



Northwest Trails

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

Volume 38, No. 3

Summer 2023

Fall Chapter Membership Meeting Saturday, October 7, 2023

The Fall chapter membership meeting this year will be held in Oregon City at the Abernethy Grange on Saturday, October 7. Information and directions will be sent in September.

The Abernethy Grange is located on Harley Avenue in Oregon City. This Grange has served the Oregon City community since its establishment in 1904.



NW Chapter Directory

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Sallie Riehl

Acting Vice President

Wendell Baskins

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Glenn Harrison

Secretary

Jenny Miller

Directors

Andy Anderson

Polly Jackson

Dave Welch

Chapter Website

Sharon Brown

Communications Chair

Marley Shurtleff

Mapping Chair

Robert Baker

Membership Chair

TBA

Preservation Officer

TBA

President's Message

The storage unit will be closed by October this year. The chapter board has made the decision due to the yearly expense of renting the unit. Information about the closure is later in this newsletter.

I hope that several of you are planning to attend the Gering Convention. I'm looking forward to seeing the area again. The landscape is fascinating, and all of us should see Chimney Rock and Scotts Bluff.

Many thanks to Dave Welch for his interesting ZOOM meetings. He has kept us in touch with so many events. I've enjoyed the family stories from those whose ancestors were on the trail as well as the informative sessions on mapping.

I will be finishing my two terms as President by the end of 2023. I appreciate all the help that many of you have given me throughout this time. The loss of my husband Jim just a year ago has left me a bit adrift, but I am making progress in learning to live alone. I won't be looking for another term, but I'm willing to do other tasks for the chapter.

Many thanks to Susan Doyle for her work on the newsletters that help keep us together by spreading the news of our members. Our chapter does important work in preserving the trail and we should be proud of what has been accomplished. It is very important that we keep the trail alive and engage others in its history.

I'm looking forward to next year's convention in Pendleton and encourage all of you to help where you can to make it a memorable experience.

Sallie K Riehl,
Chapter President

Chapter Treasurer's Report

NWOCTA is still going strong. We ended the third fiscal quarter on June 30 with all current bills paid and a balance of \$18,219.27.

Glenn Harrison,
Chapter Treasurer



Storage Unit Closing

By Sallie Riehl

We have to remove all the material from the storage unit by October. The storage unit is where we have been storing and sorting books and materials from NW OCTA members' estates or donations. The board has asked me to make the books freely available to chapter members. We are making the book list available on the chapter's page that is on OCTA's website octa-trails.org.

If you wish to own some of the titles, then send me your request through my email sallieriehl@comcast.net. If the items must be mailed to you, then you will need to pay the postage for the mailing. The payments should be sent to our treasurer, Glenn Harrison. The alternative is to come to the October 7 chapter meeting in Oregon City and pick the items up there.

Please send in your title requests by September 1, 2023.

I'm also asking that several of you be willing to take several boxes to distribute to your local used bookstores or library friends groups.

We will no longer accept books and other materials from anyone, since we cannot afford to house them.

Lists of the books being disposed of are now available at the OCTA website octa-trails.org:

Click on **Discover OCTA**, then **Regional Chapters**, then **Northwest Chapter**.

The lists are under the heading, **Free! NW Books available from the NW Chapter for the taking!**

Sallie Riehl has provided information about how to obtain the books you would like to have. Please look (and act) quickly! Please send in your title requests **by September 1**.

Chapter Table at Foster Farm Event

We will have an information table again this year at the Philip Foster Farm on Saturday, September 16, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. One or two volunteers are needed to help. Please contact Henry Pittock at hpittock3@icloud.com if you can help.

The Philip Foster Farm is at 22725 SE Eagle Creek Road. From Portland, take Oregon 224 toward Estacada. At Eagle Creek, turn left on Oregon 211 toward Sandy. In about 1/4 mile, turn right on Eagle Creek Road. The farm will be on your right. There will be vendors, food, craftsmen, and musicians all day. Food for sale includes pizza, hard cider, pie, and ice cream. The entrance fee is \$5. For more information, see philipfosterfarm.com.



Cowlitz Trail Auto Tour

September 9–10, 2023

By Dave Welch

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, Chuck Hornbuckle researched the route of the Cowlitz Trail between Fort Vancouver and Tumwater, WA. He published an auto tour guide and conducted tours over the route. On September 9 and 10 we will reprise Chuck's tours and see how things have changed in the intervening twenty-plus years. We will also see some new finds.

The tour will be led by Dennis Larsen, Karen Johnson, and Dave Welch. Dennis is a retired history teacher and has been writing on Northwest pioneers since retiring. He is particularly known for his research and writings on Ezra Meeker. He is a longtime member of OCTA and has written numerous articles for its publications.

Karen Johnson worked with Chuck on his original work and assisted in organizing events celebrating the Cowlitz Trail. She has worked as a volunteer, assistant director, director, and curator at several museums in southwest Washington. She has participated in installing two Oregon Trail markers, making an eight-part documentary video about the Cowlitz Trail, and organizing two stagecoach runs between Olympia and Longview. Karen currently serves as the curator at the Schmidt House, owned by the Olympia Tumwater Foundation.

Dave Welch assisted Chuck in his early research. He is currently the chair of OCTA's mapping committee. Along with Robin Baker, he is updating Chuck's maps to take advantage of technology that was not available to Chuck. Dave's most recent research project is the original Oregon Trail route to the Whitman Mission.

The route that we will cover, and a tentative list of stops is shown below. We will start at Kalama on Saturday, September 9, and we will end at Tumwater Falls on Sunday, September 10. High clearance or 4WD is not required. We plan to leave Kalama at 10:00 am on Saturday. We will overnight in either Chehalis or Centralia. Travelers will need to make their own overnight reservations. You may join the trip for one or both days.

More details of tour plans will follow, but for now if you are interested in participating, please **contact Dave Welch at welchdj@comcast.net**. Carpooling is encouraged since auto tours of more than ten vehicles are a challenge to coordinate on the road.

Please join us! We are very fortunate to have Karen and Dennis guiding and interpreting our journey.



In Memoriam

Robert R. Coward

Longtime chapter member Robert R. Coward, 81, of Issaquah, WA passed away Sunday, March 14, 2021, from complications of brain cancer. He was born June 6, 1939, in New York. After serving in the Navy, he made the Pacific Northwest his home. He worked for Wilson Marine and Seattle Boat before retiring. He was very active with the NW Chapter of OCTA, working on several trail restoration projects and participating in a multi-day recreation of the Oregon Trail journey. He volunteered for the Seattle Veterans Museum and was also a member of the Issaquah History Museum. He is survived by his three daughters and seven grandchildren.

2023 Oregon Trail Explorations in the Blue Mountains

By Robin Baker

We were back in the Blue Mountains this year for the third year in a row, from May 18th to the 21st. After our initial hike, we expanded our explorations beyond the Emigrant Springs State Park area.

Our first hike was one we also did in 2021, the Toll Road from near Emigrant Springs State Park down to Ross Road west of Meacham, a distance of about 3 miles. For this hike we had 8 people, a good turnout.



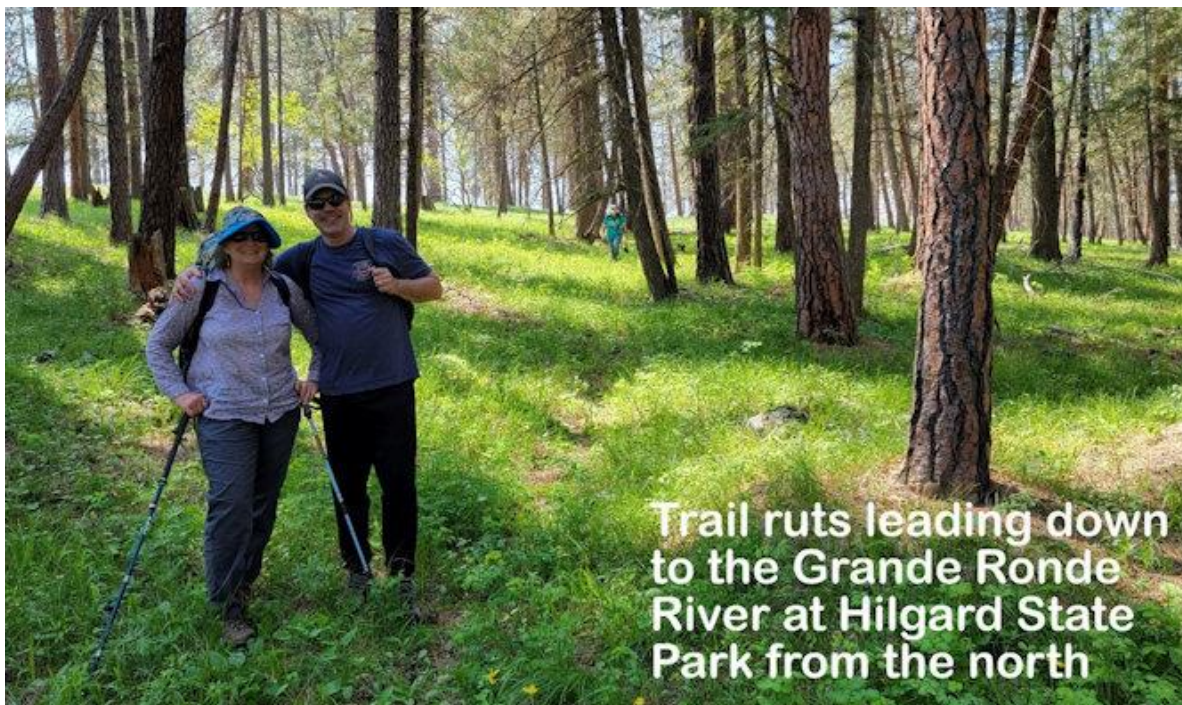
The next day, we explored the Terry Golter property just north of Meacham. The 1887 General Land Office plat map shows the Emigrant Road going through this property before heading NW to Emigrant Springs. Unfortunately, we were only able to find one location which looked like there were wagon ruts. The area is mostly 2nd growth lodgepole pine and previous logging may have erased the ruts.



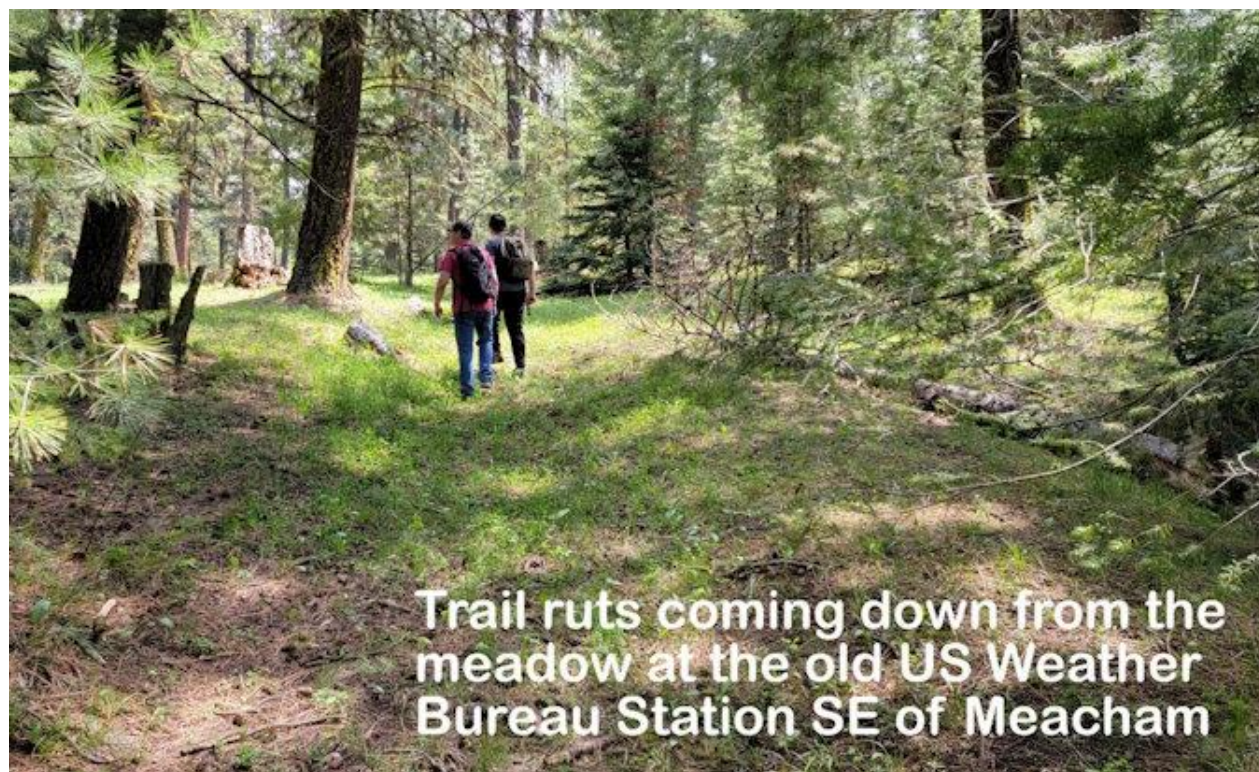
That afternoon we explored the Brenda Fife property a little further north along Highway 30. Here we found good wagon ruts, corresponding to the “Pendleton & La Grande Wagon Road” shown on the 1887 GLO plat map.



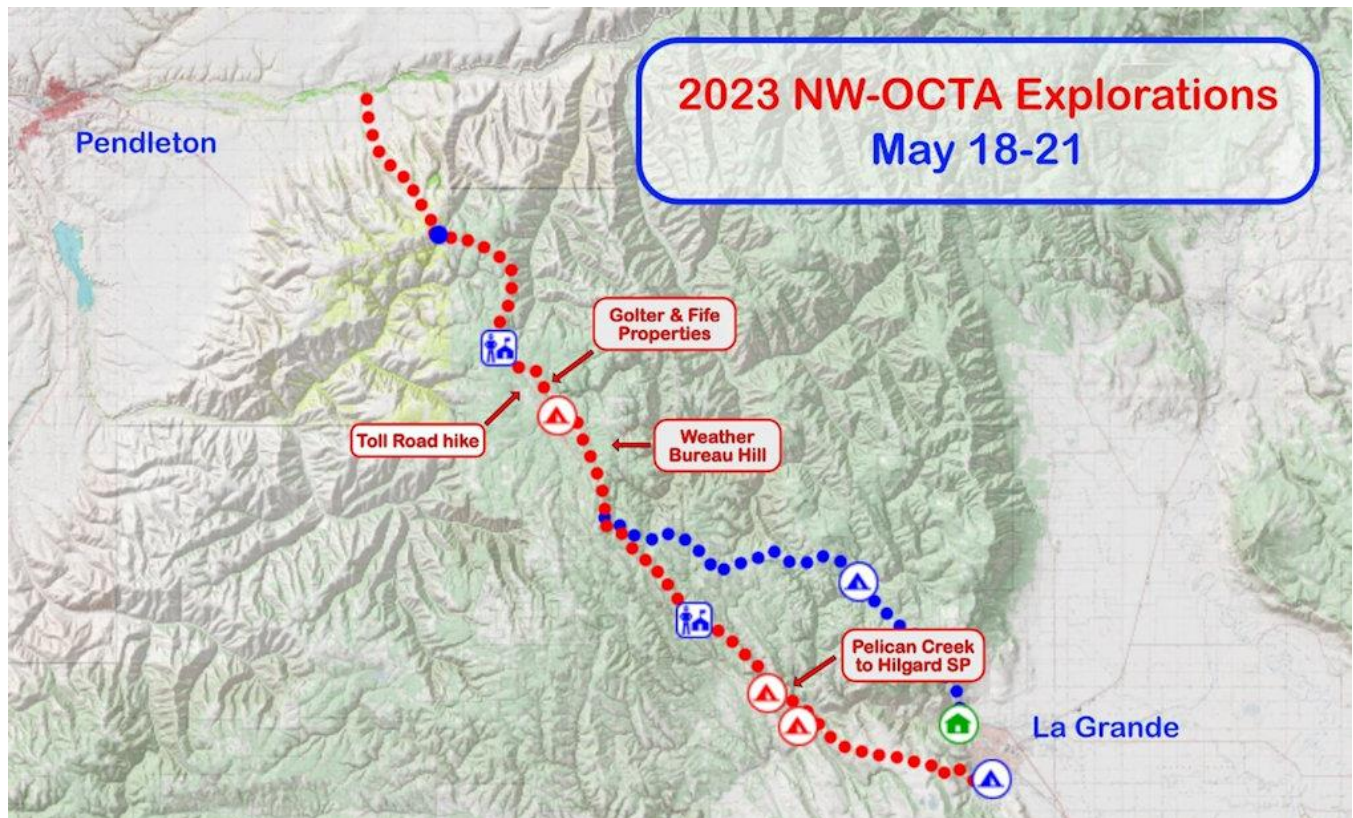
Saturday, we traveled toward La Grande down to Hilgard Junction State Park, drove up Fivepoints Creek toward the “town” of Hilgard, and then up Pelican Creek about a mile and parked. We then explored southeast up and along the ridge back toward Hilgard Junction State Park. We followed the route mapped by Jack Evans, looking for ruts shown on his map. We found good wagon ruts coming down off the ridge toward the Grande Ronde River.



Sunday was our final exploration. We explored the Pendleton Ranches, Inc. property SE of Meacham, on “US Weather Bureau Hill,” the site of a government weather station from 1943 to 1975. This area contains a large meadow with an old grass airstrip down the middle. We explored up the hill, again following the wagon rut locations shown by Jack Evans on his map.

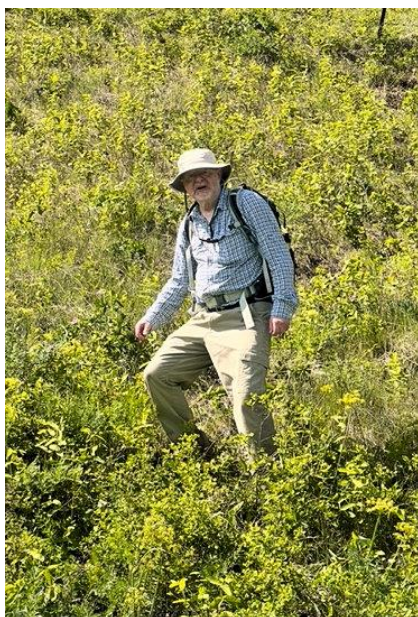


Here's an overview map showing the locations of our hikes and explorations:



Our May 2023 explorations were generally successful, but I had hoped to find more wagon ruts than we did. It seems like some of the wagon ruts are gradually disappearing over time, becoming fainter and fainter with each passing year.

Sherrill Beck shared more photos of the exploration:



Exploration leader, Robin Baker.



Sweet Oregon: An Enigma and a Song

By Mark Goddard

I've traveled Hwy. 97 in Oregon, from Biggs Jct. on the Columbia River to central Oregon, countless times over the years. Rarely does a trip occur, whether traveling north or south, without a stop at DeMoss Memorial Park. Besides its convenience as a rest stop, the history of the place has always been the attraction, for somehow I've felt connected to the whispers of the past, the smell of the poplar trees, and the rolling sagebrush land beyond.

DeMoss Park was another layer of history I held on to as I spent years following my ancestors around Oregon, traveling all the backroads I could find searching for ghost towns, getting sidetracked pursuing obscure pieces of history that weren't even attached to my ancestors. It was another piece of the tapestry of Oregon I had created in my mind over the years.

This fascination with my home state, and people of my blood who walked it before me, is a driving force in the creation of my family tree. Over the years the branches I built grew and grew, from a single family who had endured the Oregon Trail to be here, to now thousands of people in the twisting branches of my extended family. And then one day, while exploring a branch I hadn't visited in a while, I saw a name I'd forgotten I'd put there – Josie DeMoss.

Josie DeMoss (1869-1909), married to William W. Starr (1868-1931) who was the son of Mary Jane Fisk, the sister of my 2nd great-grandfather, John Moffit Fisk, who at age 10 had traveled the Oregon Trail in 1852. DeMoss? As in the DeMoss's of Sherman Co. and the Memorial Park?

"The DeMoss family—James and Elizabeth Bonebrake DeMoss and their five children—formed a musical group in 1872, the DeMoss Concertists of Oregon, later known as the DeMoss Family Bards. For over sixty years, until 1933, the DeMoss Family Bards traveled extensively, performing and preaching a Christian message in every state in the United States, the Canadian provinces, and Europe." (Kaseberg, Sherry. "DeMoss Canyon, DeMoss Springs, DeMoss Springs Memorial Park" in *Sherman County Place Names*, 3rd Edition. 2009) In 1862 they traveled the Oregon Trail. By 1883 they were camping at the springs and decided it would be home, secured 840 acres, and eventually the town of DeMoss Springs, Oregon, was platted.

One indicator of their fame was that the song "Sweet Oregon," written by James's son Henry in 1882, was considered the State Anthem of Oregon before being replaced by "Oregon, My Oregon" in 1927:

Watch on YouTube: *Sweet Oregon: by Henry S. DeMoss of the DeMoss Music Family.*

If you want to learn more, it goes without saying that the DeMoss family history is richly documented in book, song, and the internet. But back to the story...

I had the name Josie DeMoss, and I made the leap that family researchers often make, especially when encountering a relatively uncommon name twice in the same time period and geographic area: I assumed I must be related to these bards of yesteryear. The key question: was there documented proof of that assumption? Josie's birth date fit perfectly with the ages of Rev. James and Elizabeth as a potential daughter. So next to my mighty tree I started growing a new tree, a DeMoss family tree. I researched James McElroy DeMoss, worked in his parents and his children, and quickly saw that Josie was not his child.

This is where researchers dig in their heels, convinced that two people can be linked. So I built the DeMoss tree further, first exploring James's brothers, then his father and his uncles. Stepping back in time to his grandfather and his great uncles, I tried to find a line from one of them that led to someone who had named their daughter "Josie."

I continued this process, generation by generation, examining every line that might carry the DeMoss name forward. I methodically worked my way back to the early 1700s, and then, with William DeMoss (1716-1811), found a path forward in time that led to... Laura Elizabeth Fisk (1885-1956), a distant cousin of mine, who had married David Wilber DeMoss (1885-1961). The assumption that Josie DeMoss, marrying the son of Mary Jane Fisk, would connect me to the DeMoss Family Bards seemed suddenly blown out of the water, yet I'd accomplished a connection to my family I could not have imagined, along a totally different family line. The DeMoss tree I'd propagated was now grafted to mine and the strains of "Sweet Oregon," which once drifted from the stage that still stands beneath the poplar trees in the DeMoss Memorial Park, was now my song too.

And what of Josie DeMoss? She remains an enigma. Married to the son of a Fisk at age 21, a life cut short at age 40 I know not how, two children that left none of their own, no record of her parents, no photographs, a small line in an 1888 Grant Co. newspaper listing her as a member of the Ladies Coronet Band (a musician not connected to the musicians sharing her name!), and nothing more except a stone in the Prairie City Cemetery. The genealogist doesn't just build trees, but instead, strives to bring our ancestors, in a sense, to life. We add texture and meaning to their lives, and through them we understand more about the times in which they lived and by extension, what they gave to the lives we have today. My hope is to one day bring some life to Josie.

An Enigma No More: Finding Family for Josie DeMoss

In "Sweet Oregon: An Enigma and A Song," the story ended with the unexpected discovery that the famous DeMoss Family Bards were a part of my family tree. But it seemed I had failed in my initial quest to link Josie DeMoss, already married into the Starr family and related to me, to that famous branch of DeMoss family. Josie remained an enigma.

I couldn't let it go, posted my story to a variety of other sites, people got curious and began their own searches for her, and suddenly, small whispers of Josie began to surface. People sent census records, a newspaper article showed her as a member of the Lady's Coronet Band in Prairie City, and they shared their ideas. Two people surfaced who I had never met yet found them also connected to my family tree: Art Deardorff who has researched so much of Grant Co., Oregon history, and Joshua DeMoss of Virginia, who'd set a goal to record every DeMoss born in this country (he's researched nearly 10K people).

A critical piece of the puzzle surfaced when Art sent me an 1881 Grant Co. probate record concerning the estate of James T. DeMoss (1848), whom I had already assumed, wrongly, to be Josie's father. The probate record confirmed that James was the guardian and described Josie as his "niece."

It confirmed the tie to his father John DeMoss (1805-1890) of Baltimore, Maryland who raised 16 children. One of those children, John DeMoss (1834), was identified with the middle initial "S." This finding was key, as in all prior Baltimore records, John's middle name/initial was never recorded. Joshua was able to confirm that John S. DeMoss (1834) survived his brother and may have accompanied him on a migration westward after 1860.

Additional clues in the records of John S. DeMoss and Josie DeMoss provided enough evidence to reasonably conclude John S. DeMoss was the father of Josie, as all of his other siblings could effectively be ruled out. The collaboration with Art and Joshua could not have been a more fruitful family connection and I am grateful to them both.

There are still fragments of Josie's life, particularly her early life, that are still unknown. As a little girl she'd lost her mother, and her father put her under the guardianship of other family members who immigrated to Oregon. James's death forced new changes and family members to care for her at age 14, and then at age 20 she wed William Starr. She died young, at age 40, and the cause of that early death is still unknown.

But Josie has family now. My family, in fact. The lineage of her father and grandfather goes back in time to the DeMoss's whose lineages led to the DeMoss Musical Family. Along both those DeMoss family lines my family joined theirs through marriage. The mystery of Josie DeMoss was essentially resolved, and it feels as if we truly brought her into the arms of this amazing web of family.



Northwest Trails

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Material may be submitted via email, on disk, or as email attachment in Word or Text format. Pictures (JPG format) may be sent via email, on disk, 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 Avard Fairbanks for Oregon Trail monuments.



41st Annual Convention

*“We Do Old in a
New Way”*

**July 25-29, 2023
Gering, Nebraska**

***NW Trails* Editor
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