

Trail Dust

Newsletter of the Oregon-California Trails Association, Idaho Chapter
Vol. XXV Issue 3 *Suzi Pengilly, Editor* September 2013



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

Calendar of Events

October 5 Chapter Meetings—Kopper Kitchen, 2661 Airport Way, Boise
9:30 am Convention Planning Meeting
11:00 am Fall Chapter Meeting

Thank You, Jim Payne

With great sadness we share with you the August 9th passing of Idaho OCTA member Jim Payne. Upon returning from the national OCTA convention in late July, Jim saw a doctor for a pain in his side. It turned out to be pancreatic cancer-- and it was too late for any kind of effective treatment.

A native Californian, Jim wore many hats throughout his life: husband, father, grandfather, aerospace engineer, vintner, 4-H leader, skier, “fast car” enthusiast, and lover of history. After the death of his wife, he moved to McCall, Idaho, in October 2002 with best friend and new life partner Pat Rhodes.



Jim at the site of fur trade Fort Hall

Jim’s passion for history centered on the fur trade era and western emigration. He had been active in IOCTA for a number of years as a Director and had recently agreed to serve as co-chairman for the 2016 OCTA convention to be hosted by the Idaho chapter. Jim had recently been elected to the OCTA board of directors and started his term at the recent convention. Jim was a great asset to IOCTA— easy to work with and always willing to participate.

Please remember Pat as she deals with the sudden loss of Jim. You can reach out to Pat via email at pbrhodes@frontiernet.net or at 101 Jughandle Drive, McCall, Idaho, 83638.

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A Brief Overview of OCTA Convention 2013 Oregon City, Oregon

by Bill Wilson

I had arranged to travel to the Convention with Jerry Eichhorst, IOCTA President, but realized that I was already scheduled to lead a tour of the Treasure Valley PT Cruisers. I ended up flying to Portland on Monday afternoon and met up with a lot of old friends at the Welcoming Reception that evening.

Tuesday opened with the annual Membership Meeting and seating of new officers and Board members, including our own Jim Payne. These discussions were followed by keynote speaker Kerry Tymchuk, Executive Director of the Oregon Historical Society (OHS). His talk, entitled *Tales and Treasures from Oregon's History*, related many interesting tales about the collections of the OHS.

The afternoon continued with a panel discussion by four long-time members of the Sons and Daughters of Oregon Pioneers (SDOP) about what it means to be a descendant of Oregon's earliest pioneers. Since I had joined that group several years ago, I was especially interested in hearing what they had to say. Next, Ranvir Singh covered the history, mechanics, and claim procedures of the Donation Land Claim Act of 1850. My great, great grandfather, John Wilson, arrived in Oregon in 1851 and, under the Act, claimed land situated in the Willamette Valley.

One of the first awards at the evening's Awards Banquet was a *Friend of the Trail* award to Stan Norstebon, accepted in his absence by Jerry Eichhorst. Stan has been a long-time friend of the Trail, protecting trail remnants and historic properties like the

Canyon Creek Stage Station, and allowing free access to the site. Following the banquet, there was a live auction by John Winner, providing fun and funding for OCTA.



IOCTA dinner held during Convention

Wednesday was the first day of tours. There were several options, two of which focused on the Barlow Road. Since I had toured it at the 2004 Convention, I chose another option. I picked the Settlement Tour D, which began with the Champoeg State Heritage Area, including the Visitors Center, the Robert Newell House, and the Pioneer Mothers Cabin and Pavilion (where the first effort to form a government for Oregon took place in 1843).



Group touring Pioneer Mothers Cabin at Champoeg

Lunch was at the Mt. Angel Abbey, founded in 1882 to train Catholic priests. After tours of their chapel, museum, and library, the tour bus continued to the Stauffer Farm barn and house, then on to the Old Aurora

Museum (Aurora was an early commune in Oregon).



Old Aurora Museum

Thursday was a day of speakers, many of which were very interesting. Rather than bore you with a list and topics of all the speakers, I'd like to leave you with a note of humor. One speaker was talking about hearing a speech by a female docent about the history of the McLoughlin House, and how it had devolved to a Bed and Breakfast, then a hotel, and finally a "house of..." There was a pause by the speaker, and everyone expected the lady docent to say "ill repute." But she said "...of negotiated affections."

Suddenly the week was over, and I left with Jerry a little after 8:00 AM. We drove out US26 over the pass south of Mt. Hood, went slightly north on State Highway 35, then on a rural route just north of the Barlow Road. We stopped several places to view traces of the Barlow Road (that my Wilsons travelled)--a fitting end to a week immersed in Oregon Trail history.

Welcome to IOCTA's newest members

Cheryl Link, John McVey, Boise
Dan Dunne, Eagle
Lynn and Margie Houdyshell, Meridian
Elaine Rex, Mountain Home
Suzanne Linford, Bend OR
Beth & Alys Webber, Vancouver, WA
Christine Brown, Pullman, WA

Message from the President

by Jerry Eichhorst

A lot has happened since the last *Trail Dust* issue. We had a great outing at Driggs, and of course, the national OCTA convention was a lot of fun. On Saturday, August 3, I presented the Friends of the Trail Award to Stan Norstebon and his family at Canyon Creek. That area was nearly surrounded by fires in mid-August. We had another great outing on the Hudspeth Cutoff. Tragically we lost a friend and active member of the chapter when Jim Payne passed away. My heart and prayers go out to Pat Rhodes as she deals with the loss of Jim.

The chapter voted at the convention to host the 2016 national OCTA convention at Fort Hall. Hosting a convention is an inevitable responsibility of each chapter. We enjoy going to conventions and learning about the trail history of other areas. In order for that to happen, another chapter had to host that convention. We are blessed in Idaho with an abundance of emigrant trail resources, much in pristine condition. We are challenged by the limited number of available facilities to host such a convention and the high proportion of chapter members in western Idaho, across the state from Fort Hall.

Although hosting the convention is still almost 3 years away, the planning process is already underway. Everyone's help is needed as the effort will be much easier if it is spread among many people. Help is needed for tasks ranging from organizing registration materials to leading bus tours; from planning meals to gathering support from local groups; from arranging speakers to writing the convention booklet; from marking the trails along tour routes to monitoring the silent auction tables.

I encourage you to assist with this process. I think you will find it rewarding as you learn much about the history of the Fort Hall area and meet many new friends in the process. Please contact me if you can help.

Please let me know if you have any suggestions for activities for next year. Naturally, exploring possible bus tour routes in the Fort Hall area and marking the trails along those routes will be a high priority for the next 3 years.

Milner Area Emigrant Grave Investigations

by Ann Christensen

Three years ago, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) archeologist Suzann Henrikson conducted a cultural resource inventory in the Milner Recreation Area. During the inventory, she located some suspicious rock features along an access road in proximity to some of the preserved Oregon Trail ruts.

Because the BLM is planning to improve the area to highlight its historical significance, Suzann felt it was important to determine if the rock formations identified the location of immigrant graves because improvements being planned in the area include the construction of pedestrian trails and road improvements that could disturb the sites. Suzann contacted Ann Christensen of *Idaho Search and Rescue Dogs (ISARD)* who agreed to bring her cadaver search dogs to help determine if the rock piles actually were the graves of emigrants that died while traveling the Oregon Trail.

On June 22, Ann brought her cadaver dogs Kessa and Rocco to the Milner location. The two German Shepherd dogs are certified with the *North American Police Work Dog*

Association in human remains recovery and have been used by multiple law enforcement agencies in the West to help locate clandestine graves and deceased individuals both on land and in the water.

Six-year-old Rocco was deployed first to search

approximately three acres of high desert to see if he would “indicate” when he reached



the two areas containing the rock piles. When Rocco got close to the first pile of rocks, he started intently sniffing the rocks and ground beneath them and then laid down on the pile indicating that he detected the presence of human remains. Ann then had him work further into the search area where he laid down on the other suspicious rock pile at the far end.

Eight-year-old Kessa then worked the approximate three-acre area, and she also was intensely interested in the two rock piles and laid down at both locations. With the confirmation from the cadaver dogs that there are probably two graves at the site, the BLM is one step closer to identifying any gravesites and preventing any disturbance to them during the construction of improvements in the area.



Kessa

Father De Smet Monument Opens in Soda Springs

by Don Wind

A new permanent historical monument to Father Pierre-Jean De Smet in Soda Springs was unveiled on August 10th. The celebration was a recognized event associated the sesquicentennial of the 1863 founding Idaho Territorial. The exhibit is open to the public in a park-like setting on the grounds of St. Mary's Catholic Church, on the corner of West Center and First West Streets in Soda Springs.



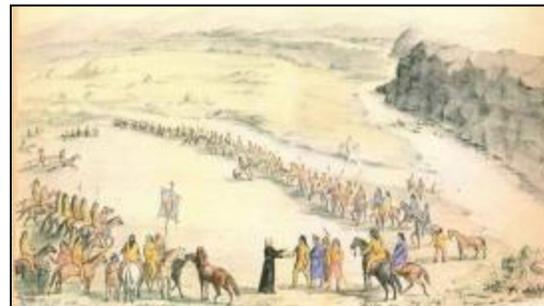
The monument is comprised of a bronze bust of Father Pierre-Jean De Smet and four interpretive signs briefly describing the history and exploits of De Smet, a frontier missionary, peacemaker, world traveler, and author.

The focus of the interpretive signs includes: (a) De Smet's arrival in Soda Springs on August 10, 1841, along with the first Oregon Trail emigrant wagon train; (b) De Smet's missionary work among the Indians of the West and his peacemaking efforts on their behalf; and (c) De Smet's extensive travels in America and Europe as chronicled in his books, maps, and numerous letters.



One of the exhibit signs

Festivities included opening remarks by Don Wind, Chairman of the De Smet Monument Committee, a keynote address by De Smet historian and Distinguished Professor Dr. Robert Carriker of Gonzaga University, unveiling of the bronze bust by artist Val Lewis of Tremonton, Utah, followed by a reception with refreshments served.



The De Smet Monument contains exhibits such as this Matthew Hastings watercolor of Father Pierre De Smet entering the Powder River Camp of Chief Sitting Bull in 1868 hoping make peace between the Sioux and the U.S. Government. This heroic effort culminated in the signing of the Treaty of Fort Laramie. Source: Midwest Jesuit Archives.

The De Smet Monument project has been a collaborative effort of the Caribou Historical Society, Cariboo Development Foundation and St. Mary's Catholic Church. The story of Father De Smet is a fascinating one, featuring history of local interest as well as having universal appeal. The monument will certainly serve as a new educational tool for all and as an important addition to the points of interest in Soda Springs for residents and tourists to enjoy.

Archaeological Looting along Oregon Trail Ruts near Burley

by Suzi Pengilly

In late August, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Burley Field Office staff discovered pristine ruts of the Oregon Trail near Burley damaged by individuals presumably in search of artifacts associated with Oregon Trail emigration. Using metal detectors and shovels, the looters dug over 350 holes. The corridor with the remnant trail ruts is a site listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and due to its location on Federal land, is protected under a federal law: the *Archaeological Resource Protection Act*.



Trail remnants as seen during spring tour



Archaeologists documenting site damage

The damage occurred within the Milner Recreation Area where BLM archaeologist Dr. Suzann Henrickson hosted a tour for Idaho OCTA members after the spring 2013 meeting in Burley. The BLM is developing an interpretive site within the area featuring emigration and other early history of the Snake River plain.

The BLM, the archaeological community, and OCTA fear that this incident may have been influenced or somehow associated with the recent metal detecting and digging at the early Mormon town site of Chesterfield, also located along the Trail, southeast of Pocatello, Idaho.

The Chesterfield activity was topic of a recent *Diggers* program on the National Geographic Channel. As pointed out by Henrickson, such shows “do not always convey important information regarding the laws associated with damaging archaeological sites or removing artifacts from public land.”

In response to these events, OCTA president John Krizek wrote an excellent letter (dated 29 August 2013) to John Fahey, Chair of the National Geographic Society Board, denouncing the promotion through the *Diggers* program of metal detecting and digging in historic sites. Krizek poignantly states that “Those artifacts belong to the American people... When this happens, more than the artifacts are lost. Part of the American experience—etched on our landscape by those hearty pioneers who built the West... is lost forever.” The entire text of the letter will be posted on IOCTA’s website soon.

The BLM’s investigation is ongoing. Trail Dust will present additional information about this case as it becomes available.

Dairies Across Idaho

Pierre's Hole

By Jerry Eichhorst

Nestled at the southwest foot of the Teton Mountains lies the Teton River Valley. Known as "Pierre's Hole" to the fur trappers, this beautiful valley was the site of two trapper gatherings. Joseph Meek attended the rendezvous in 1829 and described the event in his reminiscence *The River of the West*. Benjamin Bonneville described the area in *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*. Jim Hardee's book, *Pierre's Hole!*, provides an excellent history of the fur trapper era of the Teton River Valley.

...found time to admire the magnificent scenery of the valley, which is bounded on two sides by broken and picturesque ranges, and overlooked by that magnificent group of mountains, called the Three Tetons, towering to a height of fourteen thousand feet. This emerald cup set in its rim of amethystine mountains, was so pleasant a sight to the mountain-men that camp was moved to it without delay, where it remained until some time in September, recruiting its animals and preparing for the fall hunt.

Joseph Meek

The valley called Pierre's Hole, is about thirty miles in length, and fifteen in width, bounded to the west and south by low and broken ridges, and overlooked to the east by three lofty mountains, called the three Tetons, which domineer as landmarks over a vast extent of country.

A fine stream, fed by rivulets and mountain springs, pours through the valley towards the north, dividing it into nearly equal parts. The meadows on its borders are broad and extensive, covered with willow and cotton-wood trees, so closely interlocked and matted together, as to be nearly impassable.

In this valley was congregated the motley populace connected with the fur

trade. Here the two rival companies had their encampments, with their retainers of all kinds: traders, trappers, hunters, and half-breeds, assembled from all quarters, awaiting their yearly supplies, and their orders to start off in new directions. Here, also, the savage tribes connected with the trade, the Nez Percés or Chopunnish Indians, and Flatheads, had pitched their lodges beside the streams, and with their squaws, awaited the distribution of goods and finery. There was, moreover, a band of fifteen free trappers, commanded by a gallant leader from Arkansas, named Sinclair, who held their encampment a little apart from the rest.

Such was the wild and heterogeneous assemblage, amounting to several hundred men, civilized and savage, distributed in tents and lodges in the several camps.

The arrival of Captain Sublette with supplies, put the Rocky Mountain Fur Company in full activity. The wares and merchandise were quickly opened, and as quickly disposed of to trappers and Indians; the usual excitement and revelry took place, after which, all hands began to disperse to their several destinations.

Benjamin Bonneville

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