

Trail Dust

Newsletter of the Oregon-California Trails Association, Idaho Chapter
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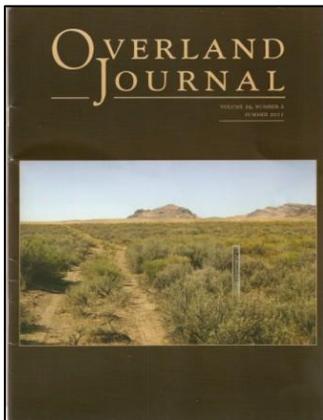
Next Trail Dust issue will be released Dec. 15. Please send any articles to Suzi Pengilly by Dec. 1.

Idaho OCTA Activities Fall 2012

- September 29** Hudspeth Cutoff Tour with Utah Gateway Chapter, 9:00am
See details and maps on IOCTA's website
- October 6** Fall Meeting at Fort Hall - Meeting will start at 10:00 at the new Fort Hall Hotel and Event Center
- October 7** Chesterfield to Fort Hall Tour - 9:00 am at the Hotel

OCTA's 2012 Mattes Award

Our own Jerry Eichhorst received the OCTA 2012 Mattes Award at this year's OCTA Annual Convention in Lawrence, Kansas. He was recognized for his excellent article in the Summer 2011 *Overland Journal Pieces to the Puzzle: Rediscovering Idaho's North Alternate Oregon Trail*. The OCTA Policy Manual outlines the conditions of the award: "The Merrill Mattes Award for Excellence in writing shall be awarded each year for the *Overland Journal* article best representing the goals, objectives, and interest of OCTA and its members. Articles may be judged on the basis of excellence in writing and research, timeliness, readability, and topic." Jerry was not able to attend the convention to accept the award in person but received a beautiful plaque in the mail. Well done, Jerry!



Contents	
IOCTA Activities	1
OCTA 2012 Mattes Award	
Soda Springs Tour	2
Message from the President	3
Research at City of Rocks	
City of Rocks Tour	
Song on Crossing the Desert	6
Diaries Across Idaho	7

Soda Springs Oregon Trail Tour

By Jerry Eichhorst

A beautiful day dawned in the Bear River Valley on Saturday, June 16. Clear blue skies overlooked mountain peaks with patches of snow hovering over the lush green valley. Temperatures in the low 80s made for a great day to explore the Oregon Trail.

About 35 people met in Soda Springs and followed local expert Tony Varilone on an all-day tour of Oregon Trail sites in the Soda Springs area. Beginning east of town, the group hiked two miles down the trail from Georgetown Summit. For most of the group, this was their first experience hiking in the ruts of the pioneers. Of course, the comparison was made how much further the pioneers had to walk. We then stopped at an overlook of Bear River Valley before moving on to Sulfur Springs. This site was off the trail but was occasionally noted by emigrants when they smelled the rotten egg aroma of the sulfur. We walked to the spring and saw gas bubbles gurgling from the water in small pockets throughout the area.



Tour led by local historian Tony Varilone

Lunch was held at Octagon Park in Soda Springs. Many people sampled the carbonated water that rushes from a small spring at the park. Next stop was the captive geyser in downtown Soda Springs. Created when a well was dug many years ago, a valve is opened hourly to create a geyser spraying nearly 100 feet in the air.



Tour group at Sulfur Springs

Tony presented stories of the early pioneers of the area from another overlook of the Bear River Valley before moving on to a new interpretive center located near Sheep Rock. Here the Bear River changes direction from flowing north to south as it heads for Salt Lake. A number of interpretive signs at this site provide a great deal of information. Then we headed across Highway 30 to see the area where the Hudspeth Cutoff branched

west from the Oregon-California Trail.



Searching a possible emigrant grave yard with cadaver dogs was the final activity of the day.

Dogs Kessa and Rocko confirmed the likely presence of one or two graves at the site, far fewer than the traditional story of 16 graves at the site.

Thanks to Tony for leading a great tour. His impressive knowledge of the history and sites of the area made for a great outing. I also want to thank all of the visitors who came out for the tour. I hope that you will join us again.

Message from the IOCTA President

By Jerry Eichhorst

It's hard to imagine that the summer is nearly over already. We've had some excellent outings this year. Tony Varilone led a great outing on the Oregon Trail at Soda Springs in June. Wallace Keck followed up with another great outing on the California Trail at City of Rocks in July. Wally Meyer led a tour of the South Alternate Oregon Trail from Glenns Ferry to C. J. Strike Reservoir on September 8. I enjoyed all of the outings and saw sites I had never seen before. Thank you very much Tony, Wallace, and Wally!

The Utah Crossroads chapter is planning a tour of part of Hudspeth's Cutoff on Saturday, September 29. It is open to other people interested in joining the outing.

Finally, the fall meeting will be held on Saturday, October 6, at the new Shoshone Bannock Hotel and Event Center in Fort Hall. After a short meeting and election we will have a special speaker followed by a visit to the old Fort Hall site and the

Welcome to IOCTA's newest members. Please join us in the chapter activities!

Dave and Donna Newberry, Twin Falls

Fort Hall museum. A tour of the Oregon Trail from Chesterfield over Mt. Putnam is planned for the following day, Sunday, October 7. Please contact me if you are planning to go on the Mt. Putnam tour as we must make arrangements ahead of time. There may be a small fee for the Mt. Putnam tour. I have arranged a rate of \$79 per night for rooms at the hotel. Details will be posted to the website soon.

Please check the website for details and the latest information on all upcoming activities.

I am looking forward to all of these remaining activities and hope that you will join me for them.

Current Research at City of Rocks National Reserve

By Kristen Bastis, Cultural Resource Manager, City of Rocks

Recent research on names from Camp Rock and Register Rock has added to our understanding of the emigrant experience along the California Trail. Additional information about Daniel Tickner and Henry Heck along with the stories of Ida Fullinwider and CS Peck is available on the City of Rocks website.

<http://www.nps.gov/ciro/historyculture/people.htm>

D. Tickner

Daniel Tickner was born in Graves End, Kent, England, around 1812 and immigrated to the United States in 1826. In 1840, Daniel married Mary Wood, and they made their home in Albion, IL where he worked as a blacksmith. Daniel traveled to California to retrieve his brother-in-law, John, who had gone in search of gold. Daniel and A. Freeman, a friend of Daniel's, set off on horseback and wrote their names in axle grease on Register Rock. Daniel, Freeman, and John returned to Illinois. Daniel made the trip to California three times within 10 years.

Late in their lives, Daniel and Mary resided in Hayward, California. At the age of 81, Daniel stood 5'10" tall, had gray eyes and gray hair and was still working as a blacksmith. Daniel shared his story in a newspaper interview in 1905 that honored him at 93 years old as the "oldest living Mason" in California. Daniel passed away on October 8th, 1906; just over a year after the article detailing his life was published.

H. Keck

Henry Keck, Jr. was the son of Henry and Mary (Hardin) Keck and born in Mercer County, Pennsylvania, on December 4th, 1823. The family moved to a farm in Harrisburg Township near Utica, Iowa, in 1846. On March 27, 1850, Henry and his brother Joseph, along with 22 other men, departed Iowa with the goal of reaching California. Joseph kept a detailed journal of the trip which has provided significant insight into their voyage west.

The crew reached the Raft River, near present day Malta, on June 27th after a rough day of travel. One of their wagons

had tipped over crossing a creek, resulting in not only the loss of food and other provisions, but also spilling Henry, who was still ill, into the water. Two days later, the group passed through City of Rocks, which Joseph called "Steeple Rocks" and probably refers to Pinnacle Pass. Joseph wrote that "the passage through is just wide enough to admit a wagon" and that "the road...was rough and hilly and some places very sidling." They quickly reached the foothills of the Sierra Nevada, which signaled the beginning of yet another arduous stage of the journey. Joseph awoke and discovered an armed "Indian behind some Sage [sic] brush a sneaking up towards" him. He gave a shout, sending the would-be attacker running, but the event so deeply frightened Joseph that he would later compose a song about the incident (Keck "To California" 2007; Keck "Letter Home" 2007).

Henry's obituary in the Keosaqua Republican on July 18, 1918, stated that Henry returned to California in the spring of 1852 and stayed until 1855, after which he returned to Iowa and married Mary Nixon. The couple settled into the house in which Henry and his parents had moved a year after first relocating to Iowa. Henry and Mary had five children: Ella, Anna Bell, Sallie, Elmer, and Henry Judson, and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Henry had been a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church for his entire life, and his funeral took place at the church in Utica, Iowa. Henry was buried in Dibble Cemetery in Harrisburg Township.

(See below *Song on Crossing the Desert* by J. A. Keck)

City of Rocks Tour

By Jerry Eichhorst

Eighteen people joined Wallace Keck, City of Rocks Reserve Superintendent, on a tour of the California Trail through the park on Saturday, July 21. Crystal blue skies overlooked the granite rock formations imagined to be old buildings and castles by emigrants.

After an introductory video at the park office, Wallace showed the group California Trail remnants in the canyon leading into the park. We stopped at Camp Rock and listened as Wallace discussed the history of some of the people who had written their names on the rock.



Superintendent Keck talking about emigrant inscriptions at Camp Rock

More information about some of the names was presented as we lunched in the shade of Register Rock while a thunderstorm hurled lightning bolts in the distance. I found it very interesting to hear of the research being done on the names. You can read more about a few of these names in another article in this edition of *Trail Dust* as well as on the City of Rocks website.

We ventured west after lunch to Twin Sisters, then walked to Pinnacle Pass. Wallace pointed out the recently



discovered name carved high on the south side rocks. After two stops in Emigrant Canyon, the tour came to an end.



Tour group with Twin Sisters in the background

Thank you very much, Wallace, for an excellent tour. I look forward to more activities at the park including the 25th anniversary celebration next year.

Song on Crossing the Desert by J. A. Keck (Source: "Letter Home June 4th 1851," by Joseph A. Keck, transcribed by Rich and Nancy Lowe, 2007)

John Keck wrote a song about an incident that occurred while on the Trail. In the mid-19th century, it was common for people to write new words to well known tunes. Perhaps someone who is familiar with tunes of the period could identify which tune these words were written to accompany?

Song on Crossing the Desert

By J. A. Keck

1.

Dear Brother I will now tell you
What happened unto me
As I was coming 'cross the plains
This golden land to see

2.

We crossed the desert in the night
It was a lonesome road
The road was long the sand was deep
We had a heavy load

3.

Full forty miles it was across
No water on the way
And many cattle there was left
To rotten and decay

4.

As we were coming cross the sand
The heaviest of the road
One of our steers did there give out
And so we left our load

5.

We then did turn our cattle loose
And to the water drove
We got them all but one across
We could not make him move

6.

Henry and I then started back
To take the steer some feed
We took some water in a sack
For he was much in need

7.

'Twas dark before we reached the place
Where we had left him lay
And when we came upon the spot
Behold he strayed away

8.

Henry he then traveled on
To try and find the steer
And I then laid me down to rest
In a wagon that was near

9.

I had not laid there very long
Before I looked [*sic*] around –
And there I saw before my eyes

And Indian on a mound

10.

A crawling up on hands and feet
As slyly as a cat
With bow and arrows in his hands
To kill me as a rat

11.

The moon was shining very bright
It was a pleasant eve
I gave one yell, the Indian ran
Im [*sic*] sure I did not grieve...

13

And when the Indian he had left
I traveled on the road
Towards the place where we had left
Our wagon and our load

14.

I had not traveled very far
Before I saw a tent
I asked them if they had seen
Which way my Brother went

15.

They told me they had seen him pass
Inquiring for a stray
He found a train a working him
And coming on the way

16.

I saw him coming close at hand
I told him of my fright
We got the steer but could not drive
Him all the way that night

17.

We drove him nearly into camp
When it was getting late
The steer was tired and would not go
We left him to his fate...

19.

I thought perhaps the Indians
Had drove him off to eat
Thinks I they'll have a jolly time
In eating his tough meat.

20.

In the evening when we started back
To fetch our wagon too
We put six yoke of cattle on
And bid that place adieu. FINIS

Diaries Across Idaho

By Jerry Eichhorst

City of Rocks

We continue this issue with the account of Lorenzo Sawyer. A doctor on his way to California in 1850, Sawyer writes detailed accounts of the sites he visits. Five days after his stop at Soda Springs, Sawyer has traveled over the Hudspeth Cutoff. On June 22, he enters the area now known as City of Rocks and continues over Granite Pass to Goose Creek.

June 22nd.

Two miles from camp we entered a narrow valley, hemmed in by very high, rocky and precipitous mountains. We traveled some six miles up this valley amid some most remarkable scenery. Here are Pyramidal rocks almost innumerable; some planted firmly upon the base, others balanced upon their points. They rise to great heights from the summits and sides of the mountains and from the valley below; many run up to a sharp tapering point like Gothic spires. Some hang so nicely balanced on small points, that it is truly wonderful how their positions can be maintained even against the slightest force of the wind.

I stopped to read some names under a huge overhanging cliff recently cracked off in such a manner as seemed to render it sure to fall. Although I could not suppose that this cliff which had hung suspended in that position for ages would take especial pains to fall and crush so insignificant a being as myself, yet one could not help thinking, "what if it should?" There were so many rocks both here and where we camped last night that might answer the description and name, we had no little difficulty for a time in determining which was Steeple Rock. The last two rocks, however, as we passed out of the valley, seemed pre-eminently entitled to the appellation. They rise in a cone-like form from the bottom of the valley to a height of from 400 to 600 feet; they are round and quite regular in form tapering gradually to a point. Opposite these two rocks the Salt Lake road comes in through another valley

some eight miles from where we first saw it. We now descend gradually into another broad basin-like valley, crossing some small streams which I think cannot be permanent. From this valley we again ascended gradually for several miles till we reached the summit of the mountains bordering Goose river [Goose Creek]. We found some very beautiful specimens of white stone resembling white marble as we entered the rocky valley above described. Some pronounced it marble, but I think it too hard a stone for marble, though it is no doubt susceptible of a remarkably fine and beautiful polish. Mica was noticed in abundance in the streams and in stones. From the summits of these mountains we had a wide view of a most wild, rugged, broken and remarkable country. The Salmon mountains, as is supposed, are in full view to the right. They are beyond Lewis' Fork [Snake River] and must be from 150 to 200 miles distant; they look like a solid bank of snow. We now descended a long and tedious mountain to Goose river. The descent is generally gradual, but in many places steep and difficult. One place we were obliged to rope down; the descent occupied two and a-half hours. We reached the river, a stream three or four rods wide, about two o'clock, and lay here the rest of the day. We find an immense amount of property strewn all along the road, such as wagons, harness, broken guns, trunks, clothing, &c., abandoned by the owners because their teams have failed. Some of the ledges along Goose river are chalk, though not quite pure. Distance 25 miles.

Lorenzo Sawyer, 1850

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