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CLOSING SOME MARKING GAPS IN JEFFERY-GOODALE CUTOFF EDITOR

Much of the Jeffery-Goodale Cutoff of the Oregon Trail system, running across remote and undeveloped lands in south-central Idaho, is still preserved for historians and all who appreciate a visit and travel on our historic trails. It ran from the Fort Hall site on the Snake River, some 250 miles, to the reconnection with the Oregon Trail on Ditto Creek in Elmore County, north of Mountain Home, ID. To Idahoans especially, both this route and the 1862 Goodale Cutoff NW of Boise (Jeffery had no part in opening that route) were important to travel by many emigrants and by miners to new gold strikes. On October 1, 2005, I-OCTA members closed some gaps in the J-G route SE of Arco, ID, which had not been checked and remarked for several years.

McGill Photo



DEEP RUTS ALONG BANK OF DRY LOST RIVER, AT LEFT

During the past three seasons portions of this trail had been remarked, but two sections had waited for another marking outing. A 1.5 mile segment along Lost River, and another of the oldest variant that went west from the perimeter of the present INL Federal lands were finally checked, and some markers added and replaced. There was also found a connector across INL land between the north and south routes, not before marked but bearing deep trail ruts. These were included with new markers.

Clayton Marler, INL advisory scientist, was our escort, and concurred with the opinion that the connector probably replaced part of the river route, which went from the west side of INL land across 1.5 miles of mostly huge boulders. It appeared that these rocks had finally, after erosion and much soil blown away, almost made that part of the route impossible to cross. The river trail,

seldom seen by men, is mostly preserved class #1 ruts.

The second section of trail that remained to be marked was 6-7 miles of the oldest, south route, from near INL to the first site of Arc—when it was little more than a stage station, from 1879-81. This trail had also been part of the first route during John Jeffery's early promotion of the cutoff, from 1854. It had been several years since anyone paid attention to those class #2 ruts (MET), now used some by hunters and other travelers through the area. Some markers were, however, in good condition.

Of interest is the fact that Arco, ID, began as a stage station, was moved 4 miles ENE in 1881 to the junction of the Challis and Bellevue stages roads (the Bellevue route the same as the Jeffery-Goodale)—there grew up as a town—and then moved again in 1902, 4 miles almost due north when the railroad came to the region!

Dick Hill, BLM in Idaho Falls, was with the marking crew and supplied the markers for the trip as well as some BLM decals. Peggy Cristobal brought her grandson, Gene Jenson, with her, and he also brought a friend, Anessa Fisher. This was Anessa's first time out on the trails, but Gene has been going on some trips since 1997.

In April 2004, when some of the Jeffrey-Goodale was marked on the SE side of Big Southern Butte, member Del Mangum, Blackfoot, assisted for his first time on the trails. On this occasion he came and brought a friend to experience trail time. Dell wrote after the marking trip:

Peg Cristobal Photo



ANESSA FISHER & GENE JENSEN PLACED A MARKER

“Thank you for allowing me to follow along in your dust the other day. I am still amazed by the perseverance of our forefathers as they traveled across this rough and rocky countryside. Wagons with little or no spring suspension, hard wooden/steel rimmed tires and 15 to 20 miles per day. And exposed to the elements day in and day out, and maybe a quilt to pad the wagon seat.

“We traveled in heated/air-conditioned comfort on rubber tires with good spring suspension and padded seats, and a radio to keep us entertained. And most of us traveled at 15 to 20 miles per hour trying to *keep up with you*.

“Sorry that I won't be able to attend the upcoming meeting, but perhaps I can plan on making it to the next one or two. The fellow riding with me, Don Palmer, was from Long Island, New York. He enjoyed traveling on the Goodale ruts.”

FIRST-TIME SOUTH ALTERNATE TRIP

For the first time since the remarking (during the last three years) of the segments that remain of the Oregon Trail South Alternate, the experiencing of the eastern half of that route was shared with a group of enthusiasts! The preparation for that trip, which was described in the last issue of *Trail Dust*, included the marking of the last remaining swales at Loveridge Bridge, Hwy. 51, Snake River crossing. Those ruts were also seen by the participants. The locked gate at the surrounding wildlife area access road along the river forced a hike of nearly a mile—to walk a few hundred yards of 160 yr. old trail!

This trip was planned in cooperation with the Owyhee County Historical Society to share the route that is mostly found in that County. The prediction of showers, and an early morning drizzle, probably prevented some persons from attending, but both days, Oct. 8-9, turned out to be relatively good days for the fall season. Dust was eliminated by early rain—dry and breezy. Even first time rut-nuts seemed to little mind the weather!

OCHS members, notably Andy Anderson, Don Smart, Jim and Jan Hyslop, Merrill Brown, and George and

Virginia Medek, were joined by a few I-OCTA people (these I-OCTAans were also joint members of OCHS), and the trip began by viewing the Glenns Ferry area trail burn—from the opposite side of the Snake River, on an elevated flat. This burned area story was featured on the front page of the August 2005 issue of *Trail Dust*. This is very near the beginning of the South Alternate, where emigrants chose not to cross the Snake at Three Islands, Glenns Ferry, and instead traveled west along the south side of the river all the way across to the Oregon border.

The new white carsonite markers were clearly seen on the black background of the charcoal vegetation, both on the river-bank route and the upper variant over a ridge.

McGill



THE ERODED, FEARFUL DROP TO THE RIVER TO BEGIN A DIFFICULT FIRST HALF-MILE OF NARROW TRAIL

The steep drop to the river, now an impossible trail, was visible from the north side, and also a view down-river, west, for more than a mile of burned viewshed.

On July 26, 1852, Charles Haden wrote in his Oregon Trail Journal about this area of the South Alternate. He always wrote in *broken sentences*: “. . .then you descend a **steep hill** to the River [photo above]. . .very fair camp [on the burned area]. . .2 ½ [mi.] more you come to where the **Bluffs comes** (sic) **to the River** [photo below] *be careful & not upset*. . .vory (sic) warm.” James Coon had written of this narrow point, on Aug. 17, 1847, “[27 men] worked road *grading around a point* on the river!” Thus it appears this sandy point was unstable even then!



MORGAN RANCH BEHIND HIKERS, CAVED-OFF HILL SIDE TRAIL—NARROW TRAIL HIKE, 50 FT. ABOVE THE SNAKE RIVER AND ALWAYS WITH CAREFUL STEPS!

The second portion of the tour required a drive west, crossing the river bridge at Hwy. 78, and then a drive back east through Conrad Thomas' Indian Hills Ranch. We appreciated his permission to cross in order to get to the steep hillside point (called a "Bluff" by Haden, above), a second narrow, eroded part of the trail, which connects the old Morgan Ranch ruts to the Thomas Ranch. That part of the Morgan unplowed land—east of this hillside where part of the trail has now *caved away into the river* until it is only a walking trail—is now BLM land, and the ruts are multiple sets of class #1 ruts!

The approximate 2 mile hike, to the old cabin that remains on the 1914 Homestead and back to the vehicles, was "enjoyed" by every person. This is a route that few people can now follow because of private property—and the BLM land is landlocked without a road to access the trail there. This fact should help insure the protection of that pristine part of the South Alternate.



NEW MARKER—RUTS E. SIDE OF THOMAS' FARM LAND, VIRGINIA MEDEK DROVE HER FIRST CARSONITE POST

All of the nine trail segments that still exist from Glens Ferry to Castle Butte, each from 1.5 to 3 miles in length, were visited during the two days. Some segments are class #2 trail and were driven, and others are very nice class #1 ruts. All of the class one ruts were hiked, at least in part, to allow the new trail visitors to see first-hand what is left of the trail. One participant with a walking-distance "pedometer" indicated that the first day's hiking totaled about 5 miles! But most of the same tour could also be offered to people who *cannot hike* very much!

This Preservation Officer and Patti appreciate those who cared enough to brave the cool breeze and the hiking to see this important historic resource of Owyhee County. We are ready anytime to share all of Idaho's marvelous trails, which emigrants once traveled and often suffered!

RENO TRAINING—CAL-NEV CHAPTER

On October 4-7, this Editor was privileged to travel to Reno, NV, as OCTA's Mapping Committee Chair, to share in the *MET Manual* training session for members of the California-Nevada Chapter of OCTA. This Idaho attendee was there more for the purpose of observation

and support for the trainers, as well as learning—Don Buck, long time trail mapper and author of the *Manual*, led in the mapping portion of the "Mapping, Marking and Monitoring" training. Some 20 participants attended.

On Wednesday, October 5, Don Buck, Leslie Fryman, Preservation Officer for that Chapter, and this Editor hiked the Dog Valley/Pass trail ruts near Verdi, NV, during a training preparation trip. This route was part of one of the field trips during the 2002, Reno, National OCTA Convention. This route replaced the Donner Pass route of the California Trail after only a few wagon trains went over that difficult Pass. From the Truckee River valley it went up a canyon for about a mile before turning uphill to the south and mounting a ridge, which it followed before coming to the top of the pass.

The route of that trail had been searched out, and one group had maintained that it followed all the way up the virtually impossible upper part of the canyon. They had even planted markers there. Only after a forest fire, which was alluded to in the "Wildfire" article, page 1, in August 2005, *Trail Dust*, left the ridge well exposed, were trail ruts on that parallel ridge obvious enough to mark. This was the trail route that the last training day field-experience part of the training followed. McGill



TRAIL ROUTE—NEW TREES IN THE DOG CR. FIRE AREA

The classroom training filled a long day on Thursday, and the whole group retired to the field on Friday. The training was somewhat improved over the first held in April, in Mountain Home, ID, based partly the on leaders' learning from that training, and with the great help of Don Buck and his expertise. Dave Welch, OCTA's National Preservation Officer, Leslie Fryman and Gail Carbiener, both Chapter Preservation Officers, and Don Buck all had part in the *MET* training.

This I-OCTA member had to return to Idaho on that Friday in order to prepare for and be available for the South Alternate field trip with OCHS. Other Chapters will be trained in the next two years.

I-OCTA BOARD MEETING MINUTES

For the purpose of better informing all I-OCTA members, *abbreviated minutes* of business meetings will be published in *Trail Dust* as soon as possible. Here are minutes from **Sept.17 Board Meeting, Fairfield, ID.**

----- **BOARD MEETING MINUTES** -----

“President Doug Jenson (Idaho Falls) called the meeting to order at 9:55 with ten board members present. Afton Patrick (Twin Falls) read the minutes of the March 19, 2005 board meeting. [Minutes were approved] Committee reports were then presented.

Treasurer, Bill Wilson [gave] three reports dating from April’s Spring Membership meeting to the September 17, 2005 date. The [latest] report was [approved]. Jim McGill (Nampa) does not get paid for all the expenses for printing the *Trail Dust*. I-OCTA only pays for the color ink and stamps. Jim donates the paper, printer and black ink. It was the opinion of the board that those costs should be noted as volunteer time/money to National... Bill Wilson --motion that [extra] expenses for publishing *Trail Dust* be documented [only] the *wishes of the publisher*. Peg Cristobal second—carried.

Preservation officer, Jim McGill reported that wind power generators are affecting view sheds. Since they are on private property, there is little that can be done. The Goodale North information is in the hands of the ID Dept. of Transportation. At Rosevear Gulch near Glenns Ferry, the ruts are being crossed by motorcross paths. Jeff Ross of the BLM has been [involved]. There is hope that the area can be closed to off road vehicles.

Jerry Eichhorst, Web Master, feels that an operations and maintenance report should be written for future directors and operators. Bill Wilson gave the librarian report. Virtual library is being recommended from National OCTA, but is still in the planning stages. Historians, Jane Wyllie (Boise) and Peg Cristobal reported that the CD of Idaho’s history is complete and copyrighted. Copies were given to the board members. Historians need to present a bill to I-OCTA for expenses.

Old Business:

1. New I-OCTA/OCTA brochures were given out to the board. The new brochure reflects the increase in dues and changes in the way membership fees will be collected. Members must join National as well as a local chapter. Idaho’s Bill Wilson was appointed as [I-OCTA] Membership Chair.
2. Next year’s convention will be held in St. Joe. The possibility of Idaho hosting the 2010 convention was discussed. Jim McGill will have a report for the Spring Member meeting with facts and figures [concerning hosting in Boise Valley].
3. Gil Wyllie and Wally Meyer (Eagle) updated the by-laws. By-laws were reviewed, discussed, and amended by section and number. Peg Cristobal made the motion to accept the bylaws as amended. Bill Wilson second...the motion passed. Jim McGill asked for a clarification of the editor’s role. {An amendment to the job description of *Trail Dust* editor [concerning printing of minutes] was later passed by board members by e-mail notification.} Peg Cristobal [will] get a copy of the documentation showing the “Idaho” [Chapter] title rather than “Idaho/Montana”. Afton Patrick will make & send copies of the revised by-laws to National and the State Board.
4. Jim McGill has diary copies & BLM maps of southwest Idaho [trails]. These will be useful in meeting MET standards.
5. Copies for the wording of the Oregon Trail sign at Montpelier were handed out to the board. Members felt it was too wordy and off the subject in places. Gil Wyllie made the

motion to table any action until further information could be obtained. Peg Cristobal second....motion carried.

New Business:

1. A nominating committee was appointed by President Doug Jenson. They are Lyle Lambert (Pocatello), Don McCarter (Boise) and Kay Coffman (Boise). Positions for board members and a secretary are open. *Trail Dust* will advertise the positions.
2. A Dell laptop computer was purchased this Summer by Bill Wilson for use with the MET program. The board approved the purchase by e-mail this Summer. Peg made the motion that the purchase be officially entered in the minutes. Gil Wyllie second---motion carried.
3. A field trip concern about low membership participation was voiced. Discussions [whether] too many and fuel prices [occurred]. No real solution was decided. Jim McGill said he [may] write a [trail marking] grant to help [reimburse] for fuel, which may help. There is still no MOU from the BLM with an agreement of understanding for I-OCTA.
4. The purchase of the City of Rocks [property] by OCTA was discussed. Bill Wilson asked if I-OCTA should donate \$1000 to National? Discussion followed. Gil Wyllie made the motion to discuss this issue at the Fall General Membership meeting. Wally Meyer amended the motion to also appear in *Trail Dust*. Lyle Lambert second---motion carried.
5. Travis Boley, Association Manager of National, asked if Idaho would be interested in supporting an Elderhostel group if one should be scheduled to come through Idaho. We felt we could provide tour guides and ideas given enough advanced notice of dates and places.
6. Nation OCTA requests a property inventory of the Chapter. This would include computers and pounders. Bill Wilson will compile a list.
7. Wally Meyer voiced concern about planned mega-power plants planned in Canada that would have power lines crossing the trail from Dubois to Jackpot. This is an area that will need to be watched.
8. Lyle Lambert said the Sho-Ban Indians have expressed an interest in marking the trail in the Fort Hall Reservation. He will keep us updated so that we can plan a marking field trip. Peg Cristobal made the motion to adjourn. Gil Wyllie second. The meeting adjourned by President Doug Jenson , 12:35P.M.

Submitted By: Afton Patrick, Secretary

FIRST TIME IDAHO TRAIL GIS WORK

On October 21, 2005, the day before the Fall I-OCTA Membership meeting, a group of member volunteers and an employee for the Canyon County, ID, Parks Dept. cooperated on a trail trip, for the first time, using the National Parks Service GIS units. The training on these *Tremble* units, with their newly designed software programs for collecting detailed trail related data, was conducted in May 2005. This training was described in a story in the June 2005, *Trail Dust*, page 2.

This Geographic Information System is more complicated than simple GPS work, designed to enter multiple kinds of information into the NPS data base records—trail GPS plotting in continuous lines, historic sites along the trails, marker kinds and positions, grave locations,

rut conditions, emigrant inscriptions, historic water crossings, wheel worn rocks and ridges, artifacts, etc.

Earlier, on October 12, our always dependable Bill Wilson and this Preservation Officer hiked the 3 mile segment of the Oregon Trail north of Mountain Home, and did the prep work for the actual GISing. Trails are first mapped and marked to *MET Manual* standards, markers placed, class of trail identified, and Quad maps completed for the trail segment—historic identification documentation, notes of trail diary descriptions, sites located, trail class changes noted, etc. Each feature requires paperwork documentation, which will be entered into the GIS units on the trails, with locations. Features are recognized and points and sites are flagged on the preparation trips.

Bill Wilson Photo



6 IN. METAL “T” & BENT CHAIN LINK—CHAIN HOOK

During the preparation trip we discovered at least three new trail times artifacts that will be part of the information collected. Included here is a photo of a hand-made wagon part, a kind of chain connector.

On that morning of October 21, three I-OCTA members and two visitors met in Mountain Home, ID, and then traveled almost 12 miles north to the Oregon Trail ruts south of the old Canyon Creek Station. Three miles of unique ruts, pristine and with no roads even near the trail, had been chosen as the first GIS area. Doug Jenson, Patti McGill and this Editor took husband and wife team of Sharon Plager and Neil Maimer, Tremble GIS unit specialists (as well as other archeological and public lands related training and experience) for their first involvement in OCTA’s volunteer work.

We owe gratitude and praise to these visitors for their time and expense involvement. (Patti and I owe appreciation for their driving us around a connecting loop, over some rough roads with *their little car*, back to our pickup truck, saving us from at least a return 3 mile hike!) **Member’s notes of appreciation** could be sent by email to: Sharon Plager thepark@conyoncounty.org

The hike, which Doug said his GPS indicated was actually about 4½ miles—sometimes needing to back-track and walk “braids” or variant swales running parallel—filled most of the day. Features of the trail, rut conditions, markers, artifacts, braids, etc., ended up

filling a list of 73 features, with needed support data. A full report will be finished later and will be available to those interested.

McGill



“NOONING” ON THE TRAIL—PATTI, DOUG, AND NEIL & SHARON, AT RIGHT—AT A WHEEL-GROVED ROCK SITE

One Carsonite marker was added by Neil to replace a broken marker, and several photo-points were taken to document the trail and allow future monitoring to watch for significant trail changes by nature or human means.

FALL I-OCTA MEMBERSHIP MEETING

The day following the GIS work 14 members and guests met at the Mountain Home facilities of the Elmore County Historical Society for the fall business meeting. Members were thankful for the use of this building, for the early opening by Nancy Campbell, ECHS, and for her attending to the group’s benefit—the *donuts and coffee that she graciously provided!* Thanks Nancy.

Officers’ reports were given, and the new By-Laws were presented to the membership. Items of old business were soon finished or advanced, primarily the discussion of the content of a trail sign that will be erected in Montpelier, ID, to replace an Ezra Meeker original marker that had been moved. Information on this ongoing item will be updated periodically. Minutes of this meeting with details of all the business will be published in the next issue of *Trail Dust*.

Election of officers was the main action attended to. New officers are Secretary, Kay Coffman, Boise, and Board Member, Lynn Porter, Idaho Falls. All other officers were reelected. The list is on the next page. Kay replaced Afton Patrick as Secretary, long time member, past President, and having at times filled about every position! Thanks, Afton, for all your work for I-OCTA. And *thanks to you and Lyle* for lunch for the attendees!

The tentative date of **Saturday, April 29, 2006**, was set for the spring member meeting, to allow for the planned attendance by Travis Boley, national OCTA Association Manager. The dates were reported for the Ezra Meeker wagon visits to Idaho in summer 2006. The accompanying group will visit **Boise on July 27. Montpelier, August 16**, will see them on their return to Washington State from the OCTA Convention in St. Joseph, MO.

I-OCTA OFFICERS AND STAFF

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Jerry Eichhorst - Webmaster IdahoOCTA.org
Peg Cristobal & Jane Wyllie - - Historians (below)
William Wilson - -Membership Chair (above)
Wendy Miller- Library Chair
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Board of Directors

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LAST GROUP MARKING FOR 2005

Not wasting any opportunity to see some trail and to replace some markers, ten attendees at the fall meeting drove to the Oregon Trail, 10 miles west of Mountain Home, after lunch. One segment of trail along Hot

Springs Creek, about 3 miles in length, needed to be checked for markers after many years since first marked by Wally Meyer. Wally led this field trip group who walked some of the ruts and placed nine carsonite markers between Hot Creek Road and Bennett Road.

Most Rut-nuts will now need to wait for Spring to go along again! Weather may still permit some small group marking, which does not require distance travel and can be *planned with the BLM on short notice* in the next few weeks. If so notification will be sent by email. Let this Preservation Officer know if you are interested.

Stricker Pioneer Cemetery Work Finished

Eagle Scout, Ben Hobbs, son of the late Bill Hobbs and I-OCTA members, Dave and Kellee Traughber, recently earned a scout award for his project to clean and make repairs at the Stricker Station Cemetery. The graves of several pioneers are located along the Oregon Trail, SE of Twin Falls. ID. The cemetery had been needing attention for some time. Ben planned and led a crew of helpers in his effort to improve the conditions of the area. His work is appreciated by all trail enthusiasts in Idaho.

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