

DESERT TRACKS



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SOUTHWEST CHAPTER
OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ORGANIZATION

MAY
1991

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THE "PRES" SEZ

Another very well organized outing took us to the eastern Arizona Butterfield Stage Stations. Thanks to Sheri and Bob Lee for researching and organizing this trip.

Most of our stagecoaches had CB's this time and we managed to get through the weekend without losing anyone. I would like to re-emphasize the benefit of EVERY car in the caravan having a CB. The trail-master gives a commentary as we drive along. In case you missed my recommendation last newsletter, I recommend, if you do not already have one, that you go into a store such as Radio Shack and spend \$75 or so to buy a portable CB. They can be stored away easily when not in use. Ours came in a 2" x 4" x 12" storage box.

We were glad that some of our members from Missouri, the Sprague's were able to join us. They seemed to really enjoy the off-road or near-off-road experiences. I don't think that Missouri has many jeep roads. It was also fascinating to see the electricity in Sheri Lee's personality when she realized that by using an old photograph, we had found the remnants of the old stage station near the railroad. After lining up various parts of a railroad bridge, and the bends in the river, we realized that we were standing on a pile of melted adobe.

Our next meeting is a combination of planning meeting and fun weekend. It is important that we

MEMOS

Chapter Membership Roster
included in this issue.

July 13-14, 1991 - Annual Planning Meeting at Tompkins' cabin in Strawberry, AZ. Details inside

August 14-18, 1991 - National OCTA Convention, Sacramento, CA

get a good representation of the group, since this is where we plan the next year's activities. Our outings are our strong point, so come with lots of neat ideas. In addition to the work, we plan to have several fun activities such as hikes, off-road trips, setting on the deck birdwatching, etc. Although our cabin is at the edge of a small town, it is pretty much out in the woods. The wind passes softly through the trees (sometimes it rushes through the trees). We have lots of birds and a few other wild-life. Just think of this as a camping trip where you don't have to put up the tent, sleep on the ground, or wash the dishes.

See details on this July meeting inside the newsletter.

Harland

BUTTERFIELD TRAIL IN EASTERN ARIZONA

MARCH 16 AND 17, 1991

Trip Report by Jack Root

It's high noon, Saturday March 16th, in the tiny hamlet of San Simon, and the Southwest Chapter is back in the saddle again. Taking up a tad west of where we left off at Doubtful Canyon (Steins Peak Station) last January, we are continuing our search for the lost stations and traces of the Butterfield Overland Mail Route, Circa 1858.

Our first objective is (as often the case with this long-forgotten venture), only a site. We located it, hard by the east bank of San Simon Creek. The twice weekly stage drew up here after the perilous run through Doubtful Canyon (westbound) or the equally dicey experience of Apache Pass (eastbound). The suspense was provided by the fierce Chiracua Apache who roamed these parts under their leaders, Cochise and Mangas Coloradas.

After gazing over the San Simon Station site the group moved west, through the little town of Bowie and headed south toward the Chiracua Mountains, destination: Apache Pass. Parking our 4WD steeds, we hiked down the actual trace of the stage road to the site of Apache Pass Station. Here were rock foundations, from which one could discern the shape of the structure that once stood here. Not far away are what remains of the Ft. Bowie Cemetery, Apache Spring, and high on a plateau Ft. Bowie itself. The past and its nearby predecessor (Old Ft. Bowie) existed from 1862-1894. One's imagination was filled with thoughts of 19th century soldiers and their doings as we strolled through the sparse remnants of this old historic post, on a pleasant winter afternoon, nearly 100 years after its active life ended.

After everyone got down out of the pass we headed for Willcox, Arizona, vowing to resume trail hunting Sunday morning. Following dinner at the Cactus Kitchen, the group met for a business meeting and a slide show presented by Rose Ann Tompkins.

Next morning, finding the site of Ewell's Station proved a tough nut to crack; in fact, we didn't crack it. But we got close. We settled for a group picture in the vicinity and resolved to work further on this one at a later date. Next stop was Dragoon Springs Stage Station, built in 1858. It was the westernmost of the ten fortified stone stations of the old Butterfield Route. The sturdy stone walls still demark the outline of the place after a century and a third. A most impressive sight. Nearby are four graves, said to be Confederates, killed by Apaches in May, 1862. After a side foray to trace the spring that supplied the station, we moved westward to Benson, Arizona for lunch.

The Rio San Pedro rising in Mexico, flows northward through modern day Benson. The next station west of Dragoon Springs was an adobe structure on



Several chapter members read the interpretative sign at Dragoon Springs stage station while others investigate the area. The remaining wall structure is easily seen

the San Pedro. It was destroyed by flood waters in 1883-4, along with a bridge built in 1859 by the Butterfield Company.

Perhaps the most satisfying experience of the day occurred at the site of the next station west, Cienega

Springs. Sheri Lee had a copy of a photograph taken some fifty years ago, supposedly of the site (destroyed) of the station. Because several structures in the background of the old photo are still there, we were able to precisely match the point from which it

was taken. A close examination of the area revealed an adobe mound (probably the remnant of the station) and a few artifacts. Eureka! We had located the lost Cienega site and redeemed our egos from the unsuccessful quest for Ewell Station.

A final stop at a nearby winery brought this interesting field trip to a close. Many thanks to Bob and Sheri Lee for planning and leading it.



The huddle looks at a historic picture of the Cienega Springs stage site. By comparing it with the still existing structures visible in the background and the melted adobe under their feet, the conclusion was that it was the station site.

photos by
Rose Ann Tompkins

BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES 16 MARCH 1991

The president called the meeting to order with 12 members present. The treasurer reported \$307.29 in the treasury. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as they appeared in the newsletter.

OLD BUSINESS

Details of the July planning meeting were discussed and will appear in the next newsletter. The dates are July 13-14.

The following motion was moved by Jack Root and seconded by Robert Lee. "The Southwest Chapter of OCTA hereafter will elect officers for two year terms, with the provision that the president cannot run for re-election." After discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

Membership was discussed and consensus was that it was going well.

NEW BUSINESS

A letter to the chapter from board member Bob Berry concerning a change in the national dues structure was discussed. No one spoke in favor of the proposal and no motion was forthcoming.

A letter to the chapter from board member Jackie Lewin concerning memberships concerns was discussed. One idea put forth was that our chapter sponsor a library, museum, or other historical organization in our area with a membership to OCTA. If a member would like to bring such a sponsorship possibility to the membership, we will be responsive to the suggestion.

Meeting adjourned.

Rose Ann Tompkins
Acting Secretary

ANNUAL PLANNING MEETING AND HIGH COUNTRY EXPERIENCE JULY 13 & 14, 1991

This year the planning meeting will be a weekend affair, if you can stay over. It will be July 13-14 in Strawberry, Arizona. Harland and Rose Ann Tompkins have invited all chapter members to their new cabin. The general plan is to have the program planning on Saturday, beginning with your brown bag lunch around noon. We will provide a variety of beverages for the entire weekend, but feel free to bring your favorite if you wish. Following the afternoon session of planning, we will have a potluck dinner. There will be an evening program with an invited speaker.

Everyone is invited to spend the night. There is room for some in the existing facilities, but you may bring your RV, pitch your tent, or roll out your sleeping bag on the floor or the deck. If you would prefer the privacy of a motel, there are several small places in Strawberry. Be aware however, that they are not inexpensive and tend to be full on summer weekends.

After the Sunday morning breakfast provided by the Tompkins, there will be a moderate hike on an old

road near the cabin. A 4WD trip on one of several forest service roads will be offered. Some of these activities are subject to how many are present and what they want to do.

We will be at the cabin after 6 pm on the Friday evening before the weekend. You are welcome to come and stay that night or arrive anytime on Saturday morning. We will also be staying over on Sunday night and you are welcome to stay that night also. We will do meal planning for the extra meals when we know how many may be present for the meals, and let you know if you need to bring anything extra. There is a small market in Strawberry and the cabin is equipped with all the usual kitchen appliances. The phone number at the cabin is (602) 476-2333.

A map to the cabin and registration form can be found on the next page.

If you cannot attend the planning session, the president would like to hear from you concerning any ideas you may have for programs and/or outings. He will pass any ideas along to the attendees. It would be nice to see some of the faces that so far have only been names on the roster list. The chapter is only as healthy as the members make it. Could you lead an outing, present a program, or otherwise contribute to the chapter? Let us know.

COED WILL EXPAND TO SOUTHERN TRAILS

Until now, COED (Census of Overland Emigrant Documents) volunteers have been focused mainly on overland travel along the Platte River Corridor. By the end of this year, the COED Committee would like to begin the expansion of the program to include southern trails into California.

Preliminary work to be done is:

-Identify volunteers who would like to visit museums, libraries, historical societies, etc, and help develop a locator file/inventory of documents related to travel on the southern trails. This will enable us to know where the documents are when we are ready to begin the actual document surveys.

-Put together a list of names of volunteers who are interested in surveying the documents and doing data entry.

-Develop instructions, route codes, maps origin and destination codes for the southern routes. This will require the help of those who are knowledgeable in the areas the trails passed through.

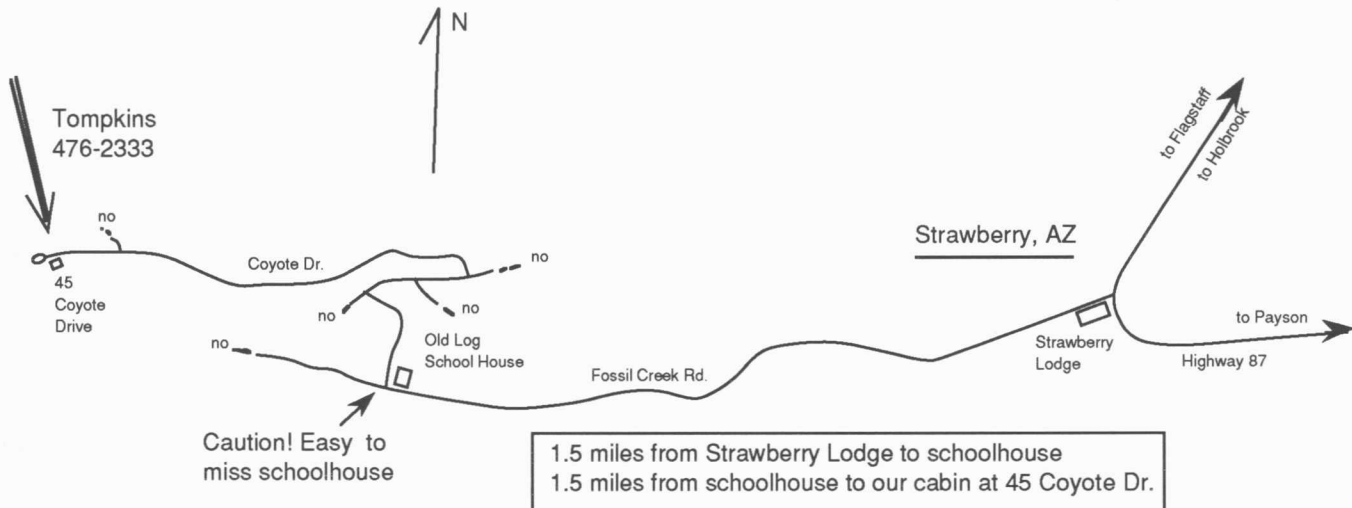
It would be beneficial for prospective volunteers to attend the COED Workshop at the OCTA convention in Sacramento. You will gain training and "hands on" experience in the COED program and be able to start surveying as soon as we begin.

If you would like more information on the COED program contact:

Kathy Roubal, COED Chair
2221 S. 25th Avenue
Boardview, IL 60153
(708) 345-7128

MAP TO TOMPKINS' CABIN

Street names are not posted for most roads,
just follow the turns,
and call if you get lost.



REGISTRATION FOR CHAPTER PLANNING WEEKEND, JULY 13 - 14, 1991

NAME(S) ATTENDING: _____

PHONE NUMBER: _____

Circle night(s) you will be staying: Friday Saturday Sunday

I (We) will bring _____ for the potluck on Saturday night.

Return to: Harland Tompkins
1125 W. Mission Dr.
Chandler, AZ 85224

by July 1

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