

DESERT TRACKS



Newsletter of the Southwest Chapter of the Oregon-California Trails Association

January, 2003

From the editors

Mark Twain, on assuming the editorship of the Buffalo Express in August 1869, wrote:

“Being a stranger, it would be immodest and unbecoming in me to suddenly and violently assume the editorship without a single explanatory word of comfort or encouragement to the unoffending patrons of the paper, who are about to be exposed to constant attacks of my wisdom and learning. I only wish to assure parties having a friendly interest in the prosperity of the journal that I am not going to hurt the paper deliberately or intentionally at any time. I am not going to introduce any startling reforms, or in any way attempt to make trouble. I am simply going to do my plain, unpretending duty, when I cannot get out of it...”

With these guiding principles we, Deborah and Jon Lawrence, are assuming the editorship of Desert Tracks on a trial basis. Deborah is a professor of English at California State University, Fullerton, who specializes in early American literature; she is currently working on a book about women’s narratives and the rhetoric of westward expansion. Jon is a physicist at University of California, Irvine. Together we travel western trails in our 16-foot, 1964 Airstream with Leonard, our four-year-old Bearded Collie. We made our first trip on the Overland Trail four summers ago. We saw the country firsthand from Independence, Missouri, to Oregon City. Using diaries, reminiscences, and letters of women who went West between 1836 and 1857, we followed the emigrants from campsite to campsite and landmark to landmark. By the conclusion of the trip we had become confirmed trail addicts and, as a result, we have since then explored the California Trail, the

Santa Fe Trail from Independence down into Chihuahua, the Gila Trail, and most recently, Beale’s Wagon Road.

We are very excited to be participating in SWOCTA. The chapter has many opportunities, and indeed represents the cutting edge, because the southern trails are relatively underexplored and underrepresented in comparison to the northern complex. An exciting new development is Charles Baley’s new book which Rose Ann Tompkins reviews in this issue and which we used to enhance our recent Beale Road experience. The Trail Turtles’ ongoing program to map the southern trails using the latest GPS technology is not only exciting as a major research effort but, as we hope is made clear by the accompanying reports, also creates tremendous enjoyment and first-hand experience of trail conditions for the participants. Our report of our recent trip over the 35th parallel route espouses a complementary approach, where we use existing literature and guidebooks to enhance our appreciation of the trail, and also take advantage of the many other opportunities for travelers, such as fine old hotels and restaurants.

We encourage all readers to submit news, articles, and correspondence for future issues – our current goal is to have two issues a year.

Deborah and Jon Lawrence



Stongbox Custodian's report

The last Treasurer's report was written on July 8, 2000, following an audit, and was included in a newsletter issued shortly thereafter. At that time, the treasury contained \$637.24. In the remainder of year 2000, the chapter took in \$154.11 and spent \$149.90. At the end of 2000, we had a balance of \$641.45. In year 2001, we brought in \$421.64 and spent \$97.63 leaving us with a balance of \$965.46. Chapter activities had dropped off significantly, the position of newsletter editor was vacant, and we were not spending very much money. Accordingly, I decided, with the concurrence of the other officers, that we would not ask the existing members for dues for 2002, but would just carry over the memberships. New members would be charged the usual \$10 dues.

In 2002, we brought in \$63.62 and spent \$75.60, leaving us with a balance of \$952.31. Again, the officers decided not to ask for dues, but to carry over the memberships. It is my sense that for a viable chapter, the treasury should be at least \$500 and not more than \$1000. If activities which generate expenses reduce the treasury to near this lower limit, we will again ask the members for dues. Otherwise, we will continue as we have for the past two years.

Harland Tompkins, Strongbox Custodian
January 15, 2003

Desert Tracks: the Newsletter of the Southwest Chapter of the Oregon-California Trails Association

<http://members.cox.net/htompkins2/SWOCTA.htm>

Chapter President:	Charles Townley
Vice President:	Tracey DeVault
Treasurer:	Harland Tompkins
Secretary:	Marie Greene

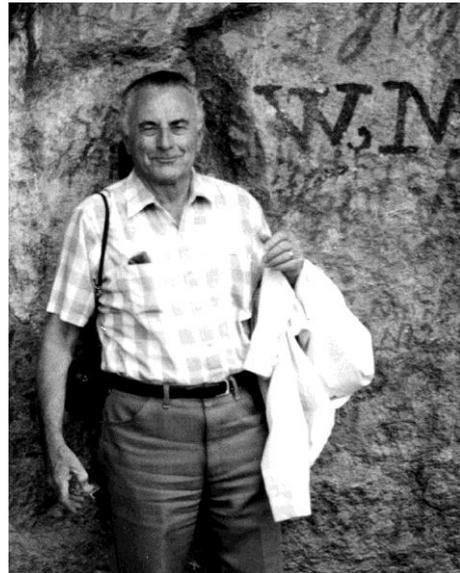
New Membership: \$10/year
Make checks payable to Harland Tompkins
Mail to : Harland Tompkins
1125 W. Mission Drive, Chandler AZ 85224

Editors: Deborah and Jon Lawrence

Submit correspondence and other material to:
SWOCTA
44 Harvey Court, Irvine CA 92612
dlawrence@exchange.fullerton.edu

Death of Robert Lee

A charter member of both OCTA and SWOCTA, Bob Lee died October 9, 2002. Bob and Betty Lee lived in Thatcher AZ. Bob was a pharmacist in Safford AZ, owning his own business for many years. He was active in various activities in the community. Born near the Oregon Trail in Idaho, his great-grandparents were married during their emigrant trip to Oregon. In recent years he had become aware of a reference to their marriage in a trail diary written by another member of the wagon train. Bob and Betty were very active in the Southwest Chapter in its early years, leading outings (including our very first one in 1987) and giving support on a number of occasions. He will be missed by all who knew him.



Bob Lee at City of Rocks during 1989 OCTA Convention

Fall Mapping Report

The SWOCTA Trail Turtles used the fall mapping trips to visit the Southern Trail area west of the Pima/Maricopa villages to Painted Rock State Park. Doyle and Fiona Reed covered this area years ago to set up the Anza Trail corridor. This was before the GPS was available to more accurately locate the trail on topographic maps. We were able to refine the maps the Doyles had previously prepared.

The part of the trail between the Pima villages and the Yuma crossing was heavily used as several alternate trails came together to journey this last part of the Gila River Valley. Emigrants referred to the Pimas as Pimo Indians. Just west of the Pima villages the river turns north before returning south and then west again. This is even today called the Gila bend, with the Arizona city of Gila Bend at its western end. It was a 45-mile stretch of desert with no water. Wagon parties spent a few days in the Pima and Maricopa villages, trading for food and preparing for the *jornada*, or dry journey, ahead. The Painted Rocks are west of Gila Bend; emigrants referred to the rock art as hieroglyphics. The Oatman Massacre site is a few miles to the west.

Rose Ann Tompkins

OCTOBER, 2002 MAPPING TRIP - TURTLES AROUND THE BEND

by Richard Greene

Gila Bend, AZ. It was a hot, hot, hot mapping trip. And we mapped 25 miles. Are the Turtles hot or what?!

The TURTLES: Don Buck, Tracy and Judy DeVault, Richard and Marie Greene, Dave Hollecker, Harlie and Rose Ann Tompkins, Ken and Pat White.

WED. OCT 9 - By 5 pm the Turtles had gathered at the Tompkins' house in Chandler, AZ. All arrived within an hour of each other. We've been doing this for so long now that everybody and everything is just 'so smooth'. We mesh easily and are comfortable together. Dinner on the patio was accompanied by several crashing into the 'invisible' patio door screen. Those who crashed into it were grateful that Rose Ann and Harlie were having their patio enclosed and the screen would no longer be needed.

Rose Ann covered the mapping plan and we headed to bed. We slept in the house, in our vehicles.. the Turtles were in good shape.

THU. OCT 10 - After breakfast at the house six vehicles got going before 8 am. We loaded up with gas and ice and as a McDs was nearby we took it in. We drove about 45 miles to the edge of the Gila Indian Reservation. It is not easy to get permission to look for the Trail on the reservation so we avoided that problem and started on the edge.

The Turtles were now revisiting an area that had been mapped by Doyle Reed in the early 1990s but without the benefit of GPS readings.

We soon found trail. Pat found an old button and Richard found half of a mule shoe. The Butterfield Stage Trail overlaps the Southern Trail and is well marked in this area.

Temperatures ranged between 95 and 100..it was a WARM morning. We had lunch under the shade of the Turtle Shell (the EZ UP shelter) that the Greenes bring to mapping trips. Shade is precious on a sunny day.

After lunch we were finding trail quite easily then we took a rugged ride over a rocky, rutted road to get an overview of the trail as it headed toward the landfill. It was hot..just too d---hot.

We made for our campsite..by the landfill....and landfill flies. Never saw so many flies in the desert before. By 4 pm the equipment stopped work and the landfill was at peace. Some showered under the Turtle Shell. We sat around. Group dinner: Italian pasta by Ken and Pat, garlic toast and salad by Tracy and Judy and others contributed snacks. It was warm and as we chatted late into the evening as our beds were cooling off. The Turtles had mapped some good trail so it made for good sleeping.

FRI. OCT 11 - It had been a pleasant night for sleeping. It had cooled off. 4 am: can you believe the land fill started operations? Was this a premonition for another hot day? Yup.

Tracy and Judy showed off their latest gadget..a 12V microwave. They naturally had to cook an equally unbelievable breakfast for campers.

Rose Ann divided the Turtles into two groups. Don, Richard and Tracy would map the gap from where we left off yesterday - the spot where Richard found the 1/2 muleshoe on the flats to the landfill. The second group continued on from the landfill.

Don's group walked from the campsite to the entrance of the landfill. The entrance was enhanced by the replica of a stage station. Then, Tracy did a wondrous thing. Tracy asked Richard for his GPS reading on the muleshoe. Tracy set his GPS to 'Go To' and from then on we followed the track of his GPS. Basically, you kept on as straight a line as the GPS showed and if you strayed the GPS would show it.

You're not going to believe this. We walked five miles and the GPS would show how much closer you were getting. When we got to within 50ft. of the muleshoe Tracy called out to Richard (who was slightly ahead) and said 'We're there'. Richard looked down and could not believe his eyes. He was standing right beside the muleshoe. There is a God and he loves the Turtles.



Saguaro cactus with barrel hoop over one arm: Evidence that the hoop was placed over the cactus while it was still standing! (Photo: Tracey Devault)

Don had volunteered to get his truck so that Tracy and Richard would not have to walk the whole five miles back. Don was there waiting at an abandoned ranch and he drove Tracy and Richard back to their trucks.

The abandoned ranch was now a derelict location with lots of trash laying around but it was inhabited when Doyle Reed led us on the first trip. Maybe the people left because of the landfill disturbed the isolation.

Meanwhile the rest of the group moved west along the trail, which roughly paralleled the existing 2-track. Strangely, the 2-track had carsonite markers every tenth of a mile (no exaggeration) implying this was the trail. We knew better and continued the mapping of the real trace.

By lunchtime all had gathered at North Tank, also the site of Butterfield watering place called Desert Wells. Only the rocks of a fallen chimney remain. The afternoon was spent continuing the carsonite strewn 2-track and parallel trail. We reached the Butterfield Pass Interpretative Area and camped.

Once again it was another hot day and we were dragging by mid afternoon. Just too hot to keep pushing it.

SAT. OCT 12 - A warm night. Not great for a good sleep. Instead of the busy landfill we now had the Boy Scouts swarming the area. The Butterfield Pass area is well marked with signs. The Boy Scouts have obviously used this Pass for earning their proficiency badges..and the tradition continues. We encountered them all day. They were naturally curious why we were mapping a trail that had already been mapped..what do you say to that except "We like to do it in the heat and know we are following the route and feel the real discomfort that the likes of the Mormon Battalion, emigrants and stage passengers must have experienced".

Gun enthusiasts had come out for the weekend and were shooting off their various weapons. Bullets seemed to be getting close even though they were shooting directly from their campsite into the hill. It was just a little unsettling and we decided that discretion was in order so we left the area to continue further west.

Trail was obvious through this area.

The schedule was to return to Chandler and relax. We were happy to get a respite from the heat so there was no problem getting our caravan to hurry on to the creature comforts of the big city. Ken and Pat opted to stay in Gila Bend and Ken was not feeling well.

The Tompkins house..AC, showers, relaxing by the pool. The group settled on a Chinese buffet and ate their weight. After the buffet the group separated and shopped and ended up at the house. This is the mapping life at it's best.

SUN. OCT 13 - After breakfast and reloading our vehicles we headed out again. This time Harlie came with us. We drove the 70 miles to Gila Bend and met up with Ken and Pat. We drove another 24 miles to Painted Rocks State Park parking area. Needless to say the heat was on. Judy, Marie and Harlie shuttled us and returned to the ramada by the parking area and the rest of us pushed on from our starting point, a Mormon Battalion sign on the highway.

We found the trail and followed it the few miles back to the parking area. We were toasted..hot that is. Another short day of mapping. After lunch some decided to go to the Oatman Massacre site and some stayed under the ramada. The warmest afternoon yet.

Harlie took five in his Jeep and the Whites followed in their vehicle. The road got rough as we neared the site and rock cairns helped us find it. The slope up from the flats to the top of the mesa is a sight for trail nuts..rust and grooves in the rock indicated a well used passage for wagons. We drove down into the flats and looked at the Furr Stage and Grave site. We explored a rough, winding road coming down from the mesa to the Furr site..it looked 20th century. It was 5:30 pm when we got back to the parking lot.

Harlie was returning to Chandler. Judy, Richard and Marie decided the trip was worth it for the creature comforts and accompanied him. The rest of the group camped at the official Painted Rocks campground. Dave fixed a great dinner as we enjoyed the mild evening. The desert is nice when the heat of the day dissipates.

MON. OCT. 14 - The Turtles were now mapping the east side of the Mormon Battalion sign from where we started yesterday. Richard made the trip back from Chandler and joined the group. The Trail was easily followed until it entered a wash and then it petered out. We then decided to drive to the other side of the rocky mesa and see where the trail came out.

Rose Ann stopped the group at different spots where the aeriels indicated the Trail should be. Richard hiked up to the top of the mesa and after a short search found a carsonite marker and the trail. By radio, Richard contacted the group and said he would walk the trail coming down the mesa. The group could follow Richard's progress and were soon searching the area where Richard was headed. Once again the Trail disappeared in a wide wash and the broad valley of the Gila River.

It's almost mystical how traces can vanish in a matter of a few yards.

We decided to go back to Butterfield Pass to finish mapping the area where we left because of the shooting problem. On our way through Gila Bend, we decided to do lunch (Subway, Burger King, etc.) and stock up with ice.

Butterfield Pass..we found plenty of trail and markers that helped us. Richard found a link of chain and thanks to Tracy's GPS 'Go To'



Don Buck and Richard Greene stand in parallel trail traces leading up a hill out of the Gila River Valley, heading for Painted Rock.

(Photo: Rose Ann Tompkins)

we were able to find it again so that it could be photographed. This was a very productive day for the Turtles.

Richard left for Chandler while the rest camped in the area. Chandler: Monday Night Football: 49ers beat Seattle..Baseball: SF Giants beat St. Louis to win the National League title and go to the World Series to play the Angels. The construction crew had started enclosing the Tompkins patio..looking good.

At camp, Don and Dave had to be content with the radio version of the 49er game while the others enjoyed the sunset, the desert evening and the strange lights in the sky.

TUE. OCT. 15 - Our last day of mapping. We were going to end at lunch.

We broke into groups and once again encountered good and vanished parts of trail. It was another hot day. After lunch and as soon as Rose Ann downloaded their GPS data, Don, Dave, Ken and Pat left for home. Tracy and Richard did the final segment where Dave had left off and rejoined Rose Ann to close up the week of mapping.

We had some hot fun, not to mention the 25+ miles of trail that was mapped. A good week.



The trail trace is easy to see here as it heads across the desert. This is along the area where the trail cut across the bend of the Gila River.

(Photo: Dave Hollecker)

Supplement to October 2002 Mapping

by Rose Ann Tompkins

On November 10, 2002, five mappers returned to the area west of Butterfield Pass. The group included Marie and Richard Greene, Rose Ann and Harland Tompkins, and Beth Langstaff, a visitor from Ohio. The temperatures were milder than in October, making for an enjoyable day trip.

The day began with a search for the world's tallest saguaro cactus. This cactus was found, measured and documented by Dennis Wells in 1988; predating use of a GPS to pinpoint the location. However, he had used various landmarks, recording them in his field notes. We had heard that the cactus had since fallen, but we wanted to confirm that information and also see if we could locate the carcass. After some hunting in the appropriate wash, we felt we found it. We measured the fallen pieces of the cactus and this confirmed our finding.

After a picnic lunch, we went to the spot of the end of October's mapping. To continue involved covering about three miles with no access road. Richard was dropped at the end of the previous mapping to walk the trail west. The two vehicles were driven to the next access road, and Rose Ann and Beth mapped from that point east. After meeting, the three returned to the vehicles. This piece of trail was not hard to follow as it is in an area that is on a gentle downslope, heading for the Gila River at the western end of the Gila Bend part of the trail. We are now very close to finishing this piece of trail to Highway 84. At that point the trail enters the floodplain and agricultural fields where it is doubtful and traces remain.

TURTLES at T or C November 2002

by Richard Greene

Turtles do the dither around Truth or Consequences (T or C), NM. The TURTLES: Tracy DeVault, Richard and Marie Greene, Brock and Lavidia Hileman, Rose Ann Tompkins, Ken and Pat White AND Cam Wade, Bob Weber. The DITHER : Today, GPS readings are accurate. Previously, the military controlled the data output from the satellites and as a security measure created a margin of error in GPS readings. This margin of error became known as 'the dither'.

The Turtles were back in T or C to remap the area because their earlier GPS readings had the 'dither' factor and we wanted to correct that situation. Also, Cam Wade had recommended we take advantage of the low water level in Elephant Butte Reservoir .. maybe we could see more of the Trail coming out of the Rio Grande bottomlands.

WED. NOV 20 The Turtles had agreed to meet in Elephant Butte State Park (EBSP) at 4 pm. Via cell phone and radios we all got together at the Los Arcos restaurant.. as fine a steak as you will find anywhere.. pricey drinks though. Just ask Tracy and Lavidia. The Greenes had come a day early to scope the camping out. They found the shower/restroom situation bleak.. there was just one place available but at least the facility was by a good beach campsite.

Before we left Los Arcos we all agreed to meet at McDs by 8 am. We headed back to EBSP and settled in our campsite for the night. What beats a camp fire.. and toasting marshmallows. Thanks to Ken and Pat. They brought everything and Eagle Scout Ken had a roaring fire going in no time. The Turtles were back into a familiar routine.. camaraderie.

THU. NOV 21 Whew! A chilly night. Daylight 6 am. Rose Ann out of camp and on her way to McDs by 6:30. Others soon followed. Brock and Lavidia, who winter in T or C, met us there. Was it the McDs senior discount (coffee 27 cents) or just getting warm and having a table to spread our maps out that made it the perfect early AM meeting place?.. anyway it became the place to meet every AM. We headed for the Mitchell Point Exit (actually we got off at the Red Rock Exit and drove back.. it had been awhile since we were last here) and met Cam and Bob there. We headed down to the river and the place where we

believe the wagons came out of the river valley at The Narrows. The water was really down. The area has been in a drought for on to 3 years and we could see vegetation, rock and debris.. even cattle grazing.. where there was once a lake.. incredible! Well, we searched.. searched.. and just could not find anything substantive. We noted a flag pole (Cam said it was some sort of abandoned 'weather station' (?) and 'the rock house' in the distance. We ended up for lunch at the corral.

After lunch and just west of the corral we came upon a grave (Tracy's divining rod verified it) and all the rust and trail you could hope for. The group split. Richard, Brock and Lavidia decided to head east and see where it led.. the others headed on. The rust soon ran out for Richard, Brock and Lavidia and the drainages they followed led them back to the area explored in the morning. They found nothing but time was not on their side so they stopped and returned to join the others. Brock and Lavidia had to go back to T or C and left. Richard caught up with Tracy, Ken and Pat. The others were across a wide wash. Richard arrived just in time to hear Cam say on the radio that he had a flat and to watch Marie try to drive up ONE STEEP HILL. As it was Rose Ann's truck and there was the fear that the truck might roll over Rose Ann relieved Marie and drove it up herself. Richard felt reassured as he drove over to help with Cam's flat tire. After putting on the spare Cam and Bob headed home to Socorro. Richard and Rose Ann were on the radio with Tracy, Ken and Pat to resolve where the trail came down and out of the wash. Nothing was positive. It was time to call it a day so Rose Ann advised the others that it was probably better that they go back instead of driving the ONE STEEP HILL. They quickly agreed! We setup to meet in T or C at the La Cocina for Mexican food. It was a rough ride for Rose Ann, Marie and Richard before getting back to the highway.. rock, sand and brush.. a little reminder of hell. We met Brock and Lavidia at the restaurant and did justice to our dinner.. we certainly ate our weight in salsa and chips. After dinner we went to Brock and Lavidia's home.. we watched the new OCTA video and got to camp around 8. There is nothing like a shower after a hard day.. especially a COOL shower. Interestingly, the women said their shower was OK. The men were doing a war dance and whimpering at the occasional blast of warm water. At least we went to bed clean. It was a long day and we went to bed without our normal evening gathering in camp.



The chill of a November evening is helped by a campfire at Elephant Butte State Park. Just ask Marie Greene, Pat White, and Ken White.
(Photo: Rose Ann Tompkins)

FRI. NOV 22 A chilly but not too cold a night. It's just great to meet at McDs and finalize our plans for the day. Marie decided to spend the day in Las Cruces. The rest of us headed down to Nogal Canyon to meet Cam and Bob (who is 84 yrs.. and pretty spry). We thought we had found where the Trail came down into Nogal Canyon and headed toward the river but Tracy was convinced that a bulldozer had left the clear cut and all the rust.. and the rest of us got around to agreeing with him. Some of the group moved over to the next side canyon and found some good rust here and there. This is a more probable route for the trail, but all the water action in these canyons make it difficult to know for sure.

After lunch in Nogal we went north up Hwy. 1 to search for the trail on the top going to Nogal Canyon. Rose Ann got us to the vicinity of the trail via the aerals (what would we do without Rose Ann and her aerals) and Tracy soon had the group along the trail. Two probable graves were the main features of possible trail evidence; it was obvious this had also been a ranch road at one time. The Trail petered out and so did our time before we could search more for the way to Nogal. Cam and Bob were a lot closer to Socorro as we headed back to camp. We were back on the beach by 4 .. Marie was there .. and after cleaning up Richard went to pick up the pizzas that Marie had ordered for dinner. Tracy was really hungry because he remarked when Richard was driving slowly across the beach 'Is that truck moving or does he like cold pizza ?' Richard got back to a roaring fire and the wine flowing freely. Richard put on a Golden Oldies tape and we all tucked into the pizza. It was a fun evening.

SAT. NOV 23 Our last day. Whites were first in leaving for McDs and the Greenes were last. From McDs we headed for Mitchell Point again and to the corral by Alien Knob. Richard, Brock and Lavidia headed for the other corral to see if they could find the trail out of the river.. they didn't.. while the others found plenty of trail heading south. As this was going to be a short day by noon we were back the Alien Knob corral and having lunch.. there was some left over pizza too. During lunch Richard mapped a short section running along the hill that Neal Johns had found on another trip.

When Richard got back the others had already unloaded their GPS readings into Rose Ann's laptop and were discussing a visit to Hunter's Draw down by Garfield. The Greenes having been there before decided it was in the wrong direction for them and said 'bye' to the group and left for home. The others visited Hunter's Draw.

Additional from RA:

Tracy wanted to show Whites the Hunter Draw area and Rose Ann trailed along. After pointing out the beginning of Hunter Draw, we went on to find Steep Hill, the place the trail comes back down from the mesa into Jaraloosa Arroyo. This proved more difficult than we thought it would be. After some sleuthing around, we finally found it. Lots of rust of course and some familiar artifacts from our other visit were still around. We then headed for Deming to spend the night, enjoying a wonderful sunset as we drove. Everyone retired early, heading the rest of the way home the next morning.

Trail Turtles Spring Trip

The SWOCTA Trail Turtles are planning a spring reconnaissance trip over the Booneslick and Santa Fe Trails. It will encompass about two weeks and is a working trip, not a trail tour. The final dates have not been set. If you are interested in more information, contact Tracy Devault at

928-778-6228

or

tracydeva@mindspring.com for details.

NEWSLETTERS OF RELATED ORGANIZATIONS AND UPCOMING MEETINGS:

News from the Plains

Oregon-California Trails Association
P.O. Box 1019, Independence MO 64051-0519
www.octa-trails.org

OCTA 2003 Convention:

August 12-16
Manhattan KS
KANZA-OCTA.org

Spanish Traces

Old Spanish Trail Association
P.O. Box 7, Marysville WA 98270
www.oldspanishtrail.org

OSTA 2003 Conference

June 21-22
Durango CO

Wagon Tracks

Santa Fe Trail Association
P.O. Box 31, Woodston KS 67675
www.santafetrail.org

2003 Santa Fe Trail Symposium

September 25-28
Independence MO

Mojave Road Report

Friends of the Mojave Road
37198 Lanfair Road G-15
Essex CA 92332-9799
www.mdhca.org

24th Mojave Road Rendezvous

October 10-13, 2003
Goffs CA

Book Review

Disaster at the Colorado - Beale's Wagon Road and the First Emigrant Party

by Charles W. Baley. Utah State University Press, Logan, 2002.

In 1858 a party of emigrants arrived in Albuquerque via the Santa Fe Trail, planning to follow the established Southern Trail to California. Persuaded by local residents, they instead decided to try to a new route, the Beale Road, and thus became a group to enter the history books due to circumstances looming ahead. Surveyed by Lt. Edward F. Beale in 1857, this route across northern New Mexico Territory had not been improved beyond the initial survey and the explorations of Lt. Lorenzo Sitreaves in 1851 and Lt. Amiel Whipple in 1953–54.

Charles Baley, a descendent of one family in that wagon train, has written the most complete account of this journey yet published. Years of exhaustive research through the records left by the members of the wagon train itself, other accounts of the time, and government reports give new insight into this ill-fated wagon train.

Baley begins his narrative with an outline of the families joining this train, their preparations and formation into the final group which became known as the Rose–Baley wagon train. John Udell, age 62, had traveled to California three times before, on the northern trails. He kept a diary on those trips, and his account of travel in the Rose–Baley train is the best daily account of this trip.

As the train moved west from Albuquerque, they passed El Morro, or Inscription Rock, where several left their names and identified themselves as part of the first emigrants to pass by. Later, near Flagstaff, they rested for a few days while scouts looked ahead for water. Finding only small springs, the decision was made to divide the train, half moving a day ahead of the other half in order to reduce the heavy need for water at one time. The scarcity of water and continued harassment by local Indians plagued the group all the way to the Colorado River.

Upon reaching the last pass before the Colorado, the parched animals were driven ahead to water, leaving some of the group and most of the wagons at the pass. As work began on rafts to ferry the river and with the company somewhat scattered, the Mojave Indians took advantage of the opportunity and attacked. With

several of the party dead, the rest retreated back to the pass, gathered what little remained of their livestock and the few wagons that could be utilized to begin a return trip to Albuquerque. Without the assistance of other parties on the trail who also turned back, more of the group would have perished before reaching civilization.

After wintering over in Albuquerque and Santa Fe, most continued to California, although not in the same train. Some accompanied Lt. Beale when he came through in 1859 improving the trail, and some took the Southern Trail as they had originally planned.

Baley recounts these events in a most readable narration without sensationalizing the events. He then recounts how the various families settled into new lives in California and how they attempted to recover the value of their lost resources from the federal government through the Indian depredation claims process.

The appendixes include a listing, with ages, of all in the Rose–Baley wagon train; a letter John Udell wrote to his brothers in Ohio and published in a local newspaper; and the 1891 Indian Depredation Claim by Leonard Rose for his losses. Also included are several maps to better understand the travel route, and a number of historical photographs of various members of the train.

The thoroughness of research and story presentation by Baley makes this book a must for all those seeking more about the early travel west. It also allows another perspective to those who are mainly familiar with the northern routes to California but know little about the southern routes.

Rose Ann Tompkins

RELATED BOOKS:

John Udell, "The Rest of the Story", and
Jose Manuel Saavedra, The Guide who was Always Lost,

both by Jack Beale Smith, Tales of the Beale Road Publishing Company, PO Box 31391, Flagstaff AZ 86003

The Story of Inscription Rock

Bertha S. Dodge (Phoenix Publishing, Canaan NH, 1975)

The Road West: Saga of the 35th Parallel

Bertha S. Dodge (U. New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 1980)

L. J. Rose of Sunny Slope

L. J. Rose, Jr. (Huntington Library, San Marino, 1959)

Traveling Beale's Wagon Road

By Deborah and Jon Lawrence

We travel often to New Mexico, following Interstate-40 from Barstow to Albuquerque. As inveterate travelers of old pioneer trails, we decided to heighten the I-40 experience by seeking out historical sites along the route. For this trip, we focused not exclusively, but primarily on the Beale Wagon Road.

In 1857, Lieutenant Edward F. Beale was commissioned by the government to lay out a wagon road along the thirty-fifth parallel. Perhaps what Beale is most remembered for today is not his route, but the use of camels in his road-building enterprise. Even Beale's camel driver Hadji Ali, who had a song written about him and made popular by Randy Sparks and the New Christy Minstrels, is more remembered than the Wagon Road. The first federally funded road to be built in the Southwest, Beale's expedition went across Arizona past the Flagstaff area and then west and a little north through Peach Springs and the Kingman area and on to the Colorado. Still visible in many places today, his route was the precursor to the 1882 transcontinental Atlantic and Pacific Railroad, Route 66, and Interstate 40.

Among the books and maps we brought with us was Charles Baley's recent book *Disaster at the Colorado: Beale's Wagon Road and the First Emigrant Party*. Baley's book examines the experiences of the first party of emigrants to attempt Beale's Wagon Road. The ill-fated Rose-Baley Wagon train left Albuquerque on June 30, 1858, with 20 wagons, 40 men, 56 women and children. In Arizona they found the trail difficult to follow and water sources increasingly hard to find. Near present-day Seligman, the Hualapai harassed them and shot their stock. When the wagon train reached the Colorado River, a large party of Mojaves attacked them. Twelve-year-old Sally Fox saw the Indians first and yelled out that the Indians were going to kill them all. She was the first one hit—an arrow pierced her chest. Her stepfather was killed along with several of the other emigrants. Nearly all of the party's livestock was driven into the river and lost. The survivors had to abandon their wagons and their possessions and retreat back to Albuquerque on foot.

In Barstow we visited the Mojave River Valley Museum where we saw Samuel Bishop's inscribed rock that had been taken from Fort

Piute. Bringing supplies and re-enforcement to his partner Beale, Bishop cached a large number of supplies at Piute Spring. It is believed the rock was inscribed to mark the location. There is also a not-to-be-missed mural on Main Street depicting Edward Beale and the camels.

We crossed to the east side of the Colorado River and located the ruins of Fort Mohave which is on a mesa two miles north of Camp Mohave. The road is sandy so four-wheel drive is necessary. In response to Beale's suggestion that a shelter was needed to protect future emigrants from the Mojave Indians, this post was established on April 19, 1859, near the location of the Rose-Baley disaster at the Colorado. We stood on the site and read the emigrants' gruesome account of their battle with the Indians here and their agonizing decision to make the long march back to Albuquerque, a distance of nearly five hundred miles.

The old Highway 66 closely parallels Beale's Trail from Camp Mojave to Seligman. Traveling on Route 66, we passed through historic Oatman. Steep mountain cliffs surround the old mining town, and wild burros roam the streets. We climbed the Black Mountains to the summit of Sitgreave's Pass at an elevation of 3,556 feet. At the crest, we read excerpts from emigrant John Udell's diary detailing the difficulties of both the ascent and the descent of this section of the road. From here the travelers could see the Colorado River in the distance and their goal—California—so tantalizingly close. We followed the steep grades, narrow road, and hair-pin turns down to Kingman. We thought of the survivors' return trip over the pass. According to Baley, the rocky terrain quickly wore out their shoes, forcing many to walk barefoot.

Beale's road building crews located a spring in the Kingman area that would eventually bear his name and become one of the first water sources for Kingman. After driving out to Beale's Springs and the nearby Bishop Springs, we stopped off at the Mohave Museum of History and Art. In addition to the books and information on local history, the museum has wonderful dioramas and a mural illustrating the story of early settlement of the area, including the Beale road building expedition and the Rose-Baley wagon train.

We took Highway 66 past Valentine, Truxton, and Peach Springs. It was in this area just west of Seligman that the Rose-Baley wagon train of 1858 first had trouble with the Hualapai.

The Indians began stealing stock and shooting arrows at the wagons.

At the Williams' Visitor Center, the Ranger gave us a map to nearby Beale sites in the National Forest. It was a wet and rainy day, so we wanted to limit our off road travel. Consulting our map, we located three Beale Wagon Road sites in the area; we chose Government Prairie. In dry weather, this forest road (FR 107) is fine for passenger cars. It meanders through beautiful open grasslands surrounded by mountains and forest. At the base of Government Mountain, the road tees into a forest road and at this location there are well preserved ruts and high quality obsidian lying on the ground. We walked in the preserved wagon ruts and saw what we thought might be the remnant of one of Beale's rock walls.



Leonard on the Beale Trail in Government Prairie. Possible Beale rock wall remnant in background. (Photo: Jon Lawrence)

We drove back to Interstate-40 and on to Flagstaff, Arizona. Founded in 1876, the town got its name from a tall-stripped pine that was used as a trail marker for wagon trains traveling on Beale's route. We went to the Arizona Historical Society where we bought several booklets by local trail enthusiast Jack Beale Smith. Smith has devoted many years to the investigation of Beale's Wagon Road. He discovered and mapped most of the original road between Zuni, New Mexico, and the Colorado River. A number of these sites can be found in the Flagstaff area.

The Beale road from Flagstaff closely parallels the highway to Leupp, where the emigrants crossed Canyon Diablo; it then follows the back road to Winslow. Arriving in Winslow we checked in at La Posada, Mary Colter's Harvey House masterpiece. Not only is there a Beale's Wagon Road marker in front of the hotel, but numerous signs in town mark the

Beale route. Opened to the public in 1930, La Posada was the only project that Colter was able to design or select everything from the structures to the landscape, to the maids' costumes. The hotel was closed in 1957, and in the early 1960's, much of the building was gutted and used as offices for the Santa Fe Railway. Today owner-managers Allan Affeldt and Tina Mion have transformed La Posada back to its former glory. Chef John Sharpe and his wife Patricia opened the hotel's Turquoise Room Restaurant in October 2000. The ambiance is special—the restaurant is facing the tracks and designed in the Pueblo Deco style—and Sharpe uses regional ingredients and features dishes from the days when Fred Harvey served rail travelers.

From Winslow, the Beale road approximately follows I-40 to Holbrook and beyond to Navajo; from there it follows dirt roads and two-lane highways to Zuni. By taking the back roads like this, we not only are able to get closer to the Beale Road, but we are able to experience some of the conditions that the emigrants encountered—which is not possible on the high speed freeway.

Zuni was built upon the ruins of the ancient site of Halona, one of the fabled "Seven Cities of Cibola." When the out-bound Rose-Baley emigrants came through Zuni in 1858, they stayed a few hours sightseeing and purchasing cornmeal and vegetables. This was the last place to get supplies before they reached San Bernardino, California.

From Zuni, we drove to El Morro National Monument. After a visit to the museum, we took the short paved trail up to the enormous sandstone rock. Spanish for "headland," El Morro is also known as "Inscription Rock" because of the graffiti-like records inscribed on the rock by the early trail travelers. On its smooth sides, we read the inscriptions of some of the early Spanish governors of new Mexico, padres and soldiers, and most exciting to us, members of Beale's expedition, as well as several of the emigrants of the Rose-Baley wagon train.

We drove on to Albuquerque and went straight to Old Town Center. Pueblo-style buildings surround a grassy plaza, dominated by the high-walled old San Felipe de Neri Church. The U.S. army stationed in the buildings around the plaza and the town's citizens promoted Beale's uncompleted road to the out-bound Rose-Baley party. On November 13, 1858, nearly two and one-half months after their attack by the Mohave Indians at the Colorado River,

the survivors arrived back in Albuquerque. They received the sympathy and support of the military and the citizens, most likely prompted by their guilty feelings for having so enthusiastically promoted Beale's route.

We drove on to Santa Fe. When Leonard Rose, a member of the Rose-Baley wagon train returned to Albuquerque with his ill-fated party, Rose quickly realized that there were more opportunities for him in Santa Fe. He bought one of the main hotels in town, the Exchange Hotel, and renamed it La Fonda. The current La Fonda was built at this same site in 1922.

Sitting in the La Fonda bar, we toasted our margaritas first to the end of the trail. Then we lifted our glasses and gave a heartfelt toast to intrepid trail travelers like Beale and the members of the Rose-Baley wagon train. And finally we gave our thanks to the interpreters and devoted friends of the trail like Charles Baley and Jack Beale Smith who make it possible for modern travelers like ourselves to use our imaginations to experience the trail as it was in days gone by.

BOOKS

Baley, Charles W. *Disaster at the Colorado: Beale's Wagon Road and the First Emigrant Party*. Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 2002.

Dodge, Bertha. *The Road West: The Saga of the Thirty-fifth Parallel*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1980.

Smith, Jack. *John Udell: The Rest of the Story*. Flagstaff: Tales of the Beale Road Publishing Company, 1986.

Thompson, Gerald. *Edward F. Beale and the American West*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983.

MUSEUMS

Arizona Historical Society
2340 N. Fort Valley Road
Flagstaff, Arizona 86001
(520) 774-6272

Mojave Museum of History and Art
400 West Beale Street
Kingman, Arizona, 86401
(928) 753-3195

Mojave River Valley Museum
P.O. Box 1282
Barstow, California 92312-1282
(760) 253-7281

**DESERT
TRACKS**



Southwest Chapter
California-Oregon Trails Association
44 Harvey Court
Irvine CA 92612