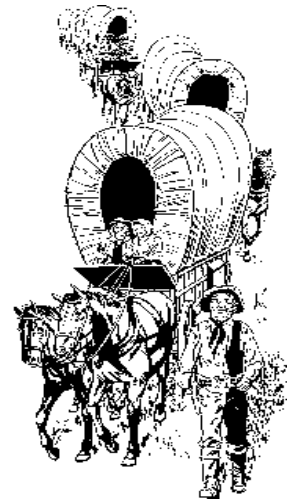


# Trail Dust

Newsletter of the Oregon-California Trails  
Association, Idaho Chapter



**Vol. XXXII Issue 3 Nancy Briggs, Editor, Fall 2020**

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## Tentative Calendar of Events

Nov 14th 2020	Colorado Chapter Zoom Event by Jeff Broome : Indian Raids and Massacres.
April 17 <sup>th</sup> 2021 (tentative)	Main Oregon Trail Back Country Byway Tour
May 1 <sup>st</sup> 2021	OCTA Board Meeting (probably virtual)
May 8 <sup>th</sup> 2021	IOCTA Spring Meeting & Tour, tba
October 9 <sup>th</sup> 2021	IOCTA Fall Meeting & Tour, tba

# Message from the President

By Jerry Eichhorst

Our fall chapter meeting was held as a Zoom meeting on Saturday, October 10. The meeting turned out fine, but I missed seeing everyone in person.

Congratulations go to chapter Vice-President John Briggs who has stepped up to be the national OCTA Vice-President and will become national President in a year. He will be the first person from Idaho to be national President of OCTA.

John's promotion required shuffling and adjusting of positions and people with the following slate being elected or agreeing to serve in appointed positions:

- |                                      |                        |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| • President                          | Jerry Eichhorst        |
| • Vice-President East                | Don Wind               |
| • Vice-President West                | Paul Dinwiddie         |
| • Secretary                          | Dave Price             |
| • Treasurer                          | Dan Dunne              |
| • Board of Directors (Central Idaho) | Betty and Pedro Celaya |
| • Preservation Officer East          | Don Wind               |
| • Preservation Officer West          | Dave Price             |
| • Trail Dust Editor                  | Nancy Briggs           |
| • Webmaster                          | Jerry Eichhorst        |

It was agreed by the leadership team before the meeting that the Historian position was no longer needed in today's digital world.

My sincere thanks to everyone who has agreed to serve the chapter. It requires the assistance of everyone to keep the chapter growing and running smoothly.

One of the outcomes of the meeting was an impromptu trip to Fort Boise a few days later to show several members the site. In anticipation of the trip, I reached out to the manager of the Fort Boise Wildlife Management Area (FBWMA) which controls the site and talked with him about the possibility of creating a couple of interpretive signs for the site. He is agreeable to the concept and will present the idea to his management. It is hoped that the project can be developed and installed with no cost to the FBWMA through grants and help from national OCTA and the NPS Trails Office. Please let me know if you would like to be part of the project team which will be developing these signs.

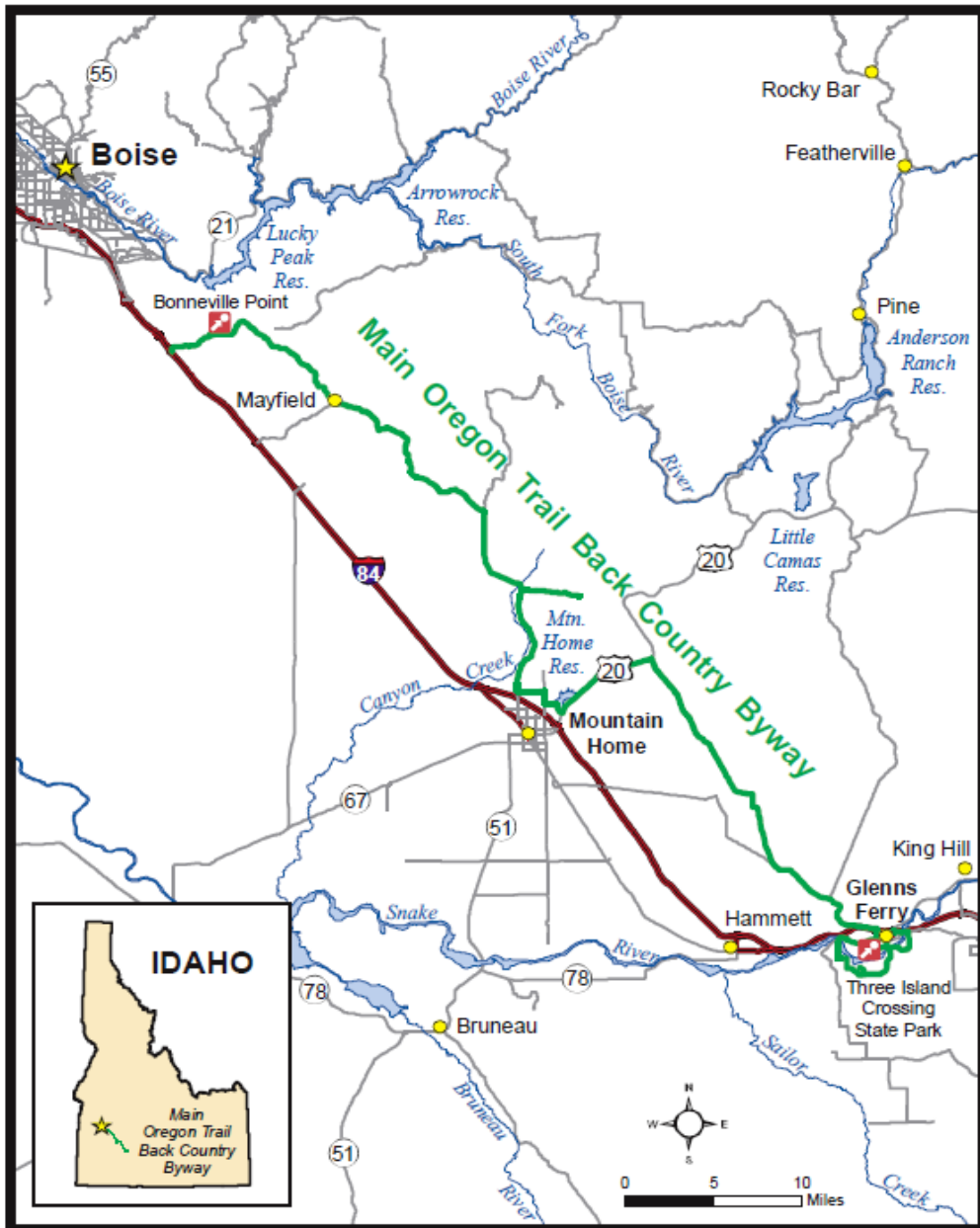
I hope that all of you have a great fall and winter. Stay safe and hopefully we'll be back out on the trails in the spring.

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# Main Oregon Trail Back Country Byway

By Jerry Eichhorst

The Main Oregon Trail Back Country Byway closely follows the Oregon Trail from Three Island Crossing near Glens Ferry to Bonneville Point near Boise. In the era of COVID-19 and the associated self-isolation, social distancing, and lack of public outings, it is still possible to enjoy the Oregon Trail close to Boise by driving the byway route.



Byway map

The Main Oregon Trail Back Country Byway can easily be driven in a day from Boise. Passenger cars can make the journey on paved, gravel, and dirt roads. Be sure to get a copy of the byway booklet for maps, directions, and interesting emigrant diary quotes along the route. The byway booklet is available at BLM offices in Boise, on Development Avenue east of the airport and on South Vinnell Way just west of the Walmart on Overland Road in Boise. The booklet should also be available at Three Island Crossing State Park. You can find the guidebook online at the Idaho OCTA chapter website ([http://idahoocta.org/MOTBCB\\_Booklet.pdf](http://idahoocta.org/MOTBCB_Booklet.pdf)) and on the NPS and BLM websites.

The byway begins at Glens Ferry in southern Idaho with a loop around to the south side of the Snake River overlooking the islands at Three Island Crossing. Excellent trail ruts are marked in this area. A number of interpretive signs are available at the overlook. You can still see the route of the trail as it turned out in the flat and curved back to cross the first channel. The trail then crossed the next channel and went to the upstream tip of the second island before crossing the main portion of the river heading slightly upstream. The third island was not used in the crossing.



*Three Island Crossing from the overlook on the south side of Snake River*

On the north side of the Snake River is Three Island Crossing State Park. The first part of the byway will continue around a loop to the park's History and Education Center where an excellent display of artifacts and information is available. Be sure to stop at the Fudge Factory Grill and Ice Cream shop on Commercial Street for a treat or at the golf course restaurant for lunch and wine tasting.

The second part of the byway heads northwest from Glens Ferry on Old Oregon Trail Road. This road is generally less than a mile south of the Trail. There are several places indicated along the byway where the Trail crosses local roads. Be sure to turn around and return to Old Oregon Trail Road at these locations as some of the directional signs indicating a U-turn have been stolen. Interpretive signs along the route add information at key locations. At the interpretive sign for the Teapot Dome Hot Springs, the dirt road can be followed 100 yards north to the site of the hot springs. These springs have been dried up since wells were sunk for agricultural purposes, but the red stain from the iron-laden water is still visible in the dry creek beds.



*Dry creek beds at Teapot Dome Hot Springs site with Oregon Trail coming down the hill*

Continuing northwest a few miles, the byway reaches Highway 20. Mountain Home is only 8 miles to the south with restroom facilities, food, gas, and other necessities. Just south of Mountain Home Reservoir, the third part of the byway heads through residential areas of northwest Mountain Home to Canyon Creek Road and then turns north back into the desert. At the intersection with Immigrant Road, the byway turns

east for a few miles to where the Kelton Road crosses Immigrant Road. The Kelton Road was a freight road used in the late 1860's and 1870's to transport goods and materials from the railroad at Kelton, Utah, to the Boise area. It followed the Oregon Trail and North Alternate Oregon Trail in many places but branched off the old trails in this area to avoid a very rocky section of road.

Returning to the west, the byway drops down the hill into the valley of Canyon Creek. A heavily used camping area along the Oregon Trail, this location was later a stage stop. The old stage station is on the right of the road. It was given to the BLM a few years ago by the Norstebon family which owns the valley. The BLM has been restoring the station for several years. The Idaho chapter partnered with the Idaho Heritage Trust to get the preservation effort rolling several years ago.

The byway continues to the northwest, much of it through private property. Interpretive signs along the way describe points of interest. Trail remnants can be seen along the road in places, especially where the road turns west at Danskin Mountain Road. The old townsite of Mayfield is passed with another rock stage station. It is located on private property and trespassing is not allowed.

## Main Oregon Trail Back Country Byway

**9 Bonneville Point**  
Topping a long ridge, emigrants were delighted to see a lush river valley lined with cottonwood trees and carpeted with grasses. That view was of the Boise River Valley. The Bonneville Point interpretive site showcases the Oregon Trail story. Trail ruts approaching the site and heading down towards the river are visible today.

**8 Bowns Creek**  
A large granite boulder near the trail became known as an "emigrant post office". Many wrote their names in axle grease on the monolith. Time has taken its toll as many names have faded. However, some are still visible. Trail ruts from the ridge-top and to the south are visible.

**7 Canyon Creek**  
Situated in a small valley, Canyon Creek was a popular camping area for many emigrants along the Oregon Trail. The valley was often crowded with wagons and stock. In later years, a stage station was built to serve the Overland Road. Remains of the station still stand today. Wagon ruts are visible on both sides of the valley.

**6 Kelton Road Crossing**  
At the completion of the America's first Transcontinental Railroad in 1869, a freight road from Kelton, Utah, to Boise was carved across southern Idaho. Ruts of the Oregon Trail and the Kelton Road are visible today in the area.

**5 Hot Springs**  
The Hot Springs location is noted in nearly every diary. Hot water bubbling from the ground mixed with cold-water streams making the site an enjoyable rest stop. The water was hot enough to boil eggs or cook meat. Due to modern day irrigation wells, all that remains are red-colored channels where the springs once flowed.

**4 Hot Springs Creek**  
Following Hot Springs Creek for several miles, the Oregon Trail passed a marshy area with willows and tall grass. Some emigrants thought the water was bad because of its dark color. Ruts are visible along the east side of the creek and heading northwest. Ruts of the North Alternate Oregon Trail are also visible.

**3 Three Island Crossing State Park**  
Discover the larger-than-life history of the Oregon Trail and walk in the footsteps of emigrants at Idaho's Three Island State Park History and Education Center. A full-lookup campground is located next to the river where Oregon Trail ruts are visible between the river and the Education Center.

**2 Two Island Crossing**  
Traveling for two days across the desert with no water available on the trail, many emigrants came to the Snake River at the mouth of Roseaver Gulch to water their stock. Some decided to cross the river by floating their wagons as rafts and forcing cattle to swim the river.

**1 Three Island Crossing Overlook**  
Strong currents and deep water made the crossing of the Snake River dangerous and proved deadly for some. Many decided to continue down the south side of the river. Ruts are still visible on the bluffs in the area and in the fields below the overlook.

*Byway mapboard panel*

The byway winds through the foothills until the road becomes Blacks Creek Road and is paved. The road to Bonneville Point branches to the right. From the interpretive center at the end of the road, the Boise River valley can be seen. The Oregon Trail heads down the hill towards the river valley.

Returning to Blacks Creek Road and turning right, Interstate 84 is soon reached as is the end of the byway. If continuing west on I-84, a side trip can be taken by exiting at Gowen Road and heading east for a couple of miles to the Ada County Oregon Trail

Center. There are excellent trail ruts coming down the hill as well as a ramp to the lower river level.

I lead a tour of the Main Oregon Trail Back Country Byway every spring. I'll take the group to pristine trail ruts and some sites on private property that are not available to the general public. It usually occurs in mid-April but was cancelled this year due to COVID-19.

Watch the chapter website, [www.IdahoOCTA.org](http://www.IdahoOCTA.org), for details about the tour next spring. I am tentatively targeting Saturday, April 17, assuming it is safe to have the tour by then.



*The byway follows Mayfield Road along the base of the foothills.*

# Visit to Old Fort Boise Oct 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020

By John Briggs

Following a comment at the (virtual) October Chapter Meeting by David Price about the sorry state of the Hudson Bay Company (HBC) Fort Boise Monument in the Fort Boise Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in Canyon County, Jerry Eichhorst arranged a visit. Katherine Kirk, Executive Director of the Idaho Heritage Trust, was with us having prompted interest in reviewing what options there may be for 'improving' the site. The 'tour' first took in 'Replica' Fort Boise in Parma, Idaho.



*Virgel Clark, Jerry Eichhorst, Katherine Kirk & Paul Dinwiddie*

Mask wearing and proper social distancing guidelines were followed! There are statues here commemorating Marie Dorion and the Snake Indian Howluck better known as 'Bigfoot' and, to the Bannocks as 'Nam-Puh'. Marie Dorion was the only woman to have traveled with Wilson Price Hunt in the 1810 Pacific Fur Company overland expedition. She, and her children, were also the only survivors in 1814 of the Bannock raid on John Reid's winter 'Post' set at the confluence of the Boise and Snake Rivers.

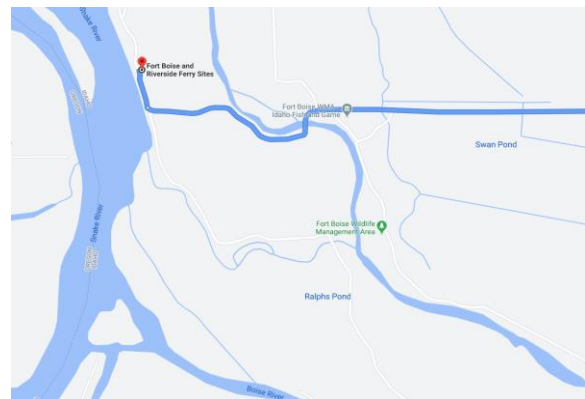
Heading west from the replica on US 26 W/US 95 NW we turned off on Highway 18 S and parked where it crosses the Boise River. The original 'Snake' Fort built in 1834 by Thomas McKay, for the HBC, was located upstream from here on the Boise River. This is the same general

location that John Reid had used and where Donald Mackenzie decided to build a 'Post' for the NW Fur Company in 1819 but soon abandoned under pressure from local Native Americans. The HBC Fort of 1834, renamed Fort Boise, was relocated several times in this area due to flooding risks finishing up close to the site we were to visit next.



*Discussing the Marie Dorion stories at Fort Boise*

On our tour, we returned to US 26/95 in Parma and headed north 2.4 miles to Old Fort Boise Road. This road is signposted for Fort Boise and for the WMA. It is 3.4 miles from there to the parking area for the Fort Boise and Riverside Ferry sites.



*The Old Fort Boise Road into the Wildlife Management Area*



The final stretch of road in is a little rough but can be navigated by a standard passenger car. There is a pit toilet here, but the only Information Panels are about the Wildlife Management Area. All agreed that this would be an excellent location for a couple of Old Fort Boise information panels.



This is the Monument as of October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Apart from information panels we will also need to get permission to tidy up the vegetation surrounding it! Jerry's article on page 10 describes the origins of the statue in some detail.

The HBC Fort that McKay built was built from adobe and did suffer from the frequent flooding of this low-lying area. Bear in mind that this is not only the confluence of the Snake and Boise Rivers but that the Owyhee River joins just ½ mile further upstream.



*Fort Boise in 1849*

It was built to challenge Nathaniel Wyeth's Fort Hall and take advantage of the fur trade in the Boise River valley. Initially it was guaranteed by HBC but then in 1836 became a company post, managed by Francois Payette. In 1844 he retired, and James Craigie managed it as the fur trade declined but its importance as a regional center for salmon fishing grew.

In 1851 the Fort consisted of an adobe wall enclosure which was 12 ½ ft high and 1 ½ ft thick, total length 400 ft. Inside were two large adobe dwellings and one range of a further three dwellings. There were two bastions one of which was on the NE corner. The door was on the west, river side, of the wall. Also, inside were a kitchen and a milk-house. There was a two-acre garden and further land had been cleared for cattle and horses.

After the great flood of 1853, the fort was only partially rebuilt. Then in 1854 the Ward massacre and escalating conflict that followed, caused HBC to abandon it in 1855. The ruins were obliterated in the flood of 1862. Together with the repeated shifting of the Snake River channel means there is no visible sign of the Fort today.

The site is also important as the location of a ferry. At first a canoe was used to ferry pioneers on the Oregon Trail across the Snake. In 1863 Jonathan Keeney began operation of the Riverside Ferry. Then in 1866 the Steamboat 'Shoshone' was built near here to provide a permanent service across the river. As business declined this sternwheeler ran Hells Canyon eventually to service the Willamette!



*Looking upstream from the Old Fort Boise monument.*

# What is the Old Fort Boise Statue?

By Jerry Eichhorst

The concrete statue at the old Fort Boise site in the Fort Boise Wildlife Management Area on the Snake River west of Parma has always been considered to be of a lion's head. It is even referred to as that in the Smithsonian Institution inventory of statues:

Sculptors: Paul Yadon, Art Yensen

Date: Sept. 21, 1971. Oct. 18, 1971

Summary: An obelisk, with lion's head carved at top. The animal has a red mane, yellow and black eyes, grey nose, and a yellow-brown throat. A low relief of the Hudson Bay flag is carved on the obelisk below the lion's head; on the back, a bow and broken arrow appear. A rifle is carved on the proper left side and a matchlock rifle appears on the proper right side.



But it does not look much like a lion. The ears of a lion point forward, the nose is not nearly as wide as that of the statue. The hair on the female lion is short and fine but the statue appears to have course long hair, but not so long as a male lion. The mouth is not flat all the way across. Nowhere could I find the Hudson's Bay Company associated with a lion. Not on their logo. Not on their flag. The statue just does not look much like a lion to me.



In an email with long-time IOCTA member and Oregon Trail expert Wally Meyer, he suggested that it might be a beaver. A beaver? I had never considered that because it is supposed to be a lion's head. It made sense in a way since the HBC was built on trapping beaver. A quick search of beaver pictures produced the thought that parts of the statue certainly looked more like a beaver than a lion. The statue hair looked much like the wet hair of a beaver. The statue ears are small like a beaver but pointed in the wrong direction. Beavers don't sit with their head elevated as the statue shows. And of course the statue nose is far too wide for a beaver.





Focusing on the width of the nose led me to consider a hippopotamus. In Idaho? Hippos were never mentioned in any immigrant diary that I have seen. A few wrote of “seeing the elephant” but not of “seeing the hippo.” The nose and mouth of the hippo look much like that of the statue. The ears point the correct direction but are larger than the ears on the statue. The eyes of the hippo stick out unlike those of the statue. The hair was all wrong, however, and the nostrils on a hippo are on the top of the nose not the corners like the statue.

So there could be only two explanations for the statue:

1) the artists were not very realistic in whatever they were modeling, or

2) the artists created a statue of the long-lost “lipover” (pronounced “**Li-Po-Ver**”). Yes, the lipover. An ancient aquatic creature which lived in Lake Idaho millions of years ago. It must have survived the ice age, the dinosaurs, the crashing of meteors into the earth, and the great Bonneville Flood by nesting in the bottomlands of the Snake River near the mouth of the Boise River. Hiding in the daytime, feeding at night by moonlight, eating marsh grasses and other aquatic plants. A small colony somehow survived until one was spotted by the sculptors of the statue who preserved the beast for all time. Now that the mystery has been solved, I can go back to more serious diary research. Merry Christmas!

# *Diaries Across Idaho*

## Snake River Plain – A Jumble of Roads

By Jerry Eichhorst

As the mid-1850's arrived, travelers to the original Fort Hall dwindled dramatically. Floods did great damage to the fort and an increase in Indian problems across Idaho helped cause the Hudson's Bay Company to abandon the fort. The creation of a new route in 1854 by John Jeffreys led to the creation of a new road north of the fort to the ferry at the mouth of the Blackfoot River. With the development of the Lander Road in 1857, a new road cut across the Snake River plain directly to the crossing of the Portneuf River, bypassing the site of the original fort. Emigrants often noted the old road and the abandoned fort.

*Drove five miles, down the valley of Ross's Fork. This brought us out into the wide open valley of Stake [Snake] or Lewis River. Two miles further is the forks in the Road. The Left is the old Salmon Falls road. the Right is "Jeffrey's Cutoff".*

*Winfield Scott Ebey, Monday July 31<sup>st</sup> 1854*

*10<sup>th</sup>: Our road lay near the stream formed by the spring [Ross Fork]. through the mountains till after noon then struck Snake River Valley. Here we took a cut off which leaves Fort Hall to the right and strikes the road beyond.*

*George McCowen, July 10, 1854*

*Started at 9 drove 10 miles down the river [Ross Fork] road good stopt to noon one mile before crossing the river. Here is a bridge. We leave Fort Hall [we are] to the left 10 miles drove to big bridge on Port Neuf*

*William H. Babcock, July 23, 1859*

*After going about 6 miles this morning we got fairly out of the mountains & came on to an expensive plain, as far as the eye could reach – passed Ft. Hall some 5 miles*

*to the north & camped on the River Neiff at 8:30 pm.*

*Hamet Hubbard Case, August 5, 1859*

*about 11 oclock we passed oposite Fort Hall which [is] a bout 6 miles from the road on our right the Fort is Vacated & some of the buildings destroyed but will be re paired a gain*

*J. S. McClung, August 6, 1862*

*We harnessed up and drove some six miles, when we came to the junction of the roads leading to Salmon River by crossing the Snake river [Jeffreys Cutoff] and the old emigrant road to Fort Walla Walla which is on this side of the Snake.*

*John M. Clark, August 15, 1862*

*In Snake River Valley, but several miles from the river. We here intersect the Salt Lake and Virginia City road. Here we are, upon a sage plain, with roads running in every direction. We are at a loss which to take.*

*Julius Caesar Merrill, August 26, 1864*

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### **IOCTA Officers and Directors**

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<i>Don Wind</i>	<i>VP - East</i>
<i>Paul Dinwiddie</i>	<i>VP - West</i>
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