



Northwest Trails

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

Volume 24, No. 3

Summer 2009

Northwest Chapter Fall Picnic

September 19

Borst Park in Centralia

This year the Northwest Chapter will again hold the annual fall picnic at Borst Park, Centralia, Washington. We will begin with a coffee hour at 9:00 a.m. and the entertainment will begin at 10:00.

Karen Haas will present “Tales and Tunes of the Trail,” stories and songs of the people as they traveled, including ones they brought along with them. We will be enjoying the debut of this performance. Karen is a delightful re-enactor who impressed those at the fall picnic last year with her performance as Narcissa Whitman.



Wind turbines on the Barlow Trail.

After lunch Wendell Baskins will present a program about the Oregon Trail and the effects the development of wind power is having on it. The presentation is neither an attack nor defense of the wind development, but a look at what is going on from past to present, illustrated with slides and pictures.

There will be short business meeting to vote on the bylaws amendment. The wording of the amendment is on page 7.

Bring your own lunch; beverages will be provided. There will be a raffle and silent auction along with the dessert table. A flyer will be sent out toward the end of August giving more information and driving instructions.

Save the Date * Hope to See You there

NW Chapter Directory

President

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

Vice President

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

Acting Secretary

Polly Jackson
pnj1000-trails@yahoo.com

Treasurer

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

Past President

Glenn Harrison
541-926-4680
gr.harrison@comcast.net

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

Well, summer is here. I hope each of you are able to ingest as much trail dust as you can tolerate, either actually on the trail or virtually from your favorite book, diary, or journal. Summer also brings our annual convention. This year the Loveland Convention promises to provide trail experiences on lesser known trail segments in a beautiful setting. I hope to see you there. We will hold a brief chapter meeting at the convention. If you have a topic or item you would like to discuss at the meeting, please email me at rblair@oregontrail.net and I will see that it gets on the agenda.

I also look forward to the end of summer when the chapter holds its fall meeting. This year will be an important meeting because we will be voting on a bylaws change. It is a brief proposed change, inserting the wording to allow the chapter's board of directors to conduct business electronically, either via telephone or email. This change will simplify the process of conducting business when there is a time-critical issue or the need to address relatively minor business not sufficiently important to cause our board members to have to travel to a meeting. Be sure to attend to make your views known on this issue. Of course, the fall meeting also will have the usual programs, visitation, food, and raffle.

Please plan to attend both these important meetings. See you there!

—Roger Blair



Voices From the Trail

“The emigrants frequently throw away their clothing, upon finding newer and better garments. Since starting, I have in this way swapped articles of clothing several times. Facilities for the acquisition of knowledge are becoming ample along these barren deserts. Lying by the wayside, are a great variety of books, which their owners have thrown away to lighten their loads. From this extended library I frequently draw a volume, read and return it.”

—Franklin Langworthy, 1850

Cascades Portage Field Trip

By Gary and Marley Shurtleff

Thirteen chilly people assembled beneath the pillars of the Bridge of the Gods at Cascade Locks on a blustery Saturday morning, April 25, to spend the day exploring the Oregon Trail River Route Cascades Portage. In this region of the river, Indian tribes gathered to fish and trade; and emigrants, miners, and commerce moved through the portage area. Over the course of the day, our group visited the sites of the former central Columbia River Gorge forts, explored the region of the Cascade Locks built in 1896, and visited the well-developed Columbia Gorge Interpretive Center outside Stevenson, Washington.

Event guide Jim Tompkins pointed out the descriptive panels beneath the bridge, then directed us to a viewpoint near the center of town, where he explained some of the geology of the area. We moved on to the site of the locks, now partly submerged in the waters behind Bonneville Dam, where we examined the development of the locks, and the impact they had on travel in the Columbia Gorge. Of particular interest was the display of the Oregon Portage Railroad's "pony" locomotive.

After lunch in the local burger joint, we all traveled across the bridge to the Skamania County Museum, the Columbia Gorge Interpretive Center, a very well-developed museum that provides Native American history, Gorge geology, post-emigration history, huge logging and fishing equipment, and a wonderful locomotive and some cars for train buffs to explore.



Cascade Locks. Photograph by Gary Shurtleff.



SP&S train cars. Photograph by Gary Shurtleff.

The last activities of the day involved driving by the locations of the former Forts Lugenbeel and Raines, and walking tour of the site of the former Fort Cascades and Cascades townsite. Cascades was an early transfer point for traffic moving up and down the portage. The tour included traces of an old military road and the Cascade Portage Railroad. Everyone on the tour gathered beside the interpretive signage for some congenial discussion of chapter events, and a final picture of the day.

Group picture, left to right: Bill Symms, Addie Rickey, Stanton Rickey, Henry Pittock, Gary Shurtleff, Lethene Parks, Jim Tompkins, Tony Chilton, Judi Chilton, Tom Chilton, Simone Chilton, Mike Chilton. Photograph by Marley Shurtleff



“We Call This Ralstons Creek”

By Chuck Hornbuckle

The 2009 Colorado OCTA convention includes a two day 4-wheel tour along the Cherokee Trail in Wyoming. One of several points of interest for conventioners will be a visit to “Gold Strike Park” in Arvada located about six-miles north of Denver.

“Gold Strike Park” was the location of the first documented gold discovery in what became Colorado. The park was dedicated on June 22, 2004, exactly 154 years later.

The location was at the confluence of two creeks that became Clear Creek and Ralston Creek. Eight years later in 1858, the bonanza occurred just a few miles from this historic site. Why the name Ralston, and who was this Ralston person?

Following the 1848 discovery of gold in California many adventurers went west. Among the gold seekers were two Cherokee wagon trains, one in 1849 and another in 1850. Traveling with the 1850 train was an Irishman named Lewis Ralston who was married to a Cherokee lady. He and his brother-in-law Samuel Simons left Georgia in early 1850 hoping to gain wealth in the west.

Arriving in northeastern Indian Territory they joined a Cherokee wagon train headed for the gold fields. About May 22nd they left the Grand Saline with Cherokee John Lowery Brown, keeping a diary of their journey. Several days later they came to the Santa Fe Trail and turned west along the Arkansas River. Passing the remains of Bent’s Fort, the train continued west to Pueblo where they traveled north along the east range of the Rocky Mountains.

Near present Denver the 1849 Cherokee train continued northerly along the east bank of the South Platte River. However, the 1850 group chose a more direct route that crossed the Platte and headed northwest.

On June 21st they stopped at the confluence of two unnamed streams to rest. There Brown wrote in his journal, “*finished crossing at 2 o'clock left the Platt and traveled 6 miles to Creek Good water grass & timber Camp 44.*”

The next morning Lewis Ralston arose from his sleep and hustled to the stream and shoveled gravel into his gold pan. Within a few minutes he shouted “*Gold!*” Others joined him, but only a few flakes of the treasured gold were found.

In his journal Brown wrote, “*June 22 Lay Bye. Found Gold.*” In the margin of his leather-bound book he noted, “*We call this Ralstons Creek because a man of that name found gold here.*”

They concluded the almost certainty of riches in California was more compelling and continued west.

“Gold Strike Park” was the culmination of many years of research by Lois Lindstrom Kennedy, an Arvada historian. Local and state dignitaries as well as a descendant of Lewis Ralston participated in the park dedication. That descendant was his 3rd great-grandson and the author of this article. Thanks to the work of Lois, along with that of Jack and Pat Fletcher, I have added a missing page to my family history.

Book Note

Tricia Martineau Wagner, *It Happened on the Oregon Trail* (Guilford, Conn./Helena, Mont.: TwoDot, Globe Pequot Press, 2005).

It Happened on the Oregon Trail is a compilation of stories of individuals and events on the western emigrant trails. As the title suggests, most were Oregon Trail travelers. Written in short-story format, the well-researched chapters are each about five pages and cover a wide range of historical topics and familiar names.



Chapters include Lafayette Tate, who was tried hanged on the trail for committing murder; Catherine Hickman and David Parks, who were married in a trailside wedding; and Ezra Meeker, the distinguished marker and promoter of the Oregon Trail. At the back is a “Potpourri of Oregon Trail Facts” and a list of sites to visit along the trail.

Central Oregon Celebrates Its 150th Birthday With Two Events

By Muriel Carbiener, AKA Hannah Perkins

The first event occurred on Memorial Day Weekend with a three day, reenactment event at Smith Rock State Park. “Hannah Perkins” enjoyed reconnecting with “Peter Skene Ogden,” AKA Tom Laidlaw, who stayed all three days. Hannah needed to be at the High Desert Museum on the third day. The weather was perfect. I brought artifacts from the museum as well as my usual wooden bucket, wooden wash board, and a pair of Mr. Perkins’s dirty stockings, which I try to get small people to wash. I was one of those lost folks on the Meeks Trail, which was not exactly at Smith Rock but not too far away.

The highlight for me was meeting a direct descendent of Robert Newell and another direct descendent of Sarah Perkins (*Covered Wagon Women*, vol. 6). She still lives in Tillamook where Sarah settled and is buried. She had heard that “Hannah Perkins” would be at the event, and thought that I might be a relative also. But of course I am not, just a composite. I gave her an OCTA brochure. They are always in my dress pocket. Others at the event were interpreting Fur Trade (besides Tom), military and settlers. Every one loved that John C. Frémont kept setting off his cannon, but I bet all the rock climbers probably did not appreciate it when the echoes bounced off the rock walls.

The second event was the last weekend in May at Tillicum Ranch, halfway between Bend and Sisters: Westward Oregon, sponsored by the Deschutes Historical Society, Bend Parks and Recreation, and Deschutes County. This time “Hannah Perkins” got to ride the Territorial Express Stagecoach from Sisters to the ranch. We had a late start because of a few problems with the mules, but after that, it was a wonderful ride with views of the Three Sisters and good weather. We had a military escort, and arrived at the ranch at 12:30. “Mr. Perkins” had put “Hannah” on the stage and met her at the end with a bouquet of red roses. All my other museum friends knew about that, but he kept them hidden behind his back until I got off. By the way, getting up and down from that stage is not easy in a long dress. The rest of that day and the next, I was trying to convince school children as well as the family visitors that it was 1859, and that Oregon had just become a new state. Of course, the bucket and wash board were there for children to really learn how to wash clothes. The event also had Civil War reenactors, wonderful era music with singing and dancing, a blacksmith, a wheelwright, wagon rides, John Frémont and the cannon, and the stagecoach came through again.



“Mr. Perkins” and “Hannah Perkins”



“Peter Skene Ogden” and “Hannah Perkins”

Trail Markers Project

By Stafford Hazelett

In the January newsletter, I announced that Trails West was inviting OCTA members to participate in a project along the Applegate Trail between Davis Creek and Dorris, California. I received the announcement a few days ago with the details. I recall some of the names of folks who expressed an interest, but I cannot seem to find them all, I think.

September 11–12–13 (Friday-Sunday):

On this field trip, led by Bob Black, we will install eight new markers and replate one marker on the Applegate Trail between Pot Hole Spring and the junction with the Yreka Trail (west of Goose Lake).

This will complete the marking of the Applegate Trail as far as the California/Oregon state line north of Dorris, CA. Some of this travel will be over rough roads where a 4WD vehicle is necessary.

We'll rendezvous at Davis Creek in the parking area in front of the old white church (at Marker A-33/L-1), September 11, at 9:00 a.m. The activity for this day will be a sight-seeing trip over the Applegate Trail west of Goose Lake from Davis Creek (Marker A-33/L-1) to Blue Mountain (Marker A-39).

For those desiring motel accommodations on 9/10 and 9/11, Alturas is about 20 miles from Davis Creek and has several to choose from. Stores, restaurants, and gas are also available there. Camping is available at Plum Valley CG, about 3 miles east of Davis Creek, for 9/10 and near Blue Mt. for 9/11. Camping is also available at Lassen Creek, north of Davis Creek, and at Janes Reservoir east of Blue Mountain.

The second day, 9/12, we'll install four markers and replate one marker between Pot-hole Spring and the Stone Bridge (Marker A-45) near Merrill, Oregon. For the night of September 12, motel accommodations, stores, gas, and restaurants are available in Tulelake, California, or Merrill, Oregon. Undeveloped camping sites are available near Clear Lake.

The third day, 9/13, we'll install four markers between Stone Bridge (A-45) and the junction with the Yreka Trail (A-50/Y-1). For the night of September 13, motels are reasonably close in either Yreka or Weed, California. The other necessities are also available there. Camping is available at Shafter CG, about 20 miles south of Dorris, California, or at undeveloped FS sites.

Membership Memo From Headquarters



We continue to hold our own in maintaining our membership. It is always a challenge in the climate we find ourselves in lately to get people to become involved. But, in adversity, there is opportunity.

Those members who live in the northern parts of the West but go south for the winter have a great opportunity to participate in OCTA with the Southwest Chapter. The southern trails offer a wealth of fascinating history, vistas and western emigrant heritage. Join the Southwest Chapter and participate with them when you can. They have a huge area they cover.

Now is a good time to think about getting members. Volunteer to give programs to service and fraternal clubs. Tell them what is planned and ask for their help. Wear a hat with the OCTA patch on it. Let people know of all the work OCTA does, the thousands of hours donated to preserving our heritage.

Volunteer to be a merit badge counselor for the scouts. There are many awards that you would be a great advisor for. Take some scouts along on a trek to get them awarded the Historic Trails Award. Then, give them a one year student membership in OCTA!!!

Visit with your local AARP organizations. Invite new retirees to meetings, events and trail events. The Boomers are retiring in large numbers and looking for fun, interesting things to do.

You are each a member of the Membership Committee, so please help preserve OCTA.

Bylaws Amendment

A bylaws amendment will be voted on at the fall picnic business meeting. The amendment is to Article VI, Section 2 (a) of the bylaws, noted below.

Article VI, Chapter and Board Meetings

Section 2. Chapter Board Meetings

- (a) There shall be a Fall meeting of the Chapter Board held prior to November 1. Additional Chapter Board meetings may be called by the President as needed. **Chapter Board meetings may be "in person," via teleconference, or via email.**
- (b) Voting members of the Chapter Board are the Officers and Directors.
- (c) Any NW OCTA member or corporate representative may attend any Chapter Board meeting in a non-voting capacity. Any NW OCTA member who holds an OCTA or NW OCTA elective or appointive position is especially encouraged to attend and report on the progress or function and give advice in their area when called upon.
- (d) By two-thirds majority vote of the Chapter Board, any Officer or Director may be removed from office for failing to perform the duties specified in the Bylaws or failing to uphold the purposes of the Chapter.
- (e) The Chapter Board shall review and make a recommendation concerning any proposed Bylaws amendment.

Article XII, Amendments

Section 1. These Bylaws may be amended by a 2/3 vote of the members present and voting at the regularly called Annual Meeting of the Chapter.

Section 2. Following review by the Chapter Board, the membership shall be advised of proposed amendments to the Bylaws at least two weeks in advance of a regularly called Annual Meeting of the Chapter and the fall members' meeting (Picnic.)

Section 3. Properly approved Bylaws amendments become effective upon approval.



Cherokee Trail to the West, 1849–1859

OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION
27th ANNUAL CONVENTION

August 18–22, 2009
Loveland, Colorado

Hosted by the Colorado-Cherokee Trail Chapter

Northwest Trails

Editor

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

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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

**NW OCTA
FALL PICNIC
September 19**

**Borst Park
Centralia, Washington**



Hosted by Joyce Bolerjack

Northwest Trails
Joyce Bolerjack
10813 NE 20th St
Bellevue, WA 98004