



Northwest Trails

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

Volume 29, No. 3

Summer 2014

NW OCTA Annual Fall Picnic Saturday, October 4, 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Clark County Genealogical Society Annex 715 Grand Blvd., Vancouver, Washington

The chapter's annual fall event will be held again this year at the Clark County Genealogical Society Annex (CCGS Annex) in Vancouver, WA. The event will begin at 9:00 a.m. with a coffee hour, and the meeting will begin at 10:00 a.m. and will include a chapter business meeting and a program. Arrangements are being made for an interesting program, which will be announced when registration material is sent in September.

Bring your own picnic lunch. This is not a potluck, but please bring a dessert for six for the dessert table. The chapter will furnish coffee and tea, and soft drinks and bottled water are available from CCGS for a donation of fifty cents.

Raffle and Silent Auction. Please bring items you think would make a good raffle or silent auction contribution. Please bundle magazines into sets of at least a year.

Registration. There will be a \$10 per person charge to cover space rental and other picnic expenses. **PAY AT THE DOOR.**

Questions? Email Lethene Parks, Lethene@comcast.net, or Rich Herman: buddy359@comcast.net

*A registration form and details of the program
will be sent in September*



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President's Message

For the past two years, we put all of our energies into hosting the national convention. I feel good about the convention despite all the negative criticism that crossed my desk. (We didn't earn national enough money. We didn't get enough new members. The food, music, or venues were terrible, etc.) We made a lot of new friends and most attendees were satisfied.

This summer, we are not just laying back, resting on our laurels, and taking stock. Members are actively involved in trail preservation and the NPS mapping survey/inventory. Many members are involved in the OHTAC (Oregon governor's Historic Trails Advisory Council) field trips, including the one at Emigrant Springs that may add new land with old ruts to the Oregon State Parks system. Some members are involved in Henry Pittock's mapping and marking excursions. Three new OCTA markers are either already in place or soon to be placed.

Life in any organization is constantly changing. Some members are getting mentally and physically feebler, while new blood is joining our ranks. We must always remind ourselves that younger minds do not always come with a wealth of knowledge in our beloved trails, but do come with a ton of enthusiasm. Some events must be designed with newer members in mind. The best events to borrow our older members expertise while tapping into our youth's energy are the annual meeting in the spring and the annual picnic in the fall. Rich Herman will be announcing soon details about this year's picnic, scheduled for October.

Next year we will have several opportunities to expand upon the theme of change. Roger Blair has announced his intent to hold a symposium in Pendleton. Multi-day events have always been popular in NWOCTA. I recall such events in Bend, Spokane, The Dalles, Fort Steilacoom, and Vashon Island. The next two national conventions will be on our edge of the continent, and I expect many more of our members will be attending: 2015 is at Lake Tahoe, California, and 2016 is at Fort Hall, Idaho. Plenty of opportunities.

NWOCTA, not just resting on our laurels, but adapting to change.

—Jim Tompkins

The Long Tale of Jane Bonney's Grave Marker

By Shirlee Evans

It began last summer after Chuck Hornbuckle placed an OCTA marker on Sanford Johnson's grave in Tumwater, WA. I mentioned my great great grandmother Jane to Chuck, and he suggested I contact Randy Brown in Wyoming, Chairman of OCTA's Graves and Sites Committee. Randy checked out the Bonney family history and asked me to write a short piece for an OCTA marker. I did, sending it to Randy and a Bonney cousin, Bill Guthrie, and my son, Dan Evans, a missionary in the Philippines. After a number of drafts, we finally agreed on the wording.

The marker was shipped to Randy, and in mid-April he loaded it in his 4Runner and set out for Oregon over packed snow and ice. Twenty miles down the highway, he turned back. The following week Randy made it through, meeting five NW OCTA members at Wamic, OR, on April 24, along with Bill and Silvia Guthrie and myself, to install the marker.

Today the marker stands at Jane's grave in Wamic's Lone Pine Pioneer Cemetery, thanks to Randy Brown, Chuck and Suzanne Hornbuckle, Rich Herman, and Lethene Parks. Rest in peace Grandma Jane. You deserve it after all that you went through.



“Team Vale” launches Oregon Trail Inventory Project

By Marley Shurtleff

At the 2014 Annual meeting on March 8, Dave Welch presented the NPS-authorized Oregon Trail Inventory Project, and four teams were quickly formed to survey different portions of the trail through Oregon. On April 29, Dave, who is also serving as a team leader, provided a day-long training session for Team Vale Leader Gail Carbiener, other team leaders Stafford Hazelett and Paul Masee, plus members interested in learning more details of the project. The goal of this particular inventory is to see what intrusions exist in the current trail viewscape, so that changes can be monitored over time.

Team Vale got off the mark quickly on May 20, meeting our BLM companions for the day, archaeologist Cheryl Bradford (new NWOCTA member), and Outdoor Recreation Planner, Josh Travers, at their office in Vale, and scoping out the form-filling requirements of the trip, before heading to Keeney Pass, south of Vale. In the group as well were team leader Gail Carbiener, Jim and Sallie Riehl, Kim Boddie (a new member from Bend), Dee and Glen Owens from California, Leta and Joe Neiderheiser, Bill Symms, and me.

There had been some worries about rain or thunderstorms, but the day was bright and pleasant as we set off. We initially struggled a bit with the forms, getting correct orientations, GPS readings, and then describing and illustrating the intrusions we saw. Gail had done a masterful job pre-filling in much of the information that was needed, along with locating maps and satellite shots of the area, so we soon figured out what we were doing. (Apologies to Dave for the changes we made to the illustrations on the fly!) Jim Riehl took 360 ° or “fore and aft” trail pictures, while Kim Boddie took pictures of all the signs and special items.

We soon discovered that our efforts involved stopping at pretty much every section line — that’s a mile *or less*, depending on the location of the trail in each section—between the south end of Keeney Pass, and Farewell Bend, south of Huntington—with additional stops at any kiosks, Auto Tour Routes, signs, or points of special interest, such as springs.

The first day our team stopped for lunch at the top of Keeney Pass, where we recorded information about the physical condition of the kiosk and area and some of us hiked 1/3 mile to the top of the lookout point on the hill above the site. In the afternoon we surveyed as far northwest as Vale, where we looked at the springs on the Malheur River that made such an appealing stop for emigrants, as well as checking a kiosk, markers, and historic buildings.

The second day we left our BLM companions in Vale and headed north, into the mostly unchanged area that the trail traversed: to Alkali Springs, Tub Springs, alongside Tub Mountain, to Willow Springs, and Farewell Bend. Along much of the route, it was as though we could have been there in 1850, except for the graveled or bladed road and occasional fences along the presumed route of the trail—and the grazing cows, many of them with their young calves, of course.

A highlight of day two was our lunch stop north of Tub Springs. The temperature was a toasty 81°, the sun was shining brightly, the wind was blowing, we were all enjoying our rest and conversation, and we even saw a pronghorn sauntering along the hillside not far from us. As day two progressed, we decided there were not too many pregnant cows we might disturb along the route, so we could go all the way through to Farewell Bend along the graveled road. Once we got to Farewell Bend, we met with Terra Kemper, State Parks employee (and new NWOCTA member), who discussed the park facilities with us. After we evaluated the kiosk there, Terra

joined us as we doubled back a mile to Birch Creek, where we photographed signs, and went for a walk in the ruts. It was a long day, but we surveyed all the areas we had planned to see.

Along the way, we discovered some great opportunities for adding and improving informational signs. We hope that the chapter will step in to fund the projects. Gail is already coordinating the planning with OCTA and BLM.

The 360° pictures, written commentary about the survey locations, and illustrations should provide a great resource document for people who want to check in future years to see what has changed along the trail route. We are looking forward to the results of the other teams, all of whom have plans to survey this spring and summer.



I look back upon this long, dangerous & precarious emigrant road with a degree of romance & pleasure, but to others it is the graveyard of their friends.

—Loren B. Hastings, 1847

Pendleton and Onward to The Dalles – the Oregon Trail

By Chuck Hornbuckle

Team Pendleton convened at the city of that name on May 24. There we were greeted by Roger Blair and Susan Doyle. They led the wagons across the Umatilla Reservation to the foot of Poker Jim Hill where we began our overland journey to The Dalles.

Our expedition roster consisted of Dave Welch, Captain; Ezra Meeker a.k.a. Ray Egan; Brian Runyan, Interpreter; Chuck Hornbuckle, Expedition Scout; and John Cannella, Government Agent a.k.a. NPS. Like the other groups, our four-day mission was to update our knowledge of the high potential sites and segments identified in the NPS Comprehensive Management Plan. Where possible, we hoped to verify that markers installed in the late 1990s were still in place.

At the foot of Poker Jim Hill, we looked up what was a challenging descent for earlier wagons, mentally ignoring the utility line scars. Turning our gaze toward snow covered Mt. Hood, we set forth, stopping in each section where the site or trail is accessible. There we recorded information and took panoramic photos of the viewshed. Along the way we met local property owners who shared their knowledge of area history.

One of first stops was at the Meeker marker in Pendleton. It was recently relocated from the correctional facility on Pendleton's west side to the hillside cemetery on the south side of town. During Meeker's 1906 expedition the marker was placed near SW Emigrant Avenue, at what became Pendleton's middle interchange on I-84.

From Pendleton we set our sights (sites) on Corral Springs, Fort Henrietta at Echo, and Echo Meadows. Seventeen years ago NWOCTA members mapped and marked that area and found evidence of the wagon trace by observing a slightly different green color through three wheat fields. On this trip, all of those fields were in summer fallow, so unfortunately, we were unable to witness that distinct phenomena.



Following a brief stop at Corral Springs, where the wagons preceding ours descended from the Pendleton plains to the Umatilla River, we visited the site of Fort Henrietta and Utilla Agency, where the agent maintained a log of all those bound for the Willamette Valley. After completing the form sheets at Echo Meadows, we continued on to Well Spring where many of those ahead of us paused for water. We were dismayed to find the spring dry and the lone tree long deceased.

Ascending the hill just west of the Four Mile kiosk, parallel Class 1 swales are very much in evidence and the kiosk is in good repair. A local historical society has placed a register for visitors to leave their names and comments. The long list proves modern travelers, many from

distant points, are interested in this historic route. Although we recognize the need for renewable energy sources, we were dismayed to observe hundreds of wind turbines within the viewshed of this segment.

Several miles west where the trail crosses Eightmile Road, we met a descendant of an 1864 settler who came west on the trail. During our 1990s trail mapping project we met the lady's grandfather who, although very pleasant, had asked us not to place markers on his land. He was concerned about possible government intrusion. Before we knew of her relationship, I had mentioned our very pleasant conversation with the gentleman. It was then she said he was her grandfather and, yes, he was a wonderful person. I had said the right words and we have another friend of the trail.

At the Highway 97 crossing, we documented the condition of the large cast metal Oregon Trail sign placed in honor of W. W. Weatherford, an area pioneer. The rise just east of the sign is lined with wind turbines apparently watching over the historic crossing.

Leaving Cedar Springs, the southbound trail turned west to the crossing of the John Day River. While the emigrants descended the very challenging hill to the river, we drove via Rock Creek to the site of the stone marker inscribed with "Old Oregon Trail 1843 – 1882." It is very similar to Meeker's markers in design. While it is inside a pole enclosure, it is almost totally obscured by overgrown weeds.



The river crossing, which in the 1990s was a gravel bar, is now overgrown with willow and not nearly as inspiring. A 40 mile plus drive took us around to the west side of the crossing where nine of the white Carsonite markers and swales are very evident ascending the hill westbound. At the foot of the road grade up from the river, Sherman County Historical Society placed a bronze plaque describing the river crossing on a large boulder. The kiosk that further describes the crossing and ascent was found to be in good repair.



At the top of the hill, the Barlow Road diverges from the Oregon Trail amidst numerous wind turbines. Passing the pioneer Reyburn Cemetery, we stopped at Emigrant Springs where the lady who descended from Oregon Trail pioneers shared her childhood memories of seeing the stone outline of what was said to be a post office-store at the springs. On the hill overlooking the springs sits the derelict Reyburn house for whom the cemetery was named.

North of Wasco, near where the trail crossed Highway 97, we enjoyed our lunch break at the Sun

Rise Cemetery. Reading the cemetery “roster” we discovered the name “Meeker,” which led us on a search for the gravesite. Unfortunately, there was no stone at the plot so we were unable to determine the relationship to Ezra, but Ray was excited momentarily.

Following local roads we descended to the Columbia River at Biggs where the trail turned west along the south bank of the river to the Deschutes River crossing. There we confirmed the kiosk was in good repair. Continuing west, we stopped briefly at Fairbanks to view the unique marker installed by I. B. Remington in 1938. Our final stop was at the city park in The Dalles where the 1906 Meeker Marker invites visitors to enjoy the history of our early westward migration.



Along the way we confirmed that virtually all of the kiosks are in good repair, but many of the south facing Auto Tour Route signs are in poor shape due to sunlight exposure. Hundreds of photos were taken along with descriptive notations at High Potential sites. We did not attempt to hike the trail as was done in the 1990s under the NPS Challenge-Cost Share Grant. However, we did note numerous Carsonite posts were missing and suggest the Chapter review the route and initiate a project to replace the markers.

The weather was cloudy and without precipitation, so it was a rewarding experience, once again.



Trail Ruts at Umatilla Army Depot and Emigrant Springs State Park

By Henry Pittock

Billy Symms, Rich Herman, and I made a visit to the Umatilla Army Depot on June 27. After meeting with the base's Facility Manager, Michele Martin, we were shown probable Oregon Trail ruts dating to 1861 and 1874. Billy and I walked about a mile of Class I ruts in the NE part of the depot while Rich waited to pick us up. Later we went to the SE corner of the depot where Class I ruts cross the abandoned runway; and Billy walked quite a bit of them.



Umatilla Army Depot ruts, looking northwest.



Looking southeast, Billy Simms in center.

On the following day, we joined up with several members of OHTAC to look at ruts at Emigrant Springs State Park. The park ranger took us to a couple of different areas in the park where we observed several sections of Class I ruts leading from the main trail (which is up on the ridge to the west) down to the springs and back up again to the ridge.



Possible Oregon Trail in Emigrant Springs State Park.

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Material may be submitted via email, on disk, or as email attachment in Word or Text format. Pictures may 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 Avarð Fairbanks for Oregon Trail monuments.

COMING SOON!



**2014 OCTA Convention
Kearney, Nebraska
August 5–9, 2014**

**1864—Drama on the
Medicine Road**

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