

# NORTHWEST OCTA UPDATE AND JOURNAL NEWSLETTER of the NORTHWEST CHAPTER November 2001

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Lethene Parks: President Don Popejoy: Editor

## Naches Pass Flyover: July 28th and 29th

Saturday my wife Kay and I participated in Judy Bentley's hike up the west side of Naches Pass. We found several trees that appear to have bark furrowed by ropes lowering wagons. So we didn't attend the Saturday part of Dick Pingrey's trip. But participants said the flights over the route from Wallula to Naches River worked out great, followed by a super Bar BQ dinner at Dick's home in Selah, WA.

About 12 of us attended the Sunday field trip. First Dick showed us, from the ground, a view of Saturday's flight path where the Longmire party 1853 wagon trail had descended to Selah, WA over the hill from the Columbia River. Then we began driving along the 1853 route west out of Selah. We viewed the Wenas Valley from a hilltop that showed us the trail route into the Yakima River valley and back west up towards the Cascades. We drove along where Dick Pingrey had grown up, and he told several funny tales of his life working on the farm as a boy. We took our group photo on the front lawn of the home built c. 1870's by family of James Longmire, who had been a boy on the 1853 wagon train. And we saw the stone that marks when Yakama Chief Ow-yi's band of people raised vegetables which the 1853 party traded for and relished so greatly.

Our vehicles weren't up to traveling on the rest of the wagon's ascent from the Wenas Valley to the southwest over Rocky Flats into the Little Naches River valley. So Dick led our cars on a detour around through Naches town; so we could approach Rocky Flats portion of the wagon route from the west side. From there Dick showed us the "macro-view" of the route westward from Selah through Wenas Valley up to where we stood at the pass near where the route continues down west into the Little Naches River Valley.

The most westward stop on our field trip was to see trail ruts located along that valley about 15 miles east

of Naches Pass. During the half-mile hike through the forest, we all had plenty of opportunity to exchange opinions with each other--as to whether the Forest Service was correct that those, ruts seem to follow the 1853 trail route?

Submitted by Warren L. "Tuck" Forsythe, Ellensburg WA

We met at the Yakima Air Field at 9 A.M. and Dick Pingrey who was hosting the week-end had coffee, doughnuts, muffins, etc. waiting for everyone. Dick gave a short talk on the history of the McAllister Museum and a briefing on the flight. By 9:30 most of the planes had taken off and the weather was perfect and the visibility couldn't have been better. We flew the flight plan (which others can describe better than I). The flights took approximately two hours. All the planes were different.

After landing Dick debriefed us on all we had seen and we broke for lunch. We met back at the airfield museum and drove to Toppenish where the town has sixty different murals on the walls of buildings depicting history of the area. From there we drove to the Yakima Cultural Center.

At six in the evening OCTA members plus our pilots and spouses met at Dick's beautiful home for a wonderful bar-b-que. What a dinner he had planned. Two bar-b-ques going with Bill Arends even flipping a few of the burgers along with Dick. A buffet table fit for a king was laid out before us. For dessert there was a beautiful sheet cake with OCTA Fly-Over written across the top. Everyone had a marvelous time and ended the evening in Dick's living room with a lively discussion about flying.

At nine the next morning we met in Selah and four cars plus one RV took the driving tour of sections of

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## Northwest OCTA Update

The *NW OCTA Update* is the newsletter published by the Northwest Chapter of the Oregon-California Trails Association. It is published on the 15th day of January, April, July, and October of each year. Also, a special Convention issue is done after each convention in August. Submission deadline for each *Update* is the 15th of the month previous to publication.

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## From the Parks Bench

### Lethene Parks

As winter nears and getting out into the trails becomes more difficult, we'll have time to reflect on what we've learned and what we want to learn about overland trails. Thanks to a dinner-time conversation with Wayne Burck after the recent Northwest OCTA board meeting in Albany, Oregon, one of the things I've learned is that there are two major-but very different-ways of looking at the trails. One is the big picture, the overview: In general, what route did this trail take? Which valley did it go through? Over which pass? Most of the time I'm in this group. The other approach is the detailed view: Exactly where did the trail go, the east side of the valley or the west side or right down the middle? Exactly which rocks on that specific pass did the emigrants have to move aside to get their wagons past that exact point? Sometimes I find myself in this group. In the study of overland trails-or of any other subject for that matter-we need both groups for the very best scholarship and knowledge. We need the overview to help us fit our trail knowledge into the larger historical context of time and place. We need the detailed knowledge to develop a truly accurate knowledge of the trails and those who traveled over them. To which group do you belong, or, like me, do you find yourself in each group at different times? Think about it.

The simple answer to what do we want to learn is "more." But of course it's really much more complex than that. One of the things I want to learn more about is how to help generate enthusiasm for overland trails in other people, especially young people. Kids learn best when they can in some way relate the learning to their own lives. In my one foray into teaching kids about the Oregon Trail I was, I believe, reasonably successful because I talked with them about children's experiences on the Oregon Trail-what chores might kids have performed, what would they do when their shoes wore out-things that the kids could relate to. Those who were on the Barlow Road outing this past spring would have seen some masterful teaching of kids by Jim Tompkins. Those of you who have seen the picture of two young girls "measuring" an emigrant grave for the fit will understand.

Another piece of learning for me this winter will be research in preparation for next spring's outing in Stevens County, where we'll tour missionary, fur trade, military and early pioneer sites. I know the big picture-the general history, the auto tour route-but I'll need to spend time learning the details of the history of each site and some of the people associated with the sites, and learning the minute details of the route and timing it for driving. Nothing like volunteering to lead a chapter outing to push you into a learning experience. Try it, you'll like it.

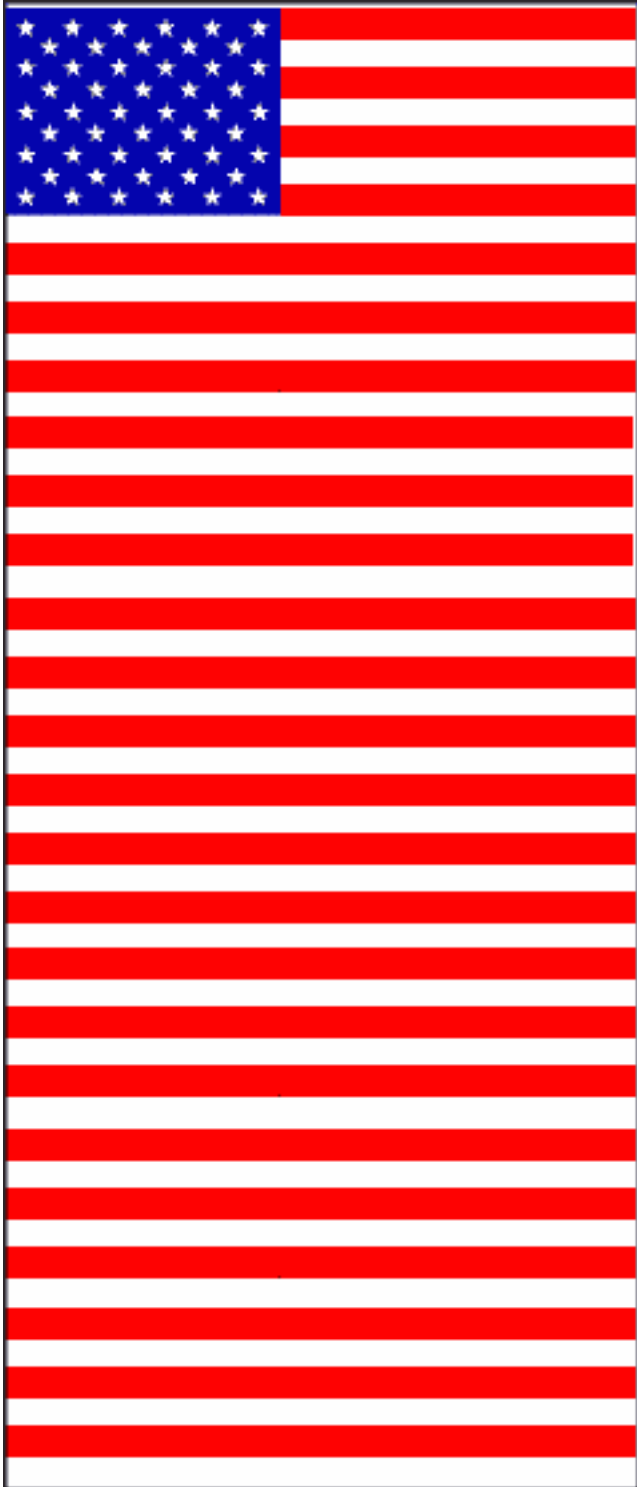
All of us in the Northwest chapter will have the opportunity to learn and to help as we plan for the 2004 national OCTA convention in Vancouver. Please let Dave Welch know how you'd like to help.

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## From the Parks Bench (Continued from Page 2)

Soon you'll be receiving a ballot to elect new chapter officers and board members. I have enjoyed being your chapter president and have learned a great deal. Now it's time for me to move on to my new learning experience as Secretary of the national OCTA, but I hope to see all of you at the March annual meeting and at the coming year's outings.

Lethene



NWOCTA Chapter Quiz: What is this picture of the American flag portraying? Answer next issue.

## Editors Forum

Another year has come and gone and now it's time to sit back and recount all the wonderful memories we have had on the trail, at chapter meetings and during the numerous outings. Thanks to all who made this year one to remember!

Please take special note of **Wendy Welch's** Convention Coverage part two. If you have lost track of what she wrote in the Convention issue, go back and reread it, then devour part two.

The flag picture to the left was given to me by **Tom Laidlaw** during our June 2001 Lewis and Clark Elderhostel program that we did together. **Tom** comes up with some great teaching tools, and I wanted to share this one with you.

### Barlow Road Tour: June 23rd and 24th

We congregated at Sorosis Park, high above The Dalles. After inspecting the city from that high vantage point, we started our eighteen person, ten vehicle caravan. An ominous beginning when it only took two minutes to lose the last three cars at the first intersection. We dropped down to 9th Street and picked up the Barlow Road as it headed out of town. Heading south we attempted to follow the trail as closely as possible. It didn't help when the fearless leader, with the assistance of some unnamed roads, mistook Five Mile Creek Road for Old Dufur Road and we took a two mile side trip.

After following Eightmile Creek to Endersby, a jaunt through Dufur, then Hix Road to Friend and Kingsley, it was out onto Tygh Ridge for a look at the 1869 Immigrant grave on the State Antelope Preserve. We saw a small herd of Antelope "loping" off just before arriving at the grave.

Then we drove out onto the highest point above Tygh Valley to look at the ruts cascading over the hills down to Tygh Creek. What a view. An hour behind schedule we scrapped Shearers Falls and lunched at White River Falls State Park. We all wondered why the convicts working there all were yelling at the Parks. Lethene had snagged with her bumper the cable fence they were erecting and was trying to back out with it.

We then made the circle of Tygh Valley from where the wagons first entered it, to where they exited up over Tygh Grade. Passing through Wamic, I decided to loop around through Smock Prairie and approach the Barlow Gate at Gate Creek from the south. I have never seen the Barlow Road so badly rutted and in disrepair. Since the Barlow Road was in such disrepair we spent most of the White River segment on the hardtop of Hwy 48.

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## **Naches Pass Flyover (Continued from Page 1)**

the Longmire Trail. Dick had printed up papers for each day on what we were seeing which were such a help to novices as myself.

Tuck Forsyth joined us for the Sunday drive and I am sure his descriptions will tell that part much better than I can. All in all it was a great outing experience and Dick Pingrey is to be thanked for showing all the OCTA members who attended a well-planned and wonderful week-end.

Submitted by Joyce Bolerjack, Bellevue WA

I would like to make a comment or two as organizer of the gang's activities this past weekend. Perhaps we broke a bit of new ground in that, as far as I know, this is the first time there has been an organized effort to take OCTA members on a trail outing by way of flying the route being studied. For a few people it was their first time in a light airplane and a few people didn't attend because they were not too certain that flying was all that safe or enjoyable. We had ten airplanes and ten highly experienced pilots to fly the group. I think you will find that those brave enough to do the flying portion found it safe, enjoyable and very educational. We looked at the Oregon Trail from the macroscopic perspective rather than the microscopic perspective. For the first time many people saw the trail from a totally different perspective.

They were able to look at it 100 miles at a time rather than a few hundred feet at a time. They could see very clearly why the trail followed that specific route and the light bulb of understanding suddenly turned on for many people. In my view we have greatly underused this very important tool in our study of the Oregon Trail. I hope this is just the start of OCTA's introduction to viewing the trail from the air. I feel honored to have been able to help make this event happen. Thanks to all that attended. You made my day. I hope you all enjoyed taking the flight as much as I did acting as a pilot guide.

Submitted by Dick Pingrey, Selah, WA

### **Convention Coverage Continued: By Wendy Welch**

The banquet was nice...thought the centerpieces left a lot to be desired, but the fun of being with good friends was the very best part. One of the highlights for me was Eric Gearhart of Seattle winning the Teacher of the

Year Award. I had nominated him after reading of his efforts to teach his classes about the Oregon Trail. With letters of support from several chapter members, he was selected. I am nor sure who was the most thrilled, he or myself. It is nice to see someone so dedicated being recognized. **Joyce Bolerjack**

Aug 17: We were introduced to box breakfasts and then took the 7:30a bus for the West tour to Prospect Hill, Devil's Gate, Independence Rock (named that because emigrants thought if they were there by the 4th of July they would reach Oregon before the snows), and through Rattlesnake Pass.

Rattlesnake Pass was so interesting - with many names visible on the rocks and only one narrow passage for the wagons to pass through. Must have been quite a traffic jam! **Colleen Eccelson**

We saw lots of inscriptions and got a geology lesson from Randy Wagner who was our tour guide. I liked his comment when he said, "I will tell you when we want you to be back on the bus at a stop. If you're not here at that time we'll assume you made other arrangements." He also talked about pronghorns and wondered why there are none pictured in Indian petroglyphs. Oh, if there were only a solution to box lunches!

The scenery was absolutely magnificent. A real treat for me having grown up in Eastern Oregon's wide open spaces. Being able to see for miles, experiencing the stillness was a real plus. Seeing the beautiful North Platte River, the Red Bluffs, Independence Rock, Devils Gate, pioneer graves, and walking in the many ruts gave me an appreciation of the desolate journey through this area. **Carol Buss**

Walking in the swales left by the pioneers is always awesome. To do so oneself is a feeling of appreciation never received unless tried. On the Western tour in particular, we walked many of these swales and I never ceased to be amazed at what these people went through to make the journey. If I didn't have a feel for the Pioneer spirit, I certainly got it walking around Independence Rock. **Joyce Bolerjack**

Aug 18: Another box breakfast and then the 7:30a bus to the East tour. Lunch was at Ayre's Natural Bridge with a wonderful park. In the afternoon we met some spry 82 year old ranchers and toured the graves on their property.

The weather was mild, the presentations were interesting, the tour to the east was informative, but the best thing about the convention was talking to

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## WHERE IN THE WORLD ???

Imagine a DEAD FLAT place in America with not a blade of vegetation for 80 miles north to south or for 30 miles east to west; without Bonneville's salt crust but with silt to a depth of up to 10,000 feet. It is a place so remote that annually, 25,000 people defy orthodox behavior, shed themselves of regulated society, and revert to idolatry sacrifice. It is a place where in 1983 a British racing team clocked a world land record of 633 mph with a follow-up in 1997.

This ancient lake bottom originally hosted one of the least successful emigrant trails to the Willamette Valley, but it eventually spawned several other wonderfully successful routes. One reference estimates that one half of the 1849 gold seekers traversed this playa, which is totally devoid of drinking water during the late summer travel season, to the Northern California mines. The dusty plain is a small part of the former Lake Lahontan which sixty thousand years ago covered an area the size of Indiana.

July 16. Today a small group of OCTA members—Eileen and Dean Johnson from Illinois; Kansas State Representative Vern Osborne and wife Carol; Eldorado County Assessor John and wife Susie Winner from Placerville, California; Trailmasters Muriel and Gail Carbiener from Sun River, Oregon; and Janie and Bernie Rhoades of Washington State—head west from the Humboldt River's I-80 predictability, to enter upon a trail whose name few "experts" can even agree on. Call it what you will—Southern Route, Applegate's, Scotts, Lander's, whatever—it begat Noble's and Lassen's Trail, mentioned profusely in 150 year old diaries, including our old illustrated friend J. Goldsborough Bruff. Touted as a short route to the gold fields that avoided the haunted and jinxed "Donner" route, it gave access to the northern mother lode's vaulted riches.

Familiar white choking talc dust billows up from our 4WD vehicles going 60 mph, five abreast. After we view the life sustaining waters of Willow Springs and Antelope Springs, the Carbieners lay fresh flowers on Susan Coon's 1860 grave at Upper Antelope Springs. A television crew is far-off to the right doing a car commercial. The only other water source prior to the Playa is Rabbit Hole Springs, all with 15 to 20 mile thirst gaps. Jack rabbits, Chukar/partridge, indifferent prong horn and sporadic wild horse sign are the only evidence of life during this drought plagued, range fire threatened July.

As you've already guessed, the location is Nevada's Black Rock Desert Playa. The Burning Man celebration

has just received BLM permission for its clothing optional Labor Day "smoke 'em if you got 'em" bash again this year.

Inhabited since circa 1300 AD by Northern Paiute, and for up to 11,000 years by other tribes, the playa was "discovered" by Fremont in 1843-44. Its "Capital" is Gerlach, NV, and it's "White House" is Bruno's Country Club. Italian born Bruno Selmi owns the restaurant, the saloon, the motel, the gas station and the tire shop in bedraggled Gerlach, the watering hole made and sustained by Western Pacific Railroad section gangs.

Eventually we arrive at the base of Black Rock, with its blessed life saving hot springs where 1846 ox teams and pack mules and faint humans recuperated, only to face the rigors of remote spectacular High Rock Canyon beyond. But first we view puffy cloud views of Mud Lake, stop for refreshments at a Soldiers Meadow picnic table, and check the rocky covered wagon "dive" site down Fly Creek over the precipice. The forward leaning 430 foot high sepia basaltic cliffs on both sides of Devil's Gate introduces us to High Rock's carved signatures, the black smoke-stained caves, and an undulating, chassis torturing, rivet wrenching hint of a dirt/slide-rock track with a million sidewall shredding sharp pointed stones.

The tediously slow but exhilarating day's trip winds up at a dry camp on Mahogany Creek's sage brush strewn confluence, 40 miles from the nearest habitation. Coyotes sing in praise of our arrival, three wild horses graze high on the ridge above us, terrified Chukar erupt from head high greasewood, two mully deer bound away from our intrusion, and finally four mallards erupt in flight from their pond hideout. Conscientious humans may or may not have upset the solitude. The quickly darkening sky, unpolluted by any city lights, slowly unveils a hundred billion stars on black velvet.

Air mattress's are inflated, steaks thrown on propane BBQ (no campfires on this tinder-dry trip), salads pulled from coolers, adult libations poured, potties placed behind head-high sage, WE'RE in business! July 19....the Trails West markers that some in the group repainted previously become a guide book for emigrant's impression quotes. The bad (barely a) trail is reason enough for lack of traffic, although we do see ONE other car during a six-hour period. Traversing Yellow Rock Canyon, Steven's Camp for lunch (left-over steak) and Upper High Rock Canyon (impassable), we ford and re-ford various creeks and hub-deep mud holes after twisting and bending our agonized car frames over humps and down thru fender scraping Sage Brush spikes. Bring a \$50,000 SUV here? HA, No Way!

Emigrant Springs, Painted Point, Massacre Ranch, Forty-Nine Creek and rock— all attested to the pioneers

that the worst was behind them. Water and green grass revived the animals' health and the seekers' spirits. We crash for the night at beautiful Cedarville, California in the dry lake-spotted Surprise Valley.

The next morning.... sorry, but we intrude on a nude bather at our next stop, the Seyferth Hot Springs. Beyond, evidence of today's knuckle-headed fowl dippers abound, with feathers, Chukar feet and innards scattered helter skelter about the scalding pools. The short northern jog around Upper Alkali Lake brings us to the Fandango Pass, where a left turn to Goose Lake brings sad good-byes on top from an eerily compatible group of 10 "Rut Nuts" who, thanks to "Carbiener Super-Guides," suffered no loss of life and only ONE flat tire. A previous trip had 13 on 10 vehicles.....pictures at 11...

Submitted by Bernie Rhoades, Edgewood WA  
(Photos by Bernie)



Bernie Rhoades Loosens the Lug Nits, While the Other Nuts Lean on Tires



Just above High Rock Lake Entering High Rock Canyon

Applegate Trail



The Entrance to Upper High Rock's Impassable Canyon On the Applegate Trail



On the Applegate Trail at High Rock Canyon



The Crew: (L-R) Gail/Muriel Carbiener, John Winner, Carol Osborne, Dean Johnson, Vern Osborne, Eileen Johnson, Susie Winner; Bernie/Janie Rhoades not shown.

**"You Were Right, Vic."  
By Chuck Hornbuckle**

Any one who has walked in or viewed trail ruts can appreciate the dilemma of being uncertain where the emigrants trod when physical signs may not be present. Such was the case, at least in my opinion, when we were marking the trail west of Pelican Creek in 1998. The route our fearless leader, Vic Bolon, chose seemed to fit that category. That is until the last week of June this year.

Twelve hardy history nuts including a visitor from Munich, Germany joined hands for a Forest Service Passport In Time (PIT) for a week on the trail to do an Archaeology Survey between Hilgard and the Blue Mountain Park. Two of those nuts were members of NWOCTA, Gail Carbiener and yours truly. Actually there was a third OCTA member, Gail's brother Gerry, but he was a CA-NV member which I guess still counts. Our German visitor, Maggie Hoffmann, had been a guest at our Olympia home and she wanted dearly to experience the old west in the United States. She said her boy friend at home asked her to check out the west to see if it was really like the western comic books they love to read. Before our week in the Blues ended anyone who was not an OCTA member received an application.

Our survey began at the Blue Mountain Visitor's Park on Monday June 25<sup>th</sup>. After a very brief introduction by our Forest Service leader Guy Marden we headed for the ruts. Five of us had metal detectors and we were quickly rewarded with loud "beep-beep" as our detectors crossed over a long hidden treasure.

Without a doubt we confirmed the trail actually traversed Blue Mountain Park as artifacts ranging from square nails to wagon parts to hand riveted barrel hoops to ox shoes (see photo) were unearthed. I was somewhat disappointed with the lack of pre-survey instruction on documenting artifacts. Maggie and I chose to measure, photograph and record each location by GPS.

As the week progressed we moved in an easterly direction towards Hilgard finding many artifacts on the way. Friday would be spent in the BLM lab in Baker City cleaning and cataloguing artifacts. Finally, on Thursday afternoon, our last day in the field, we arrived at the hill leaving Pelican Creek. While there are signs of a swale up to the bench, I had some reservations about the location. At 3:30 p.m. Gail Carbiener hit pay-dirt, an ox shoe at the top of the climb from Pelican Creek! Soon after Gail's find Maggie found a horse shoe and several square nails in the same area.

In closing, Maggie expressed her complete enjoyment in working on the trail. She sent pictures of our finds to her friends and family via e-mail. I'm not sure what she will tell them about our old west. She did say, "You consider something as old after 150 years. In Germany new is 500 years old while old is 1,000 years old!" Kinda gives a person another perspective.

**Barlow Road Tour  
(Continued from page 3)**

Two hours behind schedule, we jumped ahead to Barlow Pass where the group walked down to Pioneer Womans Grave led by Tom Laidlaw. Russ and Lois Smith split off to meet friends from South Carolina.

A unanimous decision was made to go straight to dinner at Huckleberry Inn in Government Camp. Russ and Lois and the South Carolinians were already there. Then it was off to Still Creek Campground, (except for Roy and the Blairs who made other accommodations), a roaring campfire sprinkled with jokes and stories of the Oregon Trail, animated by the Rickey granddaughters interacting with old Billy Cannon.

The next morning, early riser Tom scouted out a hiking trail from Still Creek to Government camp which was also the Barlow Road. After breakfast at Huckleberry Inn, about half the group hiked the Barlow down to Still Creek on Tom's new trail. At the end of the trail was the old resort called Swim. After a lesson from the Rickey girls on how to find a lodge and swimming pool, we inspected the old wagon tongue grave marker.

At Summit Meadows we inspected the Summit House area, the graveyard, and then headed for the cache pits area. Much to our surprise, the portion of Summit Meadows airstrip where the cache pits are located was sealed off by the Forest Service. Walking in we were met by Jeff Jaqua, archaeologist for the Forest Service at ZigZag Ranger Station. They were just starting a dig across the pits. Jeff Jaqua gave us a history of the area. In addition to this being a Barlow Road campsite, it was also a CCC campsite during the early days of the depression and then it was a WPA campground for the workers building Timberline Lodge. As we drove down to Kiwanis Camp Road to begin our Laurel Hill segment it started raining, Oregon style, by the bucketfuls. We met up again at Calamity Janes hamburger place in Sandy, Oregon.

So, another successful NWOCTA field trip is history. Until next time....

Submitted by **Jim Tompkins**

the other people who attended. I seemed to enjoy the less structured activities the most. **Marley Shurtleff**

Dinner that night was a Barbeque at Fort Casper. I tried to get people to sing the new words to the old favorite "Oh, give me a home where the bison roam, where the deer and the pronghorn play."

Aug 19: Breakfast at Parkway Cafe was a neat experience that we appreciated but the waitress didn't. We had a revolving table for 6. One couple would leave and another would join so it was always someone new to talk to. All in all, I had a wonderful time at the convention. It was well done, but it is the people that make these events fun and I'd say OCTA has those in abundance. **Joyce Bolerjack**

How proud I am of the contributions to the convention by our NW OCTA members. I am especially proud of the women; the presenters, Susan Badger Doyle and Patricia Fletcher: Lethene Parks named National Secretary; Joyce Bolerjack receiving the award for the most new members, and Wendy Welch who assisted Dave probably more than we know. **Carol Buss**

Each year I attend, the mix of warm, friendships, interesting tours, expanding trail knowledge through presenters, and general fun becomes greater. **Suzanne Hornbuckle**

The best thing about going to an OCTA convention is seeing old friends and meeting new ones - all around a common interest of trail history. Whether it is the old friends of historic trail related quilts or new friends met on a bus tour, the experience is always inspiring, rewarding and enriching. The specific highlights of this year were the Cherokee Trail pre-tour with the Fletchers and the Whiteleys as leaders and the Welches and Gail Campbell and Chuck Lowrie as drivers. Then driving the Bozeman Trail with Susan Badger Doyle and Rose Ann Tompkins to recheck Susan's mileage and descriptions. Then, the papers about those other trails by Susan Badger Doyle, James Lowe, and Jack and Pat Fletcher. **Mary Cross**

I had a great time at the convention. It was pretty much heaven on earth! **Jenny Miller**

That just about says it all.  
**Wendy Welch**

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