

# The River Road Review

Oregon-California Trail Association—Nebraska chapter

Fall 2005

## Salt Lake City Hosts OCTA Convention

by Loren Pospisil

I was able to attend the 2005 Oregon-California Trails Convention in Salt Lake City. I had attended the 1995 convention in Grand Island, but duties at work made it difficult to get away since. This year I gerrymandered the schedule to squeeze out six days. So with a fist full of dollars and tank full of gas I determined to “see the elephant”.

I left on Monday and headed west. It is about a 10-hour drive from Bayard to SLC so I could not stop a lot, but I did stop at Fort Fred Steele. It post-dates the trail, but I did want to stop, so I did. I had to get gas at Rock Springs, and while there I thought I would dig out my SLC map replete with the route to my hotel drawn with a highlighter. Well, it was not in my brief case, nor in my suitcase, nor in my box of stuff. I went through everything twice. Later I would find it safely in its file folder on my desk at work. The folder had the address and phone number of the hotel as well, so I was driving to SLC for the first time and not quite sure where I was going, and it was dark. I popped into town and stopped at the first convenience store I found. A miracle happened. The night clerk was friendly, knowledgeable and helpful!! He showed me what street I should be on, and I made it to my hotel without further incident.

Tuesday I attended the board of directors meeting. This alternated between being a wonderful



*OCTA founder and trails author and publisher was seen jailed in Utah! Reasons were not made public, but Gregory Franzwa was jailed briefly in Grantsville.*

experience and the next minute a horrid experience. There are some very good people on the board—people you would be proud to associate with. Unfortunately there is still some bickering and backstabbing; mostly though, it was positive. In the last year, there have been attempts to improve communications not only between chapters and national, but also between the various chapters. Vern Gorzitze is the new president, and I think he will be good for

OCTA. There were reports from officers and committees and chapters. A lot of these reports were interesting. It is surprising how much OCTA does. My criticism of OCTA would be that we do not toot our own horn enough. I used my time to invite OCTA to Gering in 2007. It must have been a stirring speech as the board voted unanimously to select Gering. The new Oregon Trail map was unveiled, and it is wonderful. It is different than the other one. It has

*(cont. on page 4)*

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Fall Gathering • October 8 • Beaver Crossing

# The Editor's Corner

I have read in a couple other chapter newsletters that the OCTA dues will be increased effective October 1. The new fees are \$45 per year for individuals and \$60 for families. These fees do not include the \$10 fee for Nebraska chapter membership or subscriptions to the OCTA-NE *River Road Review*. Rumor has it that we are to send payment for both national and state chapter dues to OCTA headquarters, but I have yet to get anything in writing regarding this. I just renewed my national membership at the old price a couple weeks ago. I don't know how this will work out when the national dues are paid according to your annual renewal date and the state dues are due at the beginning of the calendar year! Steve and I are working on self-guided tour instructions for the Independence Road through Adams County. We discovered that although we could drive the county roads from memory, we didn't necessarily know the names of every road. So it's taken longer to write it than to drive it! Last weekend we drove west of Grand Island to look for Mormon Trail ruts. We visited the Murdock ruts site near Alda and discovered that the Wood River crossing is not too far from the road, but is on private land. We learned that the Hall County Historical Society seems to have an active membership and regular outings along the trails. We will send them information on OCTA and see if we can learn anything new from them on the Mormon Trail.

~Carole Meyer

## The Oregon-California Trails Association—Nebraska chapter

Event Coordinator: Loren Pospisil  
Secretary: Corrine Rickner  
Treasurer: Betty Scheinost  
Newsletter Editor: Carole Meyer

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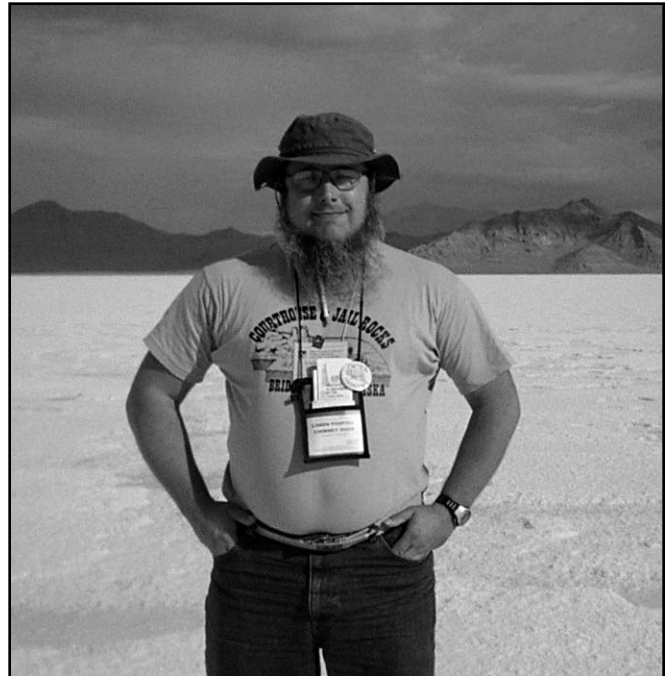
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# From the Coordinator

I attended the 2005 OCTA Convention in Salt Lake City.

I had a great time and learned a lot. On the Tuesday I attended the board of directors meeting, and depending on the topic, you found unanimity and bickering, dissent and agreement, procrastination and accomplishment. The big news from our perspective is that I made a formal invitation to host OCTA in Gering in 2007. The invitation was accepted unanimously. The rest of the week, people kept coming up to me and reporting how excited they were to be coming to Nebraska. I can understand their joy, as I get to live in Nebraska year round!! I attended a convention planning workshop that was very helpful. We are pretty well set up in the Gering-Scotts Bluff area. It will take a lot of work, but we will not have to reinvent the wheel. We will need help from other chapter members; we will need your bodies at convention. There will be a lot of fun (and I do mean fun) jobs where one can just step in and do, the legwork will have been done already. We will also need a few people at convention next year. We should have a table set up promoting Nebraska. Next year's convention is in St Joseph, Missouri, so it is just a hop, skip and a jump for most Nebraskans. I was the only Nebraskan at Salt Lake. Others had planned to go, but illness and schools starting conspired against us. Future conventions will be a week earlier.

Some of you have been to a lot of conventions, some have been to



Loren, looking for Jimmy Buffett's lost shaker of salt in the Salt Flats of Utah.

none. I have been to two. They are so much fun. You have to go see this stuff to understand the history. In his talk, Dr. Fred Gowan said that to understand western history, you have to understand western geography. On this trip I got to see—and begin to understand—Emigrant Canyon, the Salt Flats, the Mud Flats, Great Salt Lake, Pilot Peak, and others. The papers and workshops were instructive; the camaraderie was superb. A consultant at the board of directors meeting in Denver told us, “Remember that you are not normal.” Sometimes we live on and study about the trails as if we were living in a vacuum. There are people out there who share our love for the trails. Conventions are a great way to learn about, teach, enjoy and honor our pioneer heritage. In my not so humble opinion, Nebraska's Great Platte River Road is the signature part of the western trails, and I am so excited that Nebraska will host some 400 “rut nuts” in 2007.

~Loren Pospisil

## Fall Gathering • October 8

# My Adventure at a 'Road Rancho'

by Loren Pospisil

Regarding Horse Creek Station, Richard Burton wrote, "Our breakfast was prepared in the usual prairie style. First the coffee . . . was placed on the stove to simmer until every noxious principle was duly extracted from it. Then the rusty bacon, cut into thick slices, was thrown into the fry-pan. Thirdly, antelope steak, cut off a corpse suspended for the benefit of flies."

I had an adventure of my own at a modern day *road rancho*. In order to stretch out my drive time on the way back from convention, I left Salt Lake on Friday evening so that I could drive part way and check out museums at Fort Bridger and Green River on Saturday. I had studied the maps like a good trail traveler should and picked a likely town that I thought should have a *Mom & Pop* motel. While buzzing through a town just short of my planned stop, I saw a place with a vacancy sign. So I pulled in. This place at one time was a *Mom & Pop* motel except that I fear that *pop* done run off. It was shortly after 9:00 P.M., so I was tired, hungry and needed a drink. (Actually, that should have been in reverse order.) Also, I was thinking that I could save some money, as this place should only be charging 20 to 25 bucks. Wrong, try 42 smackers. My

friends, the principle of supply and demand is alive and well. I came to find out that the neighboring town that I had planned to stay in had their sole motel closed down, and this lovely garden spot was the only one for some 20-30 miles. The girls all get prettier at closing time so this place was now my home away from home. Actually, I was lucky as they only had two rooms left, and the other one was picked up five minutes after I moved in. Had I gone to the other town, I might have been sleeping on the Wyoming prairie. It was a smoking room, so I opened up all the windows to air out the room while I enjoyed a nice single malt with another single malt as a chaser.

The story gets better.

There was a café open 'til ten so I high-tailed it over there for some grub. I should pause to point out that the people at the motel and the café were all the nicest and friendliest people you could find. They really were, it is just that this place was not as luxurious as a Motel 6. I go in and pick a table, and a friendly waitress comes by with a menu and asks if I would like a beer. Things are looking up! She said they had Bud, Bud Light, Coors and maybe another, but she could not remember. I ordered a Coors,

and she efficiently departed only to return and report that they were out of Coors. So I ordered a Bud. Again, she scurries off only to return and report that they had Bud, but none had been put in the fridge so it was still warm. To which I replied, "Bring me something cold and surprise me." I then turned my attention to the menu. Had I wanted, I could have had a *hamberger* and in the morning, I could have had an *omlet*. No, I wanted something from the supper menu. Pork chops sounded fun. The reader is by now thinking ahead and knows what is coming next. The server writes down my order only to return and apologize that they are fresh out of pork chops. Rib eye? No. Chicken strips. No. Meat loaf. No. Chicken fried steak? Yes! So I order the chicken fried steak. Now, the supper menu comes with choice of potato, baked, hash browns or French fries. To my server's credit, she did not have to scurry off to the kitchen, but stated up front that they were out of baked potatoes and hash browns, but did have French fries. I celebrated my good fortune with a second unspecified beer. I now regret that I did not risk breakfast. My hosts were most helpful and friendly, it is just that the provision wagon did not make it that far out on the frontier.

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## A New Twist on the Grattan Massacre?

submitted by Joe Fairfield

(*excerpts taken from Voices of the Sandhills, Vol. 59, summer 2005, Tryon, Nebraska*)

In reading an article in the February 1973 edition of the *Frontier West*, there was an article written by Dean W. Ballenger about the Mormon cow incident that led to the massacre of Lieutenant Grattan's men...  
...The Mormons were making their pilgrimage to Salt Lake City when this occurred. It seems that this cow was under ownership of Joel Fladers, and her given name was *Rose of Eden*. He was beginning to wonder about his faithful old cow

Rose. The effects of old age and trail weariness had him wondering about whether she could make it to Fort Laramie.... He was discussing it with his wife Martha, but they had decided that the cow would probably make it, since they were going to arrive at Fort Laramie that day. Martha was more worried about the Sioux camp that she could see...and her husband Joel wasn't much better... But while his thoughts were on this, his cow, Rose started wandering off to one of the Indian camps.

Martha demanded, "...are you going to get her?"

...he started making excuses about her being sick and gaunt and she may not be worth much anyway. But Martha insisted, saying that she may be old and sick, but the Indians had no right to her and maybe they could trade her off at Fort Laramie.

Joel...started off towards the encampment to retrieve his cow. Before he got there, a Minniconjou

(*cont. on page 8*)

# Salt Lake City Convention

(cont. from page 1)

a little less detail than the old one but is considerably more attractive and double-sided. It should sell very well. I attended Jim Budde's *Convention Planning Workshop*. It conflicted with a meeting of the chapter presidents; I did collect notes from it though. There being only me at our chapter meeting, I

was elected to everything by a vote of one to zero. Had I had my wits about me, I would have elected everyone else by the same vote. I attended the Gateway chapter meeting to listen in on their preparations for 2006. It looks to be a good convention next year; I expect to see Nebraskans there in droves.

the general membership meeting, and a report about the St. Joe convention. For lunch I had a \$17 chicken Caesar salad. In the afternoon were papers and chapter meetings. In the evening I walked around town and ate at a sushi bar. I had never tried it before, but I am now converted. I was surprised at how good it was.

Wednesday there were typical opening remarks. Dr. Fred Gowans gave the keynote address. Then there was

Thursday was bus tours. I went on the one to Donner Springs near the Nevada border. We drove along the Mud Flats and stopped at the Salt Flats. The Utah chapter has done quite a bit of work at Donner Springs. On the way back we

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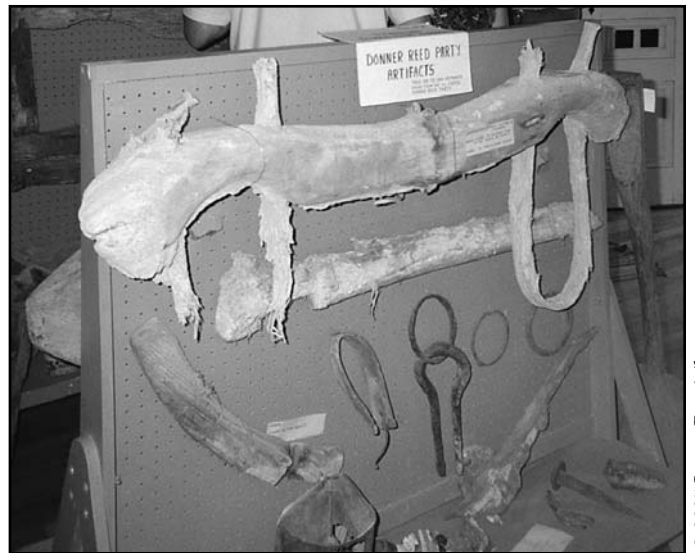


Brigham Young, leader of the Mormon Church, organized the largest religious mass exodus in American history and settled nearly 400 colonies on the western frontier. His grave is in the heart of downtown Salt Lake City.

© 2005 Loren Pospisil



Graves found near Donner Spring, more than 100 west of Salt Lake City.



An 1846 oxen yoke and other artifacts abandoned by the Donner-Reed party are housed in the museum in Grantsville.

© 2005 Loren Pospisil



Donner Spring has been restored to the conditions of the emigrant's time. Its waters provided literal salvation to people and animals coming off the desert.

© 2005 Loren Pospisil

stopped at the museum in Grantsville where they had some Donner party artifacts. That evening was a wonderful talk on *Frontier Medicine*. Some of the images were graphic, and one attendee passed out. I was happy that I had my sushi meal the evening before. Friday saw more papers. My favorite was Robert Carter's *Fishing along the Trail*. All the papers were good. Because I had to work on Sunday, I had to drive back on Saturday. In order to see some sites in Western Wyoming, I drove part way Friday night. I was able to check out "This Is The Place" Heritage Park. I then drove Emigration Canyon. I was shocked and impressed with the narrow confines and rugged terrain these people took wagons down. Saturday, I spent several hours at Fort Bridger and also stopped at the Green River museum. I had a very good time and was impressed



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*The Latter-day Saints entered Emigration Canyon, the final geographic obstacle between Big Mountain and the Salt Lake Valley, through nearly a dozen miles of river willows and scrub oaks that infested the bottoms of this narrow canyon.*

with Salt Lake City. I have never been a fan of big cities, but SLC

was clean, safe and friendly. I am now looking for excuses to go back.

## Fremont Couple Tends Mormon Trail Marker

by Beverly J. Lydick, *The Associated Press*

**F**REMONT—In 2002, rural Fremonters Marv and Jackie Welanders took on a job no one else cared to do. To this day, twice a month, they pack up their tools, drive to a spot off West Military Avenue, crawl over a chain-link fence and spruce up the grounds around a granite marker engraved with the words, "Mormon Trail 1847". The 50-year-old marker identifies the site of the first settlement in the area by a Mrs. Weltha Beebe and Abram McNeal on May 25, 1856. It also signifies the birthplace of twins Ann and Jennie McNeal, noting the tots as "the first children of Dodge County Settlers on July 12, 1856". Marv discovered the monument three years ago, hidden from view by a tangle of weeds, vines and overgrown trees. "You couldn't even see it," said Marv, who admitted driving past the marker for more than 20 years

before spotting it one day while mowing the roadside. The couple made it their mission to keep the marker visible to any traveler who might pass by. It's not as though they have an ancestral interest in the site. The Welanders are not Nebraska natives, let alone descendants of the McNeal or Beebe families. Marv, 77, hails from North Dakota and Jackie, 62, is from Wisconsin. But the marker, said Marv, "was put there for a reason and people should be able to see it". They work to keep the site tidy year-round. Now and then, they even add a special touch. Red, white and blue bunting draped the fence on the Fourth of July. Memorial wreaths hung there in late May. Jackie said the decorations were never disturbed. As long as they're able "to lift the weed-whacker," the Welanders said, they'll continue to care for

the site. They don't expect to be paid or even thanked. "I don't think you should have to ask people to do things," said Marv. "Just do it. Do it for the good of the country and the upkeep of the roadside."

(This article recently appeared in several local newspapers including the *Scottsbluff Star-Herald* and the *Hastings Tribune*. These are the type of people we are looking for. Loren sent them a thank-you card and information about OCTA. If you run across items of trail interest send them to Loren Pospisil or Carole Meyer for inclusion in the *River Road Review*.)

### 2005 Chapter Dues

If you have not paid your 2005 dues yet, send \$10 before October 1 to the treasurer:  
 Betty Scheinost  
 2760 36th Avenue  
 Columbus, NE 68601-2342

# 2007 Convention Planning Committee Report

by Loren Pospisil

On 13 September we had our second meeting of the 2007 OCTA Convention planning committee. I spent about an hour reporting on the 2005 Convention in Salt Lake City. There I had attended Jim Budde's workshop on planning conventions and Gateway chapter's meeting to listen in on their preparations for 2006. Budde had charts that showed what we can expect for attendance and percentages of participate in various activities. I learned a lot. As far as content goes we have resources that practically do themselves. The devil is in the details. There will be a thousand details. Luckily we have some detail-oriented people on our team.

Billie Johnson volunteered to be our convention committee secretary. She performed this task for the Bridgeport Centennial celebration five years ago. Besides Art and Billie, we also have the Fairfields and the Waitmans. They have a lot of convention experience. As I write this, Barb Netherland is on a two-week jaunt to follow the Oregon Trail all the way to Oregon. By the time she returns, she will have *seen the elephant* and be hooked forever.

The second part of the meeting might have seemed like *pandelirium*, but was very productive as we started to identify our hospitality, historical and human resources. We were impressed with the body of talent we have in Nebraska and eastern Wyoming. It was decided that each person should bring a formal list of these resources to the next meeting. With a master list, laying out these activities will be much easier. If you know someone you would like to see as a speaker or know of another activity, you can still let us know.

There was considerable discussion on prices and costs. The convention makes money for OCTA. This discussion formed two camps. On one hand, OCTA is the only organization that does what it does and

support for it is important. Money does not grow on trees.

Conventions are a good way to raise money. On the other hand, travel and conventions are expensive to *regular* people and you can price yourself out of business. If an organization wants to attract younger members, it must realize that younger members often have kids, and kids are very expensive pets—that is why I have dogs.

Frugal Nebraskans are going to scoff at spending \$35 for a dried piece of chicken at a banquet. The only reason I spent \$17 for the President's Lunch, was that I could not stay for the \$30 banquet. These prices are in spite of the fact that Jim Budde demonstrated that OCTA makes very little from meals. At Vancouver, there were 1330 meals served at a cost of \$34,262, and OCTA made only \$511. That is 39c per meal served and a *mark-up* of just 1.5%.

This is where Nebraska will shine. Our restaurants and hotels can feed and house people better and cheaper than your big cities. Well, now I am pontificating, but it is true. The Sheraton was a fine facility, but expensive. The *discounted* room rate was \$90, and regular rates were \$120. In Gering-Scottsbluff, we have several very nice hotels whose regular rates are \$50 to \$60. Two of them bake cookies free for their patrons. The two factions agreed that we could make money for the organization we believe in, *and* we have lower costs for the customer.

Some things were decided. They may have been predetermined, but a formal decision was required. The dates for the convention will be Wednesday, August 8 through Saturday, August 11 with pre- and post-convention tours pending. It will have a typical format with speakers on Wednesday and Friday and tours on Thursday and Saturday. We have three good ideas for pre-convention tours but still need ideas for a post-convention

tour. Another big challenge that has been presented to us is activities for children. Any ideas anyone has will be helpful.

We went through the convention planning manual's schedule of when things need to be done by, and that reduced the *pandelirium* quite a bit. We are behind schedule, but we laid out what we need to do this winter, so we should be on schedule by spring.

Our next meeting will be Tuesday, October 11 at noon at the North Platte Valley Museum. Feel free to bring a sack lunch. If you have any questions or *advice*, contact Barb Netherland at (308) 436-5411 or npvm@actcom.net or Loren Pospisil at (308) 586-2581 or

chimrock@scottsbluff.net. If you email, please use "OCTA" in the title. Again, I know most of the leg-work will be done by us out west, but we will need Nebraskans to help at the convention at St Joe next year and at Gering in 2007.

As a final plea, we will need a slogan and a logo for publication. You have seen them before on the booklets that advertise the convention. We will want to have tee shirts and etcetera for convention next year, so we need ideas quickly. Utah's was *Trailing the Pioneers*. St Joe's will be *Rivers, Plains, and Wagon Trains*. We will need a memorable one as well. Logos might be harder, but we have some artists out here. If you have ideas for a logo, we could present the idea to them.

## Nebraska Trail News

Send trail news, photos, and upcoming events to the editor.

Carole Meyer  
1118 N. Minnesota Avenue  
Hastings, NE 68901

In e-mail please use **OCTA** in the subject line.

cmartist@inebraska.com

# Nebraska Chapter Gathering and Business Meeting

October 8, 2005  
Beaver Crossing, Nebraska

## Archaeology, GIS, and Geophysical Approaches in Trails Research

*hosted by the Pariset family and Paul Demers*

### Please RSVP to Paul Demers

office: (402) 472-8872

cell: (402) 499-7055

e-mail: pdemers2@unl.edu

**9:00 A.M.:** Rendezvous at the Pariset farm – coffee and pastry

**9:30–10:00 A.M.:** Orientation and opening remarks

**10:00 A.M.–12:00 noon:** Tour of the Beaver Creek trail crossing site

**12:00 noon–1:00 P.M.:** Lunch on site (Please pack a lunch as it will be difficult and time consuming to get back and forth from the town of Beaver Crossing)

**1:00–4:30 P.M.:** On-site activities – archaeological excavation, trails recording with GIS, and geophysical survey

**5:00–6:00 P.M.:** BBQ at the Pariset farm

**6:00–7:00 P.M.:** OCTA-NE chapter business meeting

The business meeting will be short. There are several perfunctory procedures that need *perfunctorized*. Because most fun people hate business meetings, we will not spend a lot of time at it. For efficiency, if you have something that needs to be brought up officially, please let Loren know in advance. The BBQ will be provided, but you must RSVP to Paul. He has done a lot of work at this site, and we are looking forward to seeing all of you there.

Fall 2005

For those interested in driving the trail route back home on Sunday, the county road network can be driven following the Nebraska City Road. This route basically runs due west from Beaver Crossing paralleling the Interstate to the Doniphan area. Then the road follows along the south edge of the Platte before intersecting with the Independence Road northwest of the Susan Hail grave in northwest Adams County. It should only add a couple hours to driving time via the Interstate. Another option might be to drive county roads following the Independence Road from the Nebraska–Kansas border to Ft. Kearny as marked on Franzwa's *Maps of the Oregon Trail*. This will probably take about six hours plus stops to view markers. Beware this stretch has many markers. Get a *Delorme* map book of Nebraska, and if you have any questions, Steve or Carole Meyer can show you which roads to take.

### Driving Directions

#### ***From the east or west via I-80:***

Take Exit 369 Beaver Crossing. At the end of the exit, go south. (If coming from the east, turn left and cross the overpass; if coming from the west, this a right turn.)

Continue south on this paved road (named "420" or "L80E").

The first gravel road you come to is "O" Street. Turn left (east) on "O" Street.

The next road you will come to is "406" Road. Turn right (south) onto "406" Road. Continue approximately one-half mile. The Pariset farm is on your right.

#### ***From the south via US-81:***

Proceed north to Hwy 6 around the Fairmont, NE area.

Take Hwy 6 east towards Friend, NE. Near Friend, head north on "L80E" towards Beaver Crossing. Continue north, past the town of Beaver Crossing, to "O" Street. Turn right (east) on "O" Street. The next road you will come to is "406" Road. Turn right (south) onto "406" Road. Continue approximately one-half mile. The Pariset farm will be on your right.

#### ***From the south via US-77:***

Proceed north to Hwy 41 west, until it deadends into Hwy 15.

Take Hwy 15 north, until it deadends into Hwy 6/33.

Go west on Hwy 6/33 towards Friend, NE. Near Friend, head north on "L80E" towards Beaver Crossing.

Continue north, past the town of Beaver Crossing, to "O" Street.

Turn right (east) on "O" Street.

The next road you will come to is "406" Road. Turn right (south) onto "406" Road. Continue approximately one-half mile. The Pariset farm will be on your right.

## Grattan Massacre *(cont. from page 3)*

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warrior by the name of Crazy Leggs, cut poor Rose's throat... As meat was in short supply, he cut the cow's throat assuming that he had not stolen the cow, since she had come voluntarily to him and he had a treaty right to kill her for food. Fladers, who had been about half way there to retrieve his cow...turned and ran back to his wagon. Reaching the wagon, he exclaimed to his wife, "just pretend that she ain't our cow..." His wife retorted, "You are the most gutless man....You should have gone up there and made that Indian pay for our cow." She kept at him, and as they pulled into Fort Laramie, he decided...to complain about the loss of his cow. Before he could finish telling about the incident...Joseph Red Feathers...had ridden into the fort to tell about the killing of an immigrant cow and offered to pay for her according to the terms of the Horse

Creek Treaty.... He [Fladers] said that anything that he would offer to pay for Old Rose was quite all right with him.

...Second Lieutenant, James Lawrence Grattan, who happened to be in charge at the time, demanded that the Indians pay more than the four dollars that the cow was worth by giving over the man who had killed her, to the army, because he was in violation of the treaty and had stolen her.

Joel Fladers tried to reason with him and told him that the cow wasn't stolen and that she had just wandered into the camp....

Fladers said that it was OK with him and he could just take the four dollars, or if he didn't have the money he would take anything of equal value. He wanted to more trouble on the account of Old Rose. But Lieutenant Grattan insisted that the Indian be punished. He said that it was no longer a civil matter....

...Lieutenant Grattan said that he would personally lead an expedition of twenty-nine soldiers...to the Brule camp and arrest Crazy Leggs. They would bring him back to be fairly tried and hanged on the main gate post, thus teaching the aborigines to respect the treaty....

Lieutenant Grattan and his troops rode the eight miles east to the Indian encampment.

Grattan demanded that Crazy Leggs be given over to him. The argument that ensued for half an hour resulted in Lieutenant Grattan and twenty-nine troops... being killed on the spot...

...Congress convened and decided that the Grattan Massacre had to be avenged.... The Battle of Ash Hollow was the result of this order. It is said that Martha Fladers died...asking the Lord to forgive her for making her husband complain to Grattan about the worthless old cow.

OCTA-NE

1118 N. Minnesota Ave.

Hastings, NE 68901