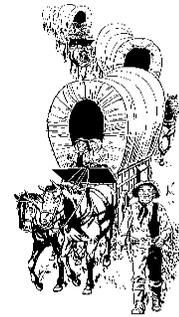


Trail Dust



Newsletter of the Oregon-California Trails Association, Idaho Chapter
Vol. XXIII Issue 3 *Suzi Pengilly, Editor* September 2011

Idaho OCTA Activities 2011

September 17-18-- Hudspeth Cutoff Tour --Cancelled

This tour has been cancelled. Not enough people signed up by September 1 to attend.

September 17-- Utah Chapter Salt Lake Cutoff Tour

The Utah chapter is having a tour of the Salt Lake Cutoff on Saturday, September 17. Interested people should meet at Snowville, UT, off I-84 at 8:30 am. 4WD vehicles req'd.

September 26—Trail Marking in Meridian (11 am) with Wally Meyer (see page 6)

October 15--Noon IOCTA Chapter Fall Meeting, Idaho History Center, Boise

Fall Chapter Meeting October 15 at High Noon

The IOCTA chapter fall meeting and elections will be held on Saturday, October 15, starting at noon. The meeting location will be the Idaho History Center (IHC), 2205 Old Penitentiary Road, Boise. The IHC is located at the end of Warm Springs Avenue. A short business meeting will be held including elections for the chapter with a tour of the Idaho State Archives after the meeting. Don't miss the meeting—you might be elected president!



Contents	
Fall Chapter Meeting	1
Cadaver Dogs	2
Message from the President	3
Fires on the Trail-Part 2	4
News from Ebey's Landing	5
Trail Marking with Wally	6
Diaries Across Idaho	7

Cadaver Dogs on the Trail

By Jerry Eichhorst

When Glens Ferry mayor JoAnne Lanham mentioned a lost grave to me at the spring meeting back in May, I was interested in learning more. A visit to the area after the June North Alternate Oregon Trail (NAOT) hikes yielded no results. Through JoAnne's persistence, however, we were able to acquire two pictures of the site taken 25 years ago. Using those pictures, Bill Wilson found the grave on Saturday, August 20. New IOCTA member Paula McCollum's cadaver dog, Ziva, confirmed the grave.



1986 photo of Sylvester Strout grave.



2011 photo of Sylvester Strout grave.

The grave is of Sylvester Strout who died in 1877. He reportedly caught pneumonia while driving cattle across the Snake River and died soon after. He is buried in

a pasture on the north side of the river marked with a couple of wagon wheel rims. There is interest in developing a marker or interpretive sign about the site.



Kessa indicates a grave.

This was the third outing using cadaver dogs this summer. The first was the July chapter outing where IOCTA members and BLM personnel explored the Soles Rest Creek area on Ditto Creek Ranch searching for a possible massacre site, the location drawn from diary quotes.

Some of the group then drove in 4WD-low to the top of the ridge separating Ditto Creek and Soles Rest Creek. It was a beautiful location with a hundred-mile view stretching from the Owyhee Mountains to the Trinitys. We could also follow Goodale's Cutoff as it left Ditto Creek and crossed the ridge over to Soles Rest Creek and the area we had explored earlier in the day.



Steve Damele, Jon Standley, Liz Heil, Bill Wilson

After returning home, I had just settled into my chair to relax when owner Ann Christensen called to tell me that Rocco had been bitten by a rattlesnake during the outing. Fortunately, the snake had only nicked his elbow, and Rocco would be fine with medication. It came as quite a shock after working with him all day and watching this amazing animal search the area and indicate the presence of graves.

The following weekend, Rocco and Kessa were joined by Ziva, as we searched the NAOT massacre site found last year. All of the dogs confirmed the presence of many graves in the area. We then verified the mass grave site and another grave beside it.



Kessa and Rocco indicate a grave.

It is fascinating to watch the dogs work. Each is slightly different, yet all are efficient and dedicated workers who clearly love their assignment. I thank their owners, Ann Christensen and Paula McCollum, for bringing them out and look forward to future outings. My thanks also go to Steve Damele for hosting us again on his ranch. Since the July outing, Bill Wilson has searched old land records and survey maps which indicate the massacre site may actually be on Ditto Creek. Guess we need another outing. Get the dogs packed and ready to go!

Message From The President

By Jerry Eichhorst

It's hard to believe that summer is almost over already. Seems like it went by so fast. We had a number of really good outings this year. I encourage you to join us on future outings and share the experience of making new friends and learning about the trails and history of the area.

Good news for me is that the Main Oregon Trail Back Country Byway is almost finished! The bad news is, however, that people are already vandalizing the signs by using them for target practice. The byway booklet was reprinted in August with 22,500 copies being printed. An additional mapboard sign was requested to be installed at Bonneville Point. Once this sign is installed, the byway is complete. It has been a very long process, but it was worth it. The gratitude of the various people in Glens Ferry and Mountain Home, the wonderful people that I met and worked with during this project, and the satisfaction of sharing the Oregon Trail with so many other people makes it all worth while. Now if we can just develop bullet-proof kevlar signs...

The OCTA convention was enjoyable as the speakers were excellent and it is always nice to see far-away friends again. Once again my tour bus had mechanical difficulties—I am beginning to think I may be jinxed. At least this year we were stranded in a town instead of the middle of the desert like last year.

We met with representatives of the Fort Hall Indians and the Lander Road Foundation during the convention to discuss the idea of developing an

interpretive display near the museum. This display would focus on the interaction of the Indians with the emigrants on the Oregon Trail and Lander Road in the area. I think this is a great idea and look forward to being part of the project. A new hotel is being built at Fort Hall so a meeting and outing may be arranged there in the future.

I hope to see you at the fall meeting. Please consider helping the chapter by volunteering for an officer or director position. Many of the people currently in these positions have been serving for many years and are looking for someone to take over for them. The work is not difficult or time-consuming, and you'll have the opportunity to help formulate the direction and activities of the chapter. Please contact Jim Payne or me if you are interested in helping.

Fire on the Trails, Part 2

By Jerry Eichhorst

In the October/November 2010 edition of *Trail Dust*, I wrote about fires in southern Idaho burning over large segments of the Oregon Trail. One of those fires burned south of the North Alternate Oregon Trail (NAOT)/Kelton Road route going up King Hill. Unfortunately, a mid-August fire this summer burned everything to the north of the fire from last year.



King Hill burn, August 2011. North Alternate Oregon Trail and Kelton Road approximately left of center. Everything in the picture burned either this year or last.



NAOT/Kelton Road on King Hill after 2010 fire.



Same view on King Hill in 2011.



Ziva marks a grave at the base of King Hill

An extremely large fire, it burned for many miles north and east of King Hill, surrounding ranches and devastating everything in its path.

Although the loss to the scenery is hard to take, the loss for wintering herds of deer will be tremendous. This area was established sage brush steppe and a prime wintering area for animals.



Burned trail marker with swale behind.

The encouraging aspect is that fire is a natural event, and the landscape will recover—the area burned last year is covered in grasses this year. It will take many years, however, to establish the “endless sage plains” so often noted by pioneers 160 years ago.



Welcome to IOCTA's newest members.

Paula McCullum-Cudd, Boise

Byron Knutsen, Preston

Denise Alexander Bittner, Eagle

News from Ebey’s Landing, Whidbey Island, Washington

By Suzi Pengilly

The Ebey family’s story of emigration should be familiar to Oregon Trail researchers. Isaac Ebey travelled west on the Oregon Trail in 1848 and soon after settled on Whidbey Island in northern Puget Sound (Washington). Like many emigrant families, once settled, Isaac Ebey wrote letters to family who had remained in Missouri, beckoning them to move west to Whidbey Island “almost a paradise of nature.”

His enthusiastic promotion of the Pacific Northwest paid off. Isaac’s mother and father, Sarah and Jacob, led the Ebey clan west in 1854, on the Oregon Trail. The party included Isaac’s brother Winfield, three other siblings, and various family members. Winfield’s diary was published by OCTA in 1997.

Three years later, Isaac Ebey was killed and beheaded by Tlingit Indians from the north. Undeterred, the Ebey family stayed on the Island where their mark on the landscape is still evident.

At Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve (Reserve), a unit of the National Park Service (NPS), one can visit the ca. 1855 Jacob Ebey Home, now refurbished into the Reserve visitor’s center.



Jacob Ebey House, Whidbey Island, WA.

The 1857 (completed in 1862) Ferry House, or Ebey's Inn, is also still standing. The Ferry House was the home of Isaac Ebey's family after his death. Located just upslope from the pier, known as Ebey's Landing, it also served as a tavern and hotel for Puget Sound travelers.



Setting of Ferry House on Whidbey Island WA. View from the Jacob Ebey House.

The Ferry House was the focus of a preservation field school during the summer of 2011. Working from detailed documentation completed in the 1930s, the NPS reconstructed the front porch of the house and repaired the chimneys.



East elevation of the Ferry House.

Reconstruction is selectively used in historic preservation. It often requires so much conjecture, or guessing, that the new construction may not accurately reflect the original structure. In this case, NPS believed it possessed precise enough documentation to complete an accurate reconstruction.



2011 Ferry House preservation project.

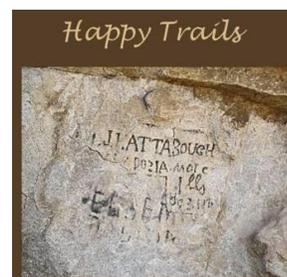


Ferry House with completed porch.

The project was funded by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the American Express Company. Planning and construction were completed with the assistance of many partners.

Join Wally for Trail Marking in Meridian, Sept. 26, 11:00am

Long-time IOCTA member Wally Meyer invites all interested to join him in a trail-marking day at Larry Woodard's house in Meridian. Call Wally at 939-0504 for details.



Diaries Across Idaho

By Jerry Eichhorst

King Hill

After leaving Clover Creek, the North Alternate Oregon Trail emigrants traveled across a bluff half a mile from a northern bend of the Snake River before dropping down into the valley along King Hill Creek. Most camped for the night at the creek before winding their way up the valley and turning west up a draw to start climbing King Hill. With an elevation gain of nearly 1000 feet and a distance of about 2 miles, the hill was not the worst faced by the travelers on their trek across the plains. But it was significant enough to be mentioned in their diaries. Recent fires on King Hill have exposed the ruts created nearly 160 years ago.

Wednesday, Sept. 8. . . .After noon we started again and passed up a very rocky hill 3 1/2 miles and most of the way was steep. . .

Parthenia Blank, 1852

July 28, ThursdayAfterward we start on and soon leave the valley. We wound among the hills until we came to the foot of a range of mountains which crossed our way [King Hill]. This we had to climb; some places for 2 or 300 yards were very steep, then we would wind up the defiles where the ascent was more gradual. One defile was very sidling and for safety the wagons required holding by hand to keep their balance and the road so narrow that a few inches deviation from the accustomed track would have precipitated then down a steep precipice 300 feet into the bottom of the defile. We tried to let patience have its perfect work, labored on and at length gained the summit. The day had been warm and the rays of the sun oppressive until now, when a cool breeze and a cooler atmosphere made us ample compensation and seemed to give us new life. It was getting late in the P. M. and we expected to have had this mountain to descend before we could encamp, for want of grass and

water. After we arrived at its summit the [road] continued along a tolerably level plain . . .

Henry Allyn, 1853

Saturday August 13th. We had a long hill [King Hill] to climb this morning and a very rocky one, it is almost useless to attempt to describe the road on this part of the trip for several days we have had little else but rocks to travel over and it looks no better ahead, mountains and hills rise up before us and when we get on the top of one we see another ahead still higher. . . .

Mrs. E. J. Goltra, 1853



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