



Northwest Trails

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

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Summer 2010

National Trails Day in Pendleton

By Susan Badger Doyle

Keith May led a walking tour of the Oregon Trail in Pendleton on National Trails Day, Saturday, June 5. NW OCTA members Rich Herman, Jenny Miller, and Jim and Sallie Riehl came to Pendleton for the tour. The group met downtown and walked about two miles to the Meeker monument at the Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution on the west edge of town.

We followed the 1860s route of the trail through Pendleton, which has been marked with street sign toppers that NW OCTA funded. Then we carpooled to see the Oregon Trail marker on the new Barnhart road extension west of town. Thanks to Keith, it was a delightful, informative tour. Afterward some of us enjoyed a picnic in a local park.



Photograph by Roger Blair

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President's Message

Anyone with an interest in one aspect of history is rarely confined to just that one area. I cut my teeth on stories of the Oregon Trail told to me by my great-grandmother who came over the trail in the 1860s as a child. I now teach all aspects of Oregon history. Besides being a rut nut I also belong to the Sons and Daughters of Oregon Pioneers. I know a few OCTAnS who belong to both groups. On Saturday July 17th, the annual SDOP picnic was held at Champoeg. It was my first meeting as their new president.

In 1901, the children of the elderly members of the Oregon Pioneer Association, seeing most everyone eligible to be a member of that organization was dying off (the last member of OPA died in 1948), created SDOP to carry out the desire to memorialize their pioneer ancestors who came to the Oregon Country before statehood in 1859. Today there are over 1,200 members of SDOP worldwide.

Although a bulk of those ancestors came over the Oregon Trail, members today include descendants of Native Americans who were already here and those arriving by other means (as well as children adopted into pioneer families). Since Washington and Idaho were once part of the Oregon Country, members whose direct ancestors settled those states are also eligible.

In addition to the annual picnic at Champoeg, SDOP holds an annual Statehood Banquet in February where Miss Pioneer Oregon is announced and scholarships are awarded. Last year's banquet was in Oregon City. About two or three meetings a year are held around the state. Last year we met at Verboort and Jacksonville. This year we plan to meet at the Grand Ronde Indian Reservation and in Pendleton. Membership is cheap, \$25 for the first year and as low as \$10 a year thereafter, or \$75 for a life membership. Information is available on line at www.webtrail.com/sdop.

—Jim Tompkins

All Trails Lead To Elko in 2010



In Remembrance

Lowell Tiller

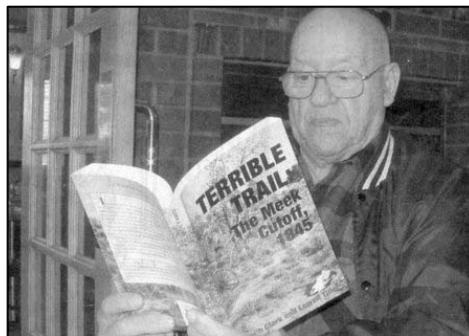
Lowell Tiller of Portland, Oregon, died July 1, two days after he turned 85. He had heart problems and diabetes, plus he had recently undergone a leg amputation. Lowell was very active in our Chapter for many years. He was the second president of the NW OCTA Chapter, a winner of the Richard and Trudy Ackerman Meritorious Achievement Award, and served on the OCTA Board.

Lowell was a great help in putting together the 1993 Baker City and 1998 Pendleton OCTA Conventions. He coauthored *Terrible Trail* about the Meek Cutoff and “Cutoff Fever” about the Free Emigrant Road.

Within Oregon he served on the Oregon Trail Advisory Council, which later became OHTAC. He was a supporter of the interpretive sign for the wagon road that passed through Grass Valley, where he grew up. The sign includes his image on one of the people portrayed. He was also responsible for building the fence around the grave of Sarah Chambers.

At Lowell’s request, there was no memorial service. One of his friends suggests the best way to remember him would be to go to Grass Valley, Oregon, and see his likeness on the historical markers there and then visit Sherar’s Falls, one of Lowell’s favorite places.

Donations in Lowell Tiller’s memory may be sent to OCTA headquarters at PO Box 1019, Independence, MO 64051-0519.



Jane Francis Rau

Weldon Rau's wife Jane passed away on June 11, 2010. Jane and Weldon had been married for 65 years. Weldon is a longtime member of NW OCTA and author of several books on the Oregon Trail, including one about his great-grandparents who came in 1853 and settled north of the Columbia River.

Jane was born September 6, 1920, in Cle Elum, Washington, to Kenneth and Florence Hudson. After attending Cle Elum schools, she studied at the University of Puget Sound, graduating in 1942 with a major in sociology. While at UPS she met Weldon Rau, and they were married on October 8, 1944. Prior to her marriage, Jane was employed as a social worker in Yakima.

After the war, the couple moved to Iowa City where Weldon attended graduate school. There Jane worked in the university's library and the administration office. After returning to Washington in 1948, their son Gregory was born. Shortly thereafter the family moved to Portland, Oregon, where Weldon started his career as a geologist. Various career moves brought them to Menlo Park, California, and finally in 1960 to Olympia, Washington. During this time Jane worked for the Bank of America and later became a military caseworker for the American Red Cross in Olympia. After retiring, she volunteered as a tutor for the Tumwater School District and for the Timberland Library.



Jane is survived by Weldon, Greg, daughter-in-law Verena Rau, and extended family members. A graveside service was held in Cle Elum, and a celebration of her life was held at the Lacey Presbyterian Church on June 19. Donations to the American Red Cross or your favorite charity are suggested.

2010 NW OCTA Outings

July

NOTE: Previously scheduled Naches Trail Outing has been postponed. The dates will be announced when the outing is rescheduled.

August

August 10–14: National Convention, Elko, Nevada. Presented by the California-Nevada Chapter.

Saturday, August 28: Outing in conjunction with OHTAC (Oregon Historic Trails Advisory Council) on the Free Emigrant Road, centered in Oakridge, Oregon. Contact: Del Spencer, 541-913-2055, del.spencer@yahoo.com.

September

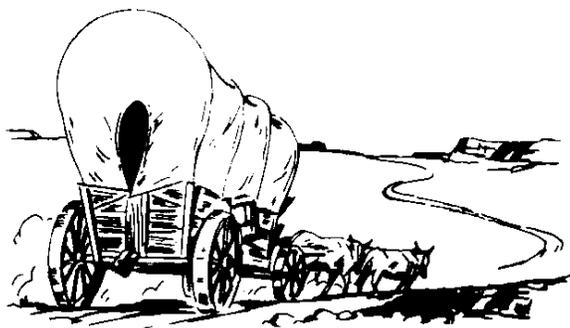
Saturday, September 11: Applegate Trail, Grants Pass area, in conjunction with the Hugo Neighborhood Association and Historical Society. Contact: Leta Neiderheiser, 541-862-9077, letan@oigp.net.

Saturday, September 18: NW OCTA Fall Picnic and Entertainment in Centralia, Washington. A flyer will be mailed a few weeks ahead. Contact: Joyce Bolerjack, 425-454-7118, jpbolerjack@comcast.net.

September 25–26: The trail marking effort at the Davis Ranch scheduled for the end of June has been postponed to September 25 and 26. I would like to have a preliminary survey of the area without marking in July (date to be determined). Not all participants in the marking effort need to participate in the preliminary survey. Contact: Dave Welch, 360-923-0438, welchdj@comcast.net.

October

Saturday, October 2: Outing in conjunction with OHTAC (Oregon Historic Trails Advisory Council) on the Meek Cutoff, centered in Burns, Oregon. Contact: Wendell Baskins, 503-655-0311, wlbaskins@msn.com.



From Wagons To Cars: Walking on the Left, Driving on the Right

By Susan Badger Doyle

One of the fascinating aspects of emigrant travel is why the driver walked on the left of the ox wagon and why today the automobile driver sits on the left and we drive on the right side of the road. It is known that right-hand travel for ox-team wagons, horse carriages, horseback riders, and pedestrians predominated in Colonial America from the time of the earliest settlements, rather than on the left as in Great Britain.

The custom of driving on the right side of the road began because the lead horse or ox was on the left, and the wagon driver would walk or ride on the left. As a result, he would drive on the right side of the road, and if he needed to pass someone going the same direction he would pass on the left.

The Conestoga wagon was a major reason for right-hand driving in the United States. The wagon was operated either by the driver riding the left wheel horse, or by the driver walking or sitting on a “lazy board” on the left side of the wagon. In either case he kept to the left to use his right hand to manage the horses and operate the brake that was mounted on the left side. Therefore, passing an approaching vehicle required moving to the right.

No formal rule of the road was adopted by the United States, or any state, until 1792 when Pennsylvania adopted legislation to establish a turnpike from Lancaster to Philadelphia. The charter stated that travel would be on the right hand side of the turnpike. In 1804 New York became the first state to prescribe right-hand travel on all public highways. By the Civil War, right-hand travel was followed in every state. By then, drivers tended to sit on the right so they could ensure their buggy, wagon, or other vehicle didn’t run into a roadside ditch, a major concern at the time.

When inventors began building automobiles in the 1890s, they thought of them as motorized wagons. Many early cars had the steering mechanism—a rudder or tiller—in the center position. With the introduction of the steering wheel in 1898, a central location was no longer technically possible. Car makers usually copied existing custom and placed the driver on the right side. Thus, most American cars produced before 1910 were made with right-side driver seating, although intended for right-side driving. The 1908 Model T was the first Ford car to feature a left-side driving position, and by 1915, the Model T had become so popular that the rest of the automakers followed Ford's lead.

Online References:

“Conestoga Wagon,” www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~pacahs/wagon.htm.

“On The Right Side of the Road,” www.fhwa.dot.gov/infrastructure/right.cfm.

“Teamsters/Wagon Drivers,” www.nedhector.com/Teamsters.htm.



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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 Avarad Fairbanks for Oregon Trail monuments.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

2010 NW OCTA FALL PICNIC

**September 18
Borst Park
Centralia, Washington
Flyer coming late August**



Northwest Trails

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