



# Northwest Trails

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

Volume 40, No. 2

Spring 2025

## NW OCTA Annual Meeting End of the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center

*By Susan Doyle*

The NW OCTA Annual Meeting on March 15 was held in the Henderson Farm building at the End of the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center in Oregon City, hosted by Corrine Lowenthal, EOTIC executive director. Twenty-seven people were present. We were welcomed by mayor of Oregon City Denise McGriff who spoke about the history of Oregon City, the oldest incorporated city west of the Missouri River.

The business meeting of reports and discussions lasted until the lunch break at noon. We brought our own lunches and ate in the meeting room with beverages provided by vice-president Wendell Baskins. A short board meeting was held during the lunch hour in the EOTIC visitor center. After lunch everyone gathered in the museum and Corrine Lowenthal led us on a guided tour and explained their renovation and expansion plans. The center is undergoing extensive improvements, including forthcoming new covers on the wagons and wagon displays on the grounds.



*Susan Doyle and Mayor Denise McGriff.*



*EOTIC exec. director Corrine Lowenthal.*



*Polly Jackson explaining OCTA's online research resource Paper Trail.*

## NW Chapter Leaders

### **President**

Susan Doyle

### **Vice President**

Wendell Baskins

### **Secretary-Treasurer**

Jenny Miller

### **Directors**

Sherrill Beck

Polly Jackson

Dave Welch

### **Chapter Website**

Sharon Brown

### **Communications Chair**

Marley Shurtleff

### **Mapping Chair**

Robin Baker

### **Membership Chair**

Sherrill Beck

### **Preservation Committee**

Dave Welch, Wendell Baskins,  
Jenny Miller, Leta Neiderheiser



MASTHEAD: Replica of *The Old Oregon Trail* bronze relief sculpture created in 1924 by Avard Fairbanks for Oregon Trail monuments.

## President's Message

*By Susan Doyle*

Like most other volunteer associations, OCTA and the Northwest Chapter are undergoing major changes. Membership is steadily declining, older longtime members are no longer with us, and it's ever more difficult to fill leadership positions. It's challenging to adapt to changing times, so if you have any suggestions or ideas about engaging our members, I'd appreciate hearing from you at [sdoyle@oregontrail.net](mailto:sdoyle@oregontrail.net).

In this newsletter are announcements for upcoming outings that I hope many of you will participate in. We have one more Zoom program in May that will discuss chapter projects and plans. The annual fall meeting will again be at Borst Park in Centralia, WA on September 27.

Sherrill Beck is taking over chapter membership from Sallie Riehl who has been keeping our membership roster updated for the past several years. Thank you, Sallie, for doing the job so well. Sherrill will work closely with Marley Shurtleff, chapter communications chair, who keeps members informed via email.

Happy trails in OCTA.

## Sad News

Glenn Harrison's daughter Sharon Watson notified OCTA that Glenn passed away April 26, 2025 just two days short of his 86th birthday. Glenn served as OCTA's president 2007-2009, was a past chapter president, and was longtime chapter treasurer.



*Glenn Harrison received an award of appreciation at the NW OCTA fall meeting last September for his many years as chapter treasurer.*

# **NW OCTA Financial Report FY25 Second Quarter January 1, 2025 – March 31, 2025**

*By Jenny Miller  
Chapter Secretary- Treasurer*

**Beginning Balance (\$16,384.85 cash plus \$5,000 mitigation funds\*)** **\$21,384.85**

**Second Quarter Report:**

**Checking Account January 1, 2025** **\$21,384.85**

**Income Second Quarter**

Donations \$100.00  
From National (dues) \$636.00  
T-Shirt sales/EOTIC \$95.00  
+\$831.00

**Expenses Second Quarter**

Fall and Spring meetings -\$625.00

**Total** **\$21,590.85**

**Assets**

Certificate of Deposit 2/24/25\*\* - \$10,000.00

**Checking Account Total** **\$11,590.85**

**Ending Cash and Assets Balance March 31, 2025** **\$21,590.85**

\*The mitigation money from Nolin Hills Windfarm is for adverse impacts on the trails, which are mostly visual. This mitigation money is accounted and reported separately from the general account.

\*\*On March 24, \$10,000 was placed into a 13-month CD

## **Call for Volunteers**

Looking for people who have these skills and are willing to do field work:

Mapping: GPS operations (record locations, tracks, and areas), use of mapping software like ArcGIS

Archaeological field work (amateur/volunteer or degreed)

Metal detector operations

Marker and interpretive panel placement (transportation, labor)

Partial reimbursement for expenses is available.

**Contact Dave Welch, [welchdj@comcast.net](mailto:welchdj@comcast.net), for more information**

# May Zoom Meeting

*By Dave Welch*

The program for the last Zoom meeting of the 2024-25 year will be on May 10 at 10:00 am PDT. There will be a potpourri of topics, including a segment for your questions about OCTA and our activities. We will begin with an overview of the chapter's work in and around the Umatilla Army Depot, including a trail segment along the southern boundary of the depot. We will also discuss plans for research later this year involving the use of metal detectors under strict constraints specified by the Oregon State Archaeologist. Lastly, we will discuss plans for next year. Suggestions are welcome.

## *Save the Dates!* **June 21 and June 22, 2025**

A Northwest Chapter outing is planned for the weekend of June 21 and June 22 to explore both the 1836 Whitman Route from La Grande, Oregon, through the Blue Mountains and the first route of the Oregon Trail from the Umatilla River to Whitman Mission and the Columbia River.

On Saturday, June 21, Wendell Baskins will lead an auto tour along Marcus and Narcissa Whitman's route through the Blue Mountains. The tour will start and end at Pendleton's Heritage Station Museum. This is not a full continuous trek over the precise route but instead will generally follow the route with stops at overlooks and other areas of interest. Some areas along the route will have rough spots along the route, but a 4-wheel drive vehicle is not necessary.

On Sunday, June 22, Roger Blair and Sam Pambrun will lead a tour from the Heritage Station Museum along the Whitman Route from the base of the Blues to Whitman Mission and on to the Columbia River to visit excellent swales at Marie Dorion Park near Wallula, Washington. This tour may be via chartered van or private vehicles, depending on interest in participating.

If you would like to participate in the Whitman Routes Tours, contact Roger Blair by email at [rblair@oregontrail.net](mailto:rblair@oregontrail.net) or phone **541-969-6763**.

*A flyer is coming soon with detailed information on the June tours.*



# Blue Mountains Oregon Trail Explorations in May

*By Robin Baker  
NW OCTA Mapping Chair*

The NW OCTA Mapping Team will be exploring and mapping the Oregon Trail again this year in the Blue Mountains of NE Oregon. The dates are May 12-18 (Monday through Sunday).

We will be concentrating on the Pelican Creek area north of Hilgard State Park and the Table Mountain area west of La Grande this time around.

If you are interested in participating in one or all of our explorations, contact the NW OCTA Mapping Chair, Robert (Robin) Baker at *robinbaker1927@gmail.com*.

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## Barlow Road Hikes in July

Robin Baker is leading two hikes on the Barlow Road on Saturday and Sunday, July 19 and 20. The hike Saturday will be on Laurel Hill and Sunday's will be at Barlow Pass. If you are interested in participating, contact Robin Baker at *robinbaker1927@gmail.com*.

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## NW Chapter Mapping – Exploration Documentation

An attachment to the email with this newsletter has web links to download two PDF documents: one for the Blue Mountains and one for the Barlow Road. The downloaded PDF documents contain web links to all the shareable documentation Robin Baker has produced so far for both areas. The document is a PDF, but the links are active.

The links look like this:

[Blue Mountains explorations documentation](#)  
[Barlow Road explorations documentation](#)



# Preservation Report

*By Jenny Miller*

On Friday, April 4, there was a meeting for all OCTA preservation officers. John Winner introduced Jordan Thomas, OCTA's Assistant National Preservation Officer. She talked a little bit about herself.

John is expecting that with the current administration there will be increased activity with oil drilling and logging. In the USFS, 25% of the forests are potentially up for harvest. There is a possibility that NEPA may be suspended to facilitate this.

John's plan is to review current sites and segments and to add to that list. Sites do NOT have to be nationally listed to be added. OCTA needs to be aware of what is out there. A database is being worked on with the help of Jordan to add in as many sites and segments as possible. It already has what is listed with NPS, and any additional information will be added to this new preservation map. The goal is to preserve sites and segments whether designated or not.

There was also some discussion concerning which mapping program to use. Many people are familiar with Terrain Navigator Pro, which has been provided through NPS grants. The other system discussed was ArcGIS, an online system.

## Jordan Thomas Assistant National Preservation Officer

*OCTA E-News Announcement*

OCTA is pleased to announce that we have hired Jordan Thomas to fill the role of Assistant National Preservation Officer. Jordan was born and raised along the California Trail in Winnemucca, Nevada. She received a bachelor's degree from Utah Valley University and a Master of Modern History from Aberystwyth University in Wales. Her master's thesis focused on emigrant diaries along the California Trail through Nevada.

Jordan worked at the California Trail Interpretive Center in Elko, Nevada, for several years and has been a board member for the California Trail Heritage Alliance for the past five years. Most recently, she was the Program Manager for the Museum of North Idaho in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. When not working, you can find Jordan reading, kayaking, or out in the mountains taking photos.

Jordan loved learning about the westward trails, especially the California Trail, since she was ten years old. Jordan is very excited to start working with OCTA to continue learning about the historic trails and to be part of saving and preserving them. Her start date with OCTA was Monday, February 3.



*Jordan Thomas speaking at the OCTA Board of Directors Meeting in April in Salt Lake City.*

# Memories of Dick Pingrey

## Shared by His OCTA Friends

### ***Travis Boley:***

We are very sad to inform you that OCTA Past President Richard H. “Dick” Pingrey, 92, passed away on February 12, 2025, in Selah, WA. He served as president of OCTA from 2003 to 2005. He was a retired airline pilot who spent a career traversing the globe before retiring to Selah, Washington, where he owned a hangar full of airplanes and helicopters, providing flying lessons over the past two decades.

Who could forget the appearance of Ezra Meeker (portrayed by Ray Egan) at the 2004 OCTA convention at Vancouver, WA, which was enhanced by the presence of one of Ezra’s wagons and the delivery of “Ezra” to the closing event at the Fort Vancouver airfield in Dick Pingrey’s 1927 Curtiss Robin? This was an homage to Ezra Meeker’s airplane trip at age 96 to meet President Calvin Coolidge, thus becoming the nation’s first transcontinental air passenger. For those interested in Dick’s personal aviation history, you can request a copy of his 82-page memoir by emailing [tboley@indepmo.org](mailto:tboley@indepmo.org) and a PDF copy will be emailed to you.



*Ray Egan as “Ezra Meeker” and Dick Pingrey at Fort Vancouver airfield in 2004.*

### ***Dave Welch:***

I enjoyed many OCTA activities with Dick, in particular flying parts of the trail in search of the Naches Trail across the Yakima training Center and looking for the original route to the Whitman Mission. We also had a common interest in airplanes. Remember the Curtiss Robin delivering Ezra Meeker to the Vancouver convention? Thanks, Dick.

### ***Lynne Alvord:***

When Dick Pingrey retired and moved back to his hometown of Selah, WA, he started going to a morning coffee group with a group of local Selah guys. My dad was one of the coffee drinkers and that is how I first heard about OCTA. Dick talked up the 1999 Pendleton convention so much, that I drove down for one day and joined OCTA.

Then in 2001, Dick arranged an opportunity for NW OCTA members to fly over the trail from Wallula to Selah. He arranged for his friends to fly people over the trail on private planes. I remember being in a small plane with Rich Hermann, Joyce Bolerjack, and Carol Buss. In addition, that evening Dick hosted a barbecue at his house. The next day we drove through the Wenas Valley and up Highway 410 into the Little Naches area, following the Naches Pass Trail. Dick showed us some ruts that were from the Longmire train. I remember meeting Roger and Susan that weekend, along with Tuck and Kay and Wendy and Dave.

In August 2001 the convention was in Casper, WY, and Dick drove, and I rode with him to the convention. I think he became Vice President that year. I also rode with him to the Salt Lake Convention in 2005.

In the fall of 2005, Dick hosted the NW OCTA fall gathering at his hangar in Yakima. It was a fun event, and he flew his Curtiss Robin. There was a drawing for the opportunity to fly in the Robin with Dick. Jack Fletcher won and got to fly around the hangar with Dick.

After his tenure as OCTA president, Dick became less and less active in OCTA. and I rarely saw him in the ensuing years. Thanks for the memories, Dick.

***Kay Forsythe:***

Tuck and I visited Dick Pingrey at his hangar in Yakima. It was fun to see the little planes that he worked with.

***Marley Shurtleff:***

Dick enthusiastically shared his love for his part of Washington and was happy to initiate trips and tell stories about the area.

My husband, Gary, and I enjoyed a couple of excursions with Dick, touring the Yakima Valley; and also the Wenas Valley, which contains a section of the Naches Trail. We saw some beautiful country and were relieved that our little pickup made it up all the steep inclines!

I fondly remember attending a barbeque at Dick's house, because it was there that I realized OCTA offered us the opportunity for friendships with a group of others who valued the pioneer trails history.

***Stafford Hazelett:***

Dick and I worked separately. I always appreciated his efforts and his reports.

***Jenny Miller:***

My memories of Dick also include flying. The first time he led us from Pendleton to The Dalles involved me being in a plane that was flying too fast to stay in the line of flight. The pilot kept weaving in and out. I ended up feeling airsick because of it! Dick took pity on me and my experience, and we redid the trip just the two of us. It was great fun seeing him come in to land in Hermiston as I was driving to the airport. He was able to point out trail from the air, but it is SO hard to see things going 100 mph! We had a really nice lunch in The Dalles before heading back to Hermiston. Also, the Vancouver convention is still a favorite memory of mine with Dick and Ezra Meeker. I really enjoyed his company and hearing about his adventures as a pilot over the years. Dick, you are missed.

***Susan Doyle:***

I have so many fond memories of Dick Pingrey at OCTA activities, especially being a passenger in his plane on flights over the trail.. His exceptional leadership roles in OCTA and the Northwest Chapter have left a lasting impression.

***Roger Blair:***

The NW OCTA chapter is saddened by the passing of Dick Pingrey at age 92 on February 12, 2025. Dick was a strong supporter of OCTA and the NW Chapter. He served one term as national OCTA president 2003–2005. At the chapter level he led an outing following the Naches Pass route. A retired pilot, he paired his aeronautical interests with trail work, flying from his home in Selah, Washington, to an OCTA meeting in Baker City. He also convinced a cadre of fellow pilots to fly to Pendleton and led an aerial survey of the trail west from Pendleton as a chapter outing. He also hosted a chapter meeting at his plane hangar, complete with a speaker, a descendant of missionary Henry Harmon Spalding. Dick's presence is sorely missed, but he will not be forgotten.





## An Oregon Trail Painting by Steve Ludeman

I enjoy creating art of the Oregon Trail. Here is an image of my painting titled “Comfort on the Trail.” My models were a mother and daughter who were re-enactors in Oregon City. I consulted with my wife Jean to get the quilt correct.

—Steve Ludeman NW OCTA member



**ABOUT STEVE LUDEMAN.** Growing up in Iowa I often had a pencil, sketchbook and paints in my hands. After college and service with the Navy in Vietnam, I was fortunate to live, work, and paint in Switzerland, Germany and Australia. In 1985, I settled with my family in Oregon where I worked as Emergency Manager for the Bonneville Power Administration in Portland. I am a Commander, US Naval Reserve, retired. In my retirement I am enjoying a career as a professional artist.

My sketchbook and paints continue to be constant companions in my travels and on the trail. I enjoy painting while my wife, Jean, creates beautiful award-winning quilts in our home studio in Oregon's Cascade Mountains. Jean also reproduces my paintings on greeting and note cards. We are truly an artistic team!

## *Northwest Trails*

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MASTHEAD: Replica of *The Old Oregon Trail* bronze relief sculpture created in 1924 by Avarad Fairbanks for Oregon Trail monuments.



## **42nd Annual OCTA Convention**

*Colorado's Historic Trails:  
A Journey Through Time*

**September 7-12, 2025  
Pueblo, Colorado**

## **More from the Annual Meeting at the End of the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center, Oregon City**



*A NW OCTA board meeting was held during the lunch hour in the EOTIC Visitor Center.*

*Chapter members were led on a guided tour of the museum by executive director Corrine Lowenthal.*

