

Summer Issue

2020



CALIFORNIA TRAIL HERITAGE ALLIANCE

The Wagon Tongue

“Fort Hall, Half-way There”

About half-way to California, most emigrants traveling the Oregon-California Trails reached Fort Hall, a trading post that became a center of commerce for traders, Indians and emigrant trains traveling the trail. This was until other shortcut routes were found that changed the routes going to California.

Fort Hall was established by Nathaniel J. Wyeth in 1834. After taking a loss on ordered goods at the Green River Rendezvous, he decided to open an independent trading post to trade with the local Indians. He stated in his personal correspondence:

“I shall proceed about 150 miles west of this and establish a fort in order to make sale of the goods which remain on my hands. I have sent out messengers to the Pawnacks, Shoshonees, Snakes, Nez Percés and Flatheads to make robes and come and trade them at this Post. I am under the impression that these Indians will make a good quantity of Robes whenever they find they can sell them and I believe the Transportation will not be too expensive for the value of the article beside which I have no doubt that tolerable good returns of Beaver may be made at this post. I propose to establish it on a river called Portneuf on Snake or Lewis River.”

However, due to competition by the Hudson Bay Company, he was forced to sell out to them by 1837. In a letter on the 5th of May in 1836, Wyeth writes to John McLoughlin Esquire, in which, he outlines his plan in selling his business. Here is his proposal about leaving Fort Hall.

“5th N. Wyeth to agree to abandon Fort Hall if required and in no case to trade or barter with any Indians or freemen below the scite of said Fort on the waters of Snake River, and also agree to establish no posts on the Columbia or any of its waters without the consent of the Honble. Company, but to pursue his trade on the waters of the Salt Lake, the Colorado, del Norte, and the Rivers of the Atlantic.”

This was advantageous for the Hudson Bay Company since the start of the Oregon and California Trails began in the mid 1830s and escalated in travel by the 1840s.

“Came to Fort Hall this morning distance eight miles...Was much cheered with a view of the Fort at a considerable distance. Any thing that looks like a house makes us glad. Called and were hospitably entertained by Capt Thing who keeps the Fort...Our dinner consisted of dry buffalo meat, turnips, and fried bread, which was a luxury. Mountain bread is simply coarse flower and water mixed in Buffalo grease. To one who has had nothing by meat for a long time, this relishes well. For tea we had the same, with the addition of some stewed service berries.” Narcissa Whitman, Oregon Missionary, Aug., 1836

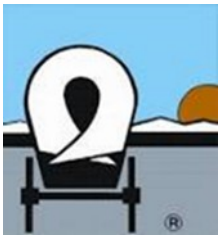
Despite changes in ownership, Fort Hall remained one of the important stops before many emigrants traveled to California. It would be their last stop to purchase goods before they headed into the Humboldt River area. July 18, 1849, Alonzo Delano recalled a very descriptive first visit to Fort Hall:

“We reached Fort Hall about nine o'clock in the morning. Its form resembled that of Fort Laramie, although it is much smaller. It belongs to the Hudson Bay Company, who, by treaty at the cession of Oregon to the United States by England, was allowed to retain possession nineteen years, in order to close its affairs, five of which have expired. We had hoped to obtain some supplies here, but were disappointed. The company were even purchasing bacon and flour from the emigrants who were overloaded. The fort stands on the left bank of the American Fork of the Columbia, sometimes called Snake, and formerly Lewis and Clark's River, which is here perhaps five hundred feet broad. On the west, nothing is seen but a




Fort Hall Replica
Today

(Continued on page 3)



38th Annual Oregon-California Trail Convention, Elko, NV
September 13-16, 2021

*“Through the Lens of History
Preserving the Past – Focusing on the Future”*



2021 octa convention
elkonv
september 13-16

★
bus tours
Long Canyon
Fort Ruby (including site tour) and Ruby Valley
Wells/Osino area (including Gun Museum)
Gravelly Ford

★
special highlights
Trail Days at the
California Trail Interpretive Center
Basque Dancers and Cowboy Poetry

★

**for hotel reservations
and more information**
www.octa-trails.org



Ruby Valley



California Trail Days 2017



Beowawe area near Gravelly Ford

“Fort Hall, Half-way There”

vast barren plain, as far as the eye can extend. On the north, at an apparent distance of thirty or forty miles, high buttes and mountains rise to the clouds, with nothing in the view to cheer the traveler; and this we felt more keenly after having passed through the fine valley of Bear River.

On applying at the fort, we were courteously told we could leave our letters, and they would be forwarded by way of Oregon the first opportunity, but there was no certain communication with the States, and that our surest way was to take them ourselves to California. While thanking them for their frankness, we felt disappointed at not being able to send our remembrances to our friends.... Around the fort were several lodges of Snake Indians, and a shirt was their only dress. The honesty of the Indians was so proverbial, that in traveling through their country we had relaxed in our discipline, and did not consider it necessary to keep night guard—a confidence which was not misplaced...”



On July 27th, 1838, Asa Bowen Smith, Oregon Missionary sent a letter to his parents from Fort Hall showing a similar accounting,

"We arrived here today. 16 days from the Rendezvous, a distance of 400 miles & over the most rugged & mountainous part of the way. We have traveled very safely, but it had not been as fatiguing here as on the low ground where it is warmer. We have had a cool bracing air, as we have been some of the time in the region of snow. We have an unexpected opportunity of sending letters from this place as an express mail arrived here last night from Walla Walla with the intelligence that Mrs. Lee, the wife of the missionary we met at the Rendezvous, was dead & an express will go to inform him of this mournful event. We are all well, tho some fatigued with our labor. We can endure it better however now than in the first part of the route before we became accustomed to it...."

James M. Daigh, California Emigrant in July of 1849 had this to say about the fort:

"Our wagons made a short stop at Fort Hall, where we disposed of part of our powder, coffee and tobacco. Fort Hall is a trading post belonging to the Hudson's Bay Company and is situated on Lewis Fork of the Snake River.... About 25 men are employed there, trading with the Indians. In addition to the men, I saw three white women, one being the wife of a half-Indian negro. The principal trader was a hamsome, portly man [Grant] about sixty years very polite indeed. He had a number of good horses and cattle for sale but was asking as much as three hundred dollars for some of the horses...."

By the mid 1840's, Ft. Hall had become the turning point for some emigrants. California fertile lands and gold were in the future. August 1845, Joel Palmer, Captain, Oregon Emigrant expressed his opinion:

"These tales, told and rehearsed, were likely to produce the effect of turning the tide of emigration thither. Mr. Greenwood, an old mountaineer, well stocked with falsehood, had been dispatched from California to pilot the emigrants through; and assisted by a young man by the name of McDougal, from Indiana, so far succeeded as to induce thirty-five or thirty-six wagons to take that trail..."

New cut-off routes, beaver market dropping, unrest with the natives and withdrawal of the Hudson Bay Company brought about Fort Hall's decline and abandonment.

Today, the site of the original fort is no longer accessible to the public. A reservation was set aside there for the Shoshone-Bannocks by the Fort Bridger treaty. So in 1962, a historical monument (above) was placed on the Shoshone-Bannock Reservation commemorating the site. On the monument, it states:

Fort Hall has been designated a Registered National Historic Landmark under the provisions of the Historic Sites Act of August 21, 1935. This site possesses exceptional value in commemorating and illustrating the history of the United States. U. S. Department of the Interior National Park Service 1962.

In 1962, the Bannock Co. Centennial Committee proposed to rebuild a replica of Fort Hall for the 1963 Centennial. It was built on the eastern side of the city of Pocatello, Idaho. The photos below are of the Fort Hall Replica that visitors can experience and learn about Fort Hall and the displays of its period lifestyle.





UPCOMING EVENTS

CTHA Board Meetings

*At this time California Trail Center Foundation Board meetings will be held by computer/phone conference until further notice and will begin at 5:30 p.m.

July, 2020	No CTHA Board Mtg.
August 13, 2020	CTHA Board Mtg.
June 2021	California Trail Days
Sept. 13-16 2021	OCTA Convention

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

The California Trail Interpretative Center's website message regarding their closure:

"To ensure the safety of our staff and visitors during the Covid-19 outbreak the California Trail Center will be closed temporarily. All events will be cancelled until further notice. We apologize for any inconvenience."

The California Trail Interpretative Center announces the release of their new mobile app!

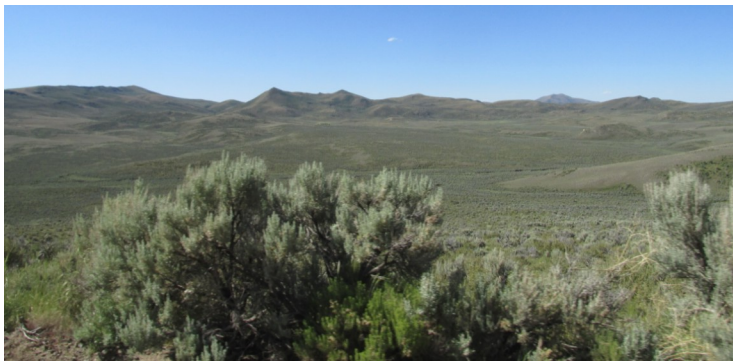
The CTIC Mobile app is still under construction and not all features are available yet.

Virtually explore the California Trail sites represented on the outdoor plaza, learn the trail history that is not featured in the exhibits and dive deeper into the emigrants' experiences as they crossed the country by covered wagon.

The California Trail Interpretative Center is releasing a new mobile app to help enhance the visitors' experience while touring the center and continue providing California Trail history and information after their visit.

The mobile app will provide directions to visit local California Trail sites as well as information about significant sites along the 2,000-mile historic trail. The Trail Center app is a wonderful resource for traveling visitors who would like to continue the California Trail experience after visiting the Center, wherever their journey may take them.

The California Trail Interpretative Center mobile app is available to download now. The mobile app is free and available for download. Go to <http://www.californiatrailcenter.org/> for more info.



The Sagebrush Sea

The Sagebrush Sea is what many have called the area known as the Great Basin. *Artemisa Tridentata*, more commonly known as sagebrush grows in arid and semi-arid conditions throughout the Intermountain West and the Great Basin.

As the emigrant's traveled into Wyoming and all the way to California, the plant that dominated the area was the sagebrush. In *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer* by Peter H. Burnett describes sagebrush as he traveled in 1843 on his way to Oregon,

"On the 30th of August we quitted Fort Hall, many of our young men having left us with pack-trains. Our route lay down Snake River for some distance. The road was rocky and rough, except in the dry valleys; and these were covered with a thick growth of sage or wormwood, which was from two to three feet high, and offered a great obstruction to the first five or six wagons passing through it. The soil where this melancholy shrub was found appeared to be too dry and sterile to produce anything else. It was very soft on the surface, and easily worked up into a most disagreeable dust, as fine as ashes or flour."

"The taste of the sage is exceedingly bitter; the shrub has a brown somber appearance, and a most disagreeable smell. The stem at the surface of the ground is from one to two inches in diameter, and soon branches, so as to form a thick brushy top. The texture of the stem is peculiar, and unlike that of any other shrub, being all bark and no sap or heart, and appears like the outside bark of the grape-vine. How the sap ascends from the roots to the branches, or whether the shrub draws its nutriment from the air, I am not able to decide. One thing I remember well, that the stems of the green growing sage were good for fuel and burned most readily, and so rapidly that the supply had to be continually renewed; showing that they were not only dry, but of very slight, porous texture. Had the sage been as stout and hard as other shrubbery of the same size, we should have been compelled to cut our wagonway through it, and could never have passed over it as we did, crushing it beneath the feet of our oxen and the wheels of our wagons."

The native people valued different species of the sagebrush not only for use in prayers but for medicinal properties. They also used the inner bark for clothing.

Faster than a Greyhound

Once the emigrants came to Wyoming, they started seeing an animal that is also numerous in the Intermountain West and Great Basin. The antelope, more correctly, the pronghorn is not really an antelope. Pronghorn, *Antilocapra Americana*, is called an antelope because it resembles an Old World antelope. It is more related to the giraffe and okapi from Africa. Native Americans hunted, ate and utilized all parts of the pronghorn.



Peter Burnett in his *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer* tells a humorous story about the pronghorn and its amazing speed.

"Lindsey Applegate gave this amusing and somewhat exaggerated account of a race between a very fleet greyhound and an antelope. The antelope was off to the right of the road half a mile distant, and started to cross the road at right angles ahead of the train. The greyhound saw him start in the direction of the road, and ran to meet him, so regulating his pace as to intercept the antelope at the point where he crossed the road. The attention of the antelope being fixed upon the train, he did not see the greyhound until the latter was within twenty feet of him. Then the struggle commenced, each animal running at his utmost speed. The greyhound only ran about a quarter of a mile, when he gave up the race, and looked with seeming astonishment at the animal that beat him, as no other animal had ever done before. Applegate declared, in strong hyperbolical language, that "the antelope ran a mile before you could see the dust rise."



CALIFORNIA TRAIL

HERITAGE ALLIANCE



President's Letter July 2020

Rollin', rollin', - whether we are talking about rivers, wagons, or the “new normal” resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic – things are never static.

Here are some of the highlights of recent and ongoing activities fostered by the California Trail Heritage Alliance.

We have initiated preliminary discussions with Nevada Gold Mines (NGM) about the Gravelly Ford Conservation Easement. NGM contact Steve Grosz is engaging the land and legal staff with the company. John Winner has discussed possibilities with Don Owens, a knowledgeable expert who consults with the National Park Service and others. We hope to have another discussion before the end of July.

MET Mapping continues to be a priority for our Alliance. Our team leader, Kevin Lee, is working as a surveyor for the USFS this summer so is available only for mapping on weekends. It is likely we will have at least one trip to Ruby Valley and possibly one to the Goshute Valley. Earlier this year, Kevin, John Winner, Helen and Duane Jones had some discussions with Nevada Gold Mines and they are open to OCTA doing MET Mapping on their private land. (cont. on pg. 7)

Elko OCTA 2021 Convention

The national OCTA Convention planned for Elko in September of 2020 has been delayed until September 13-16, 2021.

We greatly appreciate the willingness of the OCTA Chapter in Wyoming to defer their convention until 2022 so that we could host it in Elko in 2021.

Tours and speakers are as previously planned. Contracts have been signed for the convention center and the hotel.

Coach USA (Bus Company) has agreed to operate buses for the tours based on previously proposed itineraries. The theme will remain the same and the logo has been updated.





(President's Message cont. from pg. 6)

Despite the closure of Great Basin College due to the Covid-19, we continue to move ahead with efforts to digitize materials related to the California Trail. Jordan Thomas has downloaded many diaries and journals. Our next step will be to compare what we have downloaded with what is in the collection at GBC. Further steps will determine what other materials we want digitized and how we will accomplish this task.

In recent elections, Brad McMullen, Programs and Gathering Manager at the Western Folklife Center has agreed to serve as a director at large. Brad brings an educational and professional background in history and a willingness to support many of our education and interpretation efforts. Helen Hankins, Duane Jones, Gratton Miller, and Marlene Goddard were re-elected to their positions of President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer, respectively. Jordan Thomas, a board member from Elko, is relocating to northern Idaho but will continue to serve on the Alliance board.

New member Brad McMullen is interested in working with Walt Goddard on the Interpretive Panels in the Elko Corridor. Brad will look into what stories about all of the history of the area might be portrayed on the interpretive panels. Previously Walt had made a map identifying potential locations for these panels. Due to the Covid-19, the "walk-about" town to evaluate the locations has been deferred at this time.

Grants from the Nevada Commission on Tourism were not offered this spring; it is uncertain if they will be available later this year. Funds received from the Elko County Recreation Board are roughly 30% of past grants. These reductions will impact our ability to effectively market the California Trail Center. Since they have been closed since mid-March and are not expected to open until August or later, this may not be as much of a tragedy as it might seem.

Onward! Helen Hankins, President

CTHA Board of Directors

Core Members:

Bailey Billington-Benson

Leah Brady

Marlene Goddard

Walt Goddard

Helen Hankins

Duane Jones

Kevin Lee

Grafton Miller

Brad McMullen

At-Large Members

Chuck Briggs

Lisa Dinwiddie

Paul Dinwiddie

Jacqueline Lucero

Larry Schmidt

Frank Tortorich

Jordan Thomas

John Winner

Newsletter Editor: Leah Brady Contributor: Helen Hankins



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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 \$ _____

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

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CALIFORNIA TRAIL CENTER DONOR WALL RECOGNITION LEVELS

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Pioneer	\$250.00 to \$499.99
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Wagon Master	\$2,500.00 to \$4,999.99
Empire Building	\$5,000.00 or Greater

CONTACT US!

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