

# DESERT TRACKS



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SOUTHWEST CHAPTER  
OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION

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## MARCH MAPPING TRIP POSTPONED

### To Be Rescheduled

The leaders responsible for the mapping excursion previously planned for the weekend of 3/25-3/26 have found it necessary to defer the trip to a later date. It will be rescheduled at the July Planning Meeting in Portal, NM.



Photo by Rose Ann Tompkins

Here lies John Chaffin, of Platte County, Missouri. His 1849 journey to California ended in Cooke's Canyon.

(More about him inside)

A FIRST-HAND ACCOUNT OF DEATH ON THE SOUTHERN TRAIL

The following is an excerpt from the Diaries of Judge Benjamin Hayes, who came through Cooke's Canyon in 1849.

November 22nd:

Mr. John Chaffin had been indisposed since we left Socorro, but always rode out the day's journey. Last night I learned he had become worse; on rising at daylight I was informed that he was dead. We are now in camp waiting for the grave to be finished. The morning is very cold, with a piercing wind from the Southwest; a few drops of rain fell at an earlier hour; a genuine November day. Although he died at half past ten o'clock last night, the event made little stir amongst the sleepers round him. It was very sudden; very few imagined that his condition was dangerous. The grave was dug near the roadside; cedar logs were procured on the hills half a mile from the camp. There were no materials to make a coffin. He was wrapped in a blanket, then laid in his overcoat, as if the more to protect him from the chill sod. Cedar logs were laid above and filled with sprigs of cedar; then a layer of earth and in fine large rocks above to prevent the wolves from opening the grave. The rest, like this, was done by friendly hands, and we bade farewell to our worthy companion. He was an amiable and excellent man. He leaves in Platte County, Missouri, a wife and four children. Not one of us, I dare say, but thought of her bright hope for him at home. It will be long ere the sad intelligence shall come to her from this wilderness.

This mournful duty was ended by ten o'clock. At sunset we were camped on the Mimbres, distant 21 miles.

Editors' Notes--

This issue of DT includes Don Buck's fine report on our mapping excursion in New Mexico last month. Although some of you have seen it, we felt that it did such a good job of describing the joys, frustrations and pitfalls encountered in trail mapping that it would be of interest to all readers.



Mea Culpa--The camera study of the three ladies gracing the back page of our last issue "Spirit of the trail" was the work of MARIE Greene. Sorry, Mrs. Greene.

REPORT ON MAPPING THE SOUTHERN TRIAL  
THROUGH COYOTE HILLS AND COOKE'S PASS

Don Buck

We completed a very successful mapping trip over the weekend of Feb. 4-6. I think we learned a great deal--I know I did. A brief recap follows:

**Friday (Feb. 4, 1995)**

On the way to Deming in the afternoon, Rose Ann Tompkins, Pat Etter, and Don Buck mapped on three topographic maps close to 6 miles of the Southern Trail through Coyote Hills (from Vista Tank to Hwy 9). Because the trail approximated the existing dirt road, mapping was relatively easy (mostly Class 1 or 2).

**Saturday (Feb. 5, 1995)**

Our mapping party left the Grand Motel in Deming at 8:00 A.M. and caravanned to Cooke's Canyon where we began mapping at the site (ruins) of the old Cooke's Spring Stage Station. We successfully mapped 4 miles of mostly Class 1 and 2 trails through Cooke's Pass to Detention Dam #4 (near the fabulous Indian petroglyphs and mortar grinding holes). Don Couchman greatly facilitated the mapping by pointing out numerous graves and alternate routes. After a fine Mexican dinner, four members (Sheri Lee, Don Buck, Richard and Marie Greene) met to record the data collected during the day on the *Massacre Peak* quad (following the procedures in the MET Manual).

**Sunday (Feb. 6, 1995)**

Again caravanning from the Grand Hotel in the morning, our mapping party began west of where we had left off on Saturday afternoon at Detention Dam #4. Our goal was to map the segment from Detention Dam #4 to Detention Dam #2, a distance of about 2½ miles. It proved difficult to locate the trail on this segment for several reasons. There were no roads paralleling the trails as we had had the previous two days. We had to strike out into flat terrain and look for evidence of a trail. It must have seemed like looking for that needle in a haystack. Another difficulty--I later discovered--was not reading the topographic map closely enough. Don Buck should have known better; he assumed that the trail turned northwest sooner than it did. Thus the group starting from the south (headed toward Detention Dam #2) turned NW up a draw when they should have kept going 0.3 mile farther west before turning NW.

Back in Phoenix on Monday, Don Buck plotted a number of GPS readings he had taken on Sunday which enabled him to reconstruct what happened. (See attached map.) Late Saturday afternoon, Richard Greene, Don Couchman, and Don Buck drove west of Detention Dam #4 to locate the beginning point for the Sunday trip. After locating the segment of the trail where we would begin on Sunday, Richard (still full of SWOCTA zip) took off to the west over a low ridge which we *thought* might be the route of the later Leach Wagon Road (of 1857) that branched off the Southern Trail in this vicinity. Actually, as it turned out, that was still the Southern Trail, the route we should have taken on Sunday. Once over this ridge we could have turned NW and would have been right on the Southern Trail. That would have saved our southern group from turning NW too soon and thereby searching in the wrong area.

The group searching for the trail from Detention Dam #2 southeast (our northern group) met a different problem. They actually found the trail remains but did not recognize it as a trail. Unless you have some idea of what you are looking for, it's not easy to recognize an eroded trail when you come upon it. The northern group walked along the trail but assumed it was only an erosion feature. After this group left the field at noon for a ride back to the chuck wagon, Don Buck--working northwesterly--came on this eroded remains of the trail where the lone Juniper tree stands. (The tree had rooted and grown because of the additional moisture the old trail swale was able to catch).

There were several clues to the identity of this eroded trail segment:

- The eroded feature was aligned in the right direction (SE-NW) at the right location (the dashed line shown on the topographic map as the "Butterfield Trail").
- The diagnostic vegetation difference in the form of mesquite bushes lining the trail (for the same reason the Juniper tree survived).
- The less eroded feature paralleling the eroded trail for part of its way (a parallel old trail).
- The description in the BLM publication by Peggy Gerow, *Along the Butterfield Trail* (1993), that indicated mesquite bushes lined the trail in that area.
- The two graves that were next to the trail about 0.3 miles SE of the Juniper tree.

Don Buck took about 20 GPS readings on this 0.6 mile segment which located the trail along the dashed trail on the quad we were using. The width of the trail indicated by the GPS positions (dots) resulted from the distortion of the satellite signals, courtesy of the DoD. Hand-held GPS accuracy could be within 50 feet but the degrading of the signal will result in accuracy from 100 to 300 feet. On that day, my accuracy was within about 200 feet. But it was enough to tell me the location of the trail.

On the next field trip to this area, we should be able to go over this segment of trail rather quickly and complete our mapping. It shouldn't take more than two hours to wrap it up, now that we have better data and know where the dirt access roads are located.

### Conclusion

Overall we had two-and-a-half-days of productive mapping. We plotted on 7.5 minute topographic quad sheets a good 10 miles with an additional 2-3 miles of rough plotting. What have we learned from this experience--beyond not relying too much on Don Buck? I think we now realize that:

- Mapping can be tedious, tiring, and time consuming.
- We move ahead by capitalizing on our miscalculations and mistakes.
- Dogged determination will overcome adversity.

More specifically, I think we learned that when in the field there is a need to:

- Recognize emigrant trail remains which often do not appear as we would expect.
- Avoid being locked into a preconceived perception of where the trail should be.
- Constantly reevaluate the situation in light of new evidence.
- Pay more attention to the topographic features on the quad map as they relate to trail location.
- Investigate the general trail route in a wide zigzag pattern as a means of coming across any traces.
- Record in writing on field notes or a map any trail data observed.
- Utilize and carry with you for constant reference all relevant materials documenting the location of the trail.

One last item needs to be stressed when in the field. **Don't take off alone. Always have a partner within seeing or shouting distance.** Lee Underbrink rightly chastised Don Buck for breaking this basic safety rule--and I should add that Jim Carter was almost as great an offender as Don. (Perhaps on the next field trip Don and Jim should be tethered together so they can't roam too far afield.)

One last sobering comment. The length of the Southern Trail, from Santa Fe to Warner's Ranch (excluding the section in Mexico), is roughly 800 miles. At our present rate of mapping 10 miles on a weekend trip, we will require 80 trips or over 25 years (at 3 per year). There has to be a faster way to do accomplish our goal. Does anyone have any suggestions on how we can expedite the mapping process?



Taking the OCTA Board's mandate to heart, the Southwest Chapter has begun the long road to having the Southern Trail recognized as a National Historic Trail. There have been two organized chapter weekends to do ground mapping and work has begun on reaching the government agencies and legislators to further the effort.

Chairing the chapter committee in this effort are Reba Wells Grandrud and Rose Ann Tompkins. The committee will attempt to keep the OCTA membership informed and welcome any help.

Rose Ann is serving as coordinator of the mapping program using OCTA's MET Manual (*Mapping Emigrant Trails*). At present, we are concentrating on the area in New Mexico between the Rio Grande River, near Hatch, and Guadalupe Canyon in the extreme southwest corner of the state. However, interested individuals are encouraged to work on other portions of the Southern Trail, which extends for about 800 miles between Santa Fe, NM and Warner's Ranch in California. Maps, both modern and historic of the targeted area, plus diary accounts are being collected to aid in searching for the trail. These will be available to those wishing to do mapping. Knowing where the trail was in general terms and mapping via the MET Manual are very different matters. OCTA must convince the National Park Service that there are trail remnants that need to be protected and preserved; our mapping will show them in a graphic way.

Reba is serving as coordinator of the part of the program having to do with organizing the necessary support politically to achieve our goal. This is a large task, and she will appreciate the assistance and transmittal of information any of you can provide. Contact will continue with Garn Hatch of the Mormon Trails Association and George Cardinet of the Heritage Trail Fund/Amigos de Anza, both of whom have expressed interest in working with Southern Trail enthusiasts. In connection with her work for Arizona's SHPO, Reba is involved with ASCOT (Arizona State Committee on Trails, the Anza National Historic Trail, and is working with Utah SHPO and Arizona BLM on the *Honeymoon* and *Temple* Trails in the Arizona Strip. Of course, she maintains her personal interest in *any* historic trail.

If you can provide information or assistance, please contact us.

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PLANNING MEETING SET FOR JULY 22

Unique Portal inn holding rooms

Pat Etter reminds us that a rooming list is required 60 days prior to arrival. The rate is \$58.50 + 5% tax per room. A 60-day cancellation notice is required to receive a 100% refundable deposit. Anyone wishing to spend an extra night may make that reservation by calling Portal Peak Lodge at (602) 558-2223.

The Portal Cafe serves breakfast, lunch, and dinner daily. If meals are required they need to be notified two weeks prior to arrival.

Bird watchers will recognize this area as one of the prime places in all North America for pursuing their hobby. Better reserve early.

### From the Trailmarm:

By now we have all read Don Buck's sobering comment, "The length of the Southern Trail, from Santa Fe to Warner's Ranch (excluding the section in Mexico), is roughly 800 miles. At our present rate of mapping 10 miles on a weekend trip, we will require 80 trips, or over 25 years (at 3 per year). There has to be a faster way to accomplish our goal. Does anyone have any suggestions on how we can expedite the mapping process?"

Please give serious thought to this. How can we get this done in 5 years or less? It would be nice to get the Southern Route located while we still have the limited interest and support of the National Park Service. Do we need mapping weeks instead of weekends, and just camp out on the trail...maybe using a certain member's horses and imagining we are back 100 years and covering 20 miles a day.

I am interested in learning how much and how well work can be done from a Cessna aircraft out of Las Cruces which the Chapter is checking into using. It seems to me it ought to work well even though the trail won't be up close and personal.

More "active" members would be helpful too. Our membership roster keeps growing slowly, but we don't see these new folks out in the field doing any mapping. Why is that? How can we show them how much fun we have on a mapping weekend?

Anyway, the above is something to think about for the planning weekend in July.

Trailmarm

### A CAUTIONARY TALE

Here is a little story one member's mom just relayed... In January two of her friends, a retired couple, were out "rockhounding" near Deming, NM. When they returned to their vehicle they saw three men trying to break into it. The owner, a retired deputy sheriff, always carries a handgun. He drew and fired a couple of warning shots. Luckily, the banditos didn't have the weapons, or at least the desire, for a "shootout" so they ran off into the desert.

True, this seldom happens, but on our last trip Ruth Root and Marion Carter were waiting by their sport utility vehicles when some men came over the ridge carrying guns. It turned out they intended no harm...but what if they had? Those ladies were out there far from anyone and things could have turned out differently.

The Jeep Grand Cherokee is said to be the most popular vehicle with car thieves right now, but any 4WD will do. Most don't end up in Mexico as one would expect, but rather way down in Central or even South America.

Be careful out there!

# SOUTHWEST CHAPTER - OCTA MEMBERSHIP LIST - 1995

President:  
Vice-President:  
Secretary  
Treasurer

Sheri Lee  
James Carter  
Pat Etter  
Harland Tompkins

Edwin & Alice Boyle	3000 E. Lehi Rd.	Mesa, AZ 85213	(602) 832-1977
Don & Vilma Buck	1158 Ribier Ct.	Sunnyvale, CA 94087-2412	(408) 739-8521
Kergan & Jeanne Bruck	5920 N. Camino Escalante	Tucson, AZ 85718-4114	(602) 577-8289
Jim Byrkit	1309 N. Navajo Dr.	Flagstaff, AZ 86001	(602) 774-0846
James R. & Marian N. Carter			
(Nov. 1 to May 1)	4091 Sotol Drive	Las Cruces, NM 88001	(505) 522-1189
(May 1 to Nov. 1)	P.O. Box 445	Alto, NM 88312	(505) 336-8378
Scott Casterlin	1660 N. Forgeus Ave.	Tucson, AZ 85716-3403	(602) 881-5673
John & Carolyn Davis	2751 W. Monte Vista	Tucson, AZ 85745	(602) 622-8957
Tracy DeVault	105 Wildwood Dr.	Prescott, AZ 86301-5096	(602) 778-6228
Susan Badger Doyle	1658 S. Mountain View	Sheridan, WY 82801-1725	(307) 672-8090
Paul & Patricia Etter	1051 S. Dobson Rd #218	Mesa, AZ 85202	(602) 964-3967
Richard & Marie Greene	P.O. Box 483	Angel Fire, NM 87710	(505) 377-6342
Jon Harvey	5051 N. Apache Hills Trail	Tucson, AZ 85715-5912	(602) 577-0986
Lynda Hatch	1480 W. Univ. Heights Dr. N.	Flagstaff, AZ 86001-8970	(602) 556-0869
Aubrey & Wilma Haines	8421 E. Eli Drive	Tucson, AZ 85710	(602) 721-9136
David Hollecker	870 Atlas Ct.	Reno, NV 89512	(702) 322-2969
Tom James	5494 N. via del Arbolito	Tucson, AZ 85715	(602) 577-2570
Lois M. Johnson	500 E. Tunnell St.	Santa Maria, CA 93454-4148	(805) 925-1379
Gary & Dean Keller	531 N. Los Alamos	Mesa, AZ 85213	(602) 832-1495
Baldwin & Ormond Lamson	4706 Balboa Avenue	Encino, CA 91316	(818) 788-8050
Bob & Sheri Lee	5790 E. Territory Avenue	Tucson, AZ 85715-1801	(602) 299-7143
Robert & Betty Lee	3780 Golf Course Rd.	Thatcher, AZ 85552	(602) 428-1196
Wm. & Mary Mueller	1112 Silver Oak Court	San Jose, CA 95120	(408) 268-7389
Joe Nardone	25082 Southport	Laguna Hills, CA 92653	(714) 458-2253
George Osborne, Jr.	2679 Kimball Ave.	Pomona, CA 91767-2230	(909) 626-4726
Doyle & Fiona Reed	328 12th Street	Davis, CA 95616-2012	(916) 753-2759
Jack & Ruth Root	8422 E. Tourmaline Dr.	Tucson, AZ 85715	(602) 760-0903
Bill & Shann Rupp	Box 753	Jamestown, CA 95327-0753	(209) 984-3401
Ed & Mary Jo Sprague			
summer	Rt. 2, 5013 Amazonia Rd.	St. Joseph, MO 64505	(816) 279-9041
winter	4555 S. Mission Rd. #588	Tucson, AZ 85714	(602) 741-2762
Ralph & Janece Thornton	Rt. 3, Box 3459	Burley, ID 83318	(208) 678-4838
Harland & Rose Ann Tompkins	1125 W. Mission Drive	Chandler, AZ 85224-2354	(602) 963-3565
Kenneth & Dorothy Tompkins			
(Nov. 1 to Mar. 31)	5055 University #P-7	Mesa, AZ 85205-7299	(602) 985-3733
(Apr. 1 to Oct. 31)	8404 Boone Blvd.	Kansas City, MO 64114	(816) 523-5576
Maryann Tortorich	P. O. Box 1242	Jackson, CA 95496-1242	(209) 223-3315
Charles Townley	1766 Vista Montana	Las Cruces, NM 88005	(505) 526-8705
Reba Wells Grandrud	2741 E. Larkspur	Phoenix, AZ 85032	(602) 992-0339

(As of March 10, 1995 - 34 memberships, 54 members)



HARLAND & ROSE ANN TOMPKINS  
1125 W. MISSION DR  
PHANDELER, AZ 85224-2354

FIRST CLASS MAIL



**DESERT TRACKS**  
Jack & Ruth Root  
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"Passing around the base of a mountain on the 16th (Nov) to a narrow canyon, we found a marshy water hole, which was given the name of 'Cooke's Spring'".

"The next day we passed through the gap in the mountains, and came to a place where mining for precious metals had evidently been carried on at some time in the distant past. There were at least thirty holes cut in the solid rock, from ten to fourteen inches deep, and from six to ten inches in diameter, evidently for the purpose of catching and retaining water when showers occurred".

....Sgt. Daniel Tyler  
Mormon Battalion, 1846

Unidentified Grave--  
Cooke's Canyon Area

Photo by Rose Ann Tompkins