



Northwest Trails

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

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Fall 2016

NW OCTA Annual Fall Picnic a Success! Dupont and Steilacoom, WA

NWOCTA members gathered at the Dupont Civic Center in Dupont, Washington, on Saturday, September 10. The morning started with a business meeting, followed by a picnic lunch. The speaker was historian and museum curator Drew Crooks, who has written books on the the complex relationship between the local tribes and Hudson's Bay Company in nineteenth-century Puget Sound. The meeting ended with the usual fun-filled raffle. After the meeting, a large group met Drew at the site of Fort Nisqually, and he led a walking tour of the site that is normally closed to the public. Some also followed up with a tour of the Dupont Museum.

The next morning the group met at Bair Drug and Hardware Store in Steilacoom. From there Ray Egan led a walking tour of the historic part of Steilacoom, including the Immaculate Conception Church (1857). Amazingly, Father Luigi Rossi spoke to the group in the church. After the walking tour, the group drove to Fort Steilacoom for the last stop on the weekend events. After learning about the history of the fort and its present use as the Western State Hospital, everyone departed. It was another delightful and informative fall picnic.



Bair Drug & Hardware, the start of Sunday's tour.



Father Luigi Rossi.

More picnic photos on page 4

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Gail and Muriel Carbiener Received the Richard and Trudy Ackerman Meritorious Achievement Award for 2016



Dave Welch presented the chapter's Meritorious Achievement Award to Gail and Muriel at the annual fall picnic.



Gail and Muriel's names were added to the Ackerman Award plaque at the National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center on Flagstaff Hill near Baker City.

President's Message

It has been an interesting summer, and the last three months have provided several opportunities for participation in trail-related events. It started in July when Gail Carbiener led an all day outing from Hilgard to the Blue Mountain Interpretive Center. It was intended to be both a hike and Carsonite marker replacement/repair project. We were able to replace many of the labels but did not install new markers because someone decided the pounder was too much of a burden to carry, so someone left it at home (my bad). Surprisingly, we found that most of the markers were in good shape after several years in the ground. We had a great hike, and most of the attendees were able to experience this segment of the trail for the first time. Thank you Gail for again putting on another excellent trail experience.

The OCTA National Convention at Ft. Hall near Pocatello, ID, was a great success and was attended by 30 NWOCTA members. We had several very interesting trail-related bus tour options, with access to the Ft. Hall Monument located on the restricted reservation being a special privilege. We had a short NW Chapter meeting with discussions of upcoming chapter events.

We had another successful NW Chapter Annual Fall Picnic and business meeting at DuPont/Steilacoom, WA, with 30 members in attendance. After the business meeting, we had the privilege of hearing the history of Fort Nisqually from Drew Crooks who is an expert historian on the Hudson's Bay Co. On Sunday, we were entertained by Ray Egan who led an interesting walking tour of Steilacoom, starting at the historic Bair Drug and Hardware, and then a drive to Fort Steilacoom. The highlight of his tour took us to the 1857 Immaculate Conception Chapel where we were privileged to meet Father Luigi Rossi as he ministered to our NW Chapter. I want to also give a special thank you to Paul Masee for making all of the arrangements for this event.

On September 16–17 a group representing NWOCTA attended a meeting in Baker City of the Oregon Historic Trails Advisory Council at the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center. Gail Carbiener led a tour visiting Oregon Trail sites that would be adversely affected by the proposed B2H transmission line project.

Chapter Preservation Officer Billy Symms has been busy monitoring all threats to the trail by attending Oregon Energy Facility Siting Council meetings as our OCTA representative. Current primary concerns are energy related with new proposed wind farms and the B2H transmission line.

Lethene Parks, as chairman, continues to make progress with plans for the 2017 OCTA National Board Meeting and Symposium, which is scheduled for March 30 to April 2, 2017. The venue for this event is the Heathman Lodge in Vancouver and is being held jointly with the Lewis & Clark Trail Heritage Foundation. Work now is primarily focused on the symposium speakers program and tour offerings. Lethene will need everyone's help and cooperation, so please volunteer your service and be open to her requests for help when asked.

—*Rich Herman*

More from the Annual Fall Picnic



Drew Crooks leading the tour of the Fort Nisqually site on Saturday.



Walking tour of Steilacoom on Sunday morning.



Last stop Sunday was Fort Steilacoom.

Oh No !

By Chuck Hornbuckle

Typical northwest weather greeted us on the morning of September 27, 2016, with light rain showers. This did not bode well for the DAR Oregon Trail marker re-dedication program that afternoon at Toledo. But we remained optimistic.

One-hundred years ago in 1916, the Daughters and Sons of the American Revolution placed eleven Oregon Trail markers between Olympia and the Columbia River. Ten of those were identical, and one was a “unique” monument placed at the entrance to Washington north of the Columbia River. A century of weathering had taken its toll on the bronze plaques, and the plaques had become unreadable, especially to passing motorists.

Earlier in the year, the Sacajawea Chapter of DAR determined the markers must be restored to their original condition. They decided this would be a worthy Centennial Project. Thus was born the DAR Oregon Trail Marker Centennial Restoration Project. First, the chapter applied for approval of the project by National DAR in Washington, D.C. Approval was quickly granted, and the chapter contacted a professional preservationist to train the DAR members in the fine art of restoration.

Mick Hersey came forward not only as a preservationist but also as a SAR member. On July 8 the first two markers were restored: one at Vancouver and the beginning of the Cowlitz Trail, and the other at Tumwater, the end of the Cowlitz Trail. Over the next three months, the remaining markers were restored by DAR members, HODARs (Husband of DAR), and friends, including local garden clubs.

One marker was located at Toledo near what was called Cowlitz Landing where American settlers first arrived in 1845 on their final overland leg to Puget Sound. The City of Toledo stepped forward and gave their enthusiastic support for the project by not only landscaping the area around the marker but also by offering to host a re-dedication ceremony on September 27.

To accommodate the ceremony, the city closed a side street adjacent to the marker. The formal DAR program began, and the Century 1916 dedication program was included alongside the 2016 re-dedication program. Attendees were seated, and at 1:00 p.m. all were greeted by the clouds parting to let the sun shine on the group.

Shirley Stirling, Regent Sacajawea Chapter WSSDAR, was the M.C. Dennis Larsen was the keynote speaker who presented his “1905 to 1916: The Story of the Toledo Monument.” Others who spoke to the more than 50 attendees were: Mick Hersey, preservationist; Rich Herman, NWOCTA president; and Chuck Hornbuckle, NWOCTA and HODAR.

Mayor Steve Dobosh participated in the marker restoration as well as the program itself. Many dignitaries were present, including the 20th District state Representative Ed Orcutt; Lewis



The Toledo marker before, in deteriorated condition, and after restoration. Photo by Chuck Hornbuckle.



Toledo fourth grade students place their names on stones around the restored marker. Photo by Mick Hersey.

County Commissioners Edna Fund and Gary Stamper; the Meeker Society and Covered Wagon; the garden club; Toledo Historical Society; Angela Bacon, principal, and faculty of Toledo Elementary; and others. The Toledo fourth grade students added to the festivities by writing their names on small stones and laying them around the marker.

Concluding the two hour re-dedication ceremony was the unveiling of the marker and acceptance by the mayor of Toledo. All joined in singing the national anthem, after which cider and cookies were served with full sunshine from above.



Transforming the site.



Presenters and friends in their attire with the Meeker wagon. Photo by Della Stenstrom.



SAR and DAR color guard for the ceremony, l. to r.: Lt. Col. Bob O'Neil, 1st Lt. Mick Hersey, Maj. Art Dolan, and Chaplain Sally Buckingham, Lady Stirling Chapter DAR. Photo by Della Stenstrom.



Chuck Hornbuckle addresses the audience, with Shirley Stirling, Mayor Steve Dobosh, Dennis Larsen, and Rich Herman enjoying the sunshine. Photo by Mick Hersey.

The Naches Pass Legend

By Ray Egan, Dennis Larson, and Dave Welch

As a follow-on to the Summer 2016 Overland Journal article challenging the famous Naches Pass ox hide-to-rope story, Dennis Larson, Dave Welch, and Ray Egan decided to do a little more fact-checking. This time it was at the various descriptions of the descent's terrain provided by four members of the famous 1853 Longmire-Biles train.

Erastus Light recalled in an 1893 publication that, "*We started down the western slope, and after safely descending two steep slopes we reached a third, to look down which was enough to take the starch out of any living being except a pioneer.*"

The originator of the ox-rope story, George Himes, in 1905 recalled that, "*For a sheer thirty feet or more there was an almost perpendicular bluff, and the only way to go forward was by that way, as was demonstrated by an examination all about the vicinity.*"

Van Ogle was quoted in 1922 as having said that, "*The distance of steep grade was 180 feet*" and he then felt compelled to add, "*It was too steep for a footing.*"

James Longmire's 1893 version dryly mentioned that, "*one at a time, the wagons were lowered gradually a distance of 300 yards, when the ropes were loosened and the wagons drawn a quarter of a mile further with locked wheels.*"

On September 29, 2016, the three NWOCTA members equipped with Garmins and maps, walked the descent taking readings and visually assessing the terrain as they descended. Their bottom line summary: None of the numbers from the pioneers match what the three NWOCTA members observed.

The trio's findings: From the Himes precipice to the river is a drop of 710 feet. The average grade is about 30%, but there are places where the grade is 45 to 50%. The NWOCTA trio walked 1.4 miles to cover a straight line distance of about 0.4 miles (2,000 feet), as compared with Longmire's recall of 900 feet. Himes and Van Ogle's figures of 30 feet and 180 feet respectively were also not borne out as a result of physically walking the terrain, taking Garmin readings, consulting maps, and careful visual scanning. (The impacts of logging and recreational use were taken into consideration.)

The descent into the Hilgard camping area on I-84 near La Grande (now Hilgard State Park) is similar. It drops 462 feet in 1,859 feet and has an average grade of 25%, with short sections of 45% or more. However, that particular descent seems to be most notable for the fact that it did not seem to attract similar dramatic reminiscences from the Longmire-Biles travelers.

OHTAC Meeting at Baker City, September 2016



Group photo after the meeting of the Oregon Historic Trails Advisory Council (OHTAC) at the National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center (NHOTIC) near Baker City that was mentioned in Rich Herman's message..

An OCTA Convention Note



Randy'L He-dow Teton, a Shoshone Fort Hall native, told the fascinating story of how she was chosen to be the face of Sacagawea on the U.S. dollar coin first issued in 2000. Today she is the Tribe's Public Affairs Manager.

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



2017 OCTA Midyear & Symposium Heathman Lodge Vancouver, WA

**March 30–31, OCTA Midyear
April 1– 2, Symposium**