

Trail Dust

Newsletter of the Oregon-California Trails Association, Idaho Chapter
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Tentative Calendar for 2015

- March 10 & 17** **Community Education Classes, Boise**
- April 18** **Byway Tour**
- May 9** **Spring Meetings, Fort Hall**
- September 20-26** **OCTA convention, Lake Tahoe**
- October 10** **Fall Meetings, western Idaho**

Other activities:

- Preview proposed convention bus tours
- Install additional trail route markers as needed
- Investigate new Oregon Trail route north of Vale, Oregon
- Remark Oregon Trail from Farewell Bend State Park over the hill
- Replace missing byway signs

Idaho OCTA Fall 2014 Meetings

The Idaho OCTA fall meetings were held Saturday, October 4, at the Mayfield Truck Stop restaurant and lounge, festively decorated for Halloween.



Twenty people attended the meetings. Noteworthy of the convention planning meeting was the addition of John Briggs as a third co-chairman for the 2016 convention. We discussed potential tours and agreed upon general concepts and routes.

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Additional work will be required next year to confirm the practicality of the tour routes and ensure they are adequately marked for visitors to follow the trails.

A highlight of the business meeting which followed was the presentation of an IOCTA check for \$2000 to Katherine Kirk, Executive Director of the Idaho Heritage Trust, to be used for the preservation work on the Canyon Creek Stage Station. We extend many thanks to Katherine for working with us on this important project. Dave Taylor and Lyle Lambert were re-elected as Directors of the chapter for another three-year term. Thanks also go to Dave and Lyle for helping to lead the chapter.



Katherine Kirk and Bill Wilson with ceremonial check for restoration of the Canyon Creek Stage Station

After an excellent lunch at the restaurant where homemade pies seemed to be the main course for several members, the group traveled to Ditto Creek for a short hike on Goodale's Cutoff to the Ditto Creek Inscription Rock. Emigrants wrote their names in axle grease on this pinnacle of rock beside the Oregon Trail. Although the names are still visible, they are slowing fading away with time.



Names of travelers on Ditto Creek Inscription Rock are fading with time

Bill Wilson and Jerry Eichhorst discussed the possibility of an 1858 massacre of the members of a 15-wagon train in the area. The massacre remains were noted in several diaries of Goodale's Cutoff travelers as being at the junction of the cutoff and main Oregon Trail, but were not noted by travelers of the main trail.

They believe the site is in a draw just over a short ridge from the junction and surmise that the attack occurred as the wagon train climbed the ridge within 200 yards of the junction. Only a portion of Goodale's travelers encountered the remains as most took an easier route a mile to the west. Travelers on the main trail would not have been able to see the remains. One of the cadaver dogs has twice verified the presence of graves in this area. It is hoped that further investigations will lead to more physical evidence of the massacre and possible burials.



Hiking Goodale's Cutoff towards the junction with the main Oregon Trail

The group then traveled to Canyon Creek to view the restoration work completed on the stage station. Both ends of the station are nearly rebuilt, and the area has been stabilized and cleaned up. Much more remains to be done, and a roof will be required to ensure that this station built in 1874 will survive another 150 years or more. It was a fine ending to a good day with beautiful weather, friends, and trail history.

IOCTA Matching Donations for Canyon Creek Stage Station Restoration

The Idaho chapter approved a program to match personal donations for the Canyon Creek stage station restoration before the combined amount is forwarded to the Idaho Heritage Trust (IHT) to be matched again. IOCTA will match up to a total of \$2000. This process will maximize personal donations for the restoration. Bill Wilson led the way with the first donation at the meeting on Saturday.



An anonymous couple who are chapter members followed with an incredible donation of \$5000! With the total chapter match of \$2000, the donation will soon be made to IHT, matched again, and provide funding for more work to be completed next year. As the generous donors noted, "The Idaho OCTA is a good group and we're glad to help. Keeping history alive is a worthy goal."



The group in front of Ditto Creek Inscription Rock

Personal donations will continue to be accepted. Please consider contributing to this great cause. Your tax deductible donations can be made to IOCTA and sent to Bill Wilson at the return address of the *Trail Dust* newsletter. Thank you so much to those of you have contributed! Preserving history is such a great cause.

Message from the President

by Jerry Eichhorst

It is hard to believe that 2014 is winding down already. It seems like summer has flown by. Personally, I am not ready for the cold and snow of winter.

We had another great year for IOCTA with several fun outings and a number of new members becoming involved.

We made progress in planning for the 2016 convention. The planning needs to become action next year as we accelerate the pace towards August 2016. That time will also fly by. Next year will focus on defining and marking tour routes in eastern Idaho for the convention in 2016. We will also need to write historical information and firm up speakers and entertainment. I hope that many of you will travel to the Lake Tahoe convention next September and help man our booth. It is very helpful to attend an OCTA convention to understand much of what is involved in hosting one of your own.

My goal remains to have one of the best OCTA conventions ever and to not overwhelm any one person in the process of putting the convention together. I am now involved in a national OCTA committee tasked with revising the convention planning process. I want our convention to be the first to use the new process where national does much more of the standard tasks of hosting a convention, thus allowing the chapter to focus on local tasks such as developing

tours. Time will tell how successful that desire is!

I am pleased with the work being done to restore the Canyon Creek Stage Station and excited about the chapter matching personal contributions to the effort. I hope you will consider helping with this effort to preserve a significant piece of Idaho history.



Plans are already being made for meetings next year. The spring meetings should be on the second Saturday of May, the fall meetings in early October. I'll be teaching two classes in the Boise Community Education program in March. I encourage you to attend them if you are interested.

Enjoy your winter and your holidays. I hope to see you again on the trails in the spring. Merry Christmas!



A Grave Outing

by Jerry Eichhorst

Unusual for IOCTA outings of recent years, Saturday, September 27, was overcast and raining. But the outing must go on. Gail Carbineer of the Northwest Chapter had been working with Randy Brown of Wyoming to create a new interpretive sign for the John D. Henderson grave near Vale. The old sign had been vandalized and was difficult to read. A work day was planned to replace the sign.



Removing the old sign

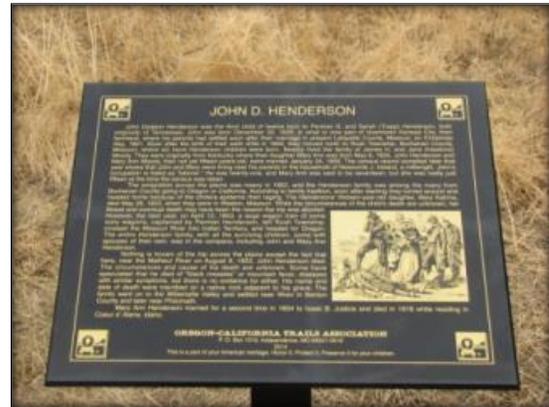


Boy Scout work crew

About 25 people including IOCTA and NWOCTA members, Boy Scouts and leaders, BLM personnel, and Randy, as

well as four trained cadaver dogs, met in light showers at the Vale, Oregon, BLM office with plans to replace the sign and verify a number of emigrant graves in the area.

While most of the adults watched with fascination as these beautiful dogs verified the Henderson grave site, the scouts quickly removed the old sign and set the new sign in concrete. A pathway to the sign was outlined in rocks, and the job was complete. My thanks to Gail and Randy for developing the sign and to the scouts and others for replacing the sign. It looks great!



The new sign created by Randy Brown

We then drove through heavy rain to Farewell Bend to check a suspected gravesite. Apparently two bodies had been uncovered when I-84 was built along the Snake River in that area. Tribal knowledge said that the graves of a man and woman marked with a post and small mound of dirt on a rise above the interstate had been moved by the road crew. Unfortunately, none of the dogs confirmed the presence of human graves. We surmised that the rain and wind of the

day, the possible greater depth of the burial, and the possible lack of decayed flesh may all have contributed to the inability of the dogs to confirm the burials. It is hoped that researching ODOT construction information may provide confirmation of the burial.

After a quick lunch in a light rain in Farewell Bend State Park, we continued west. The trail ruts west of the park are clearly visible after a burn of the area this year. Over the ridge lies the Van Orman massacre burial site. The Van Ormans were survivors of the Utter/Van Ornam attack in September 1860 near Murphy, Idaho. They were attacked and killed a day before rescuing Calvary could reach them. The grave of the woman and a mass grave of the men are well marked, so this was just a good stop to see the historic site and demonstrate the dogs' abilities.



Ashley with Bee



Paula with Zeva



Kessa



Rocko

Naturally all four dogs confirmed the burial site. Some stopped almost instantly as the scent was clear and strong. Others ranged around, continuing to narrow their focus on the site. The dogs are always interesting to watch. My thanks to Ann and Max, Paula and Rick, and Ashley, for bringing their dogs and sharing the day with us.

Diaries Across Idaho

Canyon Creek

by Jerry Eichhorst

An oasis in the desert, Canyon Creek was a popular camping location along the Oregon Trail. After a rocky road from Rattlesnake Creek, the sunken valley with a clear, running stream and lush grasses was used by most travelers to rest or spend the night. Diarists referred to the creek by many names.

October 5...We crossed a small creek, and encamped about sunset on a stream, which is probably Lake river. This is a small stream, some five or six feet broad, with a swift current, timbered principally with willows and some few cottonwoods. Along the banks were canes, rosebushes, and clematis, with Purshia tridentata and artemisias on the upper bottom. The sombre appearance of the country is somewhat relieved in coming unexpectedly from the dark rocks upon these green and wooded water-courses, sunk in chasms; and, in the spring, the contrasted effect must make them beautiful. The thermometer at sunset 47°, and the night threatening snow.

John C. Fremont, 1843

[August] 18 ...made 25 miles & encamped on a Small Brook running through a deep Kenyon the mountains again made their appearance on the South Side of Snake River which had disappeared for Some days past the Rocky cliffs to our North of us appear verry dry & Rugged

James Clyman, 1844

August 17.—...traveled eight miles and encamped on Carroll Creek, a small stream running to the south; grass tolerable scarce; some willows and a few cottonwoods.

Jesse Harritt, 1845

August 4.— ... After watering, we traveled eight and a half miles, which brought us to a barrel creek. Here we found a small creek running through a barrel-shaped valley, which is

surrounded by rock bluffs about twenty feet high. We nooned at Barrel creek. . .

P. V. Crawford, 1851

Saturday, Sept. 11. Came to another small creek in about 2 miles, then found no more water for 8 miles more, when we came to Charlotte Creek, down in a valley with steep, rocky banks... Here we found tolerably plenty of dry grass from one to two miles back on the hills. Concluded to stay over Sunday. Plenty of willow for fuel and some Balm of Gilead. Made 10 miles.

Parthenia Blank, 1852

August 13th ...Camped Rock Bluff Creek. Small bottom, good feed for first emigrants, good feed one mile off. Saw 5 graves 15 dead cattle rough roads. Traveled 15 miles. Maria A. Belshaw, 1853

[August] 18th Thursday Camped for night near Barrel spring Valley beautiful. Very high bluffs were on either side The stream delightful Black thorn trees a little up the gorge Grass good. Valley covered with mountain wheat...

Celinda E. Hines, 1853

Wed July 26 came on about 10 miles afternoon and camp on rock river a pretty gravel bottom creek with good grass here was two clever looking indians with some little fish to sell. we gave them some bread and got them so we had fish for supper, and sage hens for breakfast this morning.

Sarah Sutton, 1854

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