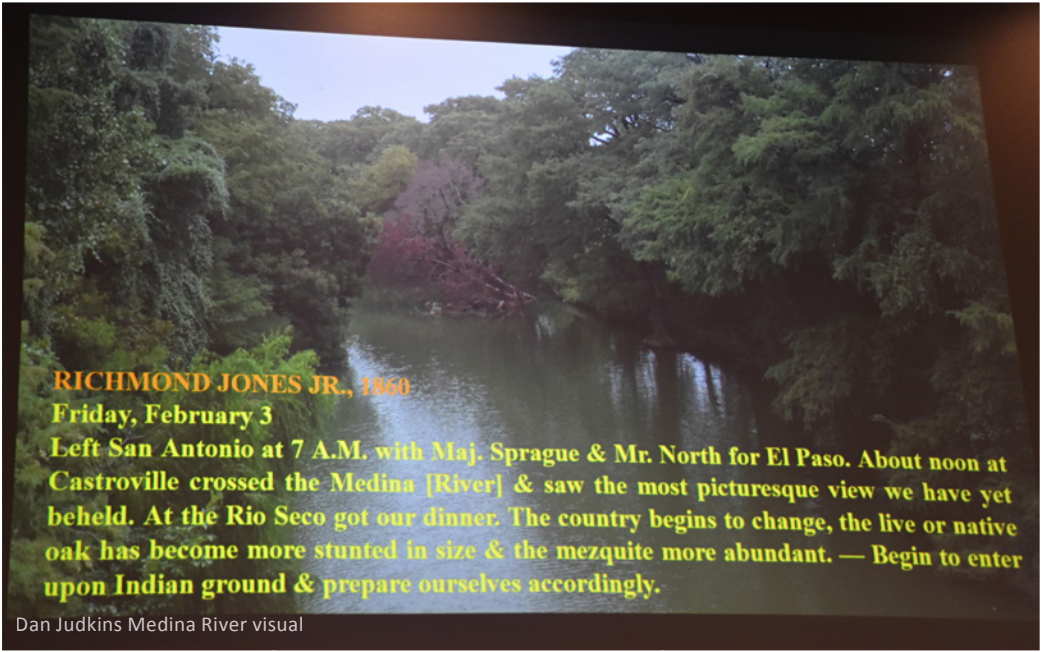




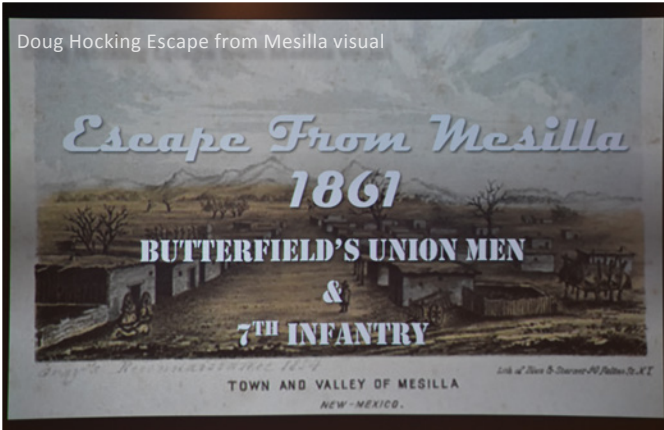
Claudia Rivers



Doug Hocking



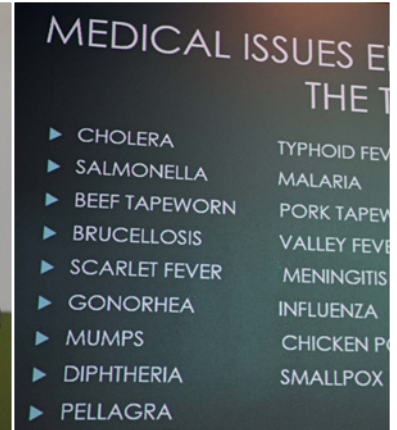
Dan Judkins Medina River visual



Doug Hocking Escape from Mesilla visual



Dr. John Bell



Craig and Laura Anders, Heritage Museum





Alexandra McKinney at Mesilla Plaza



Near Fort Davis



San Elizario, 1877



San Elizario



Socorro Mission



Socorro Mission



Ysleta Mission



News from the Chapters

SOUTHERN TRAILS

The Southern Trails Chapter of OCTA enjoyed a Trail Gathering in El Paso, TX as part of the National Board Meeting in March 2024. We started with a fabulous reception at the Abara House where we heard about their efforts to save and restore the historic old building. It is located right along the Rio Grande River, and we walked the grounds next to the border wall.

We enjoyed speakers on Wednesday and Friday, and bus tours on Thursday and Saturday.

It was great to learn the history of Mesilla and be able to tour the town and their church. We spent time in Las Cruces as well, with a visit to the Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum. We enjoyed the cemetery at Concordia, and the story of the Magoffin House and those early settlers in the El Paso area. We learned the story of the forever moving Rio Grande River and how it defined the boundary between Mexico and Texas at the Chamizal National Memorial and the efforts made to

better define the border in 1964.

We had a chance to tour the Presidio Chapel of San Elizario, the Socorro Mission, and the Ysleta Mission. It was fun to turn back the hands of time all the way to the 1600's as we toured and learned of the Tigua people that helped build Ysleta in 1682.

Our banquet speaker Dr. Maria-Elena Giner, Commissioner of the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC), shared details on the Rio Grande water treaties between the US and Mexico, as well as the Monuments that help to define the border and the role of the IBWC in preservation of borderlands trails.

It was a great gathering, and we were appreciative of all the efforts it took to make it so successful. We appreciate Travis Boley and the staff from National that helped the Southern Trails Chapter put together this joint effort. It was fun to work with you all.

Melissa Shaw



GATEWAY

July 21-26 - National Convention of the Oregon-California Trails Association in Pendleton, Oregon. Please see the OCTA website for the registration form. It looks to be a fun and educational time for all!

August 3 - Gateway field trip to the Historic Miles Ranch and Baker's Ford. The ranch is about 1 hour & 15 minutes from St. Joseph. We will leave at 8 a.m. at the Convention & Visitors Center and car caravan to the ranch. We can purchase a pizza lunch or you may bring your own lunch. Return to St. Joseph will be about 5 p.m. More details to follow.

October 12 - Death on the Trail presented by several Gateway members. Time for the program is 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. at the beautiful Center for Joy at 12th and Francis in St. Joseph.

November TBA - Gateway will hold its annual membership dinner, program and election of officers. Location will be at the San Jose Steak House.

June 1 - Gateway members are invited to join Trails

Head members at Alcove Spring, south of Marysville, Kansas. There will be a rededication of the Sarah Keyes Monument by OCTA and Daughters of the American Revolution members. Keyes is the daughter of an American Revolutionary War soldier. There will also be a tour of the Alcove Spring area - a favorite camping spot on the Independence Road, including the Donner Party.

You will need to arrange your own car pools and arrive at Alcove Spring at noon. This is a 2 hour drive. You may wish to bring a sack lunch.

June 29 - Meet at the Remington Nature Center at 9:45 and carpool to Forest City, Missouri. Dr. Peggy Ann Edwards will meet us at the City Hall where we will eat lunch (bring your own sack lunch) and hear about the history of Forest City. In the mid-1800s, the town was on the Missouri River and near the Iowa Point crossing for wagon trains. We will also visit the City Drug Store Museum for an old-fashioned soda fountain dessert.

Jackie Lewin

NORTHWEST

The Northwest Chapter is looking forward to an eventful year. Twenty-three members attended the chapter's annual meeting on Saturday, March 2, at the Columbia Gorge Discovery Center in The Dalles, Oregon. In the morning, the meeting began with a social hour followed by a business meeting. After a bring-your-own lunch, Roger Blair gave an interesting program on "Nineveh Ford: Contentious Early Pioneer." Ford was a leader in the 1843 Oregon Trail migration and became known for not only being first in many endeavors but also as a contentious settler in the Willamette Valley and eastern Oregon. The meeting ended with our always popular raffle.

The chapter has a schedule of Zoom programs lined up through June, hosted by Dave Welch. The Zoom programs provide exceptional programming not otherwise possible for our geographically widespread chapter. Furthermore, the Northwest Chapter has coordinated programs with the Colorado Chapter and occasionally had joint programs.

In May Robin Baker will lead a team in exploring trail evidence in the Blue Mountains for the fourth year in a row. The aim of the explorations is to unravel the myriad overlying and interwoven transportation routes across the Blue Mountains to ultimately determine the original Oregon Trail in this significant segment. The project is progressing well with Robin's impeccable maps and research material that complement the ground exploration.

A major focus for the chapter this year is the 2024 OCTA convention that will be at Wildhorse Resort and Casino, July 21-25, in Pendleton, Oregon. Convention Chair Roger Blair is working with a convention planning committee of Northwest and Idaho Chapter members to make this a highly successful event. The usual speakers conference and bus tours are in keeping with the theme, the Shifting Legacy of the Oregon Trail and its impact on Indigenous Peoples in eastern Oregon and Washington. The Northwest Chapter is honored to host the 41st annual OCTA convention. *Susan Badger Doyle*

NEBRASKA

The Nebraska chapter for this issue is highlighting the Mormon Trails Forum and Guided Tour - Winter Quarters

to the Elkhorn River. See the registration form below and/or contact the MTAN for more information. *Harlan Seyfer*

MORMON TRAILS FORUM ~ and ~ GUIDED TOUR- WINTER QUARTERS *to the* ELKHORN RIVER

SATURDAY, APRIL 27, 2024

**Mormon Trail Center
3215 State St.; Omaha, NE**

- **8:30AM-12:15PM**-Mormon Trail Center
Presentations regarding the Trails from the Missouri River to points west.
- **12:30PM-4:30PM**-Guided Bus Tour
From the Mormon Trail Center to Elkhorn River Crossing; George Shaw, speaker. Mr. Shaw, retired City Planner, will discuss the various routes and landmarks of the Trail through Omaha to the Elkhorn.

Cost is \$50 per person which includes Presentations at the Trail Center, Lunch, Tour Transportation from the Trail Center to the Elkhorn River and back to the Trail Center, and a 2024 membership to *Mormon Trails Across Nebraska*. Preregistration is required by April 20. Fee to attend the Forum only is \$25.00 and does not include lunch or MTAN membership.

The event is sponsored by the **Mormon Trails Across Nebraska (MTAN)**, an organization formed to promote, preserve, and publicize the existence of Mormon Trails across Nebraska from 1846 to 1869.

For more information, contact Fred Roeser 308-383-0848 or Dick Bennett at 801-636-8976; also see the Mormon Trails Across Nebraska Facebook page.

REGISTRATION FORM

NAME _____ PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____

EMAIL _____

NUMBER ATTENDING _____ AMT. ENCLOSED _____

MAIL CHECKS TO:

MORMON TRAILS ACROSS NEBRASKA
2652 PRAIRIE PLACE; COLUMBUS, NE 68601



IDAHO

My three Boise Schools Community Education classes were sold out with a waiting list. Everyone enjoyed the classes and we picked up several new OCTA and Idaho chapter members. About 25 of the participants signed up for the annual spring byway tour on April 27. The annual byway tour is always a lot of fun. We will visit Oregon Trail sites from Mountain Home to Boise, including some on private property. We will also have a potluck lunch at Sweetbriar Vineyard & Winery north of Mountain Home on the Oregon Trail.

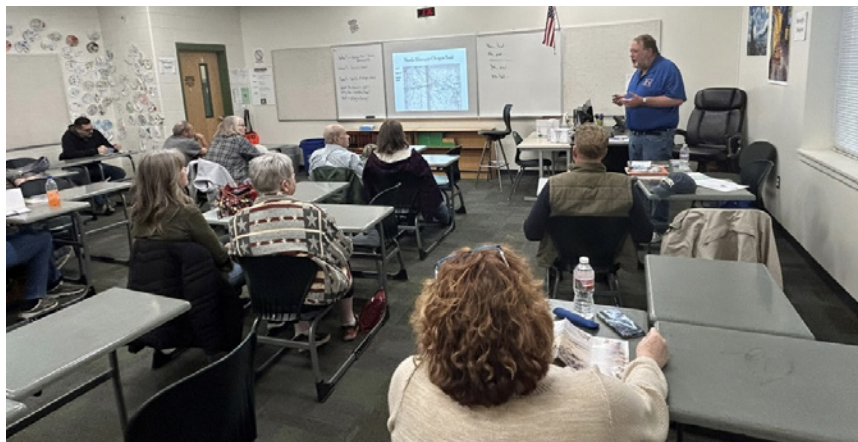
We have our annual City of Rocks activities planned for Thursday, May 16 through Saturday, May 18. We will be unveiling three paintings by Nicholas Lowe of Pinnacle Pass on Thursday afternoon. On Friday we will do metal detecting on a section of California Trail discovered in Circle Creek Canyon last year. Saturday will be the spring chapter meeting at Perkins Restaurant in Burley. The meeting will start at 10:00 am. Nicholas Lowe will be our guest speaker.

I have recruited a new videographer to work with me to create videos for the Idaho chapter. John McVey has

been a long-time member who faded away, but recently let me know he wanted to get more active again. Knowing his strong interest in photography, I twisted his arm to help with the videos. I am sure it will take some to practice and learn but we will figure it out and John will do a great job. It will be tough to replace Richard Hunt but we'll do the best we can. Thank you John!

I am trying to plan the rest of the year and finding it difficult due to the number of options available. Some of the outings being considered include

- Preview of the pre-convention tour to be led by the Idaho chapter
 - Silver City ghost town
 - Cadaver dogs at Little Goose Creek in northern Nevada
 - Jeffreys Route in INL
 - The Dalles-Boise military road
 - Cadaver dogs at Kemmerer, Wyoming
 - Utter attack sites on the South Alternate
 - Video outings from the Wyoming border to Fort Hall
- Jerry Eichhorst*



Jerry's Community Education Class, March 2024



Paintings of Nicholas Lowe



California Trail in Circle Creek Canyon

CROSSROADS

Here at Utah Crossroads, Spring is finally breaking through and even though it's still cold outside, we look back on a relatively mild winter. The cold months provided a time for me to reflect on the past thirty years of my Crossroads membership—to remember some events I experienced and the people I got to know and work with since I joined in about 1993.

We had some great conventions. In 1994 our convention was held in Salt Lake City, and 750 people were in attendance. The previous year (1993), in Baker City, Oregon, over 800 people attended (the most I remember since being in OCTA). My memories include working on activities and conventions with many great people — Dave Bigler, Vern Gorzitze (2005), and Gar Elison (Ogden, Utah, 2018) — all who have passed away. Others who have passed away that I have worked with over the years are WL Bud Rusho, Jerry Dunton, and Al Mulder.

I remember Will Bagley, Roy Tea, John Eldredge, and other greats who created field trip guides and booklets. I remember Jesse Petersen, Victor Heath, Marie Irvine, Rush Spedden, Drew and Marie Wanosik, Garn Hatch, Chuck Milliken, Craig Fuller, Robert and Linda Carter, George Ivory, Lee Kreutzer, Steve Berlin, Kay Threlkeld, Terry Welch, and Dixon Ford (and his oxen). All these people left a great impression on me. The knowledge they shared with us has become legendary. With Jesse Petersen and Roy Tea we planted more than 140 rail T posts across Utah marking historic sites. Sadly, many

of the aforementioned people have passed on. There are four of us left from the “old guard”— myself, Victor Heath, Drew Wannosik and Jesse Petersen. Sadly, three of us are well into our 80's and are no longer able to perform the duties and tasks at hand.

This has caused some reflection on my part. I have been writing for Crossroads for 12-14 years. I took over from Al Muldor who wrote *Around the Cracker Barrel* for a number of years. When he was no longer able to do it, Linda Turner and I stepped up and began writing. Eventually, it was just me (since about 2014). The time has come for me to “hang up the clipboard,” due to my own aging problems, and to pass the pen to someone else. Therefore, this will be my final contribution to *News from the Plains*. It's time for someone else to take on this responsibility. It's been an enjoyable experience. I've enjoyed reflecting on our achievements and accomplishments. I've felt strongly about the importance of keeping Crossroads in the news. However, it's time for a younger person to carry this on – to “pick up the clipboard.”

This will be my last contribution – my retirement message. I would like to thank all the people in OCTA and Crossroads for all the good times and memories. I shall always keep my membership in OCTA because I certainly believe in its mission to preserve western trail history. I salute you all, and thanks for the memories!

Anton Oscar Olson

CALIFORNIA-NEVADA

The CA/NV Chapter is anxious to get out in the field to do trail research, mapping, marking and repairing interpretive signs. We're also focused on future events and tasks that do not require good weather or a lack of snow. We have been hosting monthly Zoom meetings of the Board to get ready for the coming field season. We have opened the Zoom meetings to the entire chapter and have found it very helpful when looking for assistance.

We are planning our in-person Chapter meeting and awards event April 29th in Truckee at the Truckee Airport. In addition, Bob Crowley and Tim Twietmeyer from History Expeditions will give a short presentation on how their expedition went following Snowshoe Thompson's mail route between Placerville, California and Genoa, Nevada.

On June 18th the chapter will be having a day of presentations focused on how to find an emigrant trail and how to record it once you do. Once again, this will

be at the Truckee Airport. On June 19th Chapter Vice President David Fullerton will give a field tour of the California Trail between Verdi and Truckee. David has been doing in-depth research on this trail for several years. I think he is working on a PhD. This will be an easy drive/walk tour.

John Winner led several work parties to gather up and move Don Buck's collection of 1500 books, maps, diaries and other loose material from Sunnyvale to Sacramento. The landowner of the property that holds the Johnson Ranch, Camp Far West and the last two miles of the California Trail, Angelo Tsakopoulos, kindly offered up an empty office to store the collection. We have full access to the office building and can now start the task of cataloguing and scanning. A schedule of workdays has already begun. The task of finding a permanent home remains.

Bill Homes

COLORADO-CHEROKEE

The Colorado-Cherokee Trail Chapter is proud to announce that we have been officially approved as host of the OCTA Convention in Pueblo in September 2025. We are excited to host again 16 years after our previous hosting in Loveland, 2009. We are planning a diverse dive into the history of the Pueblo trails, recognizing the many cultures that have influenced travel on the trails through this region. Please join us in 2025!

Our chapter also approved amendments to our bylaws to bring them up to date with our current organizational function. Thanks in particular go to the Northwest Chapter for providing an excellent example of their current bylaws for us to consider while updating ours.

We want to thank Ginny Dissette for her ten plus years of service to our chapter as Secretary. Your commitment to us is greatly appreciated. Thanks Ginny!

We also want to welcome Karen Hall as our new Secretary. Karen is Regent of Overland Trail Chapter, NSDAR, out of LaPorte and is part of our northern Colorado field team. Thanks Karen for taking on this vital role. We look forward to your contributions as an officer of the board.

In coordination with OCTA National, the chapter is building a new educator's trunk specifically for teaching about emigration on the Cherokee Trail in Colorado. Once completed, we will house this at a public entity and make it available to educators in the state to check out and use.

Another initiative we are taking on is to get the Cherokee Trail recognized on the state tourism map and with the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT). We have recently given feedback to CDOT on updating their Virginia Dale kiosk sign information about the Cherokee Trail and hope to further our engagement with them on future map and signage projects going forward.

Finally, we will be helping the Wild West History Association shoot a few videos on Roberts Ranch and Virginia Dale State this May on the topics of a Native American buffalo jump, the Cherokee Trail, and Jack Slade and the Overland Stage.

Mapping Committee Report: The northern Colorado field team is wrapping up its ground-proofing on Stonewall Creek Ranch near Livermore, Colorado. Strong class 1 field ruts of the Cherokee Trail were found paralleling Grayback ridge. A report is being written to submit to the National Park Service, National Trails Office. Later this spring we will be joining the Northern Colorado Chapter of the Colorado Archaeological Association (NCC-CAS) on two projects there. The preserved 1871 Barlow Ranch residence purportedly had a blacksmith/wheelwright shop nearby which we will metal detect and dig test pits to locate it. Another project will demonstrate ground penetrating radar to locate unmarked graves at Livermore Cemetery which

was recently searched by the team with the help of human remains dogs to discover several unmarked graves for the landowner. We will be making an OCTA video on these topics to post to the OCTA YouTube channel later this year.

Back on Roberts Ranch, an additional archaeological



The historic Barlow House on Stonewall Creek Ranch

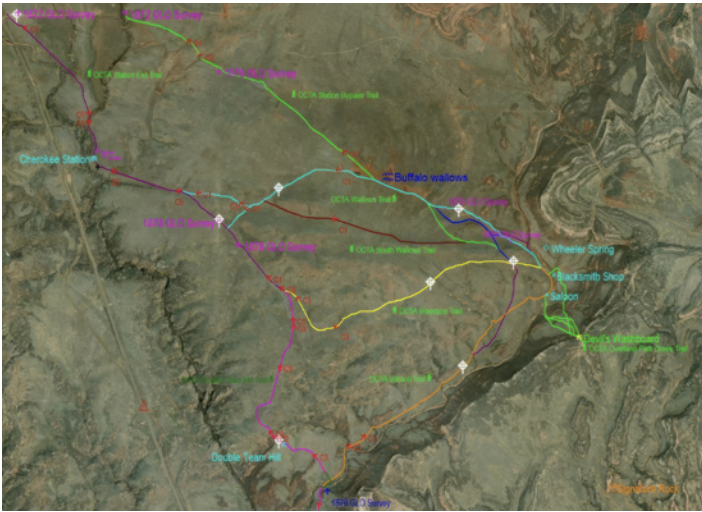


The north field team walking to Livermore Cemetery

dig site will be done at the Wheeler Springs this year to examine what that feature is (Settler? Rancher? Emigrant camper?) which is at the intersection of the Overland and Cherokee Trails at the base of Devil's Washboard. Significant artifacts at this new location were discovered last year.

The results of our findings on artifacts from other dig sites and Steamboat Rock signature rock climb can be seen in our chapter Zoom video presentation posted to the OCTA YouTube channel. Check it out under the Colorado Cherokee Trail series.

Two field reports were filed with the National Park Service, National Trails Office. One on our completion of Roberts Ranch north where we found 11 miles of Cherokee/Overland Trail evidence and the other on some adjoining Colorado State Land Board property to cover another mile of Cherokee/Overland Trail which connects to Stonewall Creek Ranch.



The Cherokee/Overland trails on Roberts Ranch North

The town of Westminster is requesting Cherokee Trail signage on their public lands. Ethan Gannett recently did an exploratory examination of their public sites to identify potential trail evidence for sign locations. The town has an excellent open space that documents the location of the Church's Stage Station on the Overland Stage route which is also the Cherokee Trail route. We will document our final decisions with the city once a location for the sign is determined.

The Cherokee Trail South Team recently had a tour of the Cherokee Trail in the Pueblo area hosted by team leader Larry Obermesik. We had a bus tour of the region and a catered lunch at Larry's house where we discussed the Cherokee Trail. Thanks, Larry, for hosting and congratulations on recently getting your FAA drone pilot license. We are looking forward to those dramatic drone shots of the trail!

The field team has also been engaged with a new property owner/chapter member who has the Cherokee

Trail and other historic structures on her property. This year they will ground proof the trail on the site and perhaps this will be on a future tour for the 2025 Pueblo Convention.



The Cherokee Trail South team tour included Chico Basin Ranch

The field team is also working on property owner permission to explore the Jimmy Camp campsite and hope to get onto that property this year for further ground-proofing.

Finally, Bruce Watson and Ethan Gannett have been remapping the Cherokee Trail in Colorado with a new technique and new spreadsheet tools to properly interpolate General Land Office section crossings of the Cherokee Trail. Additional work will be done to overlay and trace survey plat trail imagery onto the crossings to better document the trail location where ground-proofing has not yet taken place. If anyone is interested in seeing our techniques and spreadsheet tools, we will be happy to share them with other field teams.

Ethan Gannett

TRAILS HEAD

All good here in eastern Kansas/western Missouri as our Chiefs racked up another Superbowl victory. That and a mild winter have enlivened the community. Now for spring and hopefully more moisture from the skies, which we certainly need.

The Trails Head Chapter has organized a luxury bus trip to celebrate National Trails Day on Saturday, June 1, 2024. With commentary from Ross Marshall, Pat Traffas and others, we will leave Johnson County Community College near the Westport Route of the Oregon, California and Santa Fe Trails and head west rejoining the Oregon-California Trail just east of Lawrence where the emigrants chose one of two places to traverse the Wakarusa River. Interestingly, both routes rejoined on what is now Jayhawk Boulevard at the University

of Kansas. From there the bus will travel west toward Topeka and Wamego before turning on to Kansas Highway 99 which closely parallels the Trail for thirty miles leading to the Independence Crossing of the Big Blue River near Blue Rapids, Kansas, a site so central to the Trails story that it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Then it is on to Alcove Spring and waterfall, the popular emigrant party resting place where travelers left still visible initials and dates in the rocks. Thanks to the Alcove Spring Trust, the private organization that preserves the 223-acre site, this iconic place in our national history is preserved to tell its stories. One of those is that of 70-year-old Mrs. Sarah Keyes of the Reed- Donner Party who left for California in 1846 knowing that her health was fragile, but hopeful

of meeting her son at Fort Hall, Idaho. While camped near Alcove Spring she passed away and was buried on May 29, 1846, her grave never precisely located. She was one of many whose hopes and dreams were cut short on the historic Western Trails.

Registration for the June 1 bus trip is open until May 15 by contacting Jean Coupal-Smith at jcs1fun1@kc.rr.com.

The portion of the Oregon-California Trail that passed through what is now Lawrence, Kansas, has been a recent focus of the mapping and preservation activities of the Trails Head Chapter. The Trail segments that led up to and over a significant bluff (now known as Mt. Oread) on the south side of the Kansas River have long been of interest and are today, thanks to Chapter work, better understood. Plans for marking the

route are in development. In addition, the Chapter's Preservation Committee has worked closely with the Kansas Department of Transportation to ensure that construction along Kansas Highway 10 avoids the Trail.

The Trails Head Chapter is also working with the independent Barstow School located near the Independence route of the Santa Fe, Oregon, and California Trail just east of the Missouri/Kansas state line in developing a program for its 3rd grade classes. The goals are both educational for the students and informational for their families as the partnership works to develop a life-long interest in our American and Western heritage. More on this to come.

Michael Smith

Emigrant Trails Hall of Fame

The Emigrant Trails Hall of Fame Committee welcomes nominations for new members to be inducted in 2024. The criteria for selection and the nomination form are on OCTA's website:

<https://www.octa-trails.org/emigrant-trails-hall-of-fame/>

The Committee particularly welcomes nominations of individuals whose achievements are less well-known to OCTA members. Please submit nominations by October 31 to: ETHoF1846@gmail.com

OCTA-Trails.org Online Auto Membership Renewal Process and Managing Your Account

All Members need an account to purchase or renew their subscriptions to have the option to activate or de-activate auto-renewal.

New memberships will be automatically registered with auto-renewal active upon purchase.

All members will have the option to activate or de-activate the auto-renewal option in their account on the **My Account > Subscriptions > <View Subscription>** page.

All members should keep their account information current by editing any information that may have changed recently, including credit card information with an update expiration date.

Thank You!

Thanks to the many donors who support OCTA's preservation work through gifts to our annual fund drive and memorial gifts to those who have passed. Recent gifts include:

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Founding Members

When OCTA was founded in 1983, a group of men and women who believed in the mission and in the importance of trails preservation decided to join this brand new organization. Anyone who joined during that first year became a charter member, the rocks upon which OCTA was built. The last time we recognized them in these pages, the list had 136 names. Today's list is down to 55 names. If you see a charter member, thank them on behalf of OCTA.

Ruth Anderson	Dorothy Duffin	Michael Luther	Raymond E. Schoch
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For \$50 a year, OCTA Business Sponsors receive a listing on the OCTA website and in *News From the Plains*, a window decal, a framed wall certificate and an OCTA trail map. To learn more, contact OCTA headquarters at (816) 252-2276. Current business sponsors include:

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Special Thanks to OCTA's Life Members

OCTA is grateful for the support of many Life Members whose contributions mean so much to the organization. Life memberships are available for \$1,500 and credit card payments can be made in installments. Life Members receive an Ezra Meeker Life Member pin, and a 15 percent discount in the OCTA Bookstore. Plus, all revenues from Life Memberships go directly to OCTA's Heritage Endowments, so your purchase will have a long-term impact on trails preservation. For more information about becoming a Life member, contact OCTA headquarters at (816) 252-2276. Current and recently deceased Life Members include:

Lila Aamodt (<i>Deceased</i>)	Keith Fessenden	Rollie & Paula Johnson	Bob Noll
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Important Dates and Deadlines

Award Nominations – June 1

Budget Development – Budget Request – May 23 (Per OCTA Procedural Manual)

News from the Plains material – Spring issue: February 25, Summer issue: May 25,
Fall issue: August 25, Winter issue: November 25

Nominating and Leadership – Announcement of election and number of vacancies on the Board of Directors: November 25 News from the Plains Deadline; Bio and ballot: April 1

Education Activity Book Raffle - February 1

Outstanding Educator Award Application – March 31

Calendar Art for Western Calendar – April 15

National Park Service Volunteers-in-Parks (VIP) – October 1

Volunteer data (Hours, Expenses, Mileage) to Partnership – Report hours on the website at <https://www.octa-journals.org/octa-volunteer>. They can be reported as they are accumulated. If you track your hours on the paper form (available at <https://www.octa-trails.org/activity-forms/>), please report them to HQ by December 31.

Overland Journal – Spring issue to membership: approximately May 20,
Summer issue to membership: approximately August 20, Fall issue to membership:
approximately November 20, Winter issue to membership: approximately February 20

NEWS FROM THE PLAINS

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Where Will Your Footprints Lead?

They don't have to disappear.

You can leave a legacy that will ensure that your footprints are never erased, while helping to protect emigrant trails from disappearing forever.



Consider joining

OCTA's Trails Legacy Society

Your gift to an OCTA Endowment fund through a bequest or estate gift will help guarantee our ability to preserve and protect the trails.

Visit octa-trails.org/trails-legacy-society

You can make sure that ours are not the last footprints left on the trail.

A Reminder for Ezra Meeker Life Members

If you are an Ezra Meeker Life Member of OCTA and a member of one or more regional chapters, your chapter dues renew on January 1 each year.

For your convenience, you can renew your chapter memberships online by visiting octa-trails.org/why-join-octa/ and following the appropriate links for regional chapters.

You can also call headquarters at (816) 252-2276 for more information.

If you are not an Ezra Meeker Life Member, you can join at that level at any time.

The cost is \$1,000, which can be spread over several regular payments.

Remember, funds from Meeker Life memberships go directly to OCTA Endowments, helping create a legacy of support for trails preservation and education.

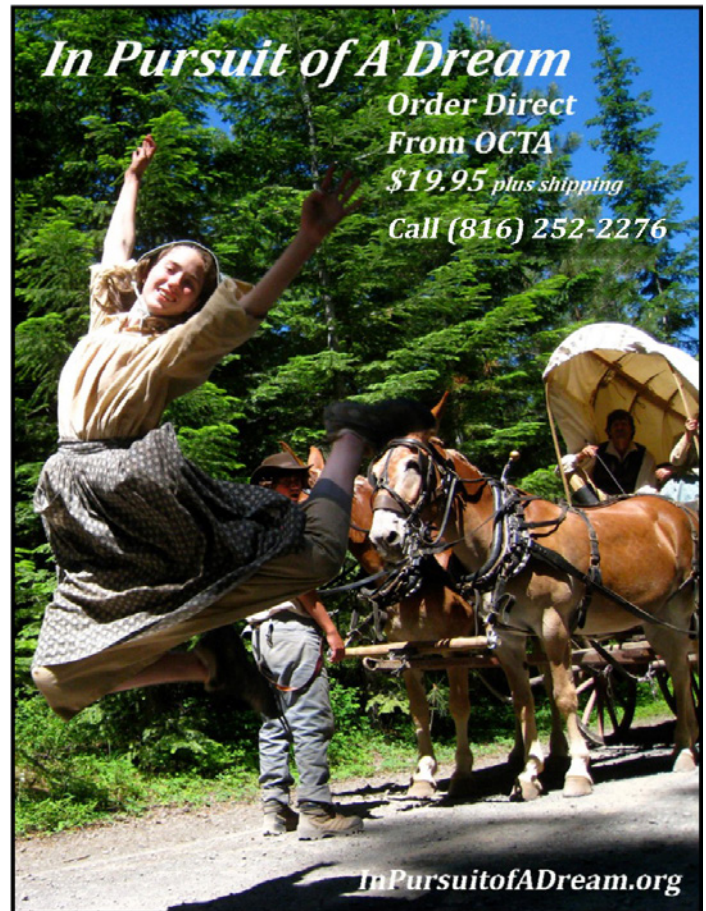
Call headquarters to learn more.



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In this issue:

Building A Bright Future for OCTA
The Gathering at El Paso
Preservation Updates & Progress
Meet Our Members



NATIONAL FRONTIER TRAILS MUSEUM

The **National Frontier Trails Museum** in Independence, Missouri brings the pioneer experience on the trails to life. The only museum in the nation certified to interpret the Lewis & Clark, Santa Fe, Oregon, California and Mormon Pioneer trails, the National Frontier Trails Museum offers:

- A unique collection of original artifacts and special exhibits
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- Interactive displays, audio guides and gallery walks
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- A robust research library
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Pack your provisions, circle the wagons and saddle up for a visit to the **National Frontier Trails Museum** where the West welcomes you, the journey begins and your adventure awaits.

416 W. Maple • Independence, MO 64050 • www.FrontierTrailsMuseum.org