



The River Road Review

Oregon-California Trail Association—Nebraska chapter

Spring 2006

Spring Stomp Scheduled for April 14

The Nebraska Chapter of the Oregon-California Trails Association is proud to announce its 2007 “Spring Stomp”. This car-caravan historical tour will follow the Oregon, Mormon, and California trails and visit important sites between Fort Kearney and Gothenburg on April 14.

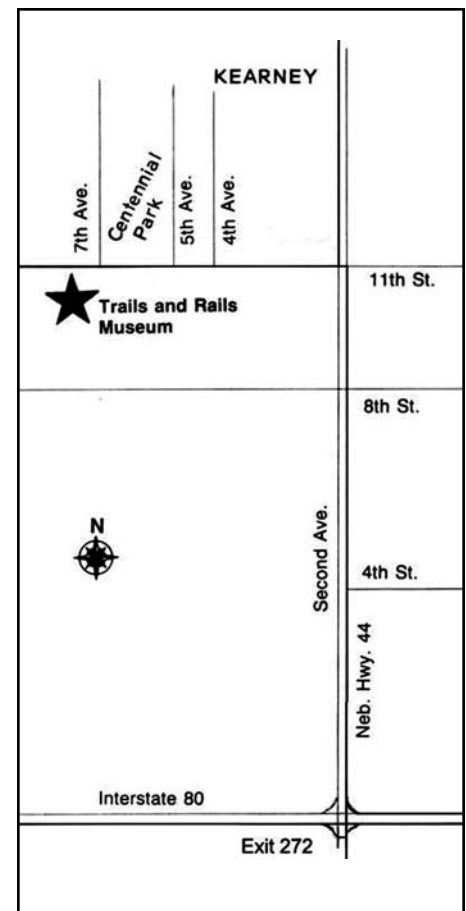
We will meet at the Trails and Rails Museum, 710 W. 11th Street, in Kearney at 8:00 A.M. We will follow the Oregon Trail with frequent stops and commentary at various historic sites and markers including the Plum Creek Massacre Site and the Plum Creek Cemetery. We will stop for lunch at and visit the Dawson County Historical Museum in Lexington. At that time we will have a short meeting with exciting news about the upcoming National Convention of the Oregon-California Trails Association to be held in Gering/Scottsbluff this coming August.

After lunch, we will hit the trail again, with more stops at Willow Island, Cozad Pony Express station,

and finish up at the Gothenburg Pony Express Museum. This segment of the trail has several compelling stories to explore. At each stop we will have historians pointing out the importance of that site.

There is no cost or fee for this tour, but the museums will happily accept donations. This is a car-caravan tour. We will be driving on gravel and paved roads and the tour should last most of the day. You will want to bring a sack lunch, water, and a camera.

This event is sponsored by the Nebraska chapter of the Oregon-California Trails Association. You do not have to be a member, if you are interested in this tour, please be invited as our guest. If you would like more information about this tour or the Oregon-California Trails Association, contact Loren Pospisil at the Chimney Rock Visitor Center, (308) 586-2581 or chim-rock@scottsbluff.net. (If you email, please use “OCTA” in the title bar.)



Trails & Rails Museum, Kearney

<http://bchs.kearney.net/museum.html>

Dawson County Historical Museum, Lexington

<http://www.dchsmuseum.com/>

City of Cozad

<http://www.cozadnebraska.net/history.asp>

City of Gothenburg

<http://www.ci.gothenburg.ne.us/index.htm>

Oregon-California Trails Association

<http://www.octa-trails.org/>

Nebraska State Historical Society

<http://www.nebraskahistory.org>

Spring Stomp • 8 A.M. April 14 • Trails & Rails, Kearney

President's Corner

I attended the OCTA mid-year Board meeting with Bill Petersen. Bill turned out to be a newsmaker. When President Vern asked those in the audience if anybody had any comments or thoughts, Bill said people had been asking him to run for the Board and he wanted to see what it was all about. Well, they were delighted to hear this. At the end of the meetings he announced that he is, in fact, running for the Board. Now, I am delighted. If you will allow me a brief editorial, I think Bill would be a great member for the Board of Directors. Since our chapter re-organized, Bill has been involved in all of our activities and helped to organize several. He is familiar with hundreds of miles of trails and was asked by OCTA to lead Elderhostel tours last summer. Whether you are from Nebraska or reading this from somewhere else, I would encourage you to vote for Bill, he will be very good for OCTA. Jim Denney was the last Nebraskan to be on the Board.

The meeting was the smoothest one yet. They passed 15 resolutions with no negative votes. There were the standard reports. The financial report was bleak. The 2007 convention was on the vague side. We are two weeks behind schedule (my fault). But we are sending registration materials to the printers this week. There was

The Oregon-California Trails Association—Nebraska chapter

President: Loren Pospisil

Vice President: Carole Meyer

Secretary: Nancy Petersen

Treasurer: Betty Scheinost

Newsletter Editor: Carole Meyer

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a report about the 2008 convention in Idaho. I am looking forward to that. The legislative report was good news. Several trail-related bills are now moving forward. The bylaws were approved after working on them for five years. The strategic plan was approved. A number of other issues about the future of OCTA were discussed. OCTA has an opportunity to take the lead in the type of trail documentary we have been looking for.

Those of you that know me know that I am not much of a meeting person. What I had the most fun was seeing the sights. The museum at Independence is fantastic. The displays are professionally done and easy to read. I was delighted to see a display idea “stolen” from the Chimney Rock Visitor Center.

I drove down to Minden and then Bill and I drove across Kansas, stopping at the World's Largest Ball of Twine, the Red Vermillion Crossing, and the Kansas State Historical Society Museum in Topeka. On the way back, we stopped at Alcove Springs. On the way back from Bill's I drove the route for our 2007 “Spring Stomp” to be held April 14th. See separate report for details.

In most ways, I am really excited about the present and the future of OCTA. The people are really positive and excited about what we do as an organization. Co-operation with the NPS, state and local agencies, private citizens, and even within OCTA is strong. We do have issues of revenue and future conventions to address.

~Loren Pospisil

Chapter Dues

Send your chapter dues of \$10 directly to the treasurer:

Betty Scheinost

2760 36th Avenue

Columbus, NE 68601-2342

Obituary

published in *The Star-Herald*

BRIDGEPORT—Joseph Will Fairfield, 71, died Sunday, Feb. 4, 2007, at Regional West Medical Center. A memorial service will be held at 10 a.m., Saturday, Feb. 10, at the Church of Christ in Bridgeport with Pastor Jonathan Seng officiating. The Nebraska National Guard will render military Honors.

The family will be at the church at 9 a.m. to greet friends. A memorial has been established to the North Platte Valley Museum. Tributes of sympathy may be left at www.bbchapels.com.

Bridgeport Memorial Chapel and Cremation Services are assisting the family with arrangements. Joe was born Sept 4, 1935, in Scottsbluff to Earl and Edna (Michael) Fairfield. He received his education in Minatare Public Schools. He joined the Air Force and was trained as a Radio/Code operator. After the Air Force, he attended Milford Trade School for Electronics. He married Lois Ann Dittmer in Clarks, Neb. Oct. 14, 1959 and they moved to Cedar Rapids, Iowa to work for Collins Radio.

The moved back to Scottsbluff in 1961 to work for KSTF-TV. While living Scottsbluff, their two children were born. In 1966, they moved to Bridgeport to work for KTNE-TV, they also owned and operated Fairfield Photography. His special interests included amateur radio, musician, photography and Nebraska history. He was a member of the Panhandle Country Music Assn., Torrington Fiddler's, and Oregon-California Trails Assn. His remaining family include his wife, Lois Ann; son, Richard (Cindy) Fairfield; daughter, Lori (Steve) Goodrich; grandchildren, Brooke, Jenna, Christopher, Corina; great-grandchildren, Kasen, Shayla and Talon; and sister, Inez Halverson and her three children. His parents preceded him in death.

The River Road Review, OCTA-NE

2007 Convention Update

Plans for the 2007 convention are shaping up very well. The committee has lined up a wide range of workshops, speakers, pre- and post-convention tours, bus tours, entertainment, and activities. Bus tours will cover the Ash Hollow to Gering segment of trail, the Morrill and Scotts Bluff County sites, and the trail from Scotts Bluff County to Guernsey—all three tours will be action packed. There should be something of interest for everyone who attends convention. Registration information will be at the printers by the time you read this and will be mailed out in April.

The planning committee, which generally meets twice a month, has been joined on occasion by National Park Service personnel from Scotts Bluff National Monument and Fort Laramie, who will be hosting special convention activities at their locations. Input from local tourism agencies and the Civic Center has also been beneficial to the planning process. We are all doing our best to make this a great conference.

We are ready to get our tour guides lined up and trained as well as finding volunteers to cover the registration desk, hospitality room, raffle/silent auction table, ticket takers for meals and busses, and general trouble shooter/gophers. Nebraska OCTA members get first choice at these plush assignments,

but we need to hear from you. If you want to help, please contact:
Loren Pospisil
Chimney Rock Visitor Center
Bayard, NE 69334
308-586-2581
chimrock@scottsbluff.net

Barb Netherland
North Platte Valley Museum
P.O. Box 435
Gering, NE 69341
308-436-5411
npvm@earthlink.net

You may also contact any committee member: Lois Fairfield, Art or Billie Johnson, Jolene Kaufman, and Bill or Nancy Petersen. Committee meetings are usually the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month at noon. Occasionally we change the time to 1:30 P.M., so you may want to call to be sure of the time.

We want to collect items for the silent auction and raffle. The go-togs for this are:

Lois Fairfield
HC 85
Bridgeport, NE 69336-9502

Nancy Petersen
615 S. Colorado Avenue
Minden, NE 68959-2309

Thanks everyone for your help.

~Barb Netherland

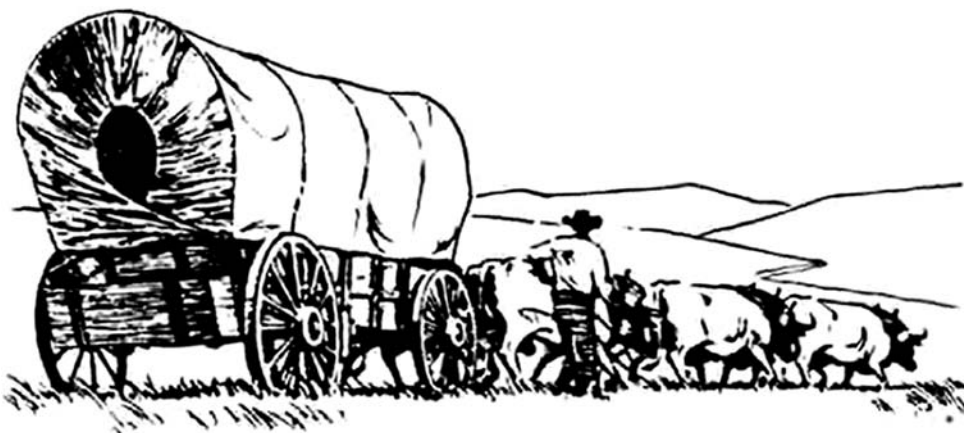
Indian Trouble Occurred 1864 in Dawson County

from *Andreas' History of the State of Nebraska*

In the times of the old overland freight and emigrant road across the plains, that route extended up the Platte river, on the south side, through Dawson County. The immense amount of travel and freighting carried on over this line is described on another page of this volume; so that it is unnecessary here to refer to events, other than those of mere local importance. The telegraph line was established through the county, and along the above-mentioned route in 1861, and in this county was the only place where it was ever injured by the Indians, except when they occasionally burned a telegraph station in time of war. The damage done here was small. They, during the early days of the telegraph line, looked upon it with suspicion. They saw the long poles and the wires stretched at the top and reasoned that the white men were building a high fence and supposed that the wires would extend all the way down to the ground; and thinking that this fence would impede their progress in hunting, set to work to cut it down. They were stopped, however, before much damage was done, and as soon as it was explained to them, no attempt was ever again made to destroy it.

There were ranches established every few miles along the route in this county. The most important of these was that on Plum Creek, which was a telegraph and stage station, and the most important one between Fort Kearney and Cottonwood Springs, or Fort McPherson, as it was frequently called after the establishment of a fort there. Here also was the scene of more Indian troubles than at any other place along the line. Just after leaving the station, and passing along the level valley of the Platte, the route led to a point where the bluffs and cañons were near to the

(cont. on page 4)



Massacre *(cont. from page 3)*

road and afforded the most perfect concealment for hostile Indians. Here they would conceal themselves and as an emigrant train came slowly along, they would dash out, attack the train, capture it if possible, and if not, dash back again on their ponies and were perfectly secure, as it would be vain to try to capture them when so completely in ambush and able to retreat unseen were it necessary. Several murders were committed here by the Indians. The most notable of these was the Plum Creek massacre that took place August 7, 1864. The Indians had secreted themselves at the point above mentioned. As all had been peaceable for many years, the travelers were not on the lookout and as a train passed along, the Indians dashed out and killed the entire party, eleven in number, and after plundering the wagons of all they desired, they set fire to them. This took place near the telegraph station, and the people

there believing that it was the outbreak of an Indian war that had been threatened for many months, telegraphed the warning at once all along the line. As was feared, arrangements had been made to begin attacks at the same time at different points along the route, and then to follow along up the river. But as this was the first point attacked, and the news was so quickly sent to the other stations, time was afforded to prepare for the savages, and but comparatively few white men were killed in the first general attack. This, however, was the beginning of a war against the Sioux and Cheyennes which lasted for several years. Immediately after this outbreak most of the ranchmen of what is now Dawson County, joined with the terror-stricken ranchmen and settlers from further west and fled from the country. For some weeks, all was panic and confusion. However, the stage stations were soon re-established and the regular mail and passenger stages again

resumed travel, but were always accompanied by a heavy guard. In a short time after, the freighters, too, again resumed their business and the exportation of freight went on without interruption, to any great extent. They, however, were compelled to stop at Fort Kearney and thoroughly organize their men and form in large trains, before being allowed to go farther west. Each of these trains, after the men were thoroughly organized and drilled formed a formidable force. By preconcerted arrangements, their wagons could, at the very first alarm, be placed in such a position as to form a perfect barricade, and but little injury was ever done them, except when a freighter would occasionally try to get through with but a few wagons and men, when they were sometimes attacked and killed. These bluffs at Plum Creek were regarded as the most dangerous part of the way, and probably more men were killed here than at any other one point along the entire route.

OCTA-NE
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