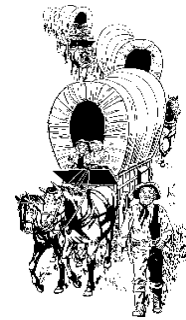


Trail Dust

Newsletter of the Oregon-California Trails Association, Idaho Chapter
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Fires on the Trail

Article and small photos by Jerry Eichhorst



Fire spreads across hillside west of Hagerman near Oregon Trail. Photo by Mel Eichhorst

The summer of 2010 was tough for the Oregon Trail across southern Idaho. Two major fires burned large portions of the trails. A fire on King Hill, north of Glens Ferry, burned across the North Alternate Oregon Trail/Kelton Road. Another fire in the Hagerman area burned across the main Oregon Trail as it climbs the bluff along the Snake River.

Terry Heslin, Trails & Travel Management Coordinator, National Scenic & Historic Trails for the BLM, Idaho State Office, and Kirk Halford, Deputy Preservation Officer/State Archaeologist, also for the BLM, Idaho State Office, joined me to visit the King Hill burn in September. Surprisingly, most of the carsonite markers survived the fast-moving fire.

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In one section along King Hill, however, it was necessary to create a fire line along the trail route as it traveled along the top of a ridge. The damage was not nearly as bad as it could have been, according to Terry:

Unfortunately, the portion damaged was a very much intact and impressive part of the North Alternate of the Oregon Trail. We all know that in the heat of fire there are things that happen that are very much out of our control and there are circumstances where dozer line needs to be placed to save life and property, so we are not at all questioning the decision making that went into placement of the dozer line, but this incident gave us the opportunity to reflect on what steps we can take to avoid such scenarios in the future. Kirk and I advised our archaeologist and other Resource Advisors (typically assigned to any fire where cultural or natural resources are at risk) to check their "Resource Advisor Kit" to ensure that up to date and accurate maps of all Trails and trail alternates are included as well as other important resource information. If data is missing then Kirk and I can work on securing funding for future surveys and data development. We also emphasized how important it is to coordinate with the resource advisor and Field Manager early to let them know of specific resource concerns and be prepared to provide ancillary maps and site specific data that may not be included in the resource advisor's kit. In most cases lack of good information and communication is a key missing link that leads to potentially avoidable resource

damage, so resource advisors can engage early and make expertise available to the fire management team.

We do want to compliment the dozer driver as they did an incredible job of reducing resource damage by having a light touch on the blade, only scouring the surface of the ground to remove vegetation. This requires incredible finesse with such a big piece of equipment. Due to the light touch a little shovel and rake work and the damaged areas of the trail could be recontoured and mitigated. The dozer along with retardant drops were effective in stopping the fire and avoiding potentially disastrous consequences as two ranches were not far removed and in the direct path of the prevailing winds and no doubt the head of the fire. It certainly could have been worse, and subsequently we learned some important lessons about how we can protect historic trails during fire suppression activities.

Personally, I appreciate the willingness of the BLM to consider the trails when they have such massive fires to deal with. IOCTA is happy to do anything that we can do to help with mapping the locations of the various trails to ensure that the Resource Advisor Kits are accurate.



Terry Heslin and Kirk Halford survey fire damage to North Alternate on King Hill

Message from the IOCTA President

By Jerry Eichhorst

Greetings members and friends of IOCTA. It is with a fair amount of trepidation that I take on the position of chapter President. I have been Vice-President for a number of years and enjoyed working with former President Doug Jenson as he guided the chapter for the last 6 years. It was time, however, for Doug to step down as he has served the chapter well. Fortunately, Doug is willing to stay on as a Vice-President in addition to his work as a national Board of Directors member. I plan to lean on him for guidance, but now it is time for someone else to take the reins.

Many of you know me already, but for those who do not, I will provide a quick overview. I have been an IOCTA member for over 13 years, serving as Vice-President and Webmaster for many years. The last couple of years I have helped with the production and distribution of the *Trail Dust* newsletter as well. I have been putting the Main Oregon Trail Back Country Byway together for the last 3 years. I worked with Suzi Pengilly and Wally Meyer on completing the new Ada County Oregon Trail Interpretive Center and Trailhead this summer. I consider myself a diary researcher. I work full-time for the JR Simplot Company as an IT Business Analyst. And every once in a great while, I like to go fishing or play softball.

IOCTA is facing a problem that most volunteer organizations, including national OCTA, are struggling with: membership is declining steadily. I believe that the root causes are an aging membership, lack of interesting activities, and a certain amount of burnout after hosting the national convention two years ago. Unfortunately, IOCTA is now at a critical point in this decline. Only 10 members attended the chapter meeting in Bliss on October 9. Outings have been sparsely attended for many years. Most people that joined IOCTA for the Nampa convention have not renewed their memberships.

It is important for IOCTA to continue as a viable organization in order to pass on knowledge about the emigrant trails across

Idaho. Preservation and marking are two of the major contributions which IOCTA offers. Yet with declining membership, these efforts become less likely to stay current.

Therefore, I believe that we need to infuse new energy into the organization in order to ensure it's continued operation for many years to come. We are blessed with an incredible core of members who have a great wealth of information about the emigrant trails in Idaho. We need to capitalize on this knowledge to attract new members.

Towards this goal, I will be working with IOCTA leadership to develop a plan for the coming year. I firmly believe that this effort is not something that only one person can perform and will require assistance from everyone. I know that it will take a great deal of work and planning to reinvigorate IOCTA. I look forward to the challenge and hope that many of you will volunteer to help with the effort. Can you put together a slide show and present something about the Trails? Can you lead an outing? Can you help publicize activities in your area? Can you make room arrangements for a presentation? There will be plenty to do.

Please seriously consider making a personal commitment to help with this effort, then contact me with any ideas and your commitment to help.



Byway Update

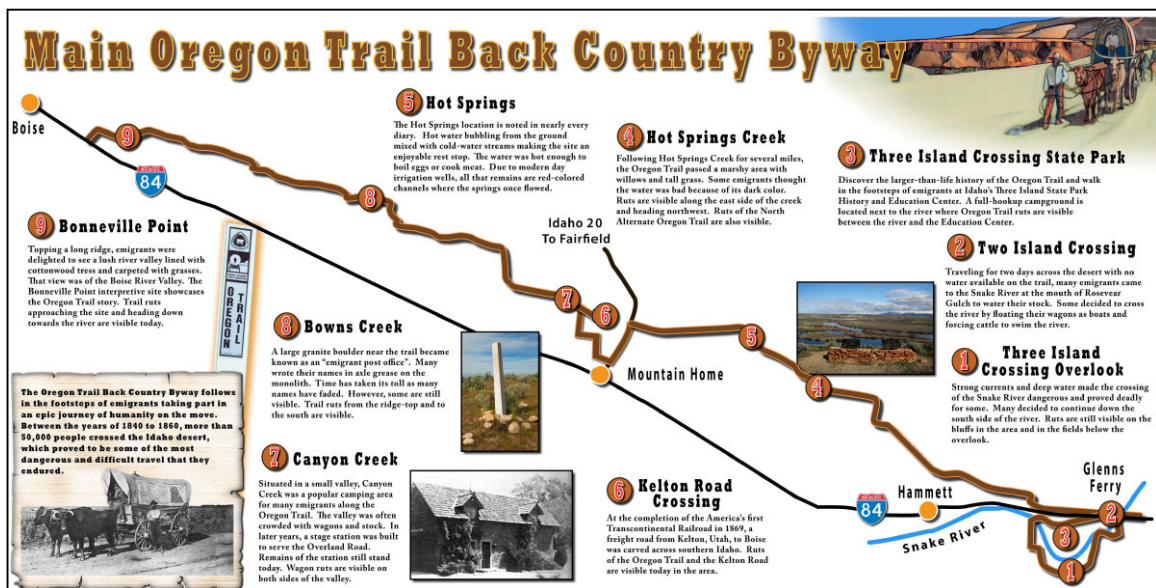
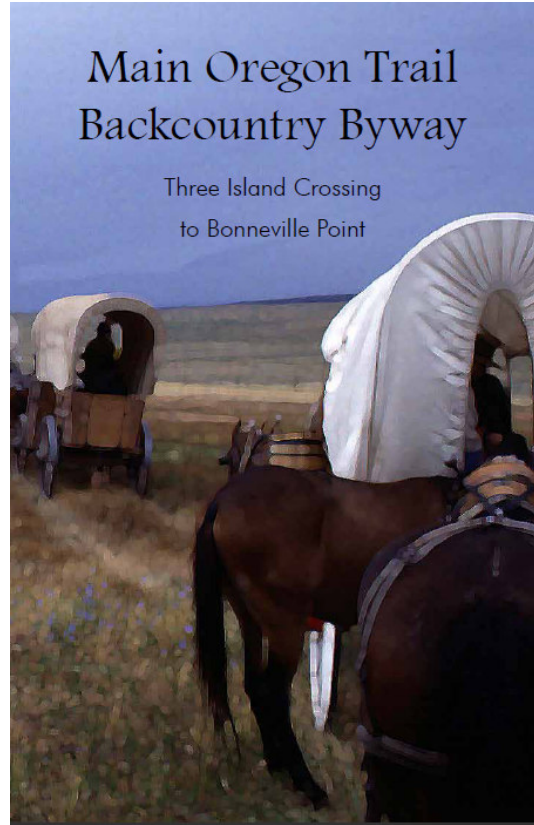
Article by Jerry Eichhorst

Great progress is being made on the Main Oregon Trail Back Country Byway this fall. The directional signs and interpretive sign stands around Glens Ferry to Highway 20 have been installed. Those from Highway 20 to Boise should be installed within a few weeks.



The mapboard signs have been finished and are also ready for delivery and installation.

In addition, the revised byway booklet has been formatted by the BLM graphic artist and is ready to take to the printer. I anticipate printing about 10,000 copies of the booklet this fall. It has been very well received by the public in the last 2 years.



The interpretive sign panels will be developed through the winter. An artist is going to create a small sketch for each location which will be combined with historical information and diary quotes to create an interesting panel.



The Boy Scouts have been doing a great job with their Eagle projects to install concrete posts along the byway. One project is complete as 27 posts were installed between Glens Ferry and Highway 20 north of Mountain Home. The other project has replaced 10 posts along the Oregon Trail near Bonneville Point and installed 2 new posts at the Ada County Oregon Trail Interpretive Center and Trailhead. The remaining posts will be installed along Mayfield Road northwest of Mountain Home. My thanks to both young men and their helping crews for such great work.



Chapter Meeting Summary

Article by Jerry Eichhorst

The IOCTA chapter held it's annual fall meeting on Saturday, October 9. Only 10 members traveled to the meeting held at the Oxbow Café in Bliss, Idaho. A typical business meeting was conducted with chapter elections held at the end of the meeting. Minutes of the meeting may be found on the IOCTA web site at www.IdahoOCTA.org after they are published. Chapter officers and Board of Director members are:

President	Jerry Eichhorst
Vice-President	Doug Jenson
Vice-President	Lyle Lambert
Treasurer	Bill Wilson
Secretary	Kay Coffman
Preservation	Dell Mangum
Historian	Peggy Cristobal
Webmaster	Jerry Eichhorst
Trail Dust Editor	Suzi Pengilly
Directors new:	Wally Meyer
continuing:	Amy Ballard
	Peggy Cristobal
	Jim Payne
	Suzi Pengilly

We thank each of these members for their willingness to help with the operation of the chapter. Please contact any officer or director if you have any questions or suggestions. Contact information can be found on the last page of the Trail Dust.

A warm welcome to IOCTA's newest members. Please join us in the chapter activities.

Martha Boeckling, Meridian
Ellen Druckenbrod, Boise

Soles Rest Creek

Article and photos by Jerry Eichhorst

On a beautiful fall day in September, Wally Meyer and I met ranch owner Steve DeMale to explore Soles Rest Creek and Ditto Creek. Both creeks run through Steve's ranch and were routes down from the mountains on the Jeffrey-Goodale Cutoff.



We met Steve and he drove us around the ranch on "goat trails". We hiked the portions of Soles Rest Creek where wagons might have camped. Steve found what appeared to be a single grave.



We then worked our way far up Ditto Creek past the point where the alternate route branched off to Soles Rest Creek. Near the point of the split is a large

granite rock which has a few names written on it from long ago travelers.



I was glad that Steve was driving and we were in his truck! Steve, thanks for being a great host. The outing was a lot of fun and we look forward to going out with you again.



Diaries Across Idaho

Souls Rest Creek

by Jerry Eichhorst

Many years ago I heard about a possible massacre on the Jeffrey-Goodale route near where it joined the main Oregon Trail. There are two Jeffrey-Goodale routes coming down from the mountains to the main Oregon Trail. The main route followed Ditto Creek, the other followed Soles Rest Creek. Researching the available diaries revealed that about a quarter of these diarists mentioned seeing the burned wagons and graves while the majority did not.

My conclusion is that if a massacre occurred, it must have been on the least traveled route of the two, Soles Rest Creek. This would explain why most of the Jeffrey-Goodale travelers did not see the remains. It is interesting that what is now known as "Soles Rest Creek" is listed on earlier maps as "Souls Rest Creek". Could the original name be due to the graves of massacred immigrants? Seems like little was known about it even back then. Time, continued research, and exploration may shed some light on this mystery.

Aug 9th. ...Traveled to the old Oregon road at the place of the massacre of 1853. There is one grave here and a great many bones of persons as well as bones of animals, also wagon irons...

Nellie Slater, 1862

We traveled slowly down through Big Camas through Little Camas down Ditto Creek, and camped about a mile below where Robert Sproat now lives. Here we found the remains of about twenty wagons that had been burned and the people all murdered by Indians eight years before...

Oliver B. Slater, 1862

Our road was through big and little Camas prairie and struck the old Oregon Trail at the massacre grounds, where a whole train was massacred in '52. This route had not been traveled since. The wagon irons were lying in circular shape in the tall rye grass; the wagons had been burned, and human skulls were lying in the grass also.

Dunham Wright, 1862

July 27th. ...Reached at noon Massacre Creek, a beautiful grove on the banks of a small stream. It seems that a large emigrant train was in camp here a few years since when in the night the whole train was massacred leaving not one to tell the tale. Of course, it was charged on Indians, but investigation proved that it was done by a band of so-called "destroying angels" of the Morman Church at Salt Lake not far off, in revenge for the severe persecution of their Church and the murder of their prophet Joe Smith at Nanvo, Illinois, some years since, by a party of masked men. It is a beautiful place with rippling water falls and songs of birds, yet such a sense of sadness and loneliness comes over me while penciling these lines that the orders to move were welcome words. This afternoon go down the creek a few miles to the Junction of our road and the Salt Lake road, we going in northwesternly direction leaving Salt Lake to the south...

Harriet A. Loughary, 1864

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