

DESERT TRACKS



VOL. 5
NO. 4

SOUTHWEST CHAPTER
OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ORGANIZATION

SEPTEMBER
1992

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FROM THE PRESIDENT --- DOYLE REED

For those of you who were unable to attend the planning session in Alto, you missed a wonderful meeting but we developed a good outings schedule even if you were not there. Our sincere thanks to the Carters for providing such a lovely place to meet. How lucky can we be?

We will be looking forward to seeing most of you at the Bluff, Utah outing on Sept. 19 & 20, arranged by Susan Doyle. I have sent Susan the material on mapping which was given to all those who attended the mapping session in Rock Springs. She can use all of our help in doing the maps. It will be a learning session for all of us.

The Wyoming group provided a wonderful program for the OCTA convention. How soon will we be large enough or able to corral sufficient talent so we can invite the group to Arizona or New Mexico?

You probably already know that Susan was re-elected to another term on the National Board. Our congratulations to her. But the surprising thing was that I also won a

seat on the Board. How about that, probably the smallest chapter in OCTA and we now have three seats on the Board.

After the convention, we came back to Las Vegas, NM to attend the conference of the Coronado Trails Association. Frankly, we felt a little like outsiders. We don't have PhD's in archaeology, we don't understand Spanish, and we can't pronounce Indian names. But we enjoyed the meeting.

If you think it is hard to locate our 150 year old emigrant trails, you should try locating a 400 year old trail that was only traveled once and then without wagons. Just horses, cattle, sheep, and other animals plus people on foot. They didn't leave much of a trail and took another route back. All the diaries and other information is in 400 year old Spanish and the language has changed over the years. The copy machines of those times consisted of seating several scribes in a room and them writing the material as someone read it out loud. You often have

more than one copy of a document but key words may be different based on the scribes interpretation of the material.

Also some of the material is in Italian, having been translated from Spanish a way back when. Translating that into English may create some problems. The Indian versions are all oral history so those stories have probably changed over time.

Think we should stick to our own emigrant trails.



Past-president Jack Root, at center, presided at the chapter meeting at the Rock Springs convention. We had a chance to visit with some members that don't make it to many of our meetings. In this picture Lynda Hatch, left and Ruth Root, right, look over scrapbooks from past chapter meetings.

SYMPOSIUM CHAIRMAN ASKS FOR IDEAS

Just a brief note to let you know how the next symposium is progressing (or not progressing). To review, our chapter has had three symposia in the past. For the first two, since we are a rather dispersed group, we used an auditorium of a local museum, first in Tucson and then in Casa Grande. For the third, one of our members suggested that the symposium be co-sponsored by a local historical society. With her leadership, the local historical society rallied the troops and we had a significantly larger crowd than in the past.

I have been trying to identify a local organization which would like to co-sponsor our next symposium. I have asked the Scottsdale Corral of Westerners and the Mohave County Historical Society if either would be interested in such a venture. Unfortunately both had other activities near the time frame of Jan/Feb 93.

What I need is other possibilities. Although I would, of course, be receptive of suggestions of groups that I might contact, what I really need is for one of our members who is also a member of another local group to agree to approach that group with the possibility and then to act as the local arrangements chairman, working with both SWOCTA and the local group. I would continue to act as program chairman, as before.

I suspect that we are getting to the point that a Jan/Feb 93 time frame is no longer reasonable, so would entertain other suggestions. Do we want to have the symposium in the summer (maybe in the mountains where it's cooler) or possibly put it off till Jan/Feb 94? Give me your input, either in person, by phone, or by the good old US Mail.

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September 1, 1992

Report from DESERT TRACKS Editor:

As our group continues to hold its own, and looks as if it is viable, perhaps it is time for the newsletter to give an accounting of itself.

We are now in our fifth year of publication, the June 1992 issue was Vol. 5, No. 3. The mailing list for that issue was 47. That includes 33 member units, plus 14 that go to other OCTA chapters, headquarters, and a few national honchos (president, historian, preservation officer, etc.). On occasion, the list will include potential members, names given me by some other member. Pat Etter receives two copies of each newsletter, one goes into the library archives at Arizona State University.

We have not had a general mailing of a chapter newsletter & brochure to national OCTA members who live in the southwest for at least two years. If we decided to do that again, a decision would have to be made on the area to include. The last time we were the Arizona chapter and only those living in Arizona and New Mexico were included.

While I am willing to continue as newsletter editor for the time being, I do not wish to be an "entrenched" institution. If someone would like to try their hand at it, that would be fine with me. A new approach with some new ideas could very well enrich the whole group. In any case, I will not do it forever, so please keep that in mind.

And to quote --- "Thank you for your support."

Respectfully submitted,

Rose Ann Tompkins, editor

The editor has the following duplicates in her library that need kind, new homes. Contact me as given on front of newsletter if you are interested.

"History of Arizona" by Farish, 2 vols., 1915 - **\$30 each**
"Personal Narrative of Explorations and Incidents - 1850-1853" by Bartlett, Vol. 2 only. 1965 reprint of the 1854 classic - **\$15**
"Overland Days to Montana in 1865, The Diary of Sarah Raymond and Journal of Dr. Waid Howard" edited by Settle, 1971. No. 8 in Arthur H. Clark's American Trail Series - **\$25**

REPORT OF THE ANNUAL PLANNING MEETING OCTA-SOUTHWEST CHAPTER

On July 18, 1992 the fourth annual planning meeting was held at the summer home of Jim and Marion Carter in Alto, NM. It was called to order at 12:55 P.M. by president Doyle Reed. Others in attendance were Fiona Reed, Harlie and Rose Ann Tompkins, Bob and Betty Lee, Bob and Sheri Lee, Susan Badger Doyle and Charles Townley.

The minutes were approved as printed in the DESERT TRACKS.

The balance in the treasury was given as \$427.45.

Discussions were held pertaining to seven future outings.

1. Date: Oct 3-4 (changed to Sept. 19-20)
Leader: Susan Badger Doyle
Hqtrs: Recapture Lodge in Bluff, Utah
Subject: Mormon Trail blasted up San Juan hill, including Comb Wash and the Twist. (Eastern end of Hole-in-the-Rock Trail)
2. Date Feb 6-7
Leader: Harland Tompkins
Hqtrs: TBA
Subject: Symposium and half day trip on Sunday
3. Date: Mar 20-21
Leader: Pat Etter
Hqtrs: Deming, NM

Subject: Southern Trail from Derry, NM to Foster's Hole (NM) via Cooke's Pass.

4. Date: May 15-16
Leader: Rose Ann Tompkins, Jim Byrkit, Don Buck, Tom Hunt
Hqtrs: Flagstaff, AZ
Subject: Mapping Workshop/Fieldschool, learning OCTA mapping techniques to begin mapping southwest trails.
5. Date: July 17-18
Leaders: Bob & Sheri Lee
Hqtrs: probably Mt. Lemmon
Subject: Fifth Annual Planning Meeting
6. Pat Etter also suggested Gillespie Canyon, NM for a future outing after more investigation.
7. Betty Lee suggested we find where Kearney left the Gila. Will save this for next year as Betty is busy moving this year.

Meeting adjourned for refreshments and Dinner. Evening program was video of Powell's trip through Grand Canyon.

Sheri Lee, Secretary

With the work of the planning session over, it was time to enjoy the delightful dinner prepared by Marion Carter. Left to right: Bob Lee, Susan Doyle, Betty Lee, and Doyle Reed.



HOLE-IN-THE-ROCK TRAIL OUTING A SEPTEMBER SUCCESS

The first outing of this new season was held Sept. 19 and 20 in and near Bluff, Utah. Susan Badger Doyle and Richard Krause planned well. When the weather threw a wrench into the works, they modified things and it was a great trip.

As the rains fell on Friday night, we knew this might interfere, and on Saturday morning it was beautiful, but wet. Participants began to gather at the Recapture Lodge in Bluff during Saturday morning, most present by the time the Navajo festival began their parade down the highway. What a nice "extra" to add to our weekend.

About noon, as traffic began to clear, we met at the lodge to discuss the weekend activities. Susan had prepared a guidebook for the weekend with various accounts of the road we were going to see, part of the famed Hole-in-the-Rock Trail of 1879-80 from Escalante to Bluff. Usually remembered for the difficult way blasted down the cliffs to reach and cross the Colorado River, these Mormon emigrants really had to build their road all the way across. As the group neared total disaster in the spring, they finally made it to the valley of the San Juan River at Bluff and decided to end the journey there.

Susan and Richard had scouted out this last portion of the road, from Cedar Mesa to Bluff. Because of high water in Comb Wash, we were not able to get to one portion of the trail, blasted up San Juan Hill at the end of Comb Ridge, but we saw other evidences of road building as well as experiencing the type of country the emigrants were forced to travel through.

Eighteen of us from three states climbed into our 4WD buggies to begin our exploration of this rugged land. Our first stop on Saturday afternoon was at the Butler Wash crossing site, the last big obstacle in the journey. We looked at two possible places, one being a raging waterfall of muddy rainwater where it would normally be quite dry. It was an impressive sight and a testament as to why it is not nice to mess with Mother Nature.

At the other Butler Wash site, the remnants of more recent road building was evident, but the signs of earlier cuts were also visible. While perhaps not all the remnants were from the first Mormon roadbuilders, it seemed to make sense from reading the only diary known from the trip and later analysis of the area, that we were looking at the crossing. We viewed and walked the area from both sides of the wash. (see pictures at bottom of pages)

We next drove over Comb Ridge and partway up Comb Wash. Eventually we were stopped by running water that didn't look safe to cross. But we could see the miles of the 1000 foot high Comb Ridge, forming a solid barrier to the emigrants. They had to travel to the end of it, where the San Juan River cut through the ridge, before they could get around it.

To end the afternoon, we visited the petroglyphs at Sand Island near Bluff and the pioneer cemetery in Bluff. Here we found the grave of Platte Lyman, the diarist of the emigrants, as well as others in that settlement group. A guest on the outing, invited by Reba Wells, told of being the granddaughter of one of the couples that made that trip over 100 years ago. That gave the whole experience more meaning for us.

The day ended with a happy hour, dinner at a local restaurant, and a business meeting. The Indian rodeo, singing and dancing continued on the edge of town, we could hear the music and chanting through the evening.

On Sunday morning we left Bluff to travel to Cedar Ridge and drive over a portion of the trail west of Bluff.



Above: The dotted line represents the trace of a road, possibly the remnants of part of the Mormon road as it crossed Butler Wash near Bluff. The X marks a road cut and the XX a remnant of a older version of the highway over the wash.

Right: The barrier of Comb Ridge can be seen here as the emigrants would have seen it. The group is deciding that the running water in this side wash of Comb Wash is probably too much to try to cross.



The day was clear and beautiful, blue sky, bright sun, and the landscape painted fresh with green against the red rocks. What a day for photography!

We drove almost to Mexican Hat, then headed north again, going up the famed Moqui Dugway. This switchback road is not for the faint of heart, but the reward is a view beyond description.

Continuing north, we turned east on the Mormon road as it headed for Comb Ridge. This was, in places, a 4WD road this day, with rocky ledges and mud holes to cross. Around each bend was a new vista and we stopped

several times to view evidences of roadbuilding, possible wagon marks, as well as the scenery. We finally reached a spot called "the twist" where the road dropped off Cedar Ridge and into Comb Wash. Again, we could see miles of the ridge, a red wall against the blue sky. The road had been blasted in places and we found evidences of bore

holes. Here in this remote spot we took our last pictures, and the group broke up to begin the long homeward journeys.

We had only to look at the red mud on our cars to remind us we had been someplace special. Many thanks to Susan and Richard for taking us into the past and into such magnificent country!

text and photos
by the editor



Above: Taken from a spot on the trace in picture on page 4, this reverse view again shows the very old road building trace on the dotted line and the remnant of the old version of the highway along the "X" marks.

Interesting diary excerpts found while doing COED surveys - - - -

From the 1852 diary of John McKieran

Thurs 10

12 oclock today we arrived at Green river We stoped but twice since we left big Sandy at each time about one hour and a half Near to the river there is some very steep hills which we had to cross

There is a first rate ferry at this place We got across by 3 oclock and encamped for the remainder of the day . . .

A man riding a mule down to the ferry was thrown by and his foot not get loose from the stirup He was draged by it to the river when a man tried to stop it but the mule became the more furious and rushed into the river draging the man under the water for a considerable distance when the man made one bold effort to save his life and threw himself forward and loosed his foot but could not hold onto the mule and it left him and turned back to the shore

The man was no swimer and he soon sunk beneath the water but he came up again and struggled manfully again he sunk and again came to the surface once more he sunk and still once more he arose to the top of the water but life was extinct and he floated away down the stream All this time his company were standing looking at the poor man drowning without making one effort to save him An Indian squaw seeing that the man would drown rushed to the river and was in the act of

jumping in to the water encumbered as she was with her roab and blankets but just as she was about to mak the leap she was stoped and told she would drown I have forgotten the mans name but he was from Ills. and owned a farm there When he was drowned he had in his pocket 40 dolls in gold 5 or 6 in silver a watch which would be enough to entice some of the ferry men to hunt him up when this company would leave

mircofilm copy at Huntington Library

From the 1866 diary of William Driver

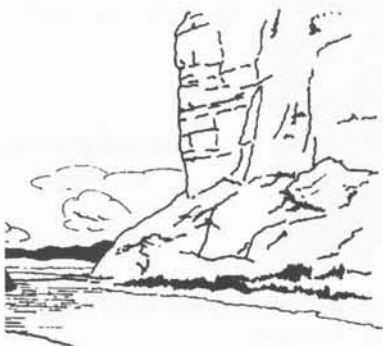
Wednesday 8th

Fine Morning. Very cold, still very sick, campt at Noon, family well, come 13 miles. Bro W Bates boy William ran over by his Waggon, over both legs, started about 6 oc P M, got benighted, Train became disorganized, none seemed to know where we weregoing. Captain Holladay thrown from his horse, a Bro from St Louis broke the Tongue off his Waggon, Bro Jacobs Cattle Broke loose and left him one yoke to haul his waggon. Sister Grace Jacobs died, aged 42, no Wood.

New Mexico Historical Review, Jan. 1942

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FIRST CLASS MAIL