



Northwest Trails

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

Volume 24, No. 1

Winter 2009

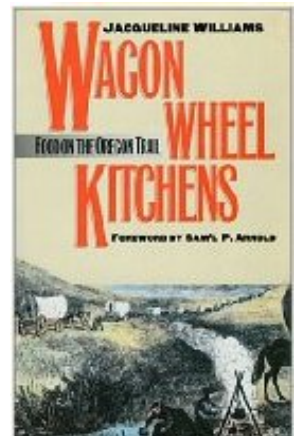
Northwest Chapter Annual Meeting Saturday, March 7 United Methodist Church 18955 South End Road, Oregon City

The 2009 Annual Meeting of the Northwest Chapter will be held on Saturday, March 7, at the Oregon City United Methodist Church in Oregon City. Activities will include the annual meeting, a buffet lunch, a program, and a silent auction and raffle. A registration flyer will be sent out in February.

We will convene at 10:00 a.m., but come as early as 9:00 a.m. to socialize and bring in raffle items before the meeting starts. The raffle is always a great success, and once again we will also have a silent auction. Please bundle issues of the same title of journals or magazines together.

The annual business meeting will be from 10:00 a.m. until noon, followed by a buffet lunch. The program will begin at 1:00 p.m. Our speaker will be Jacqueline Williams, who will speak on “The Best of Meals, The Terrible Meals: Culinary Tales from the Oregon Trail.” She was scheduled to speak at the Nampa convention but had to cancel, and we are very fortunate that she is available to speak to us now.

Jacqueline Williams will briefly discuss the foods carried or acquired on the Oregon Trail. Most of her talk will focus on why some meals would be considered delicious, while others left the wagon companies irritable and hungry. Williams is the award winning author of *Wagon Wheel Kitchens: Food On the Oregon Trail* and *The Way We Ate: Pacific Northwest Cooking, 1843–1900*. She received the 2006 Washington State Library Culture Heritage Award: Taste of Washington, the 1997 Award for Individual Excellence from Washington Museum Association, and the Marie Folkins Award. In 2008 she received the Annual History Award from the Pacific Northwest Historical Guild. She has been published widely in journals and contributed essays to the *Encyclopedia of American Foods and Culinary Biographies*.



A MAP SHOWING THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH IS ON PAGE 6

If you haven't sent your volunteer hours and expenses to Chuck Hornbuckle yet, please do so ASAP. They are due by January 15.

NW Chapter Directory

President

Roger Blair
541-966-8854
rblair@oregontrail.net

Vice President

Jim Tompkins
503-632-4557
tompkins@betonline.com

Secretary

Lynne Alvord
509-697-6818
lalvord@msn.com

Treasurer

Joyce Bolerjack
425-454-7118
jpbolerjack@comcast.net

Past President

Glenn Harrison
541-926-4680
glennharrison@cmug.com

Preservation Officer

Chuck Hornbuckle
360-352-2113
hornbucklecs@juno.com

Directors

Rich Herman
360-576-5139
buddy359@comcast.net

Wendell Baskins
503-655-0311
wlbaskins@msn.com

Jenny Miller
541-567-2468
rutnut@eoni.com

COED

Sallie Riehl
541-812-0233
salliek@comcast.net

Marking and Mapping

Stafford Hazelett
hazelett@zzz.com

President's Message

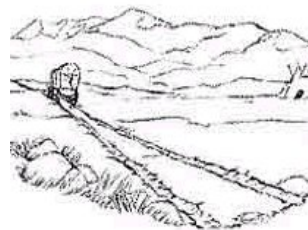
Happy New Year, everyone! I hope your trails in 2009 lead to prosperity, good health, and happiness. I have a suggestion for a New Year resolution: Resolve to renew your commitment to OCTA.

I have a couple of suggestions for how you might fulfill your resolution. First, the national nominating committee is seeking volunteers to run for Board of Directors. It is rewarding to serve on the Board and be a part of setting direction for the organization. The Northwest Chapter has long been active at the national level, probably having provided more directors and national presidents than any other chapter. Let's continue the trend. If you have an interest or would like any questions answered about serving, please contact me right away.

Additionally, it is time to think about whom to recognize with both national and chapter awards. There should be plenty of award candidates, but please send me your nominations. The awards committee is not familiar with all the goings on in OCTA and therefore may not be aware of deserving candidates. Again, you can notify me of potential candidates for both the chapter and national level awards. You need not specify any given category of award. If you just give the justification as to why a candidate deserves recognition, we will determine the appropriate award category. I will need chapter nominees right away since we recognize them at our annual membership meeting, this year to be held March 7. I need national nominations by June 1.

I hope to see all of you at the Northwest Chapter's annual meeting. It is always a fun time and good to see old friends. See you in March in Oregon City.

—Roger Blair



Voices from the Trail

“Had a fine day the men amused themselves a fishing and hunting and bathing in the pure clear stream while we women's amusement was washing and cooking in the burning sun and over a hot fire.”

—Mary Stone Smith, 1854

Newly Found 1852 letters from the Oregon Trail Written by Edward Jay Allen

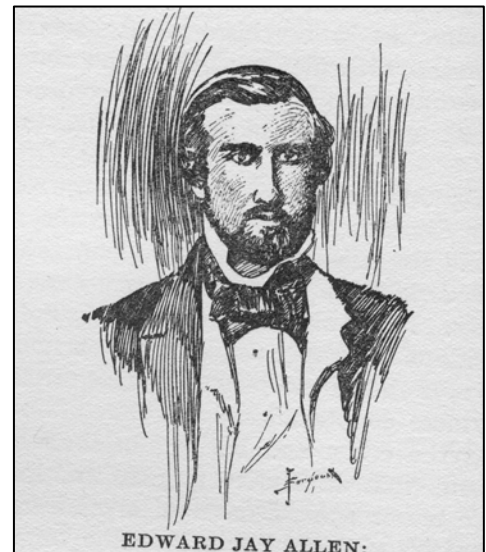
By Dennis Larsen

Edward Jay Allen was born in New York on April 27, 1830, and moved to Pittsburgh as an infant. He grew up there, attended public schools, and studied the classics at Duquesne College. As a young man Allen suffered from a throat ailment and was advised to go west to seek a healthier climate. He shipped his wagon and “plunder” by steamer to St. Louis in May 1852, and from there re-shipped to Council Bluffs, Iowa, purchasing six oxen along the way. Allen left Council Bluffs on May 19, 1852, heading for Oregon. He traveled west with 32 Ohio families. There were 400 wagons in his train.

Allen wrote a series of letters to his brother as he traveled along the trail and also after he reached Washington Territory. The letters were published in the *Pittsburg Dispatch*. Someone cut out those newspaper articles many years ago and pasted them into a scrapbook that eventually found its way to the Beinecke Rare Book Library at Yale University. In 2008, prompted by inquiries from Karen Johnson, a northwest historian, Yale scanned its scrapbook onto a DVD, then posted it online, making the letters accessible for the first time to the general public. Karen Johnson and I have transcribed Allen’s letters (over 200 type-written pages) and are now in the process of editing them. We hope to make them available to OCTA in the spring. Allen also kept a diary that was, according to him, more detailed than his published letters, and he and Ezra Meeker reread portions of it when they reunited in 1907. However, the fate of the diary is unknown.

The letters begin in eastern Nebraska and continue on through to his arrival in Olympia. Allen injured his ankle early on in the journey. By the time he reached the Snake River he could barely walk, so he joined a group of intrepid souls who made rafts out of their wagon beds and floated down the Snake River to Fort Boise. “Floated” indeed! Whitewater rapids, waterfalls, rock-strewn channels, and the like made the journey a hair-raising adventure, which, when it was over, Allen concluded was foolish in the extreme. He stayed at Fort Boise for a few weeks, running what he called the Pennsylvania Ferry. For a time Ezra Meeker and his brother Oliver Meeker joined him there as partners in this enterprise.

After shutting down the ferry, Allen started for the Blue Mountains on horseback. Through misfortune he lost his horse and supplies and was forced again to walk. As he encountered wagon trains, he attempted, with mixed success, to buy meals from emigrants who were themselves very low on supplies at this point. Eventually Allen reached The Dalles, then continued on to Portland. Upon arriving, he considered the large number of emigrants wintering in and around Portland who were all planning to move to Puget Sound in the spring of 1853 and concluded that any available land would be snapped up in no time. So, getting a jump on the competition, Allen started up the Cowlitz Trail in the winter against the advice of almost everyone he talked to. More adventures followed. On the way north he got sidetracked and found himself a delegate to the Monticello Convention. He tells some humorous stories about the goings-on there among the delegates when they were not hard at work trying to separate Washington Territory from Oregon.

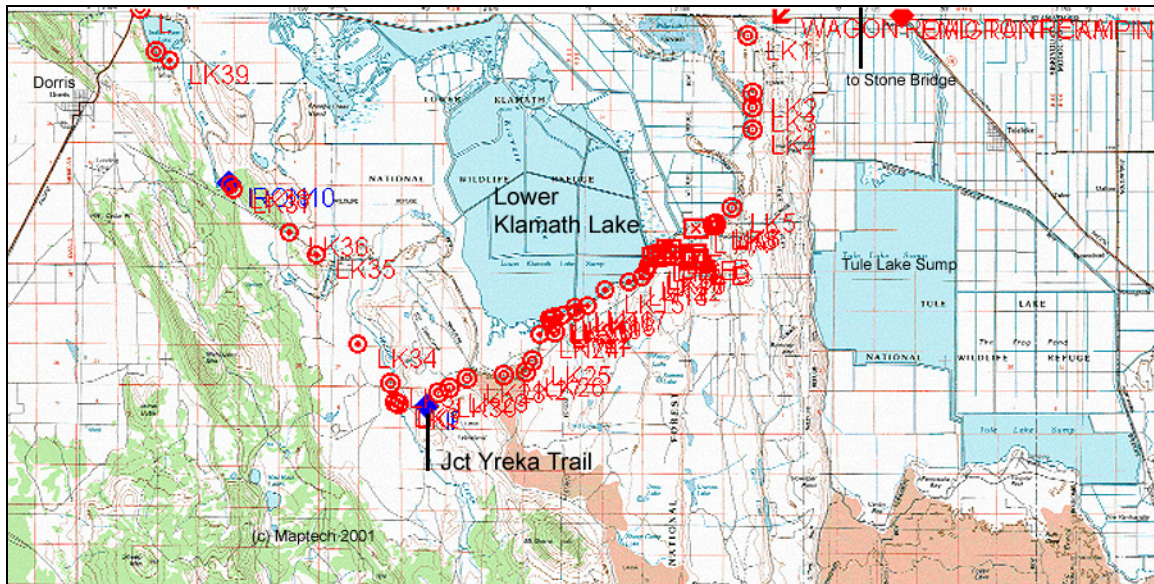


Digital images of Edward Jay Allen’s letters are at beinecke.library.yale.edu/digitallibrary. Enter search term Edward Jay Allen. The title of the collection is [Oregon trail] Eddies Letters.

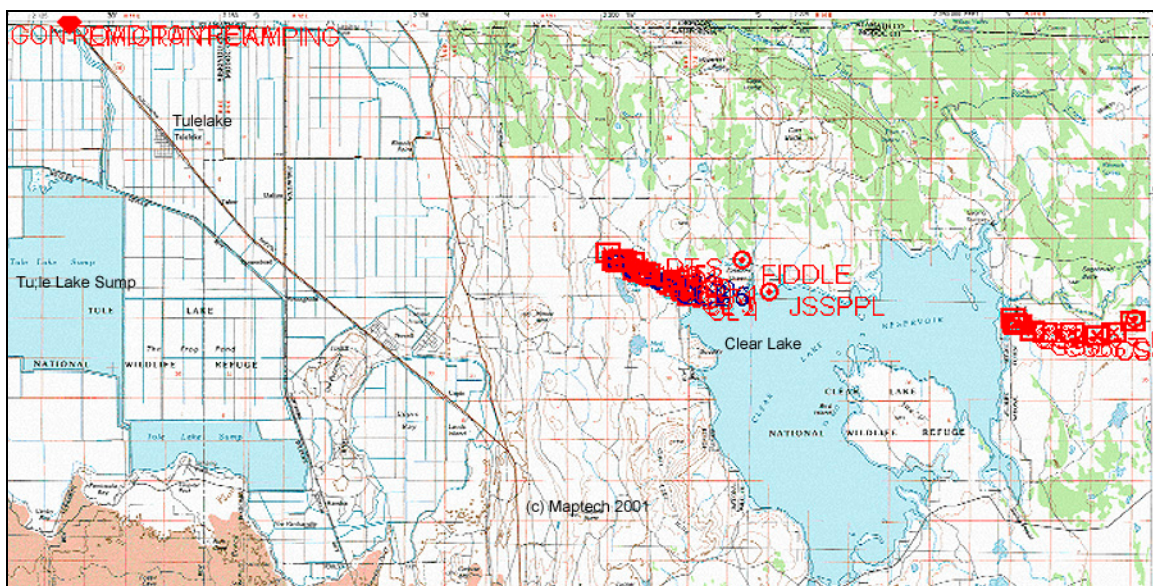
The Applegate Trail in Northern California

By Stafford Hazelett

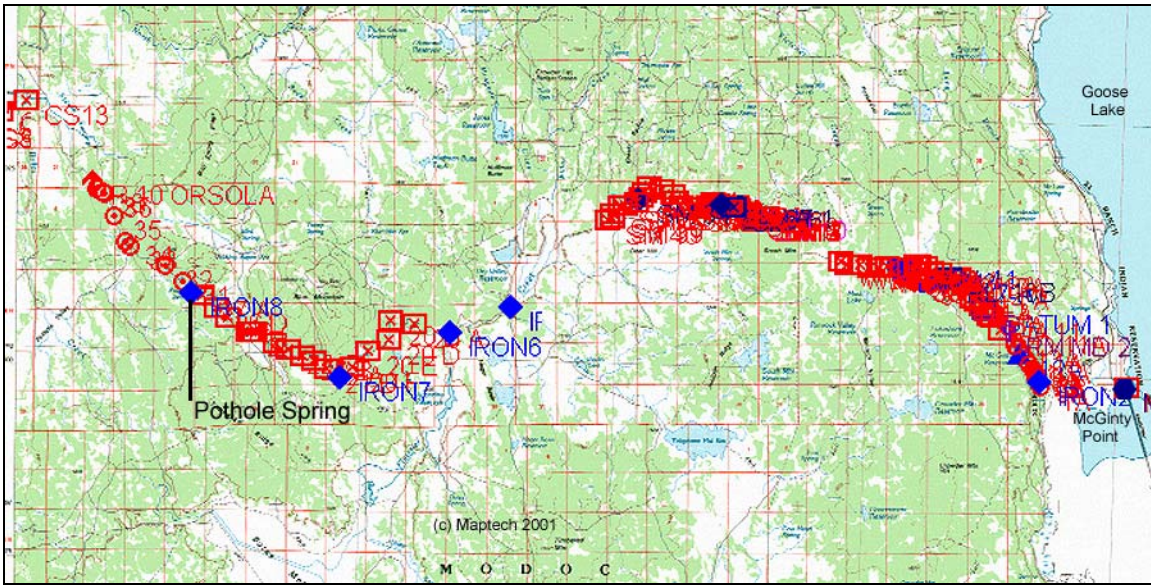
In 2002 the Northwest Chapter began placing markers across Northern California to identify the Applegate Trail – South Road. When the project was completed in 2004 with the assistance of many people in addition to chapter members, there were ten new steel rail markers with interpretive plates, a replacement interpretive plate on a steel rail marker previously placed by Trails West, and approximately 170 new fiberglass composite markers. The project stretched from the ascent of Fandango Pass near Fort Bidwell, California, to the Landrum Wayside at the intersection of the old emigrant road with U.S. Highway 97 at the Oregon-California border near Worden, Oregon.



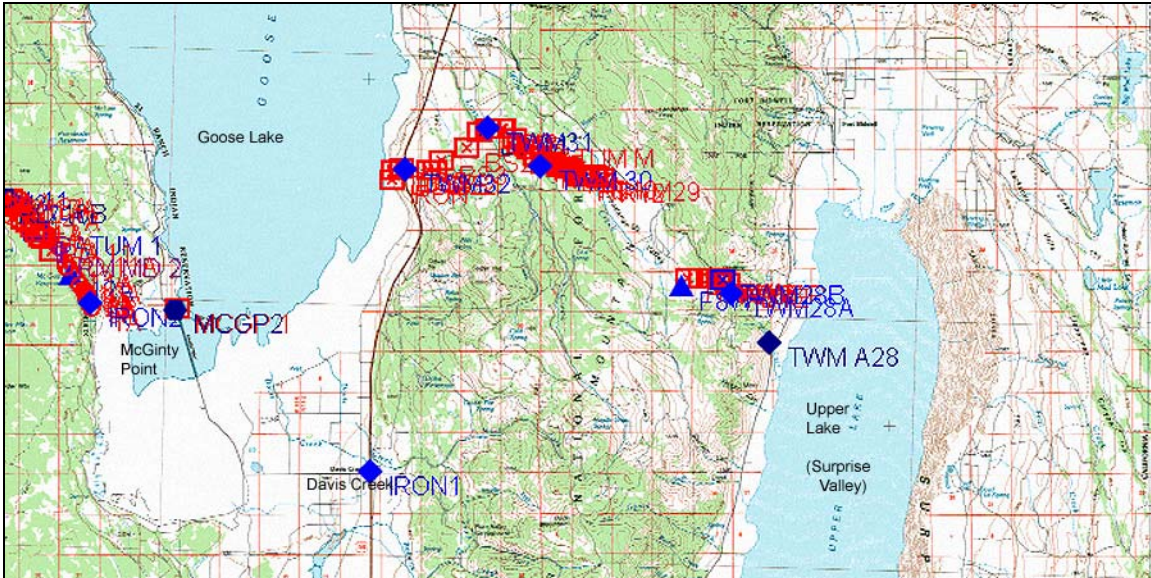
TULELAKE WEST, shows the OCTA markers in the western quarter of the Applegate Trail in northern California, Landrum Wayside to Stone Bridge, including the junction point of the Yreka Trail.



TULELAKE EAST, shows the OCTA markers in the eastern half of the western half of the Applegate Trail in northern California, Stone Bridge to Steele Swamp.



CEDARVILLE WEST, shows the OCTA markers in the western half of the eastern half of the Applegate Trail in northern California, Steele Swamp to McGinty Point, including Pothole Spring.



CEDARVILLE EAST, shows the OCTA markers in the eastern quarter of the Applegate Trail in northern California, McGinty Point to Upper Lake.

In summer 2008 a group of Trails West members discovered that the interpretive plate at Pothole Spring has been vandalized—again. This interpretive plate had already been replaced by Northwest OCTA in 2003 because of vandalism.

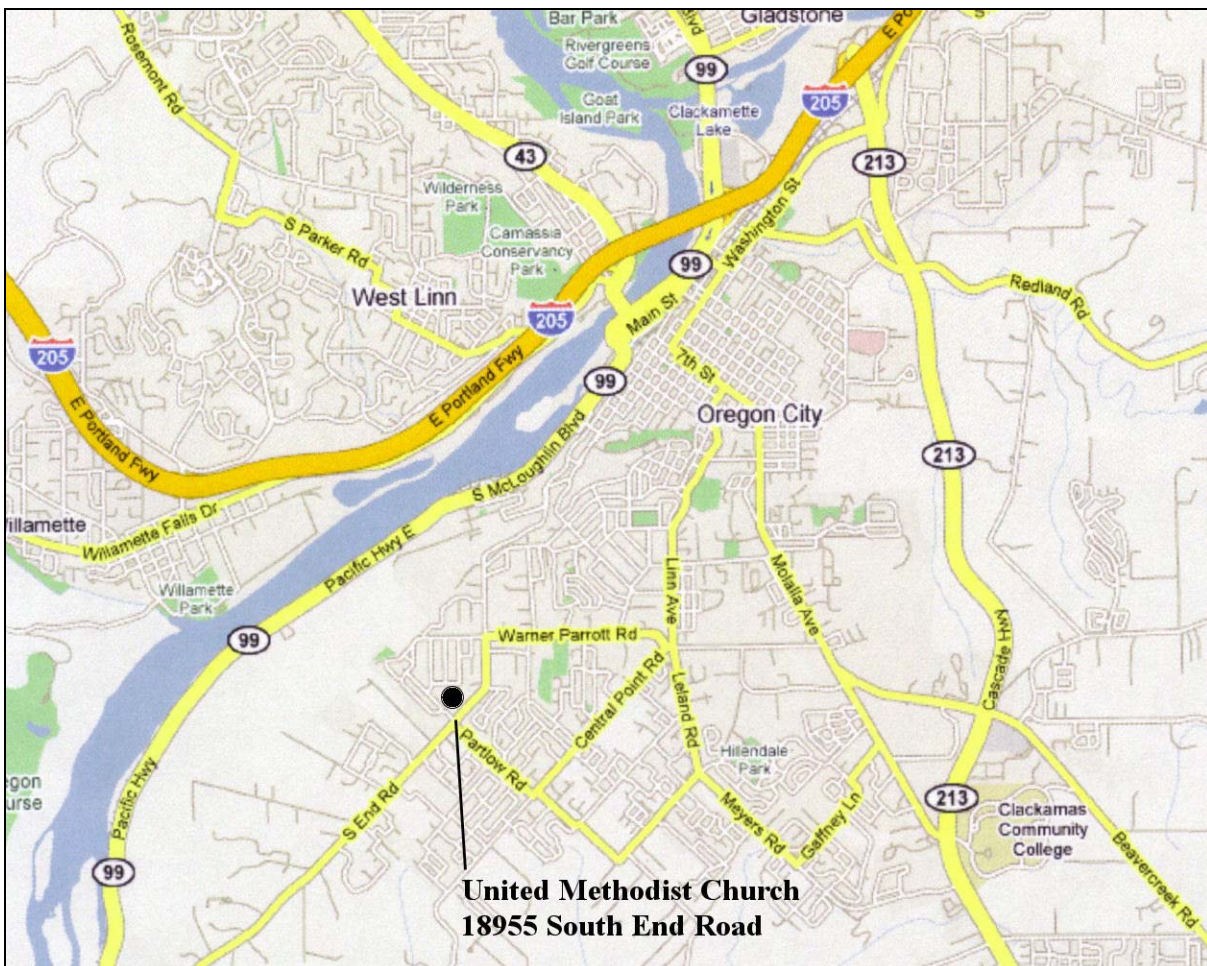


The 2003 replacement plate. Photo by Richard Silva.

Trails West proposes to revisit the northern California Applegate Trail – South Road to Oregon segment in September 2009. They plan to travel about 57 miles from Pothole Spring to the junction of the Yreka Trail. It is their intention to re-plate the steel rail marker at Pothole Spring, again, and add eight new steel rail markers with interpretive plates along the way. They are inviting members of OCTA, especially Northwest Chapter, to participate, although details have not yet been announced. Stafford Hazelett, chairman of Mapping and Marking, will publish updates in the next two chapter newsletters and notify chapter officers and those on the chapter email list if something important needs to be announced. If you want to receive a personal notice of the project, contact Stafford directly at hazelett@zzz.com.



Annual Meeting in Oregon City



Wagon Wheel Ruts and Standard Railroad Gauge

By Susan Badger Doyle

An intriguing email has been going around the Internet for years. I first saw it in 1996, and since then it has resurfaced several times:

The U.S. standard railroad gauge (distance between the rails) is 4 feet, 8.5 inches. That is an exceedingly odd number. Why was that gauge used? Because that's the way they built them in England, and the U.S. railroads were built by English expatriates.

Why did the English build them like that? Because the first rail lines were built by the same people who built the pre-railroad tramways, and that's the gauge they used.

Why did "they" use that gauge then? Because the people who built the tramways used the same jigs and tools that they used for building wagons, which used that wheel spacing.

Why did the wagons use that odd wheel spacing? Well, if they tried to use any other spacing the wagons would break on some of the old, long-distance roads, because that's the spacing of the old wheel ruts.

So who built these old rutted roads? The first long-distance roads in Europe were built by Imperial Rome for their legions. The roads have been used ever since.

And the ruts? The initial ruts, which everyone else had to match for fear of destroying their wagons, were first made by Roman war chariots. Since the chariots were made for or by Imperial Rome, they were all alike in the matter of wheel spacing. Thus, the standard U.S. railroad gauge of 4 feet, 8.5 inches derives from the original specification for an Imperial Roman army war chariot.

Specs and bureaucracies live forever. So the next time you are handed a specification and wonder what horse's "tail end" came up with it, you may be exactly right. Because the Imperial Roman chariots were made to be just wide enough to accommodate the back ends of two war horses.

Is this true? According to www.snopes.com/history/american/gauge.asp and www.straightdope.com/columns/000218.html, it's false. However, both websites give detailed explanations why the email is both wrong in many details and also right in others. First, it is inaccurate to claim that U.S. railroads were built by English expatriates. But since railroads were developed slightly earlier in England, some early U.S. railroads purchased equipment from English manufacturers. Even in England there was no standard gauge for tramway, although the coal district in the north used a gauge of 4 feet, 8 inches.

Well into the nineteenth-century the U.S. still did not have one standard railroad gauge. By the time of the Civil War, 113 different railroad companies in the Confederacy operated on three different gauges of track, which historians cite as one reason for the Union's victory. The eventual standardization of railroad gauge in the U.S. was due less to a gauge inherited from England than to the North rebuilding the Southern railway system to match its own.

What about Roman war chariots and rutted roads? Roman roads were close to modern railroad tracks in width. For example, the rutways at the buried cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum had a gauge of 4 feet, 6 inches. However, there is no direct connection between Roman rutways and eighteenth-century tramways. The similarity is the result of the fact that the builders of each were dealing with a similar problem, that is, hauling wheeled vehicles behind draft animals. Still, the kernel of truth may be that it is said Julius Caesar set the Roman cart gauge of 4 feet, 8.5 inches under Roman law so that vehicles could traverse Roman villages and towns without getting caught in stone ruts of differing widths—and over the centuries this became the traditional standard.

Northwest Trails

Editor

Susan Badger Doyle
524 NW 3rd St
Pendleton, OR 97801
541-966-8854
sdoyle@oregontrail.net

**PUBLISHED QUARTERLY, SUBMISSIONS DUE
January 1, April 1, July 1, October 1**

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

2009 NW OCTA Annual Meeting

**Saturday, March 7
at the
United Methodist Church
Oregon City, Oregon**

Speaker

Jacqueline B. Williams

**“The Best of Meals, The Terrible Meals:
Culinary Tales from the
Oregon Trail”**

**A registration flyer will be sent out
in February**

Northwest Trails

Joyce Bolerjack
10813 NE 20th St
Bellevue, WA 98004