

Trail Dust

Newsletter of the Oregon-California Trails Association, Idaho Chapter
Vol. XXV Issue 2 *Suzi Pengilly, Editor* June 2013



Next Trail Dust issue will be released Sept. 15. Please send any articles to Suzi Pengilly by Sept. 1.

July 22-26	OCTA Convention - Oregon City
Aug 10	IOCTA Outing - Pierre's Hole
Sept 14	City of Rocks 25th Anniversary Celebration
Sept 21	Joint Outing - Hudspeth Cutoff part 2
Oct 5	IOCTA Fall Meeting – Elmer's Restaurant in Boise – tour of local Oregon Trail monuments in Boise area

*All IOCTA activities are free and open to everyone. Please join us!
Additional details are available on the website, www.IdahoOCTA.org.*

Spring Meeting and Outing

By Jerry Eichhorst

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) office in Burley, Idaho, hosted the annual spring meeting of the Idaho chapter. Seventeen people attended the meeting and a presentation by the BLM about the improvements planned for the Milner Recreation Area. We then caravanned to the recreation area for lunch beside the lake. Led by BLM archaeologist Dr. Suzann Henrikson, we explored Oregon Trail ruts in the area.



The group eats lunch beside Milner Reservoir

Please let us know if your email address changes.

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Spring Meeting and Outing, cont'd.



Suzann Henrikson and Mike Courtney, BLM



Oregon Trail remnants in Milner Recreation Area

Long-time IOCTA member Peg Cristobal then led us to an interpretive site below Milner Dam on the Snake River and to Caldron Linn. Having never been to the falls, I was impressed by how narrow the Snake River becomes and how close one can get to the edge of the waterfall.

It was a very interesting outing. My thanks to the BLM for hosting our meeting and leading us through the Milner Recreation Area, and to Peg for leading the group to Caldron Linn.



Peg Cristobal discussing the history of the Milner Dam and irrigation canals in the area.



Peg Cristobal



Caldron Linn and photographers in the group

Spring Byway Tour

By Jerry Eichhorst

On Saturday, April 20, 22 people joined Bill Wilson, IOCTA Treasurer, and me, for a spring tour of the Main Oregon Trail Back Country Byway. We left Mountain Home early in the afternoon to follow the Byway towards Boise. In spite of the heavy rains the day before, the roads were in great condition, thanks to the Mountain Home Highway District spring maintenance.

The group was treated to short hikes on the trail, access to the Canyon Creek Station and Ditto Creek Inscription Rock, as well as stops at Rattlesnake Creek, the Kelton Road crossing, Bowns Creek, Bonneville Point and the Ada County Oregon Trailhead interpretive site.



This well attended tour was planned in conjunction with the Boise Community Education classes held in March. It was also part of the BLM *Take It Outside* program. Plans are to make the Community Education classes and a similar tour an annual event. If you missed the tour this year, mark your calendar for the third Saturday of April next year.

Byway Signs Moved

By Jerry Eichhorst

Due to problems with the landowner, the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) recently removed the Main Oregon Trail Back Country Byway mapboard and interpretive signs and the Rattlesnake Station highway historical marker, located 8 miles north of Mountain Home in a pullout off Highway 20. With no good alternative available, the signs were placed in an ITD warehouse.

Sue Gross of the Mountain Home Economic Development Department came to the rescue. Having been very helpful in the development of the Byway, Sue quickly recognized the signs were missing. Upon hearing the story behind their removal, Sue contacted Mountain Home Mayor Tom Rist and arranged with ITD for their placement a half mile north of I-84 near the military tank on the east side of Highway 20. With new historic site signs along the highway and plenty of parking, the new setting will work well. My thanks to Sue, Mayor Rist, and Dan Jones of ITD and his crew for moving the signs.



Message From The President

By Jerry Eichhorst

We've had three good outings already this year--the byway tour, the spring meeting and outing to Milner Recreation Area and Caldron Linn, and the second part of the South Alternate tour led by Wally Meyer. The next chapter activity will be a tour of Pierre's Hole and other historical sites in the Driggs-Ashton area led by Jim Hardee on August 10.

One of the topics at the spring meeting was the inevitable need for the Idaho chapter to host another national convention. We are blessed to have some of the best preserved trail remnants anywhere and Idaho conventions are typically very well attended. The chapter leadership (officers and directors) are beginning the process of exploring convention possibilities. We can use your help, so please let me know if you would be willing to help plan the convention. Although it is a lot of work, it will be much easier with lots of people helping plan and host another great Idaho convention.

Finally, this year's convention is coming soon to Oregon City, Oregon. It should be very interesting and is close enough to drive to in one day. Additional information about the convention can be found on the OCTA website. These conventions are a great way to renew friendships, make new friends, and learn about the trail history in that area. I hope you will join us in Oregon City. IOCTA people usually get together for dinners a couple of nights so plan on joining the group for that.

Tribute to Stan Norstebon of Canyon Creek

By Jerry Eichhorst

Nestled in a surprisingly beautiful and secluded valley 10 miles north of Mountain Home, Idaho, is the Canyon Creek area on the Oregon Trail. Often called "Barrel Creek" in emigrant diaries because of its round, nearly vertical basalt walls, this oasis in the sagebrush desert features a year-round stream and lush, green pastures. The valley was a popular camping place on the trail and later, when a stage station built to service the Overland Road, became a popular overnight location for travelers and freighters.

Long before I became active in IOCTA, Stan Norstebon, owner of the Canyon Creek area was helping preserve and share the history of his property.



Stan opened the stage station and lawns around it for a convention bus tour lunch stop in 1989. I brought several bus loads of visitors during tours with Elderhostal and in 2008 with the OCTA convention in Nampa, as well as many other tours of the byway, with stops at the station. He has supported the installation of historical monuments and interpretive signs at the station site. Stan and his family have

always been extremely friendly and open about sharing the old stage station, cemetery, and surrounding property.

One of my favorite memories is the night Eleanor Craig brought a group of teenagers to camp at Canyon Creek on one of her many treks taking sight-challenged teenagers across the country on emigrant trails. I was amazed at how quickly these young men and women unloaded their truck, set up their tents, and prepared their dinner. We sat around a blazing fire and ate dinner before they presented an adhoc theatrical presentation for the evening. It was truly an evening I will never forget.

The family is currently undertaking an effort to restore the stage station. After burning in the late 1970s, the station has deteriorated significantly. The family is working with the Idaho Heritage Trust to develop plans and has received a grant from the Trust to help with some of the restoration costs. IOCTA has pledged another \$2000 to help as well. Additional funding will be required to complete the restoration of the walls and add a roof to keep the building stable for many years to come.

I want to sincerely thank Stan Norstebon and all of his family for their ongoing support and hospitality to IOCTA. He has added significantly to the enjoyment of the Oregon Trail and Idaho history for hundreds of people. In recognition of his generosity and commitment to our history, Stan will be receiving the OCTA Friends of the Trail award at the national OCTA convention in July. Congratulations, Stan!

South Alternate Tour

By Jerry Eichhorst

Wally Meyer led a group of 16 people on a tour of the middle portion of the South Alternate on Saturday, June 15. The group enjoyed the day featuring trips to the area of the Utter Massacre of 1860, the climb out of Sinker Creek, a set of 4 parallel ruts across Murphy Flat, Rabbit Creek ruts, and the Owyhee County Historical Museum. Wally is a great source of information and has been on most of the trail routes across the state in his long career with the BLM. Thanks, Wally, for a great day!



Wally showing a map overlooking Henderson Flat



Tour guide Wally Meyer



Sinker Grade - South Alternate climbing out of Sinker Creek



Ruts on Murply Flat after a fire last year

Ruts on Rabbit Creek



Idaho Heritage Conference, September 25-27

The Idaho Heritage Conference, “Building Our Story, Expanding Our Reach,” is the first multi-disciplinary conference of its type to be held in Idaho in decades. It is jointly sponsored by Idaho Heritage Trust, ISHS, Idaho Archaeological Society, Idaho Association of Museums, Preservation Idaho, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and will feature Brent Glass, former Executive Director of the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History, as the keynote. The conference will be held at the Idaho State Capitol, and registration opens on June 1.

The Conference will offer tours, presentations, and information sessions. Registration is required. For more information, see Preservation Idaho’s website <http://preservationidaho.org> and go to Programs and Events.

Whether you are a professional historian, archaeologist, teacher, student, community leader, museum volunteer, preservationist, or simply interested in history and preservation, plan to attend.



Mountain Bluebird, Idaho’s State Bird

Diaries Across Idaho

By Jerry Eichhorst

Caldron Linn

Wilson Price Hunt and his group of trappers built crude canoes from cottonwood trees in October, 1811, and started their float down Henry's Fork of the Snake River. Hunt calls Henry's Fork the "Mad River" due to the current and rapids on the river. They regularly encountered rapids and waterfalls which required portages of their canoes and equipment. Often they attempted to let the canoes over the rapids using ropes. Unfortunately, they lost several canoes, much equipment, and many furs with this method. On October 28th, Hunt came to a narrow rock-walled canyon of the Snake River where the entire river cuts through a steep gorge. Located in southern Idaho west of Murtaugh, approximately 100 miles downstream from Fort Hall, they named the site "Caldron Linn." In attempting to navigate through this gorge, a canoe capsized and one of the party drowned. Hunt stopped and explored the river for 35 miles downstream. After reaching the conclusion that they could not continue by water, they cached much of their load and headed west on foot. Hunt's account of the float follows:

With the cargoes loaded into our canoes, we left this place on the 19th. The force of the current hurried us along at a rapid pace, and we were not long in passing the little river that I mentioned on the 7th. Beyond its confluence with the Mad River it becomes large enough to make navigation possible for canoes of all sizes.

As we went on downstream the river became more beautiful and much larger; a space of from 1,200 to 1,800 feet separated its two banks. We made 40 miles on the 20th, but throughout the last twenty the river bed was broken by rapids, and we found two other rapids farther downstream. In going through these, two of our canoes were swamped and we had to stop at once. I sent my canoe and one other to the rescue. We saved the men, but we lost a good deal of merchandise and many supplies, as well as one of the canoes.

When on the 21st we had passed two rapids, we came to a portage of a mile and a quarter. We carried the supplies by land and towed the canoes. For nearly a half mile the river narrows between two sheer mountain walls to not more than sixty feet, in a few places to even less. (6 miles)

We passed over the rapids with the canoes tied to a rope, but we did not delay re-embarking on the 21st. Thereafter we came to a series of rapids, two of which forced us to portage. One of the small canoes swamped and capsized and we lost more supplies. (6 miles)

Our journey was less fortunate on the 28th; for after passing through several rapids, we came to the entrance of a narrow gorge. Mr. Crook's canoe capsized, one of his companions drowned, and we lost a great deal of merchandise. (18 miles)

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