



Northwest Trails

Newsletter of the Northwest Chapter of the Oregon-California Trails Association

Volume 31, No. 3

Summer 2016

NW OCTA Annual Fall Picnic September 10–11, 2016 Dupont and Steilacoom, WA

Saturday: Dupont Civic Center and Tours

Sunday: Bair Bistro, Steilacoom

We are having our fall picnic this year in Dupont, WA, the first Washington named location in the Oregon Territory. Today it is a modern small city packed with 5,700 years of history. It was home then to the Sequalitchew Nisqually Indians. In 1833 The Hudson's Bay Co. built Fort Nisqually there and occupied the fort until it was sold to the government of the United States in 1869. In 1906 the Dupont de Nemours Company bought nearly five square miles of land for the manufacture of dynamite and black powder. Weyerhaeuser Timber Co. bought most of the land in 1976, and it was ultimately deeded to the City of Dupont.

Dupont's legacy lives on and the history abounds! We will hear and see the history of Fort Nisqually through the narration of Drew Crooks, an expert historian on the Hudson's Bay Co. Drew has written books on the complex relationship of Native Americans with Hudson's Bay Co. and the local settlers in mid-19th century Puget Sound. After a brief business meeting and the picnic, we will adjourn and take a short trip to see the site of Fort Nisqually and, for those who would like a short one-mile hike, walk a partly paved trail down Sequalitchew Creek to see the 5,700-year-old Indian village site, the Methodist Mission site, the original Hudson's Bay Co. storehouse site, and the Wilkes Expedition Observatory site. We can also visit the Dupont Museum and see artifacts from all eras of the town's history, including the last remaining dynamite train. Afterwards, you will find the hotel accommodations will be within walking distance of many restaurants. These are on Wilmington Street, off Center Dr.

Sunday, for those who are staying, breakfast at the Bair Bistro (in an 1893 Drug and Hardware store) in Steilacoom, next to Dupont, followed by presentations from members Ray Egan and David Welch who will enlighten us with the history of their town. This will be a half day event.

Directions to all locations are on the next page

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Directions to the picnic site, Dupont Civic Center:

Highway I-5 from either the North or South to Exit 118. This will put you on Center Drive on the West side of the freeway. Continue on Center Drive approximately a mile until you see signs that read "Civic Center, Fire Department, Police." Get in left lane and turn left at Civic Dr. Park in the Civic Center parking lot. We meet in the Dupont City Council chambers, just inside the front door, beginning at 9 a.m., Saturday, September 10.

Hotel Accomodations:

The Liberty Inn is offering OCTA a special rate of \$101 per room per night. This hotel offers king or double queen beds, buffet breakfast, swimming pool, spa, exercise room, Wi-Fi, DVD movies, and more. Call them at 253-912-8777 **before August 26** to make your reservations. Be sure you mention OCTA so you can get the special rate.

Directions to Liberty Inn:

As you depart I-5 on Center Drive, the first signal will be Wilmington Street, the second light is McNeil Street. Turn right on McNeil and go three blocks to Palisades. Turn right again and right on the driveway into the hotel parking lot. Turn left into the second row and you will see the hotel entrance.

Directions to the Bair Drug and Hardware store in Steilacoom:

Follow Center street back the way you entered town and cross the freeway, entering I-5 northbound. Take exit 119 and go left, back across I-5 and get in the right lane. Take the right turn onto Steilacoom-Dupont Road and pass Fort Lewis (Joint Base Lewis-McChord) on your right, go through the forest, and at the end you will start downhill toward Puget Sound.

Entering Steilacoom, take the LAST right hand turn onto Lafayette. A few blocks later you will see the Bair Drug and Hardware store on the corner of Lafayette and Wilkes. It's easy to find, just a block uphill from the waterfront park that Egan and Welch will be speaking at.

Directions to the Dupont Museum:

Remember that Wilmington is the street nearest the freeway, and 1400 Wilmington is the street address of the Liberty Inn hotel. Go North on Wilmington until you reach Barksdale St. It is the entrance to the old Dupont residential area. Turn left and go two blocks on Barksdale to the museum.

President's Message

Nice trail weather is finally here, and we have been busy in the field with completion of several outdoor activities.

First, I wish to thank Dennis Larson for submitting a quarterly report in each issue of *News From The Plains* that highlights Northwest Chapter activities. He has done an excellent job of reporting all of our chapter events. The last issue, summer 2016, was so complete and detailed that I learned several things about our chapter which I was not up to date on.

Henry Pittock has led two marking activities on the Barlow Road. The first of which was at the Lavender Festival where markers were installed to be able to show festival attendees where the road passed the festival grounds. OCTA also had a booth at the festival, which was our second year of attendance, and I am told we had several local land owners who inquired about the Barlow Road location in their neighborhood. Our booth had a new large banner identifying NW OCTA, which Jim Tompkins donated to our chapter. The second marking trip was in the same vicinity as the lavender farm and included interesting trail locations that we had previously located but not marked. The best part of both of these outings involved several new OCTA members who had their first trail marking experience, and we enjoyed their enthusiasm.

There are several other upcoming trail-related events and opportunities to look forward to, which are in the planning stage, and I encourage your participation.

Gail Carbiener is making final plans for the trail marking outing he is leading in the La Grande area from Hilgard State Park to Blue Mountain park. I am especially interested in this outing since I have never walked these ruts because at the time my job interfered with my passion. You should have all previously received the details of this outing to be held on Saturday, July 23. If you are not already signed up, I encourage you to consider joining us, as I have been told the trail remnants are pristine.

Gail, Billy Symms, and Glenn Harrison are actively involved with trail preservation activities involving the B2H transmission line and wind turbine threat to the trail in eastern Oregon. They continue to need our support and we must all get involved with letter writing, etc. when they ask for our help.

Lethene Parks is enthusiastically coordinating the 2017 National Board meeting and Symposium. In addition to the board meeting, the symposium will highlight the many layers of history in the Ft. Vancouver area. This will include one day of speakers and one day of tours in the Ft. Vancouver area. Northwest chapter will be making all of the arrangements for registration, speakers, tours, lodging, meeting rooms, and meals. She will need volunteers for all of these activities, and I encourage you to contact her and offer your participation.

Paul Masee is taking the lead on making final arrangements for the fall meeting/annual picnic, which this year will be held in the lower Puget Sound area of DuPont/Steilacoom, WA. Mark your calendars for the weekend of September 10–11. He has a slate of interesting speakers and historical locations to visit.

We have many actively involved members who are working hard to put together interesting trail-related activities and outings. We need your support and presence to make our chapter a success. Let's go out and have fun learning and doing.

—*Rich Herman*

NWOCTA Outings and Activities

July. The Hix Road, Tygh Valley, Davis Ranch outing is CANCELLED.

July 23–24. Hilgard State Park to Blue Mountain Crossing Interpretive Site. Friday evening meeting at Denny’s in La Grande. The hike on Saturday will be 4 miles, not 6 as previously announced, and bring a small towel, shoes, and socks to change into to wade the Pelican Creek crossing. Contact: Gail Carbiener.

August 1–5. OCTA annual convention at Fort Hall, ID.

August 20. Family History Day at the Philip Foster Farm in Eagle Creek, OR. The chapter will have a booth again as we did last year. The Barlow Road went right through here, but there are no visible ruts. 11:00 a.m.– 4:00 p.m., with free ice-cream starting at 1:00 p.m. For more information, go to the Philip Foster Farm website. Contact: Henry Pittock.

September 10–11. NWOCTA fall meeting. Nisqually/DuPont/Steilacoom, WA, area. Contact: Paul Masee.

September 15–17. OHTAC outing to Baker City, OR, to visit sites on the Oregon Trail affected by the proposed B2H transmission line project. Friday, visit trail sites Vale to Baker City and trail dinner. Saturday, OHTAC Public Meeting. Trip leader is Gail Carbiener. Contact: Glenn Harrison.



Jim Tompkins shared this photo of Paul Masee and Henry Pittock, taken June 6 at the Girl Scout camp in Faubion.

In Search of the Whitman Mission and Naches Trail Routes, April 25–27, 2016

By *Dave Welch*

Legislation establishing the Oregon National Historic Trail required that a single route be designated following the route depicted on maps in the Department of the Interior's 1977 Oregon Trail Study. This study did not include a route to the Whitman Mission, even though until November 29, 1847, the date the Whitmans were killed, the primary route of the trail passed through the mission. Some emigrants did begin using Whitman's overland route through Echo that bypassed the mission in October 1847.

Despite the predominance of the mission route from 1841 to 1847, the designated Oregon Trail continues west from Pendleton, ignoring its early history. The result is what was actually a primary route is now considered a secondary route and is not considered part of the designated Oregon National Historic Trail. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that little physical evidence of the trail to the mission has been found, while extensive evidence of the overland route remains.

To rectify this shortcoming, researchers have sought for years to identify the route to the Whitman Mission without documented success. Many accept that the route follows Oregon Hwy 11/ Washington Hwy 125 through Milton-Freewater, but this route probably developed from the later stage route. The fact that Ezra Meeker planted a marker in Milton-Freewater is taken as proof, but those familiar with Meeker's work know that marker placements were influenced by the enthusiasm of communities and available local collections.

I became interested in the Whitman Mission route at Lethene Park's "Walla Walla Weekend, 1996." I have been researching it on and off since that time. The latest of my field trips to the area took place on April 25 through 27, accompanied by Ray Egan, and assisted by local residents Sam Pambrun, Vernon Elsasser, and Brian von Borstel. Sam is a descendant of a French-Canadian employee of the Hudson's Bay Company, Pierre Pambrun, and has been studying the history of the area for many years. Vernon Elsasser resides in Touchet, WA, near the route from the mission to Fort Nez Perce (aka Fort Walla Walla) on the Columbia River. Both individuals are well-qualified "local experts." Brian von Borstel is an employee on a ranch in a key location. He provided access and guidance to important areas on private property.



*Vernon Elsasser and Sam Pambrun at monument
on Highway 12*

Figure 1 shows a map of the area we are researching and what I considered to be plausible routes. Confidence in each segment varies, but at a minimum, it provides a starting point for additional research.

The trail we were seeking begin at the foot of Poker Jim Ridge near Cayuse. According to emigrant documents, the Umatilla crossing was probably about three miles below Cayuse. The emigrants climbed the ridge on the north side and proceeded to Wildhorse Creek near Adams. This route is documented in many diaries, but the terrain is now cultivated and has been for many years. No trail evidence has been found.



Figure 1. Map of plausible trail routes in the study area.

The diaries and journals provide few details of the route to the Walla Walla Valley from Wildhorse Creek. Most commentaries jump to entering the valley, probably in the area of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) farm and Pine Creek. Note that this is about ten miles west-northwest of Milton-Freewater. The intervening rolling hills from Wildhorse Creek did not present any significant challenges nor do they have any distinguishing features, so detailed descriptions are non-existent.

An analysis of the terrain has led me to conclude that the two best routes to reach the valley from Wildhorse Creek are via Sand Hollow and Gerking Creek Roads from the Adams area. Both traverse broad valleys with an easy grade. Maps from the early 1900s show roads in these valleys continuing all the way to the Walla Walla Valley, entering about two miles apart. Today the roads are closed beyond Wayland and Duroc.

Upon entering the valley, those going to the mission made a right turn, looping around to cross the Walla Walla River near Garrison Creek at a good ford and avoiding wet areas of the valley. After the mission was established a trail developed from the mission west to Fort Nez Perce. Those using the Naches Trail in the early 1850s made a left turn upon entering the valley, crossing the Walla Walla River several times while heading for Fort Nez Perce. They avoided the mission entirely.

We began this research trip at the Frenchtown Monument just west of the Whitman Mission off US 12. There Ray and I met Sam Pambrun and Vernon Elsasser. Our search in this area was focused on the location of the point where the trail west from the Whitman Mission crossed Touchet Creek. The GLO survey map shows a road 1.0 miles above the junction of the Walla Walla River and Touchet Creek. Maps by Kolecki, who was traveling with the George Wright military expedition in 1858, show a crossing about 1.3 miles north of the junction. Sam Pambrun suggested a point near the present bridge crossing of the creek about 0.2 miles further north (1.5

miles from junction). Nothing definitive was found at any of the locations, but they remain possibilities.

We followed country roads westward seeking to find evidence of Wright's route. A set of swales in exactly the expected location was located as was intermittent evidence all the way to the Walla Walla River at Nine-mile Ranch at the junction of Byrnes Road and Highway 12.

Nine-mile Ranch is a reference to the distance to the old confluence of the Walla Walla and Columbia Rivers, the site of Fort Nez Perce. The ranch area is a location where both the Whitmans (1836) and Winfield Scott Ebey (1853) camped. Ebey was traveling the Naches Trail, which did not go to the mission since it had been abandoned five years earlier. His route was along the southern edge of the Walla Walla Valley as noted earlier.

From the Nine-mile Ranch area to Fort Nez Perce, the trail stays on the edge of the river bottom. Comparison with Kolecki's maps shows that the river course has not changed significantly in this area. Just north of Marie Dorian Park we were able to locate swales on federal property in the location indicated by Kolecki's maps. They extend for more than a mile around Smith's Bay. Smith's Bay was formed when water backed up from McNary Dam, but it was probably a wetland in the 1840s and 1850s.



Descent into the Walla Walla Valley along Hurricane Ridge.

The next day was spent with Sam Pambrun looking at sites along the southern edge of the Walla Walla Valley where the trail descends into the valley before splitting to go to the mission (east, or right) or Fort Nez Perce (west, or left). Nothing definitive was found, but it provided a good understanding for the next day's travels on the turbine-cluttered hills above.

On the final day we began at a ranch near the end of the public sections of Sand Hollow Road and Gerking Creek Road. With Brian von Borstel as our guide, we traveled the ranch roads on the ridgelines descending to the Walla Walla Valley. The descent is not difficult and many options exist. We have identified three possibilities.

Our next step is to verify their connections at the base. Our travels in that area the day before did not provide conclusive information. We also noted that the many farm roads in the area might well be on top of the emigrant routes. A discouraging aspect is that all of the routes of interest are now home to numerous wind turbines, and access is tightly controlled.

Nearly all of the area that we covered is cultivated, so we are unlikely to find ruts and swales. Some early spring show of traces might be possible. Perhaps future archaeological work will help. In the meantime we must rely upon a few clues, common sense, and studies of compatible terrain: not too steep, not sidling, and the most direct route.

In the near future, another article will discuss the basis for placing each trail segment as shown in Figure 1. As noted previously, confidence in the routes varies by segment. Also, it is not a matter of selecting a single route. The Naches Trail and Whitman Mission routes are distinct and may only have a few segments in common. Furthermore, at the time of the emigrant's arrival it was a well-populated area including both native and Euro-American peoples with trails linking all key points.

NWOCTA Mapping and Marking Outing June 11, 2016

By Theresa and Steve Fisher

On Saturday, June 11, a group of seven people met at the Oregon Lavender Farm in Oregon City to locate, map, and mark the Barlow Road/Oregon Trail ruts that were suspected to be in that vicinity. In attendance were: Henry Pittock NWOCTA mapping and marking, NWOCTA President Rich Herman, NWOCTA members Jim Tompkins, Steve Fisher, and Theresa Fisher. Also joining us were two students from Jim Tompkins's history class at the Museum of the Oregon Territory, Jeff and Chantele. Both Jeff and Chantele showed interest in possibly becoming members of NWOCTA!

Henry guided us to two areas where he suspected we might find ruts, and lo-and-behold, we located several short sections. We set a total of five Carsonite markers that day. It was quite a coincidence, when Henry received a phone call while at the lavender farm from the woman that owns one of these adjacent properties. Henry had waited to hear from her for two months, and here, at the exact hour we needed an answer, she happened to get back with her approval! We were all thrilled and amazed at the coincidence! We ended up setting two markers on her property.

On the other adjacent property, we had some excitement. Jim Tompkins discovered an ivy-covered scar on a tree that is quite typical of being caused by many wagon wheel hubs rubbing on it! We also found traces of ruts here, and we set a Carsonite marker at this location. As we



packed up, the father and son that live on this property came out to chat with us. They were excited about the scar on the tree and the marker that had been installed. The father admitted to a few of us the feelings he gets on the property of not being alone, "like the spirits of the pioneers linger" and "jingling sounds," which he proposed were from the wagons that had passed through so long ago.

We also set two markers in the SW corner of the lavender farm along the fence line, so that the public could look over the wire fence and see the ruts in the adjacent properties that we had just marked. We put Private Property stickers on the Carsonite markers so the public would not go onto these adjacent properties.

We travelled in a procession down the road a few miles to visit the home of an elderly lady from whom Henry had gotten permission to search her property for ruts. She seemed surprised at the size of our group, when a “parade” of five cars streamed into her driveway! We discovered a Class 1 swale in the forest next to her house. She was excited about the news and was open to a Carsonite marker being placed at a later date. She thanked us for coming out.

After such an exciting day, we were all famished and held an impromptu “Chapter Meeting” at the Carver Hangar Restaurant. We discussed the successes of the day over a 24-inch-diameter pan of nachos and hamburgers. It was a fun, productive, and exciting day!



Barlow Road Project Update

The Oregon Historic Trails Advisory Council (OHTAC) received a grant for a multimedia, educational project using new technology to make trails come to life, whether a person or group is actually on the trail or using a computer or smart phone. The grant required raising \$4,000 in matching funds. OCTA and NW OCTA each made \$1,000 contributions OHTAC and NW OCTA members made individual donations totaling \$2,317.50 by May 20, or \$317.50 over the goal. On May 24 an additional pledge of \$500 came through for a future donation. The background work has been done, so the funds will largely be spent over the summer. This project will likely be a pilot program to use on other historic trails.

Thanks to OCTA & NW OCTA as well as all the NW OCTA members in WA, OR, CA, and ID who contributed to this educational project.

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Material may be submitted via email, on disk, or as email attachment in Word or Text format. Pictures (JPG format) may be sent via email, on disk, or originals for scanning. **Please send pictures separately from text document.**

MASTHEAD: Replica of *The Old Oregon Trail* bronze relief sculpture created in 1924 by Avard Fairbanks for Oregon Trail monuments.



Fort Hall: Cultures and Changes

**2016 OCTA Convention
Fort Hall, Idaho
August 1–5, 2016**