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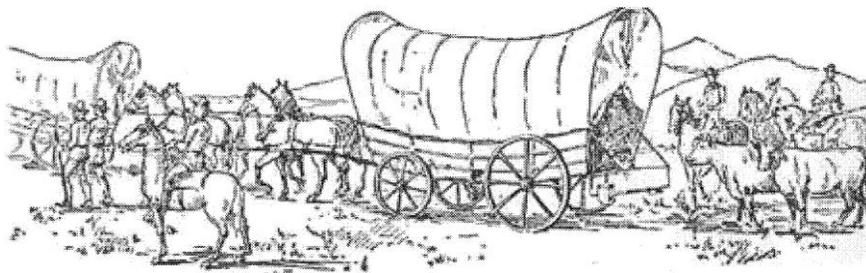
Gateway Chapter Oregon-California Trails Assn

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Reunion

Coming Events

Annual Meeting
San Jose Steak House
Tuesday Nov. 13, 6 pm

Gateway Chapter, OCTA
John Atkinson, President
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President's Column

On **November 13, 2012**, the **Gateway Chapter** of the **Oregon and California Trails Association** will hold its **2012 annual meeting**. Members and friends will: Share a meal at **San Jose Steakhouse beginning at 6:00**

p.m.,

- Hold a brief meeting where officers and Gateway board members will be elected,
- Review activities of the past year
- Reflect on possibilities for future projects and activities
- Hold drawings for some nice door prizes.

We look forward to a good turnout for this time of fellowship and reflection on the past year that was filled with interesting activities.

The 2012 program year began in March with a history of the Agency Ford and the Agency community. That program was followed by a First-Day-Out tour of the St. Joe Road in Doniphan County.

In June, we took a fascinating trip to the Omaha area where we visited the Mormon Winter Quarters and Fort Atkinson. August brought the National Convention of OCTA held in Lawrence, Kansas, and

San Jose Steakhouse

Tuesday 13 November 2012

A bit of fun, some music, a little business. Join us "rut nuts" in the private room at the end of the Belt Highway for an annual meeting to remember!



Above, on the site of Belmont looking over the trail and across the bottoms to St. Joe.

Below, the trail crossed the ridge straight behind the flag pole. and moved toward us and to the right at Iola cemetery.



WOLF RIVER CROSSING

The St. Joseph Road of the Oregon-California Trail crossed the Wolf River in the valley before you. With its steep banks, the Wolf River was a difficult crossing. This was Indian Territory, and the Indians offered the travelers the chance to cross the river on a crude bridge of logs stacked in the river bottom. The toll for using the bridge varied from twenty-five cents to one dollar per wagon. Lodi'sa Frizell wrote in her diary of meeting the Indians at Wolf River in May 1852.

there were several of them here, quite fine looking fellows, not near so dark as those I had seen, but of the real copper color, said they were of the Sacs & Fox tribes. One was a chief, he was dressed in real Indian style, had his hair shaved off all except the crown lock, which was tied up & ornamented with beads & feathers, he, & one or two others, had various trinkets upon their arms, legs & head, but their main dress was their bright red blankets.

Upon leaving the Wolf River valley, the St. Joe Road passes approximately four hundred yards south of this cemetery and then veers northwest toward the Great Nemaha Subagency and the nearby Iowa, Sac and Fox Presbyterian Mission, about two miles distant.

By 1857 when settlers moved onto this land, the cemetery had already been established by travelers to Oregon and California.

Research, Signing, and Funding by:
THE OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION
Gateway Chapter
2003

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follow the historic road. However, over time, some roads change in both position and name. Perhaps a brochure or a pamphlet-sized edition of a driving guide to the St. Joe Road would be a good project to consider. The Gateway Board may explore that idea in the future. Let a board member know if you have suggestions.



Gateway Chapter and the St. Joe Road in Doniphan County

By John Atkinson

In the 1840s and 1850s the St. Joe Road took hundreds of thousands of emigrants toward hoped-for riches or a new life in the west. The Gateway Chapter of OCTA is dedicated to the preservation and protection of and education about this significant section of the National Historic Oregon and California Trails. Part of Gateway's responsibility is met by marking the trail in the counties of Kansas through which the St. Joe Road traveled. On Saturday, October 27, 2012, several Gateway members did an annual check on the condition of the posts in Doniphan County. In the two years previous Nemaha and Brown counties received similar attention.

Using an excellent set of directions prepared by Paul Dittmore, a crew of seven Gateway officers and members, namely Corky and Carol Smith, Glendon Hartman, Bill Leppert, Fred Sawin and John Atkinson, searched out more than 20 posts in Doniphan County. With the help of Sawin's GPS unit, a list of coordinates were noted. Also, the posts were examined for condition.

Most posts are in excellent shape, but

a few should be replaced because of damage by mowers, fire or the effects of weather. A post that was originally installed on Airport Road south of Rosecrans Airport disappeared a few years ago. A replacement post was installed the day of the outing. Another post fell victim to a roadside burn and will be replaced soon.

These posts, made of a white material called Carsonite, were placed along roadsides at locations determined by consulting the Field Notes of the original General Land Office Survey of Kansas Territory. As the 1855 survey crews laid out the mile lines significant features of the land were noted including the then very visible wagon road to California or Oregon. Thus the trail crossings of mile lines are known with good precision but between mile lines the actual route of the trail can usually only be surmised. The lay of the land can give clues because wagon trains followed the ridges whenever possible.

The book *The St. Joe Road*, co-authored by Gateway member Jackie Lewin and Marilyn Taylor, was published by the St. Joseph Museum in 1992. The *St. Joe Road* is an excellent traveler's guide that contains a wealth of good history and information as well as driving directions for those who choose to

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September brought us a very informative program by Wally McDonald, M.D. called Medicine on the Trail.

On October 9, five of the six Robidoux Brothers came back to life and had a thoughtful evening at Robidoux Row.

The last activity prior to the upcoming Annual Meeting was an inspection of all the posts that mark the St. Joe Road in Doniphan County. Gateway Chapter assumes responsibility for the protection and preservation of the St. Joe Road portion of the Oregon and California National Historic Trails in the four Kansas counties of Doniphan, Brown, Nemaha and Marshall. Marking road crossings with white Carsonite posts serves to inform the public to about the route of the historic trails.

Hope to see you all at San Jose Steakhouse on Tuesday, November 13.

John Atkinson, President



Medical Practice on the Trail

Dr. Wally McDonald kept the audience amused even when the topic was the 20,000 person death loss among the 350,000 or more emigrants on their 2000 mile hike to greener pastures in the 19th century west.

Accidents were the worst, then cholera—which hit the wagon trains early in the jump-off towns but lessened past Fort Laramie as the human density decreased and as the brackish pools or wells cholera needs to survive outside of its hosts for a few days began to dry up.

Never fear, dysentery could strike anywhere a fly could find a dead carcass. Heroic efforts like mercury salts for diarrhea and bleeding for fevers could be useless, but pain management with morphine and a few other preparations was pretty effective even then.

Without antibiotics, with poor food leading to scurvy, constant overwork, constant stress—you try keeping track of 5.7 kids, 6 extra oxen, a milk cow, and a herd of meat animals.

Men, hunting for meat along a heavily traveled wagon track learned that seeing few indians could mean the game was gun shy or just absent. Buffalo hunting paid handsomely when he stayed on his frightened horse, was not run over, and found his way back to the wagons.



The Tale of the Trail, by Melissa Shaw Jones.

It's a small book: 23 pages and 58 full-color pictures, but if you have kids, a van, and a willing spouse, you could drive the length of the Oregon branch of the Historic Nation Overland Trail system from Portland to the "jump off" towns in four lo-o-ng days.

Pictures and a journal, OCTA member Jones proves, can be more than one family's summer scrapbook. They can be a way to share history with their generation.

For details about her book, check online at www.TheTailofTheTrail.org. To publish your own, try Blurb.com.

Many of the women were pregnant for part of the trip. Most were in child-bearing years. Infant death was high—even in the cities—in an age before vaccine.

Oddly, giving the kids coffee cut down on disease—because of the boiling.

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Oxbow erosion around the airport in this 2003 aerial photo hanging at Rosecrans airfield shows how current cut a channel against the western bank where Belmont's crossing would have been.

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Looking west from Wyeth Park, the yellow roof of a barn on a foggy morning in October stands just beyond where the town of Belmont stood in trail years. The crossing was at the foot of the bluff where the river bore in close and the ferry could drop a ramp right onto the bank. The steep bluff was a severe test for the too-frequently inexperienced teamsters and their barely trained ox teams.



Along the trail in the Missouri River bottoms.

Corky Smith examines the fill along Treece road where the river used to cut deeply into the bank in Belmont Crossing days. Doniphan County Historical Society will set up a monument on this site.



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