



# Northwest Trails

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

Volume 23, No. 2

Spring 2008

## Northwest Chapter Annual Meeting

Forty-one members attended the NW OCTA Annual Meeting in The Dalles on March 1. Treasurer Joyce BolerJack reported a balance of \$11,245.38 and 216 members in the chapter. It was announced that Rich Herman will fill in for Chuck Hornbuckle as Chapter Preservation Officer. Dave Welch presented on South Pass and wind turbines in Oregon. Changes to the bylaws were approved to make the NW Chapter fiscal year the same as national's, October 1 to September 30, and to allow changes to the bylaws to be voted on at the fall meeting.

Guest speaker Mary Michaelson gave a delightful and interesting program with slides on Phoebe Goodell Judson, an 1853 emigrant with ties to several pioneer families in the Pacific Northwest. After the sandwich buffet in the dining area, Paul Masee spoke for Stafford Hazelett on the process of determining land ownership along the trails and encouraged members to participate in the project. Next, Roger Blair presented the chapter awards for 2007. John Edmundson accepted the Distinguished Service Award, and Billy Symms accepted the Distinguished Volunteer Award. Two more Distinguished Volunteer Awards were announced to go to Gail Carbiener and Stafford Hazelett. They weren't present to accept their plaques. The Richard and Trudy Ackerman Award for Meritorious Achievement was awarded to Gary and Marley Shurteff, who were also not present to accept their plaque.

Following the award presentations, Jeff Pardue gave an informative slide presentation on the Umatilla River cutoff trails in the Umatilla Chemical Depot. The meeting was adjourned, and the Silent Auction was closed. Wendell Baskins announced the winners. Then the ever-popular raffle was held. Suzanne and Chuck Hornbuckle were greatly missed, and Rich Herman, Susan Doyle, and Jenny Miller filled in for them. Another excellent meeting, and special thanks to Wendell Baskins for making the arrangements.



*Billy Symms accepting the Distinguished Volunteer Award.*



*John Edmundson accepting the Distinguished Service Award.*

## NW Chapter Directory

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## President's Message

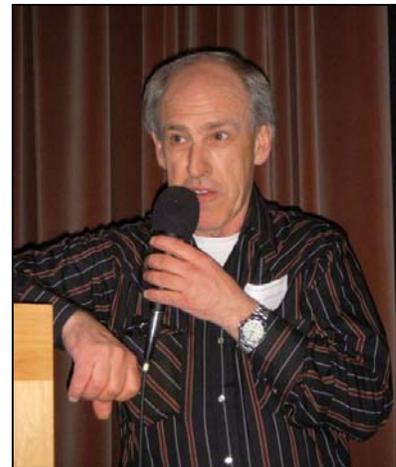
The early March annual meeting was a great success and an enjoyable time as usual. Congratulations to the award recipients! You'll find the list of recipients elsewhere in this newsletter. Each recipient richly deserves the recognition and our collective thanks for their efforts. Also, congratulations to the officers and board members for the upcoming year. The slate is nearly the same as last term, except that Susan Doyle is stepping down as vice-president and Jim Tompkins assumes those duties. Susan will continue as newsletter editor. Wendell Baskins was re-elected to a second term on the board, so the board makeup remains the same for now. Start making plans to enjoy our next general get together, the fall picnic, September 20.

In the interim, plan to attend the Nampa convention in August. Although gas prices seem to continue to rise without letup, Nampa is less than fifty miles beyond the eastern border of Oregon. You just won't find a closer convention except for one within our chapter states. Being on the planning committee, I can assure you that there will be an excellent program and a fun time. For those old-timers who attended the Boise convention in 1988, you should be aware that there will be very little duplication of tours. It will be a great time.

—Roger Blair



Mary Michaelson



Jeff Pardue



Paul Massee

## More Photos from the Annual Meeting

## NW Chapter Mapping and Marking: 2007 Accomplishments, 2008 Plans

*By Stafford Hazelett*

In June, Paul Massee led a project to verify the route of the emigrant trail climbing the hills west of La Grande. This is part of the Blue Mountain High Potential Route Segment. Paul did most of the field preparation and I provided some mapping support and a field review before the participants arrived. Four people hiked the full Oregon Trail route with a local guide from La Grande to Hilgard Junction State Park, while ten other folks performed a ground survey searching for evidence of the route of the ascent. The landowner was pleased to see the interest and allowed us to place three white fiberglass composite markers with Oregon Trail stickers on a probable swale on his property.

Also in June, William Symms led a project to place interpretive panels at Alkali Springs and Tub Springs in the Malheur Desert, Oregon. This is part of the Alkali Springs High Potential Route Segment of the Oregon Trail north of Vale. The first day of the project, Symms worked with the local BLM archaeologist, Diane Pritchard, her husband, OCTA members Gail and Muriel Carbiener, and former members Bruce and Wanda Raffety. The next day, they were joined by National OCTA Mapping and Marking Chairman Jim and Patti McGill, from Idaho, and Tom Gray, OCTA member and president of the Malheur County Historical Society, to complete the project.

A new interpretive panel was installed in April near the Willow Creek Campsite near Cecil, Oregon. The project leader was non-member John Edmundson. Several OCTA members were present at the dedication of the panel in September when a new fiberglass composite trail marker was also placed.

The Oregon State Historic Preservation Office developed a plan for inventorying the Oregon Trail in Oregon and for updating their database in cooperation with OCTA.

For 2008, a project is currently underway to

create a database of the owners of land that is crossed by the Oregon Trail in Oregon. Both SHPO and OCTA are planning a review of the High Potential Historic Sites and Route Segments on the Oregon Trail as part of the 2008 Heritage Conference in May in Eugene, Oregon.

## Oregon Trail Elderhostel

*By Jim Pritchard*

This year's Oregon Trail Elderhostel has two programs: July 9–24 and September 10–25. Each is 15 nights. More than a trail, the rutted, rocky route west was a dream in the minds of travelers searching for the way to a better life. It was a path to the promised land, “the land of milk and honey,” the fertile Willamette Valley of Oregon Territory. Follow in the footsteps of these hardy pioneers to recapture the essence of one of America's most remarkable migrations. Examine the joys and sorrows of the trail and see the unrivaled beauty of the landscapes of nearly one-third of our country through six states—each unique in history, topography, and character.

Come prepared to enjoy walking at trail sites (sometimes in the actual trail ruts); to visit replica settlements, forts, and museums; to hike (up to two miles) at scenic locations such as Register Cliff where we view hundreds of emigrant inscriptions carved into the rocks; and to delight in a diversity of landscapes unfolding each day.

If you are not 55 years old, you need to register as a roommate with someone who is at least 55. For more information, or to register, contact:

Elderhostel  
11 Avenue de Lafayette  
Boston, MA 02111  
1-800-454-5768  
[www.elderhostel.org](http://www.elderhostel.org)  
(ask about program #13713TCV)

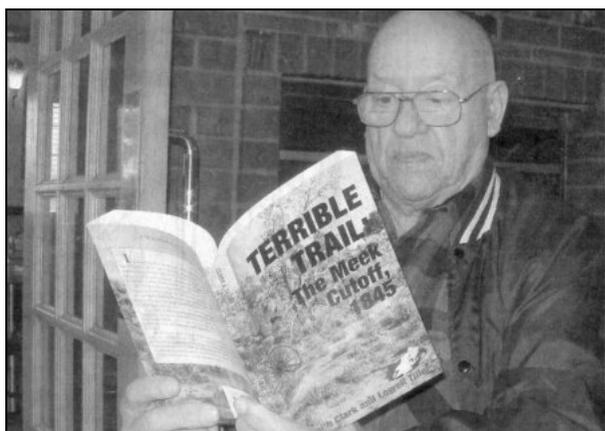


## Newspaper Article Features Lowell Tiller

Lowell Tiller was recently featured in two Northwest newspapers. Tiller is a longtime member of the chapter and a respected trail researcher. Among the chapter awards he received is the Dick and Trudy Ackerman Award for Meritorious Achievement. He is noted for co-authoring *Terrible Trail: the Meek Cutoff, 1845*, published in 1966.

A lengthy article, "Historian Lowell Tiller Hails from Hermiston," was in the *East Oregonian* on March 20 and summarized in the *Portland Oregonian* on Sunday, March 30. In it, Tiller reflects on his teen years in Eastern Oregon. While he spent his first thirteen years at Grass Valley, south of Rufus, his family moved to Hermiston in the late 1930s, and he graduated from Hermiston High School in 1943. He joined the U.S. Navy Air Corps and served in the Pacific in World War II. After the war he returned home and earned a degree in business administration.

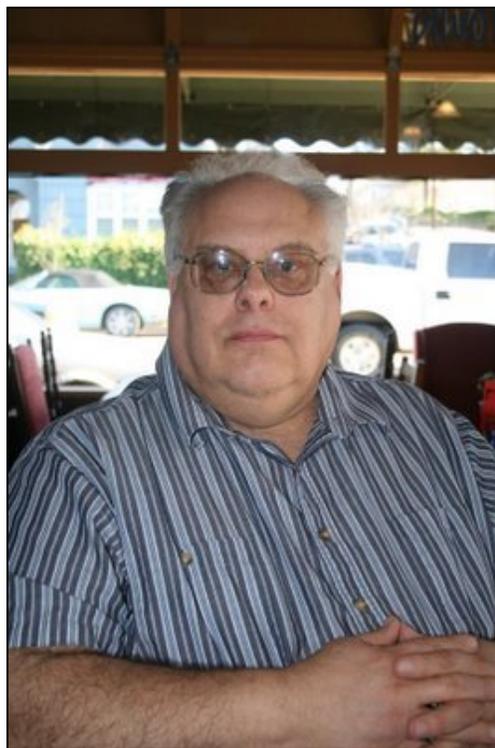
Tiller retired in 1987 after twenty years with Nalley's Fine Foods. After retiring he helped refurbish many of the Oregon history signs. He also joined Oregon's Travel Information Council and worked with the state's historical marker program that provides blue signs along highways to attract tourists to businesses. He now lives with his daughter, Teresa Davis, in Portland. Tiller is no longer as active with the Northwest Chapter as in the past, and his ever-smiling face is missed at chapter activities.



## Jim Tompkins Recognized

The Oregon City Municipal Elevator Public Art Project is artwork by Michael Asbill for the only Municipal Elevator in the United States. Asbill posted "Thank You Jim Tompkins" for providing information about historic images for the project on the Oregon City website, [www.orcity.org/blogs/artblog/artblog.html](http://www.orcity.org/blogs/artblog/artblog.html).

Nobody knows Oregon City history like Jim! Over the years he has done a massive amount of research and pieced together a comprehensive history for the region. He is thorough and thoughtful. He has written several books including *Oregon City* from the Images of America series published by Arcadia. He also wrote *City at Willamette Falls*, which is the most complete and comprehensive account of Oregon City that I have had the pleasure to read. This wonderful book is available in the library at the Museum of the Oregon Territory.



*Well done, Jim!*

# Ezra Meeker's 1910 Oregon Trail Markers

By Dennis Larsen

Most Northwest OCTA members are aware that in March and April 1906 Ezra Meeker erected a number of inscribed granite markers along the Oregon Trail from The Dalles to Vale, Oregon. He also erected a number of cedar posts and painted a number of boulders along that route in locations where he felt permanent markers should be placed. Meeker's 1906 journey over the trail by ox team is well documented; however, at age seventy-nine, in March 1910, Ezra hit the trail again. This time he veered north of Pendleton to Walla Walla, retracing the route of the 1843 migration, a section of trail that he did not travel in 1906. This 1910 effort is not as well known as the 1906 expedition, but over the last couple of years I have put together as comprehensive a telling of that story as possible using Ezra's correspondence stored at the Washington State Historical Society Research Center in Tacoma.

Recently I discovered a 1910 journal hidden among Meeker's papers, full of information not found in his letters. One very interesting discovery is that Meeker set fifteen new markers along the trail in 1910, all in Oregon. He used a three-foot galvanized 1½-inch pipe with an inscribed brass cap inserted in the top. His plan was to place one of these pipes as a temporary marker where currently traveled roads intersected the trail. He hoped that an appropriation pending in the U.S. Congress would eventually provide the funds to replace these pipes with permanent inscribed granite markers. Lack of finances ended his marking in eastern Oregon.

For those who would like to search out these 1910 markers, I provide the following information and journal entries. If one is found, please notify the chapter as I hope steps would be taken to preserve it. After receiving this material Roger Blair and Susan Doyle began researching the story of the markers set by Meeker between Walla Walla and Pendleton. Their findings are included, along with a wonderful photograph of the school children and Meeker taken on April 14, 1910 in Milton-Freewater, Oregon.

## # 1 The Dalles, Oregon

### March 19, 1910, journal entry:

*Busy day: set 3 foot galvanized 1½ pipe as first marker in crevice of Harbor Rock. We needed to chisel but little to let the pipe in the crevice in an upright position after which filled the surrounding space with cement or rather concrete.*

*Harbor Rock stands near the bank of what is known as mill creek and as it is the initial point for the survey of the military reservation, no further reference need be made as to location.*

*Here at this point the immigrants embarked on scows or rafts to float down the Columbia to the Cascades, hence this is an appropriate place to mark.*

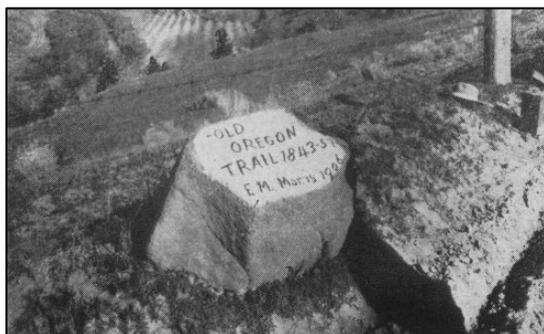
*The rock is submerged in high water 10 or 12 feet nevertheless I think this is the place for a monument by building a foundation to reach above high water mark.*

## # 2 The First Boulder Marked: the Cushing place, four miles east of The Dalles

In 1906 Meeker painted a boulder here. In 1910 he relocated the boulder and inscribed it as mentioned below. I include both his 1906 and 1910 information to help in determining its location.

### March 15, 1906, journal entry:

*Today we found the Old Trail and junction with the road on Mr. & Mrs. Cushing's place; Marked a heavy boulder at the side of the road Old Oregon Trail 1843-57. E. M. March 15th. Took a photograph of stone.*



**Undated letter to George Himes:**

*The stone is in SE qr sec 31, T 1 R 14 E. N. W. The spot was identified by Mr. Cushing, Jr. is on the road on W. W. Cushings place about a mile west of the crossing of five mile creek. The letters ought to be chiseled in this stone.*

**March 21, 1910, journal entry:**

*Found our marked boulder 4 miles out from The Dalles but the paint was nearly all off, so we unyoked, set the cook to getting dinner and out with the cold chisels and dug the letters into the rock "Oregon Trail," so they will be legible for a century. This boulder is on the trail where the visible marks of it is shown four miles out from The Dalles and is on the public road and from which W. Cushing's house bears N 55 E about 200 rods. This house is down in the deep valley near 10 mile creek with a peach orchard in the foreground; took a photograph of this view four years ago. From the boulder another house near the road bears N 50 E about 100 rods distant.*

The Cushing home was on Fifteenmile Creek, a bit above Cushing Falls. The painted boulder would have been in the creek bottom. The current paved road travels high above the creek at this point. Access to homes in the creek bottom is via gravel roads. According to Joanne Ward, the librarian at the Discovery Center at The Dalles, the Cushing home no longer stands.

**#3 West of Meeker's camp on 10 Mile Creek [today's Fifteenmile Creek]****Letter to George Himes, March 17, 1906:**

*Before leaving camp 15 on 10 mile creek, this morning I planted a stone marker as usual, where the trail leaves the present road, about 300 yds westerly from camp 15 and just 730 steps westerly where the trail again strikes the road and is merged with it until lost in a ravine that has washed out since it was traveled*

**March 21, 1910, journal entry:**

*Camped on this identical spot four years ago. The place was then known as "Coopers" or 10 mile creek; found the stone marked 4 years ago but road has changed leaving it off the road, so I will put up an iron marker in the morning.*

This is where Company Hollow Creek enters Fifteenmile Creek. There are a number of stones along the creek that Ezra could have painted. It looks like the old road came down to the right of Company Hollow as you look up the hill. It seems likely Ezra would have painted a boulder where the road coming down the hill crossed Fifteenmile Creek. The washed out ravine he mentions is still there, going one mile up the hill to McCoy Road.

**#4 Fairbanks, Oregon****March 22, 1910, journal entry:**

*Set iron post at Fairbanks in county road 100 feet from the store bldg and about the same distance from the Dufer railroad track. This is in the SE ¼ of SE ¼ of Sec 25, T 2 N R 15 E of Willamette meridian but the exact location by the survey not obtainable with the force at hand but there can be no mistake as the road starts up the draw from the creek bottom, leading to the bridge crossing of the Deschutes river six miles distant.*

**#5 Miller Place: one mile east of Deschutes River bridge in Columbia River bottoms****March 18, 1906, journal entry:**

*This morning set a post 300 yards or thereabouts westerly Thomas J. Miller's house at point of divergence of the Trail. [here obliterated] to the old ford and nearly opposite of station 18 of O. R. & N. Co. R. R, the present traveled road bearing to the left [looking westward].*

**March 22, 1910, journal entry:**

*Reached Millers place after crossing the bridge and out some three fourths of a mile; found our old post standing but concluded to set an iron marker near Millers house and in the county road opposite the Deschutes station on the O.R. & N RR. Both these markers set today are 1½ inch galvanized pipe 3½ feet long set in the ground 2 feet tamped with earth to within six inches of the ground and remainder with cement.*

The house is gone today, victim of I-84 construction, railroad relocation, and the building of the state park.

**#6 Biggs, Oregon****March 23, 1910, journal entry:**

*From Fultons to Wasco the Trail is off to the north about three miles and intersected by three traveled N & south roads, two which were marked and described in my 1906 trip. Have arranged with John Fulton whose address is Wasco, Oregon, to set an iron marker near the Biggs station on the O.R.N. station about ½ miles west of station and opposite where the Trail comes down the hill.*

**#7 Wasco, Oregon****March 19, 1906, journal entry:**

*The Trail runs 2 1/4 miles north of Wasco, set a post at intersection of Trail with road running north to Columbia river near J. P. McMilan.*

**March 23, 1910, journal entry:**

*March 19<sup>th</sup>, 1906 I set a wooden post on a present traveled road running north from this place at the intersection of the Trail near J. P. McMilans place and about 2¼ miles out. E. G. Tozier will plant an iron marker in place of the wooden post which I have lettered for him and has agreed to cement around the iron pipe to prevent its removal. The marshal of the town contributed four iron markers.*

The 1906 post was set a few hundred yards north of where China Hollow Creek Road intersects the Wasco-Rufus Road. The Oregon Trail crossed the Wasco-Rufus Road here. There is no post or marker at this location today, but just east on a farm road, a weather-beaten sign marks the trail. You can faintly make out the trail swales as they head west across the wheat fields.

**#8 Klondike, Oregon****March 24, 1910, journal entry:**

*Six miles out from Wasco, arranged with P. T. Peddicord Klondike P. O. to send him an iron marker which he is to set at "emigrant Springs," a point on the Trail about 3 miles north at a crossing of county road running north.*

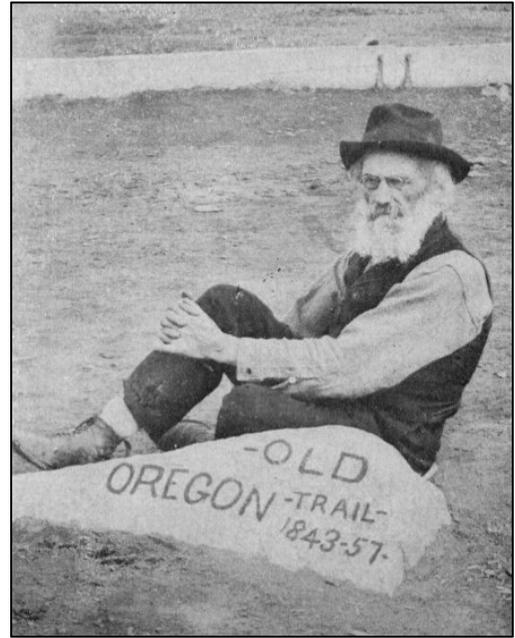
**#9 John Day River Ferry, Oregon****March 24, 1910, journal entry:**

*Set an iron marker on the left bank of John Days river at ferry landing. The Trail crossed the river about a thousand feet below in the field.*

**#10 Well Springs, Oregon****March 26, 1910, journal entry:**

*Passed Wells Springs 6 miles out from Ella PO. Found the boulder marked 4 years ago & chiseled the letters into the stone that had only painted before; The U. S. surveyors have fixed a permanent mark on the top of the stone marked U.S. Geo survey Elevation 822 Location T 2 N R 25 E Sec 29.*

At Well Spring there is a solitary granite boulder with a flat face sitting a few yards north of the lower spring in the spot indicated by Ezra. It is the only large rock in the vicinity of the spring today, but it is not the rock photographed by Meeker in 1906. Most of the granite erratics in the area were removed in the 1960s and 1970s to be carved into tombstones for modern cemeteries. At right is a photograph of Meeker at Well Spring.



## **#11 Echo, Oregon**

### **March 27, 1906, journal entry:**

*Set a post in the town near the Echo hotel. At this post at Echo we hauled a dozen heavy boulders and built a mound of stone around base of post and also marked one of the heaviest of the stones.*

### **March 28, 1910, journal entry:**

*Found the post standing I put up 4 years ago but will replace it by a galvanized iron marker.*

Today, on the corner of Dupont Street and Main Street in downtown Echo, is a plain white metal shaft (significance unknown) standing in front of the site of the old hotel where Ezra set his post in 1906.

## **#12 Milton-Freewater, Oregon**

### **April 14, 1910, journal entry:**

*We did not go into camp here but went to the hotel for meals; I came on by the electric cars and arranged to put up an iron marker near the crossing of the Walla Walla river on the bank of the ditch at the bridge and on the electric car line and within the limits of the town of Milton. The school children came and each cast a stone at the foot of the marker which is an inch & a half galvanized iron pipe, set into cement. Spoke in hall at 7:30 and at MS church at 9:30.*

Blair/Doyle: Effie Ritchey was one of the school children who saw Meeker place the pipe in Milton. She described how each student placed a rock at its base. In 1989 a landscape excavator located the pipe in a pile of rocks, and not knowing what it was it was thrown away. Later that year Effie identified the location, and a memorial monument was placed at the site. The monument is in the front of a chiropractor's office at 139 S. Main Street, Milton-Freewater, on the corner of Main and Elizabeth. Effie Ritchey died in 2006 at the age of 107.

## **#13 Weston, Oregon**

### **April 15, 1910, journal entry:**

*Came on by rail and arranged to set marker in road at OM Richmond's being at the turn of the road leading to the depot and being in the town limits of this town. The school came in a body at 3 O'clock and a large number of citizens; the ladies band played two pieces after the children each cast a stone at the foot of the marker; after the first piece rendered I addressed the children and citizens and then went into camp. At night addressed a meeting in a large hall with a large audience of gentlemen and ladies.*

Blair/Doyle: The 1914 Standard Atlas of Umatilla County shows O. M. Richmond property on the road to the railroad depot, now named Key Road. Where Meeker placed the pipe is now covered by the Lamb Weston plant parking lot.

## #14 Athena, Oregon

### April 16, 1910, journal entry:

*Dandy better and so at 10 o'clock hitched up and drove out of Weston slowly; stopped for lunch by the road side and I walked on ahead, leaving team to follow and team arrived at 2:30. Set an iron marker at crossing of Wild Horse creek where railroad crossed the trail and county roads.*

## #15 Adams, Oregon

### April 17, 1910, journal entry:

*Drove to "Adams" 5 miles; arrived at 10 and drove on at 3:45. Set an iron post in county road opposite the RR depot; addressed the Sunday school at 10:30 and again the assemblage at 3 when the marker was put in place.*

Blair/Doyle: In spite of research and scouting trips, the locations of the pipes in Athena and Adams are yet to be found.



*Ezra Meeker, in the covered wagon, and school children in Milton, Oregon, April 14, 1910. Milton Eagle photograph. Although it was taken by the newspaper photographer, the photograph was not published. The original is now in the Frazier Farmstead Museum, Milton-Freewater.*



## *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 Avar  
Fairbanks for Oregon Trail monuments.

## **MARK YOUR CALENDARS**

### **The Annual End-of-the-Year Fall Picnic**

will be

**Saturday, September 20  
in  
Centralia, Washington**



Special surprises this year include  
the Territorial Stage Coach coming  
through the park  
and a visit from Narcissa Whitman

## *Northwest Trails*

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