



TRAIL DUST



Idaho Chapter
Oregon-California Trails Association

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TRAIL MARKING ACTIVITIES NEED MORE PLANNING/PARTICIPATION

To some people who have been involved in trail marking activities with I-OCTA for many years this public service may sometimes seem to be futile and unappreciated. Wally Meyer has understood what it is like to go back out to the old trails, where he alone for the BLM once installed thousands of carsonite markers, and find markers shot to pieces and broken by vandals who destructively delight in activities that sometimes mutilate more than the markers on Idaho's public lands. However, marking is one of the first stands in historic trail preservation.

To some people trail marking may not seem to be a relevant or important enough issue for the lead or front page story, even in this humble Paper. This year, though, OCTA has begun to re-promote better funding for trail preservation, and leaders have called for more Chapter support and activities in getting back to one of the most important functions, motivations, and reasons for the existence of OCTA!

activities need to be included in the year's schedule of events for all Chapters.

MCGILL PHOTO

In the light of all the information that has been disseminated concerning the decline in preservation activities, the regular destruction of trail segments, even on supposed protected public land, and on the plans for more future efforts to promote and plan preservation-related training and promotions probably every Chapter news letter should feature regular preservation articles.

Some discussion and published information by OCTA's leaders have offered the positive news that Chapters do spend a lot of time in doing the "enjoyment" phases of OCTA activities. But without preservation the trails will not remain in tact to enjoy. One alternative that can help Chapters to accomplish both preservation and enjoyment is to plan combined marking and field trip activities, and to get more people to share in the enjoyable experiences of placing some of those carsonite markers.

Yes, this is being done at times, but for some reason it appears that remarking of trails where markers have greatly deteriorated or been broken—and decals have faded—is falling very much behind the enjoyment phase of Chapter involvement! Not every field trip should be planned to include marking, but regular marking



NORTH ALTERNATE MARKER NEAR EMIGRANT CROSSING RESERVOIR WITH HUNDREDS OF BUCKSHOP THROUGH IT Above is one of the damaged markers on Idaho's North Alternate Trail, but this is one of the most minor of ruined markers, and was left in place with a new decal. It was agreed that being so close to the Reservoir where all kinds of fishermen and hunters visit, that a new marker

would only invite some other cad to shoot holes in it. Sometimes large caliber rifles are used to nearly cut the markers in half. (Everyone reading this can imagine what a *great sportsman and accurate-shot gunman* it takes to blast a standing-still trail marker—Sarcasm!)

If a person is looking for great reward/public recognition for the work involved in trail marking, then he should resort to some other outdoor sport that the public has gone bonkers over, and have made overpaid heroes and sports gods out of players. If one is looking for some healthy outdoor activity with self-controlled and good exercise and loaded with intrinsic satisfaction, heart-full sharing of historic areas, and incomparable cerebral pleasure trail marking is great. One can get the feeling that things being seen and experienced are so close to pioneers passing and the traveling hardships endured.

On the west side of the Canyon Hills part of Caldwell, ID, there is a passage down from the plateau upon which a deep swale through the Canyon Hills Cemetery proves the passage of the Oregon Trail. Under the thick wild berry vines that cover that down-sloping passage of the Trail, over large basalt stones, wagon wear and scratches are evident from the emigrant trains that had to descend to the Boise River. This writer crawled under the vines to see the wagon wheel wear on the rocks. In that Canyon Hills area is about the only undisturbed or unplowed-under remnants of the Trail in Canyon County.

This writer believes that on the east side of the Canyon Hills plateau there is still part of a trail that ascended up to the land where the Cemetery now sits. It is on a direct line with and only a couple of hundred yards from the east-west swale through the Cemetery, which the old timers verified as part of the Oregon Trail route. It is also more than a mile north of the other known passage of the Trail up onto the plateau. The line of that northern route up is almost straight from the east, across the Cemetery swale, and down the known passage on the west.

Some sections of ruts in various locations still need discovery, proving, and *marking for the first time!* There are still some great adventures to be experienced in trail identification and marking in Idaho, mostly short sections or variants of the trails and alternates. One such short section was discovered on the North Alternate near the top of the long grade NW of King Hill, ID, and was reported in the June 2004 *Trail Dust!*

For 2004, I-OCTA set marking days during each Summer month, apart from other scheduled field trips. These

were more like goal dates for reminding each of three marking groups across the State about trail marking that was and is needed to be done, and some dates were changed to meet the needs of workers in the various locations. Every group did not get out during each month and some dates were skipped, but over-all the plan has been a success. More group-marking days were fulfilled than has previously been done for several years.

It is the hoped that this kind of scheduling will in the future continue to bring growth in the trail marking activities that need to be done. A possible new position in I-OCTA for this writer, Preservation Officer, and the work for national OCTA in trail mapping and marking will make Patti and I more available for travel to other areas of the State. We want to continue to assist the marking groups all across Idaho as possible.

I-OCTA NO. ALTERNATE FIELD TRIP

The next activity for members and guests of I-OCTA is the trail hike from Hot Creek Road back NW toward Teapot Dome on **Saturday September 25, 2004**. We will meet at **9:00 a.m. in the rear parking lot of AJ's Restaurant, 1130 Hwy. 20, at Mountain Home**. This is about ¼ mile east of the freeway exit toward Fairfield.

For people who cannot hike the approximate 2 miles of the North Alternate Trail, vehicles will be delivering hikers to the south end of the area and picking them up at the north end. Those who can only ride are welcome to see the area from vehicles, riding along with others or driving their own high clearance vehicles. We will also drive to see some other historic site along the trails.

The weather appears to be developing toward a good day with moderate temperatures and good hiking conditions. Bring liquids and lunches along with cameras!!

ELECTION AND BUSINESS MEETING

This call is again issued to remind I-OCTA members of the annual Fall Meeting at Mountain Home, ID. On **Saturday, October 9, 2004, we will meet at 10:00 a.m., again at AJ's Restaurant, 1130 Hwy. 20, Mt. Home!** Election of officers and some board members for the year will be finished, along with other necessary business. We are asking for all newer members possible to attend, some who are potentially active people that will soon come to enjoy the activities of I-OCTA.

There will be an afternoon field trip to see some of the west end Jeffrey-Goodale Cutoff near Danskin Peak, north of Mountain Home. High clearance vehicles will be needed, but visitors can ride along with members that have pickups and more appropriate vehicles.

AJ's is prepared to offer lunches with our meeting. Some free lunches will be given to new members and visitors.

Ward Massacre Memorial Observance

On August 21st, about 100 people met at the Ward Park near Middleton, ID, and near the Ward Massacre site. The highlight of the 150th year Memorial was a presentation by Don Shannon from the information in his new book, *Boise Massacre on the Oregon Trail!*

Representatives from county and state agencies, historical societies, and many private citizens attended and heard much about the tragedy from Mr. Shannon.

Wendy Miller, Canyon County Historical Society and Museum Director and I-OCTA member, also offered a related presentation on women and children on the Oregon Trail, wearing an era costume dress. She also displayed memorabilia, pictures, and other reminders of the massacre victims and survivors from the Historical Society's archives CCHS ARCHIVES



WILLIAM AND NEWTON WARD, TEENAGE SURVIVORS
Trudy Johnson led a few family-member descendents of the survivors of the massacre. These all attended from out-side of the State of Idaho.

Diane Aldrich, I-OCTA member, and husband set up and shared their trail-era emigrant wagon and many traveling artifacts for participants to see and photograph.

NORTH ALTERNATE MARKING

On both August 27 and September 17, remarking of the North Alternate (N.A.) continued from the area of the Emigrant Crossing and Blair Trail Reservoirs toward the NW. This project, begun in May 2004, has offered some of the most difficult areas to access, some of the most faded and eroded-away ruts, and also some of the best trail related and primitive scenery. MCGILL PHOTO



EXTREME WAGON WHEEL WORN BASALT--APPROACH OF N.A. TO SOUTH CANYON RIM AT ALKALI CR. CROSSING--
WALLY WITH HIS LUNCH AT A FAVORITE VIEW AREA!!
(If the viewer thinks Wally is being favored with many pictures in *Trail Dust* it may be because he is always present, sometimes the only subject available, always a dependable helper, and the *biggest ham* of all! After so many years, he almost owns many miles of ruts, and he ever enjoys showing them off to first-time visitors!)

Only a few markers remain to be placed in random and short areas of that part of the trail, and then a check of a few miles of remaining ruts near Bliss, Idaho. Much of the route from the Trail's connection with the Northside Trail and Snake River ferry crossing, near Thousand Springs south of Hagerman, ID, on north to the Bliss area has long ago yielded all evidence of the Trail to the farmers' soil tilling equipment and private property!

Most sections east and SE of King Hill are also gone. There are some probable ruts for 2-3 miles on BLM land west of Pioneer Reservoir, western Gooding County, and some which cross under the Interstate NW of Bliss. Some exploration will be necessary to find these sections of the N.A. Whether they have ever before all been marked is still an unanswered question.

Next season it is hoped that many days can be spent checking and marking remaining sections of trails and alternates along both sides of the Snake River across central Idaho, and some of the central part of the Jeffrey-Goodale. This will busy the Twin Falls/Jerome group. There is a lot of enjoyable work to be done along so many of the miles of remaining trail ruts across Idaho.

OCTOBER HUDSPETH MARKING

The last major planned I-OCTA activity for the year is the remarking of all of the Hudspeth Cutoff. This will be an overnigher, and more information will be forthcoming in the next *Trail Dust*. This **note is to serve as a reminder** so that all possible helpers can begin to plan for October 23-24. This will be a four wheel drive, high clearance activity for some areas of the Cutoff. But those

sections over the hills that would be difficult to access with two-wheel drive vehicles can be passed around on other routes. Camping gear will be needed, or a long drive to Malad City on the 23rd for a motel room.

Supplies have been ordered so that markers and decals will be plentiful for that route. Dick Hill, BLM, Idaho Falls, will be going along on this outing. Dick will supply some of the carsonite posts.

Suggestions from Wally

Jim,

Had a good time marking the trail with you and Patty yesterday. All that "rock walking" [is] hard on us older ----, (Bill [Wilson] and I).

I Have some ideas on trail mapping. As you know, on the ground this will be extremely time consuming. Not only do the known remnants have to be mapped, but one has to check for some distance on each side to look for *previously unknown parallel ruts or variants*.

Another way, one that I have already mentioned to you, would be the use of helicopters. A camera could be mounted on the belly of the ship to film the routes. The film footage could then be used to map the trail, and, of course, OCTA would then have a good visible record of existing trail conditions.

This would cost some money, maybe around \$500 per 80-100 miles, but it sure would be a lot quicker and maybe, in the long run, cheaper than doing it by motor vehicle and hiking.

If OCTA wants to do it just by ground checking, maybe the chapters with long trail segments in their states would want to purchase 4WD ATVs to make the job easier.

Wally

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Possibly, mapping in open country can be done using high resolution aerial photos, although this may require some modification of Trail Classification Categories. You may want to check with knowledgeable folks at Boise State, USGS, etc. to see if this is possible.