



# EMIGRANT TRAILS HALL OF FAME

OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION



## William & Jeanne Watson

William "Bill" and Jeanne Watson's contributions to the emigrant trails extended from 50 years of field work on the emigrant trails in the Sierra to OCTA's board room and the halls of Congress. Bill served as OCTA's president and on the board of directors, but his primary contribution, in conjunction with his wife of over 60 years, Jeanne, was liaison with Congressional staff on matters affecting the emigrant trails. A singular achievement was the passage of legislation establishing the California and Pony Express National Historical Trails.

The Watsons were at the forefront of creating the successful Partnership for the National Trails System (PNTS), which today represents all 30 National Historic and Scenic Trails authorized by Congress. Bill and Jeanne cherished their OCTA Meritorious Achievement Award, PNTS Lifetime Achievement Award, and the Department of Interior's "Take Pride in America Award," which marked the first time it was awarded to a National Historic Trail couple.

For 50 years, Jeanne and her family worked to interpret, mark and protect the Sierra crossing of the Carson Route of the California Trail, which included 20 years as Forest Service Adopt-A-Trail volunteers on the Emigrant Valley to West Pass and top of Horse Canyon Trail. Jeanne helped recruit the Kirkwood Homeowners to maintain the Caples Lake to Emigrant Valley segment, and helped lead trail hikes for 30 years.

For more than 31 years, Bill and Jeanne made an annual trek to Washington, DC to advocate for the trails system and to provide Congress with a progress report summarizing how volunteer efforts were helping to preserve this vanishing piece of American heritage. Bill also received the Department of Interior's "Take Pride in America Award" as previously noted.

### Biography

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#### William Campbell Watson

- Born: 1927, Berkeley, California
- Died: 2016, Orinda, California

#### Jeanne Hamilton Watson

- Born: 1929, Oakland, California
- Died: 2015, Orinda, California

Married: 1954, Berkeley, California

### Achievements

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- Assisted in creation of the Partnership for the National Trails System
- Encouraged passage of legislation creating the California and Pony Express National Historic Trails
- Leadership at many levels of trail and historic preservation organizations