

TRAIL DUST

Newsletter of the Idaho Chapter of the
Oregon-California Trails Association



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Upcoming Activities

IOCTA Chapter Meeting	October 12, 2024
OCTA Symposium in Salt Lake City	April 15 – 17, 2025
OCTA Convention in Pueblo, CO	September 7 – 12, 2025
OCTA Convention in Chico, CA	TBA 2026
PROPOSED OCTA CONVENTION IN BURLEY, ID	2027

Message from the President

By Jerry Eichhorst

We had some great activities since the last issue including a Model A Car Club tour, driving over Granite Pass, using a cadaver dog to search for a lost grave on Little Goose Creek, and verifying several graves along the Oregon Trail. We also had the annual Oregon-California Trails Association convention in Pendleton, Oregon. Details of these activities may be found in other articles in this issue. All of these were a lot of fun. If you were not part of these, you missed out.

On Wednesday, July 31, I met with Kevin Kostka, the new Ada County Open Space & Trails Coordinator. We walked around the Ada County Oregon Trail Recreation Area and discussed the history of the site, ideas for improvements, and the Oregon Trail. I had worked with his predecessor for many years, but he retired. I am sure that we will continue our excellent partnership with Kevin and his staff.



The Fort Boise interpretive and site ID signs were installed on Friday, August 2. This project started a couple of years ago. My thanks to the NPS Trails Office for developing the

signs, Tyler Archibald and IDFG for working with us to locate the signs in the Fort Boise Wildlife Management Area, Dave Price for leading the effort and working with the various groups to make this project happen and John Briggs for developing a generic memorandum of Understanding (MOU) document which OCTA can use for all such projects. Paul Dinwiddie went with me to the installation and helped put the interpretive signs together.

Idaho is currently blanketed in a deep layer of smoke from numerous fires in Oregon, California, and Idaho. One of these, the Durkee fire, burned hundreds of thousands of acres in eastern Oregon including an area along the Oregon Trail north of Vale. The BLM has assured me that the Alkali Springs and Birch Creek areas were not damaged. I plan to visit the areas with the BLM once it is safe to do so. A report they sent me on July 30 indicates no damage to trail resources:

Thompson Fire:

The Thompson Fire has burned approximately 2.5 miles of the Oregon National Historic Trail (ONHT) alignment east of Hwy 84 on private lands. The alignment is intersected by several improved gravel roads, which have successfully served as fire line containment perimeters for the area. A Dozer line was necessary where the western edge of the fire line intersected the ONHT, however, impacts to the alignment of the ONHT as mapped were avoided. Even so, the preexisting integrity of the affected portions of the trail is extremely low, as no discernable features or characteristics of historic trails were noted within the parcel.

Durkee Fire:

Most of the section(s) in question are interfaced with a hard gravel road. Sections of the trail that deviated from the road were unburned and were not affected by suppression activities. The most significant portion of these areas is located within an enclosure. Large sections of the road were either bladed or disked, these activities created no apparent disturbance that was not already in place because of the existing road and its construction. Two known cultural sites located along this section are associated with

springs and were lightly burned over. No significant impact was observed, and existing interpretive installations are intact. Light damage to fencing was observed. Suppression activities did not affect these sites upon initial inspection.

More activities are coming this fall. Gary Makey offered a tour of the Lander Road in the first week of August, but no one was able to join him, so it will be canceled or rescheduled. For September, I am looking at a trip to see the new signs at Fort Boise and then a trek north of Vale to see the Oregon Trail in the burned area. The chapter has not been there in many years. This will be dependent upon fire conditions.



The fall chapter meeting will be on Saturday, October 12, starting at 11:15 am. It will be held at the Idaho Pizza Company at Orchard and Overland in Boise where we have had the fall meeting before. Please come join me to discuss the activities of the chapter and the 2027 convention. After the meeting, we will head to the parks along the Boise River in Boise where new interpretive signs have been installed as part of the NPS sign project for Ada County.

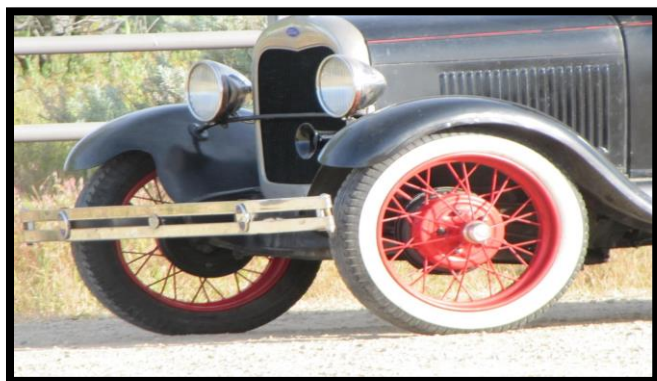
Later in October, I will be speaking at the Idaho Genealogy Society Annual Conference, and we will revisit the lost grave on Little Goose Creek. We will bring the cadaver dog back as well as ground penetrating radar to accurately mark the location of the grave. An archaeologist from Idaho State University is looking into excavating the grave to obtain a DNA sample in the hopes of identifying the remains as requested by the rancher who owns the property.

Please watch the [chapter website calendar page](#) for details of these activities. Come join us on the trails.

Model A Car Club Tour

By Jerry Eichhorst

On Saturday, June 1, I had the pleasure of leading a group of Model A antique cars on a tour of the Oregon Trail from Bonneville Point to Canyon Creek. What a great time we had! The cars were fantastic, and the people were as well. We took many pictures and videos to make a YouTube video to be shared with OCTA and the car club.



Ford Model A detail taken as the 'convoy left on the gravel road at Bonneville Point.

From Bonneville Point, we made our way to Mayfield shown below.



It was so much fun the club wants to do it again next year! My thanks to John McVey, John Briggs, and Paul Dinwiddie for their help in shooting photos, videos, and drone videos, and for helping with the tour.



Drone photo of the Tour entering Canyon Creek from the West

Jerry led the Tour with Paul Dinwiddie bringing up the rear in case of any problems. Despite the age of

the cars and the less-than-best road conditions, there were no problems.



Another drone shot of the Tour – at Canyon Creek.

California Trail Activities

By Jerry Eichhorst

In the last week of June, we had two days of outings on the California Trail south of Burley, Idaho. On Wednesday, James Dayley led us over Granite Pass and down the mountain to Goose Creek. I had been to the pass many times before but have always wanted to follow the California Trail down the west side of the mountain.

The pioneers wrote in their diaries about how difficult the trip down the mountain was, including having to tie ropes to their wagons to let them down the last steep descent to Birch Creek.



Looking over Goose Creek Valley from Granite Pass

We also verified a grave along the trail with Cagney, a trained cadaver dog. What a fun day! Thanks James!





Following the California Trail



Goose Creek Valley looking south



More of the California Trail



The California Trail at Record Bluff looking East

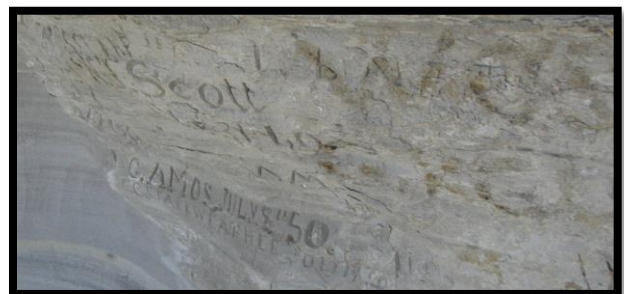
On Thursday we traveled up Goose Creek to the mouth of Little Goose Creek with rancher Eric Bedke. We used Cagney to find a lost grave which Eric's father told him about many years ago but had since been lost.

We also visited Record Bluff to view the emigrant names carved in the sandstone and explored the mouth of Little Goose Creek Canyon.

We plan to go back in October to document the grave in more detail using GPR and an archaeologist from Idaho State University.



Record Bluff



Record Bluff





Record Bluff



Little Goose Creek Canyon



Face carved in top layer of basalt on Record Bluff

Cadaver Dog Grave Verification By Jerry Eichhorst

To wrap up the last week of June, we used Cagney to verify several graves along the Oregon Trail north of Mountain Home. I have known about these graves for many years and previously verified them with other cadaver dogs. This was the first time Cagney had worked in the area.

Cagney verified the possible graves contained human remains and also verified two new apparent graves in the area, one of which had been shown to me in this year's annual byway tour. It is always interesting to watch a cadaver dog work. I encourage you to come out when we bring Cagney over again.



Cagney indicating human remains



One of the graves in the desert along the Oregon Trail

Idaho's Next Convention

By Jerry Eichhorst

One of the best activities of the Oregon-California Trails Association is the annual convention, an opportunity for rut nuts from around the country to come together to renew friendships, learn about the emigrant trails and history of the area, and have a week of fun with presentations, dinners, tours, and entertainment.

These conventions, however, do not magically happen on their own. Each chapter hosts a convention about every 10 years on a somewhat rotating basis. The two most recent Idaho conventions were in 2008 at Nampa and in 2016 at Fort Hall. Both were excellent conventions. It is now time for Idaho to host another convention.



Many aspects go into determining the location of a convention. A facility must be available that can handle up to 300 attendees, provide space for presentations and dinners, and provide meals. It is preferable that the facility be attached or within a short walk of sufficient hotel rooms for the attendees. The location needs to be a place OCTA has not visited recently and has sufficient trail resources in the area for tours without spending many hours riding on a bus.

After considering all of these factors and investigating a couple of areas in southern Idaho, I recommended that the Idaho chapter host the 2027 OCTA convention at the Burley Inn Convention Center in Burley, Idaho. The convention center is attached to the Best Western Plus hotel and is a short walk from the Fairfield Inn and Suites. The area has many trail resources on the main Oregon Trail, California Trail, and North Alternate Oregon Trail which are not too far away. Bus tours could encompass sites from Fort Hall to the City of Rocks to Hagerman. Caravan tours could travel the California Trail up Goose Creek and across Granite Pass. I presented this recommendation to the chapter members during the Pendleton convention. The recommendation was unanimously approved. This recommendation must be approved by the OCTA National Board of Directors before it becomes official. That will likely be done at the next BOD meeting.

Unless someone else would like to take on the position, I will be the Convention Chairman. John Briggs will be the Convention Treasurer. Many other positions will need to be filled. I will be sending an email to the chapter members requesting their help in the planning and execution of the convention. As we proved during the Fort Hall convention, we have many talented people in the chapter. If many of them become involved, nobody needs to be overworked and burned out. Please consider helping with the convention. It is critical for the success of OCTA and the Idaho chapter.

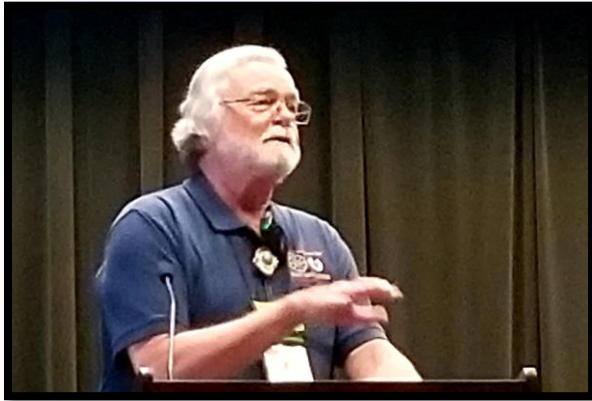
Reflections on the Convention at Pendleton

Jerry Eichhorst

I enjoyed this year's convention at Pendleton. I went up early to attend a preservation meeting on Saturday and the Board of Directors meeting on

Sunday. The convention started Monday with a full day of excellent presentations. Our own chapter

member, Jim Hardee, gave one of the best presentations on Marie Dorian.



Jim talks about Marie Dorian

Tuesday was a bus tour day but I chose to go sturgeon fishing in the Columbia River with Jerry Lambert. It was a lot of fun.



Wednesday was another bus tour day but some of the tours had to be cancelled due to the intermittent closure of I-84. I went west from Pendleton following the Oregon Trail using the NPS Oregon Auto Tour Guide to direct me. Thursday was another day of excellent presentations. All of the meals were good, the meeting rooms were nice, although quite cold, and the hotel was fine. The casino, however, was very tight and did not pay out well for me. It was fun to see so many friends and several new members at their first convention. I helped Roger Blair take pictures this year so I was busier than normal. I look forward to next year's convention in Pueblo, Colorado.

Don Wind

From my perspective, the 2024 OCTA Convention in Pendleton was a success. The Wildhorse Hotel provided an excellent venue and very good dining. The pre-convention Trail Preservation Workshop provided much-needed information, guidance, and plans for chapters to pursue in their efforts to protect the historic trails. I believe that the Idaho Chapter was the best-represented chapter at this workshop. Dave Price's presentation was the best and the most useful, especially for those who needed guidance for preservation efforts on public lands.

The highlight of the first day was Jim Hardee's lecture on Indian woman Marie Dorian. Many other talks focused on the impacts of Western migration on Indians and their way of life. Convention tours were interesting, although my tour to the Trail Interpretive Center in Baker City was cut short due to wildfires along the Interstate 84 corridor. There was plentiful smoke in the Pendleton area all week.

Paul Dinwiddie

The 2024 OCTA convention in Pendleton was a great experience. It started with my leading the pre-convention tour for 10 people from seven different states to several Oregon Trail sites along the Idaho-Oregon border.

The convention speakers and topics were excellent, and they significantly improved my cursory knowledge of Pendleton and Walla Walla history, and the impact the western migration continues to have on the original Native American inhabitants. The Wildhorse Casino was a great venue -even if I didn't leave a winner.

John Briggs

Nancy and I thoroughly enjoyed the Convention. The Wildhorse Facilities were excellent and well supported by the staff. And the talks on Day 1 were all of a high standard.

I went on the Blue Mountain Crossing hike on Day 2, one of the best Convention Tours I have ever

enjoyed as we walked, very carefully alongside and occasionally within the deep swales that are a feature of this Oregon Trail Interpretive Park.



Hiking, carefully, with Lewis and Clark Executive Director (OCTA's own!) Richard Hunt (thanks – Robin Baker)



Jenny Miller hiking at the OT Blue Mountain Crossing Interpretive Park.

On Tuesday we were entertained and educated by the Consolidated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, CTUIR, Drummers & Dancers, followed by Laura Dean's musical presentation –

'Music in the Western Expansion – Songs of Heart and Place on the American Frontier'.



The CTUIR Dancers, accompanied by the CTUIR drummers

It would not be an OCTA Convention without a bus problem but, after a short unplanned walk, we enjoyed lunch in Adams and made our way following the route to Whitman Mission. We then went on through the Wallula Gap down the Columbia River Route to Cold Springs before returning to Pendleton via Holdman.

Talks on Day 4 were also of a high standard with the highlight for some of 'Murder at the Mission'.

The awards and closing banquets were both enjoyable with an excellent Hall of Fame video and the always entertaining auctioneer John Winner.



Diaries Across Idaho

By Jerry Eichhorst

Wyoming Poem

In the last issue, I shared a poem about Oregon. That poem was a serious attempt to describe the Oregon country by a man who traveled across the country.

The poem in this issue was shared with me by a new Idaho chapter member, Terry Sunderlin. It was part of an Oregon Trail presentation he gave at the Mountain Home Library in late July. Terry did a good job on the presentation and I appreciate him sharing the poem.

This issue's poem is anything but serious. I found it funny in a simple (teenager?) way. I think it could also apply to Montana.

WYOMING POEM

It's winter in Wyoming
And the gentle breezes blow
Seventy miles an hour
At twenty five below.

Oh, how I love Wyoming
When the snow is up to your butt.
You take a breath of winter
And your nose gets frozen shut.

Yes, the weather here is wonderful
So I guess I'll hang around.
I could never leave Wyoming
'cuz I'm frozen to the ground.

Anonymous

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