

Fall ISSUE

2017



CALIFORNIA TRAIL HERITAGE ALLIANCE

THE Wagon Tongue



South Pass

South Pass was a very interesting encounter for many of the travelers. It was known as the “Gateway to West”. Having traveled through the eastern portion of the Rocky Mountains, many travelers were surprised when they reached it.

Amelia Hadley in 1851 noted,

“...we saw the far famed south pass, but did not see it until we had passed it for I was all the time looking for some narrow place that would almost take your breath away but was disappointed. It is a body of table land rooling but not mountainous and is 15 miles wide...the altitude here is 7 thousand & 30 feet. We have been on a gradual accend since we left Larimi and now we shall decend the same to the pacific...”

South Pass was discovered by fur trader Robert Stuart and six companions in 1812. He and his companions were following an Indian trace in Wyoming and found the wide pass in the Rocky Mountains. At 7,550 feet in elevation, it crossed the Continental Divide and made it easier for overland travel with ox-drawn wagons.

Meldahl in his book, Hard Road West, writes:

“Crossing the Continental Divide, the emigrants drank for the first time from waters that flow west to the Pacific Ocean. Spirits were high. The first 1,000 miles were over, and it hadn’t been that bad.

Up to South Pass, the emigrants had ascended the valleys of east-flowing rivers—The Platte, the North Platte, and the Sweetwater. The rivers gave water, the grassy bottomlands provided feed for livestock and the smooth slopes of the valleys made natural avenues for overland travel. West of South Pass, the land becomes less cooperative...”

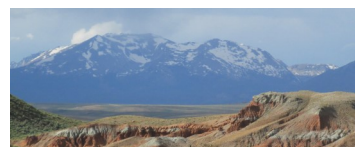
Alonzo Delano in 1849 was very critical of the area. He notes,

“There are no particular land-marks to distinguish the scenery on the east side of the Pass from that of the valley, through which we had come. The ascent is so gradual that the culminating point is a matter of doubt with the thousands who have crossed it, and I can only give my own impressions. Half a mile before we reach the highest rounded knoll, according to my ideas of the highest point, are two small conical hills, which stand near each other, on the same plain, perhaps twenty rods asunder, between which the road passes...”

...From the culminating point, the view is not as grand as at many places along the Sweet Water Mountains, for these mountains, though here much diminished in size, hinder any extended view in that direction. The point has an altitude of between seven and eight thousand feet, and the rarification of the air is so great that it is necessary to stop frequently to get breath on ascending the hills in the vicinity.”



(continued on page 3)



National Historical Trails Interpretive Center



This past summer, I was able to travel the California Trail through parts of Wyoming.

As I have been volunteering at the California Interpretative Trail Center, writing and researching articles for our newsletter, I felt the need to experience the Trail personally. I've been reading and hearing about specific land-

marks and I was curious to see these places. So this trip has given me an experience that I will always remember. More so, since I have also taken a number of pictures, I can share these pictures with our readership.

I've wanted to go to Caspar, Wyoming to see our counterpart—the National Historical Trails Interpretive Center. Like our California Trail Interpretative Center here in Elko, the NHTI Center really captures the real-life drama that the pioneers experienced as they traveled through Wyoming from 1841 to 1868.



Situated on a hillside over Casper, it also provides a view of the valley and has markers showing where the trails historically crossed through the town of Casper.

The Center provides both visual and audio presentations of the Oregon-California Trail Experience. It is self-directed, so you can take your time to read and listen to informational presentations.

The NHTI Center covers the Oregon, California and Mormon Trails. They also include information on the Pony Express Trail and its historical significance. There are hands-on activities that engage people of all ages.

I can especially relate to this quote by Lesley Wischmann, once I read it.

"If you have ever thought about throwing your possessions into the back of your car and heading out for parts unknown, you already know the feeling that propelled hundreds of thousands of emigrants westward in the 19th Century."

- Leah Brady



South Pass (continued from page 1)

The emigrants while disappointed, found a reason to celebrate. They were halfway on their journey. Peter Decker in 1849, took out a flag and planted it on South Pass. People gathered together. Someone playing a fiddle. There was dancing and singing.



For some, it was an different emotional passing. William Kelly in 1849 expressed his sentiments:

"Here, with one accord, we halted, to gaze for the last time on the eastern hills and valleys of the Atlantic slope. I strained my eyes, looking abstractedly towards the eastern horizon for the spires and steeples of Sligo, and the familiar faces of my old acquaintances; and as they all appeared on the camera obscura of my imagination I felt a pleasurable sadness that for the instant wholly absorbed me; but I was soon brought to "a sense of my situation" by three lusty cheers, given as a sort of adieu to our friends before descending into the valley of the Pacific,—an ebullition of kindness and good feeling which I trust they duly appreciated."

Once over South Pass, most of the wagon trains continued on to Pacific Springs where fresh water and grass were available. In busy times, trains had to go several miles from the springs to find it.

While waiting for his sick companion to get better, Samuel Stover in 1849 writes,

"we gradually descended to the Pacific Springs where we found ice cool water and ice in the bottom of the swamps. Concluded to remain there until Monday morning. Quite a number of trains passed us and many camped on the creek.....Several hundreds wagons passed during the day and the creek again is white with wagons and tents and the bottom alive with stock."

At this gathering place, they met previous traveling acquaintances and found that some wagon train compositions had changed.

"Some had divided from policy, because they were too large, and on account of the difficulty of procuring grass in one place for so many cattle, while others, disgusted by the overbearing propensities of some men, would not endure it, and others still, from mutual ill-feelings and disagreements among themselves." - Alfonzo Delano, 1849

Once over South Pass and having rested at Pacific Springs, the travelers now faced an area that has been said to be the emptiest land anywhere on the Oregon-California trail. In the previous months, the travelers were able to use geographic landmarks, wooded areas, and rivers to guide them. Now they faced barren sage plains. Water would be a big issue but another of the issues occurring was distance miscalculations since they could not judge distance and sometimes saw mirages only to be disappointed. James Abbey in 1850 recorded,

"The mirage has deceived us several times to-day. While worn with travel and thirsting for water, there might be seen, sometimes to the right, sometimes to the left, and then in front, representations of large rivers, lakes and streams of pure water; but as we would advance in the direction whence they would appear, they would recede or fade away, leaving nothing to view but the barren desert and the blighted hopes of the weary traveler."

Over 20 miles from South Pass was where the "Parting of the Ways" was also located. At this point, the emigrants had a choice to make considering that there were many optional routes to California. The southern route would take them to the Salt Lake and Ft. Bridger route and the other northwest route towards Ft. Hall and Oregon. There were other cut-offs along the way but both routes would reunite them with the California Trail along the Humboldt River for those continuing on to California.

It was just a choice each wagon train made usually based on the need of supplies or worry about the condition of their members or livestock. Going towards Fort Bridger was the closer route.



Green River facing northeast



UPCOMING EVENTS

CTHA Board Meetings

*All California Trail Heritage Alliance Board meetings are held at the California Trail Interpretive Center on the 3rd Tuesdays of the month and begin at 5:30 p.m.

Oct. 17 CTHA Board Meeting , BLM office

Nov 21 CTHA Board Meeting , BLM office

Dec 19 No meeting

Great Basin Native Fall Market Oct. 21-22, 2017

KEY LINKS

www.facebook.com/pages/California-Trail-Center-Foundation/157116030992463

<http://www.californiatrailcenter.org/>

www.emigranttrailswest.org

www.octa-trails.org

www.appl.org

[www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/elko_field_office/
blm_programs/blm_special_areas/
california_trail_historic.html](http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/elko_field_office/blm_programs/blm_special_areas/california_trail_historic.html)

TRAIL CENTER ACTIVITIES

Kill the Indian, Save the Man: American Indian Boarding Schools

10/28/2017 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm

Learn about how Pratt's words came to characterize the Indian boarding school era, and what that would mean for Indian peoples today. Jens Camp, research associate for the Great Basin Institute at the Trail Center will be the speaker.

Junior Ranger Program: Flint, Steel, and S'mores

10/29/2017 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm

Join Nevada Outdoor School interpreter Tim Burns and learn how the mountain men created campfires with flint and steel. Following the program, enjoy making s'mores around a crackling fire. Ingredients for s'mores provided, while supplies last.

Junior Ranger Program: Coyotes: Elusive, Smart, and a Symbol of the West

11/05/17 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm

The coyote, the charismatic cousin to the wolf, is elusive, intelligent, and its howl is as iconic sound in the West. Native American tribes were inspired by it, while ranchers and homeowners can be alarmed by its presence. Join BLM Biologist Beth Wood and learn more about Coyotes.

Junior Ranger Program: Birds of Prey

11/19/17 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm

Join Joe Doucette, Conservation Educator with the Nevada Department of Wildlife, to meet and learn about Birds of Prey.





Artists partner with Trail Alliance and Trail Center

Two local artists, Simone Turner and Deb McFarlane, were the creative part of the first annual Artist in Residence Program hosted at the California Trail Interpretive Center.

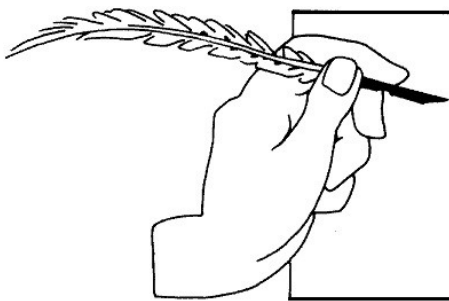
The women were chosen from a competitive pool of applicants. Each performed their artistry on site at the Trail Center and provided instruction.

Simone completed a project creatively using broken pieces of china to make a picture and Deb completed a beautiful and artistic felting project.

The artist-in-residence program promotes awareness through art of the exceptional places and history of those who traveled along the California Trail. The program provided an opportunity for learning and dialogue about the value of preserving the history of the trail. It engaged and informed an audience through public programs by participants, and provided time for artists to pursue their work.

The program sponsored and funded by the California Trail Heritage Alliance will be held again in 2018.





20 Souls Brave Fall Weather for Site Stewardship Training

Fall equinox weekend found twenty-plus individuals from the Elko area in a Saturday class on site stewardship. The class was taught by Samantha Robinson, of the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office in Las Vegas. Attendees included members of the general public as well as the Elko County Chapter of the Nevada Archaeological Association, the California Trail Heritage Alliance, and the Humboldt High Roaders. Everyone who attended is interested in protecting important historic or prehistoric sites in Elko County. The Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Elko District Office and staff archaeologist Dan Broockmann hosted the training.

Participants experienced a very well-prepared and professional presentation by Samantha Robinson about the laws and policies that provide for the protection of important historic and prehistoric sites.

Despite the fall equinox, or perhaps because of it, the weather was ideal for the "outdoor portion" of the training. Two "sites" were found in an area just outside the training room. Students were asked to look at the site as if it was their baseline visit to a site that they would later steward. Technical experts quizzed the students on observations and comments for site monitoring form. Later in the session, after some additional classroom instruction, students were asked to revisit the sites and identify what had changed. Through this process we all learned about the importance of good notes and photographs for every site visit. It goes without saying that the "experts" altered the sites between the first and second visits so the students would have shocking and surprising observations to make.

At the end of the class, all participants signed up for archaeological sites that they wanted to steward in the future. Feedback about the class was very positive and the support of the BLM and the Nevada SHPO's office for this training was greatly appreciated.

CTHA Board of Directors		
<u><i>Core Members:</i></u>		<u><i>Newsletter</i></u>
Kerry Aguirre		Editor: Leah Brady
Tamara Baker		Contributors:
Bailey Billington		Helen Hankins
John Collett	Kevin Lee	Dan Broockmann
Walt Goddard	<u><i>At-Large Members</i></u>	Alex Rose
Marlene Goddard	Blaine Benedict	
Helen Hankins	Leah Brady	
Duane Jones	Larry Hyslop	
	Jacqueline Lucero	
	Gratton Miller	
	Larry Schmidt	
	Frank Tortorich	
	John Winner	

CALIFORNIA TRAIL

HERITAGE ALLIANCE



It is hard to believe that we have already had our first snowfall in Elko, Nevada and that the leaves are changing colors and falling to the ground. Despite the rapid-seeming passage of the summer, it has been a time of accomplishment for the Alliance.

Duane Jones and Helen Hankins (with spouses) attended the Oregon-California Trail Convention in Council Bluffs Iowa in June. Among the many highlights were a riverboat trip on the Missouri, field trips to the homes of railroad baron Grenville Dodge, the Mormon “Winter Quarters”, the exhibit at the De Soto Refuge of hundreds of artifacts from the sunken steamship, the Bertrand, and more. Many fine speakers gave us a sense of the overland trails from the “jumping off” perspective. The trip was time and money well spent. A key accomplishment of the convention is that the national board of the Oregon-California Trail Association (OCTA), voted to have the 2020 OCTA Convention in Elko, Nevada!

In other news, the Alliance was pleased to be one of the catalysts for the Nevada Site Stewardship training course in September. Jacqueline Lucero, Helen Hankins and Mike Mauser all attended. A second course is planned for spring. Attendees learned how to monitor and report on site conditions on a quarterly basis using a plethora of materials provided by the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office. See article on page 6 in this newsletter.

The first weekend in October, John Winner, Past President of OCTA, taught a two day course in Mapping Emigrant Trails (MET). A total of 11 individuals attended. The first day emphasized ethics, software, GBS use, importance of historical research, use of remote sensing tools such as aerial photos and other imagery, and the importance of good field craft. The second day, led by Jan Peterson, included a three hour tour of part of the California Trail west of Carlin. Participants were able to practice techniques learned the day before.

Duane Jones has continued efforts to obtain funding for marketing. Grant requests have focused on some items previously funded such as billboards, public television, Nevada Magazine, and others. Two new ones have also been applied for – Chinese translation of the “rack card” at the Trail Center, and a grant to fund evaluation of the effectiveness of our current marketing efforts.

With the extraordinarily able assistance of Camille Howes, Associate District Manager for the BLM in Elko, members of the Alliance have been working on our Strategic Plan. At this time, specific tasks are being identified to implement activities in broad categories of Fund Development, Organization, Communication, and education.

In mid-October, the Alliance is partnering with the Western Folklife Center, the Northeastern Nevada Museum and the CTIC to sponsor the first ever meeting of history oriented organizations in our area - the History Connection.



NDOT continues to indicate that the bike path from the City of Elko to the Trail Center is a top priority and that they will shortly initiate bi-monthly conference calls with the Alliance.

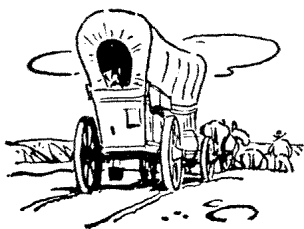
—Helen Hankins, President



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californiatrailheritagealliance.org](http://www.californiatrailheritagealliance.org)



DONOR WALL

IN ADDITION TO BECOMING A MEMBER OF THE CALIFORNIA TRAIL HERITAGE ALLIANCE, INDIVIDUALS OR BUSINESSES MAY ALSO MAKE A DONATION TO THE CALIFORNIA TRAIL HERITAGE ALLIANCE FOR THOSE DONATIONS GREATER THAN \$250.00, THE DONOR CAN CHOOSE TO BE PUBLICLY RECOGNIZED ON THE DONOR WALL AT THE CALIFORNIA TRAIL INTERPRETIVE CENTER. RECOGNITION LEVELS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

CALIFORNIA TRAIL CENTER DONOR WALL RECOGNITION LEVELS

<u>LEVEL NAME</u>	<u>DONATION AMOUNT</u>
Pioneer	\$250.00 to \$499.99
Trail Blazer	\$500.00 to \$2,499.99
Wagon Master	\$2,500.00 to \$4,999.99
Empire Building	\$5,000.00 or Greater

Join Today! - Membership Application

Join your friends and neighbors and become a supporter of the California Trail Interpretive Center! Every membership supports the California Trail Interpretive Center and Trail preservation. When you join other enthusiasts to become a member, or renew your membership, you directly support interpretation, education, and special events at the California Trail Interpretive Center, and help preserve the Trail and its history for the benefit of current and future generations.

Annual Memberships: ☐ New ☐ Renewal

Name: _____ Address: _____

City/ST/Zip: _____

Email: _____

All members receive the informative electronic newsletter, electronic updates about special events and activities and a 10% discount at the California Trail Interpretive Center store. Invitations to one or more special events are extended to the Supporter membership levels & above.

Level	Individual	Family	Supporter	Partner	Lifetime
Special Event(s)			1	2	3
Cost	\$25	\$50	\$75	\$100	\$200

*Special Events may include presentations, workshops, tours, exhibit previews or other activities. Individuals who choose to make a donation equal to or greater than \$250 will receive recognition, if desired, on the Donor Wall in the California Trail Interpretive Center

PAYMENT: ☐ Check ☐ Visa ☐ MC ☐ Amount \$ _____

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Make Check Payable to: **California Trail Heritage Alliance, P.O. Box 1778
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CONTACT US!

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