

SPRING Issue

2018



CALIFORNIA TRAIL HERITAGE ALLIANCE

THE Wagon Tongue



I can imagine that when the emigrants reached the City of Rocks that they knew that they had seen another Elephant on their journey.

William Woodham in 1854 writes:

"At noon we encampd near the so-called Monumental rocks. They are a cluster of rocks forming a sort of semi-circle. They rise to a great height and are of a light grey color and look like the ruins of some enormous structure. They are situated in an amphitheatre of mountains, with snow capped summits. The rocks themselves rise out of a little plain covered with velvet sod. A small stream issues from their base and glitters along down the valley. A sort of thin mist hangs in the air, giving a dreamy appearance to the whole scene....All afternoon we travelled along the same valley among rocks of the most singular shapes, some rising to great heights like the spires of churches, others of a more tower like appearance. Encamped on a sage plain near a little creek with tolerable grass."

City of Rocks was known by many names. Noted in diaries, many emigrants camped, left their mark and passed through it. On the southern border of present-day Idaho & Utah, it was a major part of the California Trail once the emigrants left Raft River, a tributary of the Snake River, and traveled southwest into the Great Basin area heading towards the Humboldt River.

".... Left camp at eight o'clock, and leaveing the creek, passed to the right through a gorge in the mountain, and came out on the "old trail" or Fort Hall road near Steeple rocks, where we made our noon halt. These rocks present a singular appearance-- rising from the base of the mountain in a pyramidal form to the hight of fifty, and one hundred feet; presenting the appearance (with the exception of superior hight) of a Hottontot village. The mountains that show themselves today, look grand, and beautiful. Ascending the mountain through a high gorge, and when at the summit we found spread out before us the most beautiful mountain scenery that I have seen on the road. Our elevation is very high, so that the mountains that lie before us on the opposite side of the valley, (through which "Goose creek" finds its way) seem to increas in magnitud as they rise one above another, in the succession of their ranges. Our distance today is fifteen miles. - Gordon Cone, 1849

City of Rocks was established as a National Reserve by Congress in 1988. Today, it has a visitor center, picnic grounds, camp grounds, and hiking trails. However, even today, it is a little known National Reserve. Which is unfortunate because it has spectacular views such as the Twin Sisters and Pinnacle Pass. There are also historic kiosks with information throughout the reserve.

(continued on page 3)

Preserved in Time



How do we know where the actual trail went? Emigrant diaries and government documentation tell us some of the routes, but another way was the actual trail ruts that showed where they traveled. Historians have noted and documented the areas in which they can be found. Thanks to volunteer organizations like Trails West and the Oregon-California Trail Association, markers have been placed along the trail so people can view them.

However, there are many places along the trail that are not protected or accessible to the public. Due to the passage of time and settlements the landscape has changed the Trail. There are few places that have preserved the trail ruts so future generations can view them. One of those places is the Oregon Trail Ruts State Historic Site in the Guernsey area of Wyoming. In 1975, this site was declared a National Historic Landmark.

It is at this site that thousands of emigrants had traveled over the soft sandstone cutting a path through the winding rocky terrain before making their camp along side the North Platte River.

The North Platte River was important to the travelers and their livestock but it also posed a danger to them when they had to make a choice of which way to travel. It was a swift river and was easier for the emigrants to traverse over the rugged landscape than risk crossing the river.



From one of the kiosks along the walking pathway, it notes,

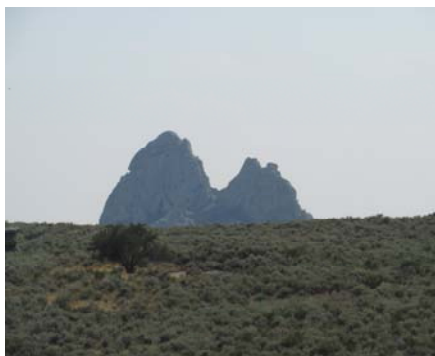
“Wagon wheels cut solid rock, carving a memorial to Empire Builders. What manner of men and beasts impelled conveyances weighing on those grinding wheels. Look! A line of shadows crossing boundless wilderness.”



City of Rocks (continued from page 1)

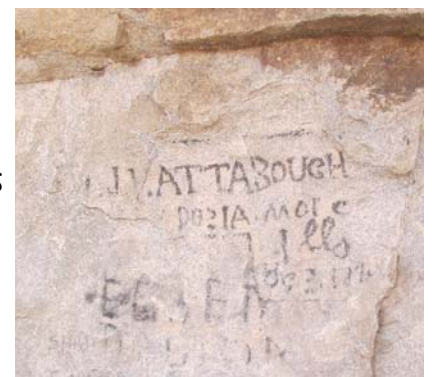
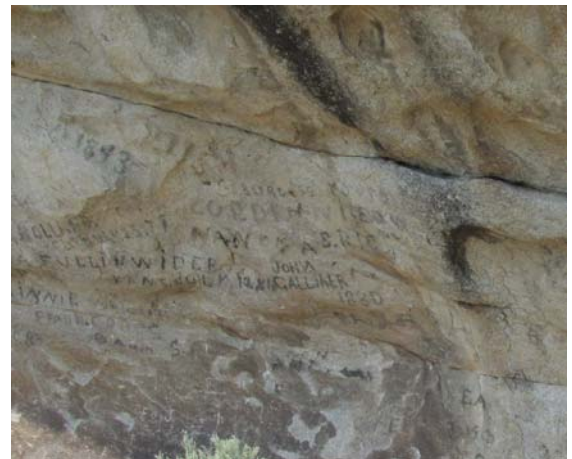
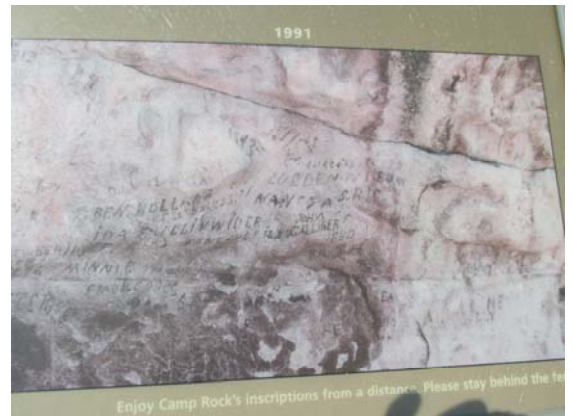
Another feature to behold are the names that the emigrants inscribed on the rocks in wheel-axle grease. Slowly, time is erasing many of them. The top right picture was taken in 1930, the middle right picture was taken in 1991, and lower right taken in 2017.

Richard Augustus Keene in 1852 wrote
“There are thousands of names here. I registered Mine on a large rock.”



*“Inscribed on the rock;
a memory of times passed,
a memento for future generations
to ponder”*

(on BLM kiosk at City of Rocks)





CTHA Board Meetings

April 19, 2018 CTHA Board Mtg.

*California Trail Days will be held
May 19-20, 2018*

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

TRAIL CENTER ACTIVITIES

April 22, 2:00 p.m.: Junior Ranger Program:

Pioneer Games: Marbles and Horseshoes

With no TV, internet, or video games, how did pioneers have fun on the California Trail? Games of course! Ranger Greg will provide lessons on how to play two popular pioneer games: Marbles and horseshoes.

April 29, 2:00 p.m.: Junior Ranger Program:

Tahwani: Western Shoshone Life in the Springtime

Spring is a time of change, it is a transition between the harsh cold of winter and the blazing heat of summer. Join Jens Camp, and learn how Western Shoshone people lived through this time of the year. Topics include foods, shelter, and other traditional lifeways.

<<<<<<<<>>>>>>

California Trail Days

June 3-4, 2017

Ranger Rose is seeking volunteers to assist with the California Trail Days. To volunteer, or for more information, contact Ranger Rose at 738-1849 or CAtrailcenter@gmail.com



CALIFORNIA TRAIL

HERITAGE ALLIANCE



President's Message

One hundred seventy years ago, folks would have been gearing up to head West to California. To those of us involved with the California Trail Heritage Alliance, those long ago days sometimes seem like yesterday. While we enjoy the benefits of modern scientific and technological advances, we continue to find ways to promote the story of those early pioneers and to preserve the traces and stories they have left behind. Here are a few of the things we are currently working on:

Bicycle Path – Elko to Trail Center

The Alliance is continuing to work with NDOT on the bike path. NDOT has put in a request for the area where the proposed path is located to be flown by our Location (aerial mapping) Division soon. This imagery will provide the needed high quality photos for presentation and project scoping purposes. The NDOT project scoping group has been working on developing some preliminary costs but would also like to utilize the high resolution fly over.

Hot Hole Fencing Project

Kevin Lee, Alliance Board Member, has received the blessing of the Elko City Council to move forward with our project to improve fencing and signage around the historic “Hot Hole” on the California Trail. We have applied for a \$30,000 grant from Travel Nevada to begin the fencing project.

Mapping Emigrant Trails (MET) Projects

The Alliance is currently working on permit applications to “Map Emigrant Trails” in the Ruby Lake National Wildlife Refuge and on adjacent USFS managed lands in the Humboldt Toiyabe National Forest. A partnership is ongoing with the BLM for mapping those public lands beginning in 2019. BLM wants to complete a lidar survey prior to initiation of MET mapping. A final report, prepared by Gratton Miller, is pending completion for mapping in the Ruby Valley last fall.

Chinese Translation of Short Stories

Five summary articles have been written in English about the California Trail and related topics. The Alliance plans to use funds from Travel Nevada to contract for translation of some or all of these articles into Mandarin Chinese.

Spanish Language Translation of Interpretive Panels

The Alliance is partnering with the California Trail Interpretive Center to print and laminate several Spanish guide booklets for the Trail Center. The guides are composed of translations of some fifty of the interpretive panels in the Center. The translation was done by Isabel Sanchez. The first sample guide will be shared with BLM in early May.

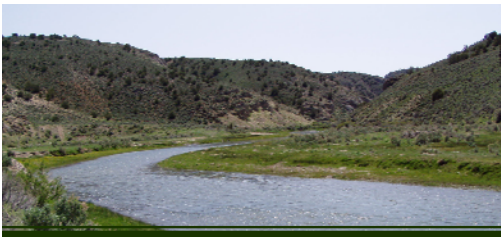
Site Stewardship

The State Historic Preservation Office in Las Vegas will be providing training in Elko in early June for site stewards. The Alliance is in the process of selection one or more sites along the California Trail for periodic monitoring and cleanup.

Marketing Study

With funds from Travel Nevada, the Alliance is planning to complete a marketing study. The study will evaluate the effectiveness of current advertising and marketing efforts and recommend a strategy for future efforts.

Until next quarter – hope to see you on the trail! Helen Hankins



South Fork Canyon

Eight miles west of Elko the deep gorge of the South Fork opens into the Humboldt Basin across the valley from the California Trail Interpretive Center.

While the Far West was a distant part of Mexico until 1848, South Fork Canyon was the narrow portal through which the earliest travelers on the Hastings Cutoff struggled to reach the California Trail.

The South Fork twists, splashes, and foams through the canyon before joining the main stem of the Humboldt. The perilous passage wound through the narrows, sometimes in the midst of the stream, sometimes on ledges and bluffs above the water.

John Wood, an 1850 gold rusher, described the road through the canyon as “one of the worst I ever saw, so bad that it is incredible to tell.” Sarah Davis, also in an 1850 gold rush party, complained:

“... we have traveled all day and onley [sic] come ten miles ... we have traveled in the creek half the time.”

Fearing a Box Canyon

On September 7, 1846, Heinrich Lienhard, one of five “German Boys,” wrote:

“... we entered the deep canyon through which the stream had cut its course and along which our road led. In many places the rock walls rose almost perpendicular; the stream made many bends, now to the right, now to the left. As the canyon narrowed, we were often under the impression that there was no outlet until we were almost upon it.”

The Lienhard party began to fear they would be entrapped in the canyon as they moved deeper into it.

John Bidwell, five years earlier, had wondered if the Bidwell-Bartleson Party was going to be boxed in. Lienhard must have been near the same spot when he wrote that “We had to keep crossing the stream with the water almost reaching the wagon bed. In places, we had to go almost straight down the river three, four, or five feet from the bank.” In his journal, *From Saint Louis to Sutter’s Fort, 1846*, he writes that his party crossed the river thirteen times.

Finally, an ox didn’t want to move with the current, and turned toward an embankment. The wagon leaned and the right wheels rose into the air. Lienhard describes the event:

“Our wagons tipped over into four feet of water. The bows, together with the covering, were on the bottom, and the wheels were in the air where the bows should have been. All our belongings were in the water. I feared that my double-barrelled rifle was also broken and my books were spoiled.”

(continued on pg. 7)


Core Members:
Kerry Aguirre
Bailey Billington
John Collett
Walt Goddard
Coralee Griswold
Helen Hankins
Duane Jones
Krys Munzing
Jeff Williams

CTHA Board of Directors

At-Large Members
Blaine Benedict
Leah Brady
Larry Hyslop
Larry Schmidt

**Christina Sullivan
Frank Tortorich
Kerry Tuckett
John Winner**

Newsletter
Editor: Leah Brady
Contributors:
Helen Hankins
Alex Rose
Larry Hyslop



South Fork Canyon (continued from pg. 6)

To rescue the wagon they unleashed the uncooperative ox and pulled the wagon downstream to safety.

Donner Party in the Canyon

Almost five years to the day after the first emigrants, Bidwell Bartelson, passed through the canyon, the Donner Party struggled through on September 25-26, 1846. Oregon-bound emigrant Jesse Quinn Thornton recalled the Donner Party along the South Fork.

“On the night of the 28th [25th of September actually], they encamped at the head of a canon leading into the valley of Mary’s or Ogden’s River. Here they saw large bodies of Indians in a state of perfect nudity.”

Thornton described the Donner Party encampment:

“... they entered the canon, and traveling about eight miles, found, at 11 o’clock, P.M., a place sufficiently large to admit of an encampment out of the water.” The following day James Frazier Reed wrote: “this day... traveled to the junction of Marys [Humboldt River].”

Thornton related their passing through the canyon and at the trail junction:

“... they pursued their way down the canon, and after traveling eight miles, came out into the valley of Mary’s River [Humboldt], at night, and encamped on the bank of the stream, having struck the road leading from Fort Hall. Here some Indians came into camp and informed them by signs, that they were yet distant about two hundred miles from the sinks of that river.”

Thornton wrote an early account, *Oregon and California in 1848* relating to the Donner Party trails. Much of the information was supplied by William Eddy, who was with the Donner train.

Five years later, in 1850, John Wood described South Fork Canyon: *“the kanyon ... which the road follows is one of the worst I ever saw, so that it would be incredible to tell.”* Wood, with considerable hyperbole, writes:

“we crossed it about 25 times, some places having to wade along in it crotch deep. . there being no room on the banks for a road, and in many places these crossings were bad beyond all comparison ... we had a hard time getting our little cart along.”

Excerpt from *Canyons, Cutoffs and Hot Springs: Explore the California Trail Near Elko, Nevada; Explore the California Trail and Hastings Cutoff through Elko, Nevada*, Gray Jay Press, by Charles Greenhaw and Larry Hyslop

Temporary Exhibit at California Trail Interpretive Center, “Nevada Wild”



PHOTOGRAPH: “Twin Fawns,” by Mark Hayward

The California Trail Center is presenting a temporary exhibit, “Nevada Wild: An Exhibition by the Elko County Art club.” “Nevada Wild” will include 45 paintings, photographs and sculptures by local artists. The exhibit opens April 14 and will run through June 10.

Susanne Reese, Dave Patton and Glen Ellen Finley curated the exhibit. “Nevada Wild” was made possible in part by support from a Trail Center partner, the Southern Nevada Conservancy. The Trail Center will host a free public reception celebrating the exhibit on June 2, 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., and will include hors d’oeuvres. Artists will share their stories and inspirations behind their artwork.

For more information, Elko County Art Club visit <https://elkocountyartclub.wildapricot.org/>.



P.O. Box 1778
Elko, Nevada 89803

Phone: 775.340.2031

Email: ctcf1849@gmail.com

www.californiatrailheritagealliance.org



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 Events)			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 \$ _____

Card # _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

Make Check Payable to: **California Trail Heritage Alliance, P.O. Box 1778, Elko NV 89803**

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

CONTACT US!

CALIFORNIA TRAIL HERITAGE ALLIANCE P.O. Box 1778, ELKO, NEVADA 89803

775.340.2031 ❖ ctcf1849@gmail.com ❖ www.californiatrailheritagealliance.org