TRAIL DUST

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

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Upcoming Activities

Idaho Chapter Fall Meeting in Boise	October 25, 2025
OCTA Symposium in Independence, MO	April 16 – 19, 2026
OCTA Convention in Chico, CA	September 12 – 18, 2026
OCTA CONVENTION IN BURLEY, ID	2027

Message from the President

By Jerry Eichhorst

It is hard to believe that summer is almost over. This year has gone by even faster than previous years. There are so many things I wanted to do this summer that I never got to.

Preservation is a primary focus of OCTA and the Idaho chapter. There are dozens of projects around the West which potentially impact the emigrant trails. Wind turbines, solar farms, transmission lines, and even geothermal projects, are constantly being proposed. The Idaho chapter works with state and federal agencies to provide feedback on these projects as an interested party. My thanks to Don Wind and Dave Price for their great work in handling so many projects so well. We could not do it without you! On the national level, John Winner does a fantastic job trying to keep up with all the projects and working with the chapter preservation officers. John is developing an online application which can be used to visualize the projects on maps based upon the NPS historic trail routes.

I occasionally try to help by screening projects when they first come up. To this end, I participated in the Idaho Power Joint Meeting on September 9 regarding the Lucky Peak Transmission Line replacement project. The transmission line crosses the Oregon Trail about a mile northwest of Bonneville Point. Idaho Power agreed to not drive on the Oregon Trail in the area. Because there is already a transmission line crossing the Oregon Trail, there is little concern for a replacement transmission line. The Oregon Trail in the area has been heavily used and driven on through this area for many years.

I met with Marc Munch, Susanne Perry, and Travis Pitkin of the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) on September 11 to discuss several projects ITD is working on which may impact the emigrant trails in Idaho. The first project is a site to obtain material for road work in the northwest corner of Craters of the Moon National Monument & Preserve. The Jeffreys-Goodale Cutoff runs through the area. We agreed that ITD will maintain a 500-foot buffer between its work site and the JGC. The second project is to widen and improve Highway 16 to Emmett. The Goodale North route crosses the highway on top of Freezeout Hill, but since there are no remaining remnants of the route, there is no concern. I am also working with ITD and the Idaho State Historical Society to revise all the large historical marker signs across the state. I will be involved in all the signs dealing with the emigrant trails. There will be about 100 new signs added in the project.

The Idaho chapter hosted another Model A car club tour on the Oregon Trail in June. The Elmore County Sheriff's Office escorted the tour and filmed the outing. The video they created is available at this link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NPTxnx07P_0.
Last year's Model A car club tour video is great and can be seen on the OCTA YouTube channel at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YF0WAW8Zr9U&list=PLxTzdgVbUd1tWHoeDXF3CSzPL_SC4mzno&index=9.
Be sure to "Like" the videos in YouTube.

I presented *The Oregon and California Trails Across Idaho* twice in Meridian during June. I worked with several experts of the Northwest chapter to determine that the newly exposed road north of Vale was not part of the Oregon Trail. The road ruts were discovered last fall after the huge Durkee fire. I am also working with a California-Nevada and Idaho chapter member who is writing a book on Pegleg Smith. We are trying to determine where Smith's trading post was along Bear River in eastern Idaho. It is hoped that we can have an outing to explore the area in the future.

In July, Gary Makey led a small outing on the Lander Road in eastern Idaho. It is difficult to get many people to the far east side of the state for an outing when most of the chapter membership is in western Idaho. Gary put together a driving

guide for the Lander Road which will be posted on the chapter website in the future. Thanks Gary!

On Saturday, August 23, the chapter had an outing at Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve. Special arrangements were made to allow the group access to the Jeffreys-Goodale Cutoff north of Highway 20 through the park, which is generally not available to the public.

On September 16, I met with several people from the Hagerman Valley Historical Society (HVHS) to view sites of the North Alternate Oregon Trail and review diary quotes describing the route. They had differing ideas about the route but agreed with the route I have identified after reviewing the diary account descriptions. We also talked about developing an Oregon Trail display in their new museum and possibly creating an Oregon Trail driving guide for sites in the area. I presented to HVHS that evening and invited them to join the North Alternate Oregon Trail tour the following Saturday.

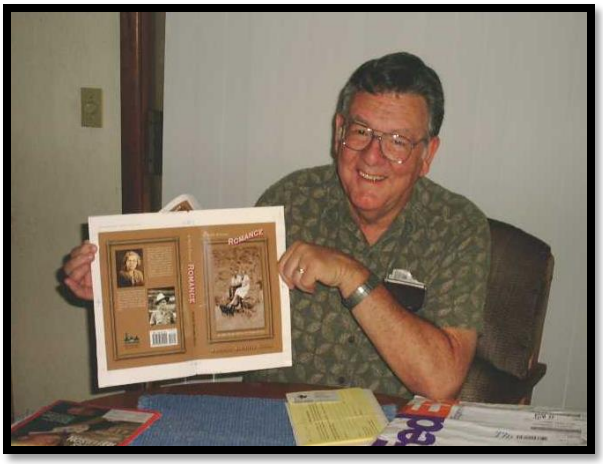
I led a tour of the North Alternate Oregon Trail on Saturday, September 20. This is an interesting tour with many great sites to see. It is also the deadliest route in Idaho. We had several members of the Hagerman Valley Historical Society join us for the tour. I think it is good to share our outings with other groups that love history as much as we do.

In October, the Northwest chapter will be hosting outings to metal detect an emigrant campground north of Pendleton and use cadaver dogs to check suspected graves in the Blue Mountains. Since they do not have those resources in the Northwest chapter, I have helped coordinate our three cadaver dog handlers to assist the Northwest chapter. Thanks to Lori, Debra, and Jenny for helping the Northwest chapter.

The fall chapter meeting will be held on Saturday, October 25, at the Idaho Pizza Company restaurant in Boise at 5150 W Overland Rd, Boise, ID (northwest corner of Overland Road and Orchard Street). The meeting will begin at 11:15 am. We will have our standard short business meeting focusing on preservation and activities, then begin serious work on the 2027 OCTA convention we are hosting in Burley. It is time to get serious about planning the convention. Please join us to meet chapter members and enjoy a salad bar and pizza buffet lunch after the meeting. I hope you will join us on the trail and for the fall chapter meeting.

Bill and Mary Alice Wilson Passing

By Jerry Eichhorst



Bill Wilson and his wife Mary Alice passed away this past winter. Bill had been quite sick after a bout with COVID, spending time in the hospital and at a care facility. Mary Alice passed away a few weeks after Bill.

Bill and Mary Alice met in Pocatello. They celebrated their 50th anniversary in 2014 at The Stonehouse restaurant and bar on the Boise River. Both entered this marriage after previous marriages, and they remained married for six decades.

Bill previously was President, Secretary, and Treasurer of the Idaho chapter. He wrote the Trail Dust newsletter for several years. Bill

gave me his Oregon Trail materials a year ago prior to his illness.
Bill and I spent many days out on the trail together. For many years, he would drive to my house and we would go on outings together, so he did not have to drive. We explored many miles of the desert to find the North Alternate Oregon Trail and other areas. Bill was a great teacher, mentor, and friend. He will be greatly missed.

Lander Road Outing July 22, 2025
By Gary Makey

On July 22, 2025 a group of 5 set out to clarify part of the route of the Lander Road in Caribou National Forest and a strip of BLM land near Wayan, Idaho. The group was made up of Gary Makey, Don Wind, Steve Dayton, Joe and Steve Meyer. The part marked consisted of 2 National Forest trail sections whose existing markers were either broken off or inadequate to follow the trail route. Joe Meyer dropped the others off and drove ahead to supply marker restock and to provide a shuttle back to the starting point.

The rest of us walked the first non-motorized trail section, carrying markers and the pounder, a tool to drive the markers into the ground. A broken marker was replaced and new markers were installed.

Non motorized section of Lander Road

This section ended at a meadow which is used for camping. The meadow can be accessed via a forest service road.

Steve Dayton, Don Wind and Steve Meyer installing a marker at north end of meadow

One might assume that this meadow was also used as a camping location for people on the trail. The trail entered the meadow at the south end and the Lander road continued as a 4-wheeler trail on the north end of the meadow. Joe was here to provide restock.

Lander Road as a 4 wheeler trail

We followed the next section on the 4-wheeler trail until the trail turned east. At this point we assumed the Lander Road would continue north and continued in that direction. We came upon a Lander Road marker leaning against the Forest Service boundary sign which confirmed our assumption. A new marker was installed at this location.

New marker at National Forest Boundary

We were now on BLM land. The Lander road was again a 4-wheeler track. We followed this to a fence at the BLM-private land boundary where we installed a marker..

Annual Model A Car Tour
By Jerry Eichhorst

On June 21, I led a group of seven Model A vintage cars on a tour of the Oregon Trail east of Mountain Home. We followed the route of the morning portion of the annual byway tour, starting east of Mountain Home and working northwest along the Oregon Trail.

We stopped at a location where the Oregon Trail crosses the county road, where long-time friend and IOCTA member Betty Ann Nettleton joined the group. She shared her family's long history of ranching in the area. Her ancestors settled in the area in the 1860's.

We continued to the junction of the main trail with the North Alternate Oregon Trail and the Teapot Dome Hot Springs. We then followed the Trail to the Sweetbriar Winery for a great potluck lunch.

The Elmore County Sheriff's Office sent a deputy and video person along for the day. They created a video of the outing which is

available on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=13KO6DJD8tw.

My thanks to Betty Ann, the Treasure Valley Model A Car Club, Tamara and Mike of Sweetbriar Winery, and the Elmore County Sheriff's Office.

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Beginning of the tour in Mountain Home

Betty Ann Nettleton shared her family's long history in the area

Jerry describing the trials Emigrants faced on the North Alternate.

The cars assembled at Teapot Dome Hot Springs

Leaving Teapot Dome Hot Springs

Craters of the Moon Outing
By Jerry Eichhorst

When I talked to the Idaho Native Plant Society (INPS) in May at Glenns Ferry, I met Ted Stout. Ted worked at Craters of the Moon for many years and is interested in the Jeffreys-Goodale Cutoff (JGC) which skirted the north side of the park and the lava plain that it showcases. He worked with the current park administrators to get access to the restricted area north of Highway 20. On August 23, 2025, a small group of three chapter members, several INPS members, and a park employee hiked to a section of the JGC and followed the route for a short distance. We determined that what looked like the trail on satellite images was really a graded road for a mine. The JGC actually ran in the valley below and was barely visible. Thanks Ted for arranging the outing.

The Jeffreys-Goodale Cutoff climbing out of the valley

A deep swale of the Jeffreys-Goodale Cutoff

An example of the lava fields that the trail skirted.

Hagerman Valley Historical Society Partnership
By Jerry Eichhorst

On September 16, 2025, I went to Hagerman to meet with several members of the Hagerman Valley Historical Society (HVHS). After spending the afternoon looking at a few historical sites in the valley, I gave a presentation on the North Alternate Oregon Trail (NAOT) to about 30 people that evening. The following Saturday, I led a tour of the NAOT which included Idaho chapter and HVHS people. HVHS Archivist Sarah Skaar has joined OCTA and the Idaho chapter.

The HVHS recently moved their museum into the old store/bank building at the south end of town. It provides much more space than their former building and has a long history, appropriate for a museum. One of the additional displays they would like to create is about the rich history of the Oregon Trail in the area. The Oregon Trail ran on the south side of the Snake River, about 10 miles away. The NAOT ran through Hagerman Valley.

I presented the HVHS with a carsonite marker for the display with appropriate decals for the area, a box of Main Oregon Trail Back Country Byway booklets, a packet of NPS Oregon Trail maps, and a handful of OCTA brochures. I plan to help them develop a driving guide for local Trail sites in the area. I also reached out to the person I am working with on the state historical signs about adding one for the NAOT near the museum. It is good to share a love of history and be able to help each organization. I look forward to a great partnership with the HVHS in the future.

The new site of the HVHS Museum

Diaries Across Idaho

By Jerry Eichhorst

Later Diaries

Although we consider the Oregon Trail era to end in the late 1860's, many people continued to travel the route in wagons pulled by horses and mules into the early 1900's. These later accounts provide an interesting insight into the communities along the route. The Hagerman Valley Historical Society recently sent me an account of a family that traveled to Hagerman in 1920. I share a small portion of the family history and the account of Rosie Arterburn here.

Early [Arterburn] was a farmer and in 1916 he decided to leave Edgar County, Illinois and try things out West. After acquiring a "covered wagon," he left Illinois with his wife and 6 children and headed for Mott, North Dakota. They stayed long enough to try farming and acquire two more additions to the family - then the call of the West was heard again and Early packed up his family and headed for the beautiful Hagerman Valley in Idaho. Things were so bad during their trek of 1920 that they had to kill hawks along the way for food to survive. They added one more child to the family for a total of nine children (two had died). The family has remained in the Hagerman Valley and surrounding areas. The last family reunion we had in 1973 was attended by 92 members of the family.

House built by Early Arterburn in 1922

Rosie Arterburn:

I do remember quite a bit about our trip from North Dakota. On June 4, 1920, we left Regent, North Dakota, in a covered wagon. Dad had built a frame on a wagon and covered it over with tin. So we were protected from bad weather. We lived off the land a lot. People were very kind and shared their provisions with us quite freely. They were all surprised and pleased to see us, as covered wagons just didn't come that way so much any more…

From there [Yellowstone Park] we entered Idaho up around the Twin Falls, not the city, then on down past American Falls and then Shoshone Falls. All very beautiful. There was a lot of water going over all of them at that time. Then we went on over the grade in the Hagerman Valley.

We came to Owsley's Ferry and crossed over the Snake River. We arrived in Hagerman in late afternoon. The first place we stopped was at the big rock building at the south end of Hagerman, Morse Roberts store. Now known as the Idaho State Bank.

[This building is the new home of the Hagerman Valley Historical Society.]

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IOCTA Officers and Directors

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