

# Trail Dust

Newsletter of the Oregon-California Trails  
Association, Idaho Chapter



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## Calendar for 2017

**Feb 22, March 1, 8, 2017** Boise Schools Community Education classes

Jerry will be adding a third class on the Oregon Trail from Thomas Fork to Fort Hall based upon his presentation at the Fort Hall convention.

**Apr 1-2 2017** OCTA National Symposium, Vancouver WA

**Mid-April 2017** Annual Spring Byway Tour

**May 7<sup>th</sup> 2017** Idaho Chapter Spring Meeting and Tour

**Aug 7<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> 2017** OCTA National Convention, Council Bluffs IA

**Oct 7<sup>th</sup> 2017** Idaho Chapter Fall Meeting and Tour

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## Message from the President

By Jerry Eichhorst

It seems that a long, mild fall has come to an end in southern Idaho and winter is here. The Indian Summer gave us an opportunity to enjoy a few extra days out on the trails. The California Trail outing (see separate article in this issue) was a lot of fun and took us to an area the chapter had not been to in nearly 20 years. I hope to do the first part of the California Trail from Raft River to Granite Pass next year.

The fall Idaho chapter meeting was held Saturday, November 5, which was followed by a tour of the remodeled state capitol building led by Afton Patrick. The chapter celebrated the successful Fort Hall convention and re-elected all the existing officers. I will continue as Chapter President, John Briggs and Lyle Lambert as Vice-Presidents, Dan Dunne as Treasurer, and Paul Dinwiddie as Secretary. Jim and Dawn Fazio, and Dave Taylor will serve another term as Directors. Virgel Clark will take over as the chapter Historian from Peggy Cristobal who has done a fantastic job as Historian for many years. I will continue as the Webmaster, Wally Meyer and Lyle Lambert as Preservation Officers, and Nancy Briggs as the *Trail Dust* Editor. My sincere thanks to all the officers, directors, and appointed positions which enable the chapter to function smoothly.

Bill Wilson and I have been searching for a little-known massacre site on Goodale's Cutoff near the junction with the main Oregon Trail for many years. Based upon a single diary account and only a couple of reminiscences, a possible site has been located and efforts have been made to confirm the location this fall. Cadaver dogs hit upon the suspected mass burial site. Ground penetrating radar showed lots of anomalies in the burial site. Serious metal detecting in the area has yielded several rifle balls near the rocks from which the Indians are presumed to have attacked and square nails from where the wagons likely circled. It is hoped that an archaeological excavation can be conducted on the area next summer.

Community Education classes will resume in early spring with a new class being offered on the Oregon Trail from the Wyoming border to Fort Hall scheduled for February 22. The Main Oregon Trail Back Country Byway class will be March 1, and the North Alternate Oregon Trail class will be March 8. Chapter meetings are tentatively scheduled for the first Saturday in May and the first Saturday in October. Please let me know if there are trail sites you would like to have the chapter visit next year.

With winter already set in, it is likely that trail activities will hibernate until the spring leaving time for family, holidays, and research. I wish all of you a very Merry Christmas and look forward to the spring when we can meet out on the trails again.

# California Trail Outing

By Jerry Eichhorst

On Saturday, October 8, a small group of IOCTA members and guests traveled the California Trail from the base of the Goose Creek mountains in southern Idaho to Highway 93, 27 miles north of Wells, in northeastern Nevada. Meeting at Burley and heading south, we stopped first at the bottom of the descent of the Goose Creek mountains from Granite Pass. Several sections of ruts are available in the area. The steepness of the descent is inspiring.

At the next stop where the California Trail reached Goose Creek, Lynn Houdyshell had a flat tire. It seems that there is a flat tire nearly every time I travel this section of the trail. The group quickly replaced the tire with the spare and the tour continued south. The last time Lynn had a flat tire on an outing a couple years ago, he replaced the truck afterwards. Unfortunately, he would not give me this new truck due to the flat tire. Maybe next time.



We drove in to Record Bluff and admired the names emigrants carved into the ashén sandstone. Many of the names are disappearing as the soft stone is exposed to the elements and slowly wears away. Those names inside the small caves are still pristine, appearing today the same as what

Harriett Sherrill Ward described in 1853: *"In one of the large caves we seated ourselves and enjoyed a pleasant half hour reading names and dates..."*

After the outing, I talked with Larry Jones, founder of IOCTA and long-time Idaho State Historical Library trails expert about the odd face carved into the basalt cap. He said that in his research many years ago, he showed the site to numerous archaeologists and the thought was that it was related to Indians along the Columbia River where similar carvings can be found. Because it looks much like the face masks in southern Mexico, another theory is that it was carved hundreds of years ago, by the Aztec Indians who once lived in the Salt Lake valley, 115 miles away.

Continuing south, we drove a 2-mile section of the California Trail in 4WD-low. We followed the California Trail past Rock Spring, Emigrant Springs, and the Trails West marker for Chicken Springs. Maybe there had been water in the area 160 years ago, but there was no sign of it now. We traveled through Thousand Springs valley trying to imagine the area with hundreds of springs across the valley. Like Chicken Springs, the area is dry now.

We covered a lot of miles and saw some very interesting sites along the California Trail. Several of the party spent the night in Jackpot, enjoying the seafood buffet and other entertainment. Next year we'll try to do the first portion of the California Trail from Raft River through City of Rocks and on to Granite Pass.

# Visit to the Idaho Capitol

Nancy Briggs



Afton Patrick led a tour of the Idaho Capitol on the afternoon of the November 5<sup>th</sup> Chapter Meeting. In the photo above she is explaining the Great Seal of Idaho to chapter members.



Afton is extremely knowledgeable about the Capitol and its long history, and her years as a teacher were evident as she eloquently described the various alterations that have been made over the years.



One wonders what it is that Dave Newberry is looking at but all is revealed in the next photo. He is looking at the inside of the Capitol Dome, quite spectacular!

The building was designed by John Tourtellotte. He used skylights, light shafts and reflective marble surfaces to capture natural sunlight and direct it to the interior space. We learned so many "secrets" about the building, such as the "marble" columns are not marble at all, but actually covered with 'scagliola' which is a mixture of gypsum, glue, marble dust and granite dyed to look like marble. It's a secret process known only to some Italians who covered their work during restoration so no one would learn how they do it! Afton also showed us many features that were uncovered during the 2005 restoration – including an original wooden elevator. Thank you, Afton for the very interesting tour!

# Diaries Across Idaho

By Jerry Eichhorst

## Steamboat Spring

The first *Diaries Across Idaho* in December, 2008, featured Steamboat Spring and the 1852 story from Enoch Conyers of a member of his party who tried to plug up the spring by sitting on it. Continuing on our present journey of the Oregon-California Trail across Idaho, Steamboat Spring is the next site of interest. Fortunately, there are many interesting diary accounts of this location.

...one, that is just on the bank of the river, which is built in the form of a crawfish hole, about three feet high, formed of sediment thrown up by the water, which spouts about three feet high every quarter of a minute. There is an air hole near it that makes a noise like a steamboat, but not as loud...

Joseph Williams, August 10, 1841

...Boys stuffed in coats & clothes to stop it but it would find vent & throw the water out with the force of an engine...

F. W. Brooks, July 2, 1849



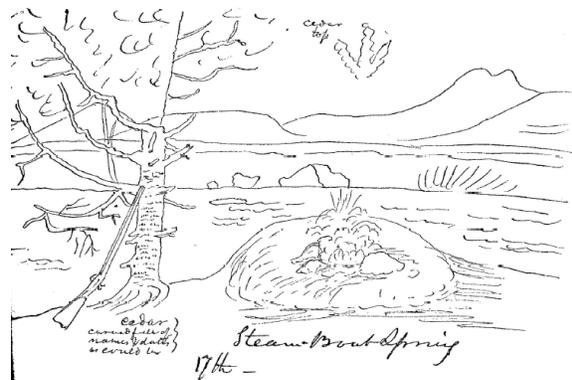
Steamboat Spring - Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society, Volume 1 Number 4 December 1900

...This large one has also a suction power. Some one around reached a cup into it, when it was immediately drawn from his hand into the hole. He, however, delved down for it, & found it the length of his arm in, & required a considerable jerk to get it out.

Wakeman Brownly, July 11, 1849

...An old cedar stands near the spr'g, the trunk & branches of which are carved and penciled all over, as high up as can be reached, with name, &c...

J. Goldsborough Bruff, August 17, 1849



A white, living among the Shoshone Indians, whose lodge is one-half to three-fourths of a mile distant from Steam Boat spring, informed us that the hissing or puffing sounds, varies in loudness with the height of the surrounding waters, being loudest at high water. He said that when the water is highest, he could distinctly hear it at his lodge.

Lorenzo Sawyer, June 17, 1850

...we Tried to stop it with old clothes and Rocks But it Threw Them out as fast as we could put Them in...

Thomas Woodward, June 24, 1850

...went to the steamboat springs and gave myself a good scrubbing...

George W. Short, June 21, 1852

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