



Northwest Trails

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

Volume 21, No. 2

Spring 2006

Meeker Centennial Kickoff April 29, 2006, at Chehalis and Claquato, WA

From July 23 to August 21 a group of OCTA and Ezra Meeker Historical Society members will re-visit many of the sites visited by Ezra Meeker in 1906. Ezra's goal was to place an Oregon Trail marker at key locations. A century ago two communities in Washington failed to carry through on their promise to Meeker. They, and another recalcitrant (Soda Springs, ID), will correct this omission this year.

In Chehalis and Claquato, Washington, a little south of Olympia, Karen Johnson and Edna Fund of the Lewis County Museum (www.lewiscountymuseum.org) are planning for the dedication of two monuments on April 29.

This will be a great occasion, and all those who are interested in the trail and its meaning are invited to attend. Plans at this point call for a dedication of the marker in Claquato in the morning, along with a tour of the Pioneer cemetery, while the afternoon will be spent in Chehalis with a parade, a dedication, and a barbecue in the evening. Of course, the Meeker touring group will be there with our wagon and period attire.

All OCTA members are invited to attend and participate in this first event of the Meeker Centennial Expedition.

Additional information can be obtained from Dave Welch at welchdj@comcast.net

Schedule

April 28 – Pioneer Exhibit at the Lewis County Museum

April 29 – Events in Chehalis and Claquato

12:00 Claquato

Dedication of Claquato marker
Tour of historical display inside Claquato Cemetery offices
Tour of pioneer graves at Claquato Cemetery

2:00 Chehalis (downtown)

Dedication of Chehalis marker

3:00 Chehalis (Stan Hedwall Park at Exit 76 from I-5)

Covered wagon parade
Community barbecue
Pioneer arts and crafts
Bullwhackin' Kass (tentative)
Old-time games and activities for kids



NW Chapter Directory

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President's Report

The annual meeting in The Dalles in March was a good meeting with a great program. A total of eighty-two people attended, including twelve from the Yakima Genealogical Society who attended with Dick Pingrey. The raffle was a lot of fun as usual and brought in \$365. After paying expenses related to use of the Discovery Center, awards, etc., the chapter made \$237, one of the better returns we have had.

The proposed by-laws change to align chapter renewal dates with national's was approved by the membership. You will not be receiving a renewal notice for 2006 from the chapter, but when you are billed for your national dues, you will be asked to include chapter dues with your payment. **Be sure to include payment for the chapter dues** or your chapter membership will lapse. Thereafter, your chapter membership will become due with national membership. National Headquarters will forward the chapter dues to the Chapter Treasurer on a regular basis.

In the morning Linda Crew gave an excellent talk about her book, *A Heart for any Fate: Westward to Oregon 1845*, based on the events of the tragic 1845 Meek train. After lunch Jenny Miller and Lethene Parks teamed up to give an entertaining slide show of trail sites entitled, *A Visual Journey*.

Lowell Tiller attended the meeting but has indicated that his future participation in chapter activities will be curtailed due to health considerations. In recognition of his long and faithful service to the chapter as president, devoted worker, and his always cheerful outlook (and arm twisting for raffles and chapter fund-raisers), Lowell was awarded a Certificate of Appreciation.



Jim Tompkins was also awarded a Certificate of Appreciation for his long-time leadership as an enthusiastic trail historian, newsletter editor, trails monitor, vice president, outings coordinator, and convention presenter. Tom Laidlaw was presented with a Certificate of Appreciation for his many years of service as website administrator. Glenn Harrison was given a gift in appreciation for his service as president.

Glenn then presented this year's Richard and Trudy Ackerman Meritorious Achievement Award to Lethene Parks for her extensive contributions to NW Chapter affairs, not the least of which was her tenure as president and the advances in organization she brought to the



organization under her able leadership. Lethene will be officially recognized with the plaque and entry on the slate of past recipients at the BLM Oregon Trail Interpretive Center in Baker City, Oregon, on June 10, 2006.

After the annual meeting adjourned, the Chapter Board met in a short meeting to address the chapter's website concerns. The board approved contracting with Adam Welch to develop a new chapter website. Adam recently developed the updated national OCTA site, and the chapter hopes to construct a similar design. He will be working with Marley Shurtleff and Tom Laidlaw to complete the update. Watch for an announcement of its inauguration!

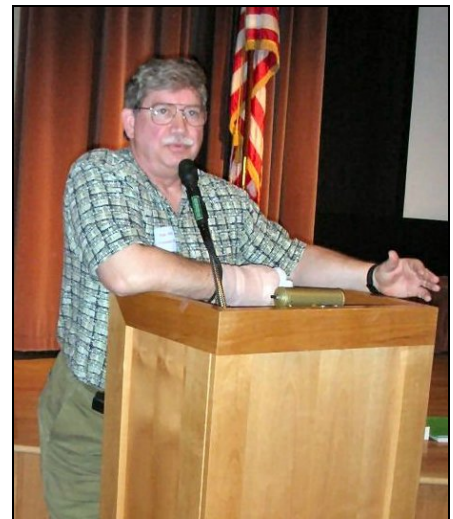
The next weekend after the annual meeting I attended the national mid-year meeting in Phoenix. Association Manager Travis Boley and President Vern Gorzitze met with chapter presidents for an hour prior to the regular board meeting to discuss the membership dues issue. This meeting was facilitated by Sharon Brown from the National Park Service. With NW Chapter approving the by-laws change a week earlier, I was able to report that our chapter should have no conflict with the national policy of collecting national and chapter dues together. The only major difficulty related to the Cal-Nev chapter's decision to continue with their current dues structure and collect the dues themselves, but the issue seems to be put to rest now. Ironically, the only chapter president not present was from the Southwest Chapter.

The first hour or so of the mid-year meeting was devoted to brain-storming OCTA's mission and goals. Again, this portion of the meeting was facilitated by Sharon Brown, who did and

excellent job and will be synthesizing the input for the board. The remainder of the meeting was generally a matter of informational updates and routine business.

One item of import that was approved was an increase in reimbursement for expenses of board members and officers to attend the mid-year meeting from \$300 to \$500. If any of you have thought of serving on the board but held back due to finances, you should know that at least some of your travel expenses will be reimbursed. I encourage you to serve. It is a good way to keep informed of what is going on in the organization and you get to help steer the course.

See you on the trail!



—Roger Blair



The raffle table was spread out in the Center's lobby.

An Interesting and Exciting Discovery in the Meeker Papers

By Dennis Larsen

As some of you know I have been at work the last several years transcribing the 50,000 letters in the Meeker Collection at the Washington State Historical Society Research Center in Tacoma, Washington. I have completed the several thousand letters covering the 1906–08 Old Oregon Trail Monument Expedition and have moved onto his 1910–12 Expedition. While going through these letters, I discovered that Ezra's primary purpose on this expedition was to thoroughly map the exact route of the Oregon Trail and present his findings to Congress. The letters kept referring to a map he had created that was over 200 feet long. In my prowling around the many boxes of the Meeker collection I had learned that one box contained mostly maps. I had never looked at it, and from the looks of it when we opened it, no one else had either.

I told Dave Welch what I learned, and so on a hunch we went to Tacoma to look at the maps. And we were rewarded for our efforts. From the descriptions of the maps in the correspondence, I am convinced that these are indeed the maps of the Oregon Trail that Ezra made in 1910. Dave is working on putting together an index of what's exactly in the box. At the very least, this is the first effort to map the entire Oregon Trail. Any significance beyond that I will leave for the experts. The maps themselves are in excellent shape and on good quality velum paper, and they are indeed over 200 feet long. We rolled them out in parts, pretty much covering the entire length of the research center multiple times. Some are annotated. Kansas is covered in two separate mappings, one in pencil that Ezra did, and another made by the Kansas Historical Society.

Hopefully, we will have more information to share at the St. Joseph convention and will be glad to discuss what we found there, or at any of our stops along the route of our reenactment this summer.

To whet your appetites I will share with you with some of the correspondence:

Dear Sir

I adopted a different method than on my trip of 1906-7 when efforts were made to secure erection of monuments, in that during the eight months and eleven days on the plains I turned my attention to locating the actual track of the Trail and securing tracings of it from the public land survey. I have four states, Idaho, Wyoming, Nebraska, and Kansas, I may say complete, making rolls in the aggregate of over 200 feet in length and covering nearly 1600 miles of the Trail. Oregon is not complete but we know it so well, as well as Washington that we feel no concern that the track will be lost. (Ezra Meeker to John L Corwin, Long Beach, Calif., January 5, 1911)

Dear Sir

Because of the Committee's action regarding the bill to appropriate only \$25,000, I have made another trip over the Trail, this time turning my attention exclusively to tracing and locating its whereabouts. I now have tracings of the public survey nearly 200 feet long and showing the 1600 miles of the exact location of the Trail and can give a close estimate of the present traveled road crossings and thereby determine the number of markers needed. (Ezra Meeker to Congressman W. E. Humphrey, December 23, 1910)

Dear Sir

I enclose statement in substance I should have said before the committee. I have the completed tracings of the section lines the Trail crosses for the four states, Idaho, Wyoming, Nebraska and Kansas, a plat nearly 200 feet long but concluded best to hold it for future use. (Ezra Meeker to Congressman W. E. Humphrey, January 13, 1911)

Mountain Home
June 2nd, 1910
Fred H. McConnel
County Surveyor
Caldwell, Idaho

Dear Sir

I herewith send you tracings of Township plats showing the old roads. I wish you would draw a red line to show the present traveled roads as mentioned in our conversation and send the same by letter postage to Twin Falls. Herewith find stamps to cover postage.

Any object of interest of which you have knowledge of such for instance the location of the scene of massacre a few miles below your city. The location of towns or cities and the railroad, if not too much trouble, I wish you would indicate it on the plats.

My driver's illness compelled me to be with my outfit else would have visited your city again and gone over the tracing with you.

Respect.
Ezra Meeker

Dear Sir

I enclose map of Kansas upon which you will find a dim lead pencil line intended to indicate the general route of the Oregon Trail as traveled in 1843. I wish you would examine this and make such corrections as you may see necessary. (Ezra Meeker to Geo W. Martin, Sec. Historical Society, Topeka, Kansas, July 22, 1910)

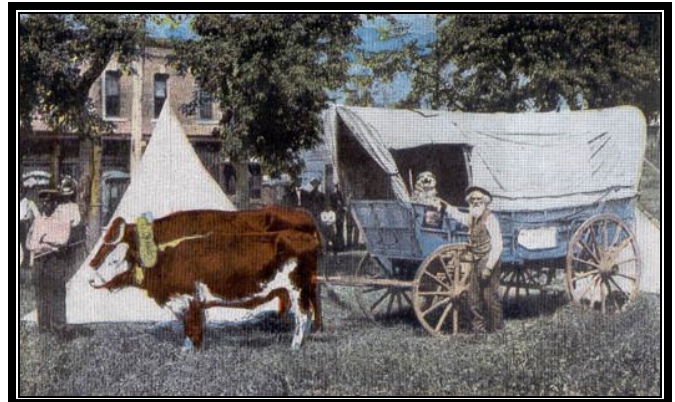
Dear Sir

I wrote you on the 20th inst. addressing letter by way Seattle and today read in a N.Y. paper that you had arrived in Kansas City Sept. 24th on your way to Washington D.C. it were quite a long article well written and giving particulars of what you had done and what you were striving to do. one thing I noticed in particular were that you had a map 370 feet long showing the Trail in detail to lay before Congress (well I reckon that is some map, eh.) (William B. Mardon to Ezra Meeker, September 27, 1910)

Northwest Trails, Spring 2006

Meeker Centennial Expedition 2006 Schedule

Jul 22 Puyallup, WA
Jul 23 Tumwater, WA
Jul 23 The Dalles, OR
Jul 24 Pendleton, OR
Jul 25 Durkee, OR
Jul 26 Flagstaff Hill/Baker City, OR
Jul 27 Boise, ID
Jul 28 Three Island Crossing /Glenns Ferry, ID
Jul 29 Pocatello / Fort Hall, ID
Jul 30 Soda Springs, ID
Jul 31 Rock Springs, WY
Aug 1 South Pass, WY
Aug 2 Casper, WY
Aug 4 Scotts Bluff, NE
Aug 5 Kearney/Fort Kearny, NE
Aug 6 Alcove Spring, KS
Aug 7 Arrive St. Joseph, MO
Aug 8-12 OCTA Convention
Aug 10 Independence, MO
Aug 16 Fort Bridger, WY
Aug 19 Walla Walla, WA
Aug 21 Return to Puyallup, WA



Ezra Meeker at Kearney, Nebraska

Rock Springs BLM Celebrates the Antiquities Act Centennial in the South Pass Area

As part of the Antiquities Act Centennial Celebration, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in Rock Springs “will observe the celebration with three separate events,” said Terry Del Bene, lead archeologist with the Rock Springs BLM. The first of the three events is a study of the National Historic Trails in the South Pass area, which will be a joint effort between the Lander and Rock Springs BLM offices. The BLM needs skilled volunteers to assist in trail recordation and trail site/feature documentation for this project.

The Bureau has partnered with willing landowners, the National Park Service, the Oregon-California Trails Association, and the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office. The BLM has already started making contact with landowners in the areas who may be involved in the study. Collectively, these groups and agencies will complete historical document research and the field assessments for the South Pass area.

The research being completed is the first comprehensive review of documentation combined with field-checking ever done for the entire South Pass area. “The volunteers accepted for this particular study need to have established skills in trail recordation, prior experience with GPS units, an understanding of digital cameras, and comprehensive writing experience,” said Colleen Sievers, co-lead for this project. “We will be conducting a volunteer program bringing together historians, trail experts, and professional archaeologists from across the country,” explained Del Bene. Fieldwork will take place from June 19–30, 2006, in the South Pass area.

Anyone interested in being a part of this unique opportunity should contact the BLM Rock Springs Field Office in writing by May 1, 2006. The office address is:

Rock Springs BLM
ATTN: Cultural Resources
280 Highway 191 North
Rock Springs, WY 82901

Please include your name, mailing address, a brief list of qualifications, and dates available to volunteer. There is limited space available, and qualified volunteers will be taken on a first-come, first-serve basis. Qualified volunteers will be mailed a volunteer packet with more specific information.

The second major event of the Antiquities Act centennial celebration will be the Kansas School for the Blind visit to the Cherokee Trail on July 12, 2006. The third event will be the Ezra Meeker Commemoration on August 1, 2006, which will be held near the Ezra Meeker Monument at the South Pass Summit.

For more information, contact:

Terry Del Bene 307-352-0301
Colleen Sievers 307-352-0324

My View on Trail Preservation

I was giving thought as to why we should believe in trail preservation when I ran across a quote from John F. Kennedy over 40 years ago.

President Kennedy said: “It’s our task in our time and in our generation to hand down, undiminished, to those who come after us, as was handed down to us by those who went before us, the natural wealth and beauty which is ours.”

The future of our historic trails is in our hands.

—Chuck Hornbuckle



PASSPORT IN TIME

The Oregon Trail in the Blues

Wallowa-Whitman National Forest

June 26–30 (Must commit to full session)

The main route of the Oregon Trail passed from the Grande Ronde (now known as La Grande) Valley up over the Blue Mountains and down to Pendleton. Emigrant diaries recorded the terrible travel up steep mountains, generally late in the season, sometimes in the snow. Thousands made the trip between the 1840s and the 1860s. Much of the trail has been marked, and visible wagon ruts remain even today. However, some sections remain unconfirmed where nature and logging activities over the years have removed any visible traces of the route. Volunteers using metal detectors will attempt to locate these undocumented portions of the pioneer trail. We will search for archaeological evidence, use GPS technology to record our finds, and take a digital picture of each artifact located.

Number of openings: 25 per session

Special skills: Interest in emigrant trails, GPS knowledge, and metal-detector experience helpful but not required; please bring your own metal detector if you have one and indicate on application if you will do so

Facilities: RV and tent camping at Hilgard Junction State Park near the work site; full services in La Grande

Applications due: April 21

Contact: Gail Carbiener at 541-593-2190 or cypmccg@oregontrail.net

Boardman Bombing Range Trail Hike

If any chapter members are interested, a trail hike to Well Spring on the Boardman Bombing Range is a possibility for National Trails Day, June 3. Chapter Director Jenny Miller is making the arrangements.

If you are interested in the hike, please email Jenny Miller at rutnut@eoni.com no later than **April 26**.

Books of Interest

Linda Crew, *A Heart for Any Fate: Westward to Oregon, 1845* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 2005).

Everell Cummins, *Train of Innocents: The Story of the Kennedy Train* (AuthorHouse, 2006; www.authorhouse.com).

Joyce Badgely Hunsaker, *Seeing the Elephant: Voices from the Oregon Trail* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2003).

2006 Annual Picnic

The NW OCTA Annual Picnic will be held September 9 in Centralia, Washington, at the Borst Park



Meeker Monument, La Grande,

Northwest Trails

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Material may be submitted via email or on disk or as email attachment in Word or Text format. Pictures can be sent via email, on disk (JPG format), 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 Avarad Fairbanks for Oregon Trail monuments.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

2006 Ackerman Award Event

Saturday, June 10
at the
Oregon Trail Interpretive Center,
Baker City, Oregon

Program in the Theater
Living History
Ackerman Award Presentation
Buffalo Stew Lunch
Author Book Signing

Special Feature

The 1862 Kennedy Wagon Train Reunion
of Kennedy Family Descendants

A registration flyer will be sent out soon

Northwest Trails

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