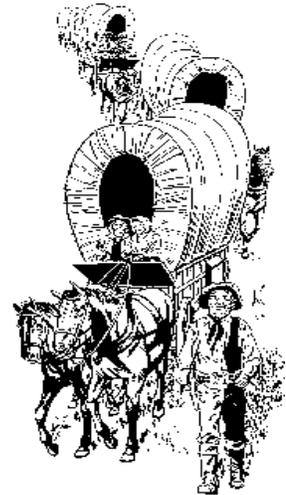


Trail Dust

Newsletter of the Oregon-California Trails
Association, Idaho Chapter

Vol. XXXIII Issue 3 *Nancy Briggs, Editor, Fall 2021*



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Tentative Calendar of Events

October 23 rd 2021	IOCTA Fall Chapter Meeting, 11:15 am, Idaho Pizza Company, Overland and Orchard Boise
Spring 2022	Visit to INL to see Jeffrey's/Goodale Cutoff (Limited number of visitors)
Jan 27 th – 30 th 2022	San Diego Symposium and Board Meeting
Aug 28 – Sep 3 rd 2022	Annual Convention, Casper WY

Message from the President

By Jerry Eichhorst

The OCTA convention in Elko was a huge success. It was great to see so many friends again and get out to explore the California Trail and the Toano Road. I enjoyed the speakers, socialization, and especially the Basque dinner at the Star Hotel. I remember going there 10 years ago at my first Elko convention with a number of Idaho chapter members and have looked forward to going there again ever since. Delicious food!

I want to thank Paul Dinwiddie and Don Wind for leading the California Trail pre-convention tour. I heard a number of great reports on the tour at the convention. They both took on the challenge of learning the route and history in order to provide a great tour.

My congratulations again to John Briggs who is now the first person from the Idaho chapter to be the OCTA president. He will do a great job of leading the organization.

The Lander Road Lane's Grave sign project is progressing well. Sign content has been approved and negotiations are in progress with ITD to install the signs. I am starting a new project working with the town of Arco and Butte County to develop historical and interpretive signage about the Jeffreys Route in the area. It will be a long-term project to define what they want to do, how to obtain funding, and how to develop and install what is developed. I plan to involve the NPS Trails Office once the Arco people can define what they are looking to develop.

The fall chapter meeting will be held on Saturday, October 23, at the Idaho Pizza Company at Overland Road and Orchard Avenue in Boise. The meeting will start at 11:15. The restaurant opens at 11:00 am. I hope that everyone will be able to attend. I do not plan to have a Zoom digital component for the meeting. After a short business meeting, we will have a couple of special guest speakers.

I am looking forward to teaching my Boise Schools Community Education classes again in the spring. Hopefully the COVID pandemic will allow me to do so and life will get closer to normal.

See you on the trails!

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Thoughts on the Elko Convention

By Jerry Eichhorst

The 2020 OCTA convention to be held in Elko, Nevada, was postponed due to the COVID pandemic. Plans were made to have the convention in 2021 with the hopes that the world would be a safer place by then. As the time for the convention approached, the latest variant of coronavirus was spreading rampantly. OCTA leadership decided to have the convention but require all participants to be vaccinated. The State of Nevada issued a requirement that masks must be worn indoors. But the convention could go on.

My convention started on Sunday, September 12, with the Board of Directors meeting. It was a good meeting with only a couple of people feeling the need to restate everything in their written report. Meanwhile, Paul Dinwiddie and Don Wind, Idaho chapter vice-presidents, were leading day 2 of the California Trail pre-convention tour. Everything I heard about the tour is that they did a wonderful job. My thanks to Paul and Don for leading the tour.

The first day of the convention started with the membership meeting in which our own John Briggs became the OCTA President. Our congratulations and support for John. He is a brilliant person and will do a great job as the President. The rest of the day was filled with speakers, and a Basque dancer presentation at a park across the street from the convention center. A number of us then went to dinner at a Mexican restaurant.

Tuesday was a bus tour day. I have had very bad luck with bus tours through the years so elected to do my own exploring of the California Trail. Paul and Lisa Dinwiddie went with me as we explored the California

Trail north of Wells, Nevada, as it traveled over the Humboldt Divide.



California Trail near the Humboldt Divide

It turned out to be a great section of trail with beautiful scenery, a number of pronghorns, and impressive ruts.



Humboldt route of California Trail heading towards the Humboldt Wells (springs) in the valley below

The day was capped with an Idaho group dinner at the Star Hotel Basque Restaurant. I had been waiting for 10 years since the last Elko convention to go back to the restaurant. It was worth the wait!

Wednesday was filled with more speakers, and the awards dinner. I was blessed to receive the Merrill Mattes award for writing the *Overland Journal* articles about the travelers and Indian attacks on the Jeffreys Route in 1854. I received the award 12 years ago for my article on Rediscovering the

North Alternate Oregon Trail. I find the award is much more meaningful to me this time around as I recognize how important the award is and how much hard work goes into preparing an article worthy of the award. My thanks to OCTA for honoring me with this award.

Thursday was another bus tour day and thus another exploration day for me. Paul and past *Overland Journal* editor Marlene Smith-Baranzini went with me back to Wells for a day of exploring the California Trail west of Highway 93 to Elko. We followed the Trails West guide and found all except one of the T-rail markers in that stretch.



Bishop Creek Canyon on the Bishop Creek route of the California Trail

We explored Bishop Creek Canyon and visited the old townsite of Metropolis, a 1910's ghost town which started with grand ideas of a new town and dried up when they lost their access to water.



Arch of the Metropolis school building

Remains of the hotel and school buildings still remain and make for an interesting visit. We continued by following the Trails West

guide to track down the markers to Elko. It was another great day of seeing California Trail sites followed by the End of the Convention dinner at the convention center.

Friday was the day to drive home. For the last few years I have wanted to explore the Toano Road from northeast of Wells to the Snake River at Salmon Falls Creek. The Toano Road was a freight road from the transcontinental railroad to Boise. Because I was as close to the old railroad town of Toano as I was going to be for some time, I decided to lead a tour of the Toano Road that day. Ten people chose to follow me into the unknown Nevada desert on roads I had never traveled before. Brave people!



Ten brave souls who followed me on the Toano Road (tracks through the middle of the picture)

We ended up traveling extremely dusty roads for several hours. The tire ruts were deep and straddling the hump was sometimes impossible, so we often had to straddle the ruts.

We found the old Toano townsite filled with rock foundations, colored broken glass, and metal trash. We followed the Toano Road northwest across the dusty desert, finally coming out to Highway 93 at the Thousand Springs valley road. It was a very interesting trip, and I am glad we were able to make it through without incident. We'll do the remaining sections in the future.



An old foundation at the Toano townsite

It was great to see so many friends at the convention. The Idaho chapter was well-represented with about 20 members present.



California Trail heading from the Humboldt springs to the west

It was fun to explore parts of the California Trail and the Toano Road which I had never seen before.



California Trail just a few miles east of Elko. Note I-80 on the left of the photo.

The speakers and dinners were good. All in all, it was a great convention which I enjoyed a lot. I am looking forward to next year's convention in Casper, Wyoming. I might have to see what kind of treks I can do on bus days again. I hope you will plan on attending the Casper convention.

Convention Tour to Fort Ruby and Ruby Valley

John Briggs

The Convention Bus Tours were very good!

Whenever we have driven north through Nevada on US 93 we have admired the snow-capped Ruby Mountains and hoped to have the opportunity to get closer to them. The 2021 Convention Tour to Fort Ruby and the Ruby Valley enabled us to do just that!

The Mountains rise 6000 feet above the Ruby Valley floor to 11,400 ft. They are oriented just a few degrees off North and South (i.e., NbE to SbW), which is why one can see them from US 93 for such an extended time. On the north end lies Secret Pass through which we drove but which Lansford Hastings determined was too difficult for wagons. Instead, he led wagons south, forgoing Harrison Pass (which the Bidwell

Bartleson pack train used) all the way to the south end and Overland Pass. We followed his route all the way to Cave Creek and Fort Ruby.



Ruby Mts from Ruby Valley

We started at Fort Halleck site where Nevada 229 south exits I 80, close to Wells. The Fort closed in 1886 and little remains of it now.

Continuing south on NV 229 we climbed through Secret Pass used by Peter Skene Ogden in the 1820s.

We then dropped down into Ruby Valley following the Hastings Cutoff on the east flank of the Ruby Mountains. Norm Cavanaugh educated us on the important Western Shoshone sites en-route.

Ruby Lake, after which the National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) is named, is more marsh than it is lake but it is an important stopping off point for migratory birds.

We were given a brief introduction at the Refuge to the NWR and the history of the valley and then continued south to the site of Fort Ruby. The Fort was built here in 1862 to protect the Overland Trail from the Utah border to Austin in mid-Nevada which crossed the southern end of Ruby Valley.



Spring House at Fort Ruby sits on damp ground close to a Spring and was used as cold storage for supplemental foods

After the Treaty of Ruby Valley was signed in 1863, even though it is regarded today by local Shoshone leaders as something that was forced on them, conflicts declined and the Fort was closed in 1869. The troops stationed there were moved to Fort Halleck which was in turn closed in 1886.

Two structures have been restored. The Spring House, shown above, is believed to have been used for cold storage of meats and vegetables. It is partly embedded in the damp ground close to a Spring which keeps it relatively cool.

A log cabin is not thought to be of military grade set up by a supplier to the Fort.



Jim and Dawn Fazio of the Idaho Chapter at the log cabin

Visible from the Fort is the site of the 1860 built Pony Express Station now restored in Elko.

We returned to the NWR for lunch and many then took the short hike to Cave Creek where a natural water source springs from a hole in a cave at the base of the Ruby Mts.



Cave Creek Trail approaching the Rock Shelter

The cave was used by Native Americans, pioneers on the Hastings Cutoff and soldiers, many of whom left their 'marks' on the walls and ceilings of the rock shelter.



Settler signatures on the wall of the Cave.

Secret Pass and the entrance to Ruby Valley are about 2 ½ hours south of Twin Falls, Idaho, and about 45 minutes from Wells, NV.

Convention Tour from Elko to (near) Gravelly Ford

John Briggs

First stop was Les Schwab in order to quell the continuous alarm associated with uneven tire pressure! Soon, thereafter we stopped at the 'now diminished' Elko Hot Hole.



The 'Hot Hole' at Elko

This is one of several hot springs used by Native Americans, Fur Trappers and Pioneers in the area near Elko.

At the California Trail Center, we stopped to look across the Humboldt to where the Hastings Cutoff exited South Fork Canyon. The Trail then continues through Carlin Canyon, which we were to visit on the return journey. While the river was very low for our visit it did in the past occasionally fill Carlin Canyon and an alternative route known as Greenhorn Alternate was taken.



Start of Greenhorn Cutoff

We made two stops in the old railroad town of Carlin. The first was just to the SW, on State Route 278, where the California Trail ascended a 'considerable hill' now known as Emigrant Pass.



Interpretive Board with Emigrant Pass in the background

Carlin became home to many Chinese Construction workers once the railroad was complete. They planted vegetable gardens and sold produce to the mining communities. We stopped off at the restored Chinese Gardens.

Poor road conditions meant we could not stop at Gravelly Ford, but we were able to go on to Beowawe and the Lucinda Parker Duncan (the mother of the wagon train) gravesite relocated to a bluff overlooking the Humboldt west of Gravelly Ford.



Final stop was to see the Ruts in Carlin Canyon



Carlin Canyon

Diaries Across Idaho

By Jerry Eichhorst

Early Descriptions of Fort Hall

Fort Hall was originally built as a wooden stockade, made of cottonwood logs from along the Snake River. It was built in late July and early August 1834, by Nathaniel Jarvis Wyeth, after he was too late to the annual rendezvous at Ham's Fork. By 1838, the outer walls had been rebuilt using sun-dried adobe bricks. Here are some of the early descriptions of the first stockade.

On the 18th [July] we commenced the fort, which was a stockade eighty feet square, built of cottonwood trees set on end, sunk two and one-half feet in the ground and standing about fifteen feet above, with two bastions eight feet square at the opposite angles. On the 4th of August the fort was completed and on the 5th the "Stars and Stripes" were unfurled to the breeze at sunrise in the center of a savage and uncivilized country, over an American trading post.

Osborne Russell, 1834

At the fort, the affairs look prosperous: the stockade is finished; two bastions have been erected, and the work is singularly good, considering the scarcity of proper building tools.

John Kirk Townsend, July 26, 1834

The name of Capt. W's. fort is Fort Hall, its latitude 43° 14' north. The place is not pleasant, the sand being frequently driven about by the wind in as large quantities as snow in the east.

Jason Lee, July 28, 1834

Fort Hall, in 1836, was a stockade, made of cotton-wood logs, about twelve feet long, set some two feet in the ground, with a piece of timber pinned near the top,

running entirely around the stockade, which was about sixty feet square. The stores and quarters for the men were built inside with poles, brush, grass, and dirt for covering, stamped down so as to partially shed rain, and permit the guards to be upon the tops of the quarters and see over the top of the stockade. It is situated on an extensive level plain or flat, with spurs of the Rocky Mountains on the east, at the distance of thirty miles, high ranges of barren sage hills on the south, some eight miles distant.

William Henry Gray, 1836

Here turnips have been raised but too frosty for farming. Some timber on a small spot and apparently several thousand acres of good soil.

Henry Herman Spalding, 1836

The buildings of the Fort are made of hewed logs, roof covered with mud bricks, chimney & fireplaces also of the same. No windows, except a square hole in the roof & in the bastion a few port holes large enough for guns only. The buildings are all enclosed in a strong log wall. This affords them a place of safety when attacked by hostile Indians, as they frequently are, the Fort being in the Black Feet Country.

Narcissa Whitman, August 3, 1836

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IOCTA Officers and Directors

<i>Jerry Eichhorst</i>	<i>President</i>
<i>Don Wind</i>	<i>VP - East</i>
<i>Paul Dinwiddie</i>	<i>VP - West</i>
<i>Dan Dunne</i>	<i>Treasurer</i>
<i>Dave Price</i>	<i>Secretary</i>
<i>Don Wind</i>	<i>Preservation - East</i>
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<i>Charlie Teall</i>	<i>Webmaster</i>
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