

OCTA Beginnings

The Oregon-California Trails Association had its beginning in 1982 when author and publisher Gregory Franzwa called a number of friends, asking that they meet with him. The subject of the proposed meeting was the preservation of the emigrant trails and wagon roads of the Trans - American West. Those responding to Franzwa's request were Dr. John A. Latschar, Robert D. Tucker, James F. Bowers, Robert Rennells, Bertha Rennells, Troy Gray, Billie Gray, Merrill J. Mattes, Roger Blair, Dr. Merle W. Wells, and James P. Johnson. The latter was a former Congressman who had sponsored a bill to recognize the Oregon National Historic Trail.

The first meeting was held August 12, 1982. A board of directors was chosen including Merle Wells, Merrill Mattes, Charles W. Martin, Sr., Bertha Rennells, James Bowers, E. G. Chuinard, John Latschar, James Johnson, Robert Tucker, Gregory Franzwa, Troy Gray, Thomas Hunt, Dr. Stanley Kimball and Russell Dickinson. Elected officers were Franzwa, President; Mattes, Executive Vice President; Robert Rennells and Billie Gray, First and Second Vice Presidents respectively; Latschar, Secretary; Tucker, Assistant Secretary; Bowers, Treasurer; and Johnson, Legal Counsel.

It was agreed that the organization would be called the Oregon-California Trails Association, and would issue a quarterly publication to be called the *Overland Journal*. In addition, they drafted a Statement of Purpose, established dues and membership rules and guidelines for forming local chapters, established procedures for drafting a set of bylaws, and scheduled the first national convention that was held in Independence, Missouri, in August, 1983