



EMIGRANT TRAILS HALL OF FAME

OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION

Walter E. Meacham

Biography

- Born: September 21, 1879, Alameda, CA
- Died: July 1, 1951, Portland, OR
- Married: Mary Myers, November 11, 1950
- Historian, trail preservationist, trail association officer and director

Achievements

- Founder, Old Oregon Trail Association (1922).
- Executive secretary of Old Oregon Trail Centennial Commission (1943).
- Executive secretary of Oregon Territorial Centennial Commission (1948).
- Regional Director (Oregon) of OTMA and American Pioneer Trails Association (APTA). Executive secretary of Oregon Council, APTA.
- Promoted recognition and marking of the Old Oregon Trail.

A son of Oregon pioneers, Walter Meacham had a lifelong interest in preservation of the Oregon Trail. He founded the Old Oregon Trail Association in 1922, prior to the founding of Ezra Meeker's Oregon Trail Memorial Association (OTMA). Meacham encouraged Meeker in his work.

His early trail promotion efforts focused on designation of the rapidly evolving transcontinental highway to the Northwest as the Old Oregon Trail Highway. That route generally followed the route of the Oregon Trail from Missouri to Oregon.

In 1923 he welcomed President and Mrs. Warren Harding to Meacham, Oregon, for the dedication of the last five-mile section of the Old Oregon Trail Highway. They also participated in an Oregon Trail pageant attended by 25,000 people and unveiled a monument to the memory of pioneers on the summit of the Blue Mountains.

Meacham later became active in OTMA and served as a Regional Director and in its successor, the American Pioneer Trails Association (APTA). He spent the remainder of his life as the executive secretary for the Oregon Council, APTA. He also was executive secretary of Oregon's Old Oregon Trail Centennial Commission in 1943 and in 1948 he served as executive secretary of the Oregon Territorial Centennial Commission.

His ashes were scattered on the trail he loved at Flagstaff Hill near Baker City, Oregon, according to his wishes. The epitaph on a cemetery monument near his parents' graves summarizes his trail passion, "Oregon Walt, Champion of Oregon Pioneers, Preserver of History They Made."