

Winter Issue

2016



CALIFORNIA TRAIL CENTER FOUNDATION

THE Wagon Tongue

TRADING ON THE TRAIL

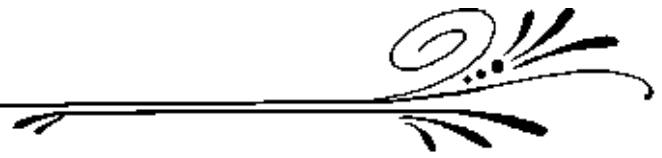
By Dr. Jonathan Foster, GBC

The overland pioneer trails could be places of hardship, deprivation, and unfamiliar experiences for those who traveled them in the mid-nineteenth century. As a result of space and weight limitations, pioneers were forced to leave behind items of comfort and even some necessities as they embarked on the months-long transcontinental journey. Likewise, leaving for California meant leaving behind the familiar social and cultural interactions that define one's home and sense of belonging. Trading and the existence of trading posts along the trail often eased the resultant discomfort by providing for social interaction and the acquisition of necessities.

Trading along the trail took on various forms. Pioneers often traded goods among themselves, with visiting traders, and with established communities of whites and Native Americans. Trading posts along the westward trails also varied considerably in style and frequency of appearance. Pioneer diaries indicate that trading posts ranged structurally from permanent log and adobe buildings to buffalo hide tents to traveling wagons. As one might expect, trading posts and trader visits occurred with more regularity closer to settled areas and population centers. When starting out or nearing settled areas, pioneers seemingly passed some variation of a trading post or encountered an opportunity to trade every few days. Yet, in the heart of the journey, weeks could pass without such an encounter.

When visiting a trading post, pioneers could expect to find necessities at relatively expensive prices, although perhaps not as expensive as one might expect. For example, at a trading post at Humboldt City, Nevada in 1862, bacon could be had for 35 cents a pound, coffee for 75 cents per pound, and sugar for 33 cents per pound. In today's dollars, that would be approximately \$8.02 per pound for bacon, \$17.19 per pound for coffee, and \$7.56 per pound for sugar.

(cont. on pg. 2)



Trading on the Trail (cont. from pg. 1)

Trading posts also offered the opportunity to barter for provisions or services and to sell excess equipment. One desert-weary pioneer between Humboldt City and Dayton, NV, traded a small wagon for a dressed sheep and 100 pounds of hay. Another, sold a harness and rifle at Genoa post for \$15, while his friend sold a revolver for \$6. With this money, they bought potatoes, beef, syrup, bacon, and new shoes.

Finally, trading allowed for social interaction and an increased sense of normalcy in the otherwise abnormal situation of transcontinental migration. As pioneer Jane Gould observed, it was a "welcome sight" just to see a real building after spending so much time in the open prairies and deserts. At the posts pioneers interacted with others, gained news about events and parties ahead, rested, and even met up with companions who might have ventured ahead and then waited. The type of trade goods offered at the posts also provided pioneers with hope. As pioneers approached their destination, the appearance of California-grown fruits and vegetables at trading posts provided a psychological boost to fatigued pioneers by serving as evidence of their journey's impending completion.

Thus, trade along the trail played a significant role in the successful migration of thousands of pioneers westward to California. The act of trading allowed for the acquisition of necessary supplies, while the trading posts themselves and the social interaction that occurred with trade rendered an uncertain and abnormal situation more normal and familiar.

Sources:

Gould, Jane. *Diary of Jane Gould in 1862*. Medford, OR: Webb Research Group Publishers, 1997.

Riley, Glenda. *Covered Wagon Women: Diaries and Letters from the Western Trails, 1852: The California Trail*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985.

Todd, Edgeley Woodman, ed

Donner Party Website

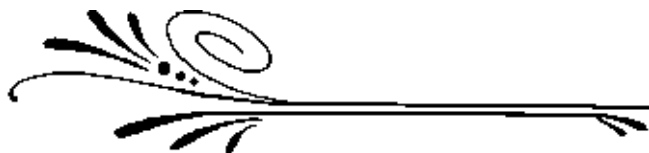
"The Donner Party was the most famous tragedy in the history of the westward migration. Almost ninety wagon train emigrants were unable to cross the Sierra Nevada before winter, and almost one-half starved to death.....The logs on this site contain the words of the participants from their diaries, letters and first-hand accounts, balanced by the perspective of later historians." In 1891, Virginia Reed wrote in "Across the Plains in the Donner Party" in *Century Magazine*:

"On the evening of February 19th, 1847, they reached our cabins, where all were starving. They shouted to attract attention. Mr. Breen, clambered up the icy steps from our cabin, and soon we heard the blessed words, "Relief, thank God, relief!"

There was joy at Donner Lake that night, for we did not know the fate of the Forlorn Hope and we were told that relief parties would come and go until all were across the mountains. But with the joy sorrow was strangely blended. There were tears in other eyes than those of children; strong men sat down and wept. For the dead were lying about on the snow, some were even unburied, since the living had not had strength to bury their dead."

A very informative website on this winter tragedy.

<http://www.donnerpartydiary.com>



Trail Center Programs



It's been a snowy winter! Despite the weather, the Trail Center has hosted some very popular programs. Saturday, January 23, over 100 people participated in the Moonlight Snowshoe Hike. Beginners of every age donned snow shoes donated by Cedar Creek Clothing. Experienced show shoers brought their own. Nancy Taylor, US Forest Service, and Mike Setlock, BLM, led groups through the snowy hills behind the Trail Center. Afterward there was the roasting of marshmallows and drinking of hot chocolate around the fire. The moon even made a brief appearance from behind the clouds. The BLM will be hosting more snow shoe hikes in the Ruby

Mountain area so keep an eye out for those opportunities.

Sunday, January 24, Leah Brady presented a children's basket making program. History of Shoshone baskets and native materials were explained before the weaving began. 49 kids and adults practiced making a simple basket they could take home. Using paper plates and twine they spent an hour weaving. Everyone expressed their enthusiasm and enjoyment of this program.

There will be additional opportunities to learn about weaving and fiber arts in March so be sure to check out the Trail Center's calendar at www.californiatrailcenter.org.

"adapt yourself at once to woolen and leather; provide yourself with woolen underclothes, woolen overshirts ...woolen shirts.... You are going to a region of the country where the rise and fall of temperature in the twenty-four hours is great. "

-Excerpt from Men of the West by C. Luchetti



UPCOMING EVENTS

CTCF Board Meetings
March 17, 2016—BLM office
April 21, 2016
June 3, 2016

*All California Trail Center Foundation Board meetings are held at the California Trail Interpretive Center and begin at 6:00 p.m.

June 4-5, 2016 Trail Days
At CTIC
August 4-5, 2016 Western Heritage Festival
In Elko, NV
August 2-7, 2016—OCTA Convention
In Ft. Hall, Idaho



CALIFORNIA-NEVADA CHAPTER OF OCTA

Go to the OCTA website for more detailed information on:

**Fort Hall: Cultures and Changes
Oregon-California Trails Association
2016 Annual Convention August 1-5, 2016
Shoshone-Bannock Hotel & Event Center, Fort
Hall, Idaho**

The Idaho Chapter of OCTA is hosting the OCTA convention at Fort Hall, Idaho. This convention will focus on the Native American history and culture in the Fort Hall area and how the influx of fur trappers and Oregon/California Trail emigrants changed their lives forever. Active participation by the Fort Hall Shoshone-Bannock Tribe will be a key component of the convention.

Speaker topics include Tribal history and cultural changes, fur trapper history, and excavations at Fort Hall. Convention bus tours will include early trapper sites in Idaho and Oregon Trail sites around Fort Hall.

Pre-convention tours include the Oregon Trail through the Fort Hall reservation and the Hudspeth Cutoff. Post-convention tours include Goodale Cutoff and the California Trail through Idaho.

<http://www.octa-trails.org/events/octa-2016-annual-convention>

KEY LINKS

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

www.emigranttrailswest.org

www.octa-trails.org

www.trailcenterfoundation.org

www.appl.org

www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/elko_field_office/blm_programs/blm_special_areas/california_trail_historic.html



CALIFORNIA TRAIL INTERPRETATIVE CENTER ACTIVITIES

From Sheep to Spinning Wheels: California Trail Interpretive Center Celebrates Women's History Month with Fiber Arts

ELKO, Nev. – Pioneer women created socks, mittens, shawls and quilts. Today, fiber artists create hats, sweaters, purses and slippers.

“We often buy clothing made in other countries, in factories by machines, by people we do not know, with fabrics that are synthetic and unnatural,” said Park Ranger Alex Rose. “With the fiber arts, people create items, with their hands, that express their love for family, friends and even strangers.”

The California Trail Interpretive Center is recognizing Women's History Month in March with both adult and youth programs focused on the fiber arts. “The fiber arts provide a modern connection to our pioneer past,” Rose said.

All of the programs are free. Some programs require registration, and space is limited. To register, call 775/738-1849.

March 5, 2:00 p.m.: Needle Felting: Spring Flowers

Join Deb McFarlane and learn how to needle felt, and create your own colorful, felted spring flower. For adults, registration required.

March 6, 2:00 p.m.: For the Kids: God's Eyes

Create colorful yarn ornaments with Dinna Frost. The activity provides a wonderful introduction to working with yarn. Ages 5 and up, registration required.

March 12, 2:00 p.m.: Braided Placemats

Join Leah Brady and learn how to recycle old sheets, rags and t-shirts. Turn them into a functional placemat or a braided rug. Each participant must bring sheets, t-shirts and a sharp pair of scissors. For adults, registration required.

March 13, 2:00 p.m.: For the Kids: Meet the Sheep

Where do sweaters come from? Join Kristine Dedolph and learn all about sheep and pet the lambs. Open to everyone.

March 19, 2:00 p.m.: Crochet, Knitting and Spinning Wheel Demonstrations by the Ruby Mountain Fiber Folk

Members of the Ruby Mountain Fiber Folk will work on knitting and crochet projects. The fiber artists will provide knitting, crochet and spinning wheel demonstrations. Open to everyone.

March 20, 2:00 p.m.: For the Kids: Learn how to Weave

Join Dinna Frost and learn how to weave with yarn and cardboard. Ages 6 and up, registration required.

March 26, 2:00 p.m.: The History of American Quilting

Quilts provide warmth for the body and soul. They are practical works of art, stitched with love. Jan Connelley will present a program on the rich history of quilting in the United States. Open to everyone.

March 27, 2:00 p.m.: For the Kids: Clothespin Dolls

Join Dinna Frost and learn to create clothespin dolls like pioneer kids. Create both boy and girl dolls with scraps of fabric and thread. The program provides an outstanding introduction to sewing. Ages 6 and up, registration required.



Join Dinna Frost on March 6 and learn how to make yarn ornaments, also called God's Eyes.

For more information about the California Trail Interpretive Center call (775) 738-1849.

Visit the Trail Center online at www.californiatrailcenter.org or on Facebook.

CONTACT:

**Alex Rose at 775-738-1849,
or CAtrailcenter@gmail.com**





The Emigrant Trails - The Long Road to California

In Marshall Fey's book, the Emigrant Trails—The Long Road to California, he writes:

"Weather played an important yet unpredictable role during the emigrant era. Heavy rains could slow a company to a crawl, particularly in the Great Basin and in the Sierra Nevada. A trail blocked by a fallen tree or muddied by a swamp, river or stream often forced the emigrants to seek a bypass. Rock slides, thunderstorms, a lack of water, the condition of teams, and other factors mentioned earlier, all contributed to the emigrants having to improvise as the need arose.

In the Rocky Mountains and in the Sierra, a heavy snowpack from the preceding winter made already difficult passes even more perilous. Normally placid streams and rivers could turn into raging torrents, capable of sweeping away both men and beasts, scattering wagons as well as their contents. A mild winter turned small streams into thin ribbons of often stagnant water. The emigrants frequently encountered either too much water or not enough."

Interesting book on following the Trail with maps, guides, diaries and points of interest.

Recipes from the Trail



DUTCH OVEN BISCUITS

This is an old time chuck wagon recipe. There are no milk or eggs in these biscuits, as there often were none available on the range. Many Dutch oven cooks argued that water made lighter biscuits than milk. The original chuck wagon cooks used lard or bacon grease. Biscuits made with bacon grease are especially delicious and worth trying if you are not too concerned about your arteries at the moment.

4 cups sifted flour
1/2 cup lard or bacon grease

4 tsps. baking powder
water

1-1/2 tsps. salt

Heat a 12 inch Dutch oven. Place oven and lid (separately) directly on campfire or hot coals for about five minutes to heat. While oven is heating, thoroughly sift together dry ingredients. Add lard and enough water to make a thick dough. Handle or mix as little as possible. Lightly flour a board and pat the dough out on it to about 3/4 inch to 1 inch thick. Cut biscuits and place them in foil lining with sides touching. You can squeeze and crowd them in. You can use a tin can or anything for a cutter. Remove oven from fire using a Dutch oven hook and place biscuits into it. Using hook, remove lid from fire and place on oven. Spread a shovel full of coals on the ground, putting oven on top of them. Spread another shovel of coals on top of the oven. Do not place oven back into the fire or the main bed of coals, as bread is delicate and can easily burn. You will have to check your biscuits after the first five minutes, and then several times throughout the cooking process. If they are cooking too quickly, remove some of the coals. Sometimes you have to move the oven itself off the coals for a few minutes. Biscuits are done when golden brown. Makes from 10-12 biscuits.

From "PioneersWest Recipes at <http://www.pioneerswest.com/breads.html>

CALIFORNIA TRAIL CENTER FOUNDATION

Springing Forward!

The California Trail Center Foundation is poised to spring forward in several areas. The BLM plans to have a library intern onboard by sometime in March. Blaine Benedict is ready to work with the intern on options for scanning some of the books in the Trail Center library. Our hope is to make these books available online as soon as possible. Local (Elko) members of the Foundation plan to help the BLM as needed to set up a temporary library that is accessible to the public this spring. We are eager to begin to fulfill the dream of founders Paul Sawyer and Dale Porter to make information about the National Historic California Trail available to the public.

BLM has initiated a proposal to do some interim interpretation in the vicinity of the "Hot Hole" within the City of Elko. This was one of the original waysides identified by Paul Sawyer and Dale Porter. The Foundation intends to partner with the BLM and the City of Elko on this effort. The interpretation and showcasing of this key point on the trail is part of a larger plan the City of Elko has for a sports complex in the vicinity.

The Foundation remains interested in the bike path from the City to the Center but we have been stymied by the lack of information from an individual and agency. We will shortly pursue other avenues if the long-promised assistance doesn't materialize.

The Foundation will support California Trail Days the first week in June. We are also working on a fund raiser to be held in association with the county-wide Western Heritage Festival in early August. Current plans envision a short wagon ride, a brief walk on the Green horn cut-off and a Dutch oven meal.

We are continuing to move forward with marketing in many fronts – billboards, television, print, and social media. *See you on the trail! President Helen Hankins*

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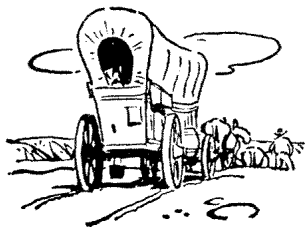
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DONOR WALL

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 membership levels above the Nancy Kelsey level.

Level	Lucinda Duncan	Nancy Kelsey	Virginia Reed	Elizabeth Townsend	Sarah Winnemucca
	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 \$ _____

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California Trail Center Foundation, 530 Idaho St., Elko NV 89801

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Pioneer Level

Trail Blazer Level

Wagon Master Level

DONATION AMOUNT

\$250.00 to \$499.99

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\$2,500.00 to \$4,999.99