

THE FIFTY-NINER

Quarterly newsletter of the
Colorado-Cherokee Trail Chapter
Oregon-California Trails Association
Fall 2007

October meeting



Johanna Harden



Presentation of maps and photographs



Annette Gray and Johanna Harden

Many thanks to chapter member Johanna Harden, Archivist of the Douglas County Libraries, who conducted the October meeting at the Douglas County History Research Center in Castle Rock. The meeting was preceded by lunch at the historic Old Stone Church Restaurant.

After a short business meeting, Johanna showed *Chasing Fortune, Chasing Dreams: The Cherokee Trail*, a 30-minute documentary which tells the story of trail travelers based on their journal entries. It includes an interview with Lee Whiteley, a chapter member and noted historian on the Cherokee Trail.

The video was produced by Douglas County Television and was a winner of a Government Programming Award in 2002 from the National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors.

Some members were interested in obtaining a copy. Johanna indicated that copies are no longer available from Douglas County, but that it can be checked out of the library. It also appears to be viewable on dataflix.com: <http://www.dataflix.com/scripts/prodView.asp?idproduct=104>

Following the video Johanna and her colleague, Annette Gray, gave a presentation of maps, photographs and other materials pertaining to the Cherokee Trail which were of great interest to the members present.

Welcome to our new chapter members

- Charles Marvin Clegg – Fort Duchesne, Utah
- Chuck and Suzanne Hornbuckle – Olympia, Washington
- Dennis Jorgensen – Green River, Wyoming
- Edna Kennell – Casper, Wyoming
- Judith Miller – Golden, Colorado
- Celia Quignon – Nampa, Idaho
- Bob and Sandy Rummel – Loveland, Colorado

The chapter has established a life membership level (\$200) and we welcome Chuck and Suzanne Hornbuckle as our first life members. Chuck and Suzanne are also life members of OCTA and the Northwest Chapter. Chuck is a descendant of Lewis Ralston, who made the first gold discovery in Colorado. Chuck has written an article about Ralston which appears on page 5.

2009 Convention Update

By Ernie Witucki

On October 26 Travis Boley and I visited Loveland, Colorado and laid the groundwork for the 2009 OCTA Annual Convention. We first met with the General Manager of the Best Western Hotel, a potential site for the Convention Headquarters. Later we toured with officials at the extensive facilities available at the new Larimer County Fairgrounds and construction site for the adjoining Hammon's Executive Suites Hotel and Convention Center.

Afterwards a meeting was arranged with Loveland's events coordinator from "Engaging Loveland" and the City of Loveland's Senior Planner to tour various complexes in the Central Business District that included the Community Building, Rialto Theater, Museum, City Hall, caterers, and other possible facilities.

A recommended visit to Sylvan Dale Guest Ranch at the mouth of Big Thompson Canyon proved to be a potential good site for some of the 2009 activities. We left Loveland with favorable impressions of both the reception from Lovelanders and compatible convention sites.

John Murphy's suggestion, *On the Cherokee Trail to the Gold Fields*, has been adopted as the convention theme.

Preservation Training Workshop

The Preservation Training Workshop is still planned for June 2008. It will be held on either the first or second weekend; the exact date will be finalized in early January. It will begin with a one-day classroom session at the Douglas County Library in Castle Rock. The second day will be a field session on the Cherokee Trail. The Workshop will be conducted by Dave Welch, Leslie Fryman and Jim McGill.

Marvin Burke appointed to OCTA Audit Committee



Chapter member Marvin Burke (center) has been appointed by OCTA President Glenn Harrison to serve on the Audit Committee of the national organization. The Audit Committee assists the Board of Directors in fulfilling its oversight responsibility regarding the integrity of OCTA's financial statements, the reliability of internal control systems, and compliance with legal, regulatory and internal OCTA policies.

Marvin and his wife, Dorene, live in Northglenn and have been members of OCTA for about six years.

Marvin is a native of Denver and a graduate of the University of Colorado with a degree in accounting. After serving in the Army he worked for the Internal Revenue Service for his entire career until his retirement.

An OCTA wedding!

Chapter Vice President Carolyn Moree and Wyoming Chapter member Jim Luckey plan to be married on December 15.

Carolyn and Jim met through OCTA. Carolyn will be moving from Fort Collins to Rock Springs, Wyoming where Jim lives.

We are sorry to see Carolyn leave Colorado but look forward to seeing Carolyn and Jim in the future at the OCTA conventions.



Jim Luckey and Carolyn Moree at the 2007 convention

.National Membership Drive

By Duane Iles

Greetings friends,

Here is the report of membership as of December 1. Also, I am including a little chart I have put together to view things over a period of time. As you note, membership numbers are pretty flat. It makes one wonder if we are losing more than we are getting. I think this will require some real analysis to really understand what the numbers tell us. I will give you answers to this question as soon as I can figure it all out.

We have had some super recruiters since August. Coming as no surprise leading is super OCTA member Jim McGill with seven. Boy if we could clone Jim.

Others are: Glenn Harrison, Patti King-McGill, Jackie Ellis, OCTA staff, Iles, Bob Clark, Fred and Fern Linton, Greg Franzwa, Henry and Lynn Woodward, Edna Kennell, Don Cooper, Bill Leppert and Tom McCutcheon.

Congratulations and THANK YOU to these folks.

Chapter presidents be sure to recognize your recruiters and try to motivate the rest of your members.

Many people are making a lot of efforts to accomplish our recruiting goals. We need to get everyone involved in bringing in new members and stopping the hemorrhage of losses. Some considerations, talking points and ideas:

- Gift memberships
- The Gold Rush contest
- Call and talk with non-renewing members -- we can give you all the information at the office.
- Volunteer to talk to service and social clubs and HAND OUT applications
- Chapters - make sure that you are providing a good product for ALL members. All rut nuts are happy if we can get them on the trail. But, DO NOT forget our older members who no longer can walk the trails or those folks who are not interested. Encourage folks in our other programs - research, preservation, COED or any other area you all know. They are just as important as walking the ruts!!!! Make all members feel needed, useful and important.

Anyone with other ideas, share. Send to me and I will pass them on.

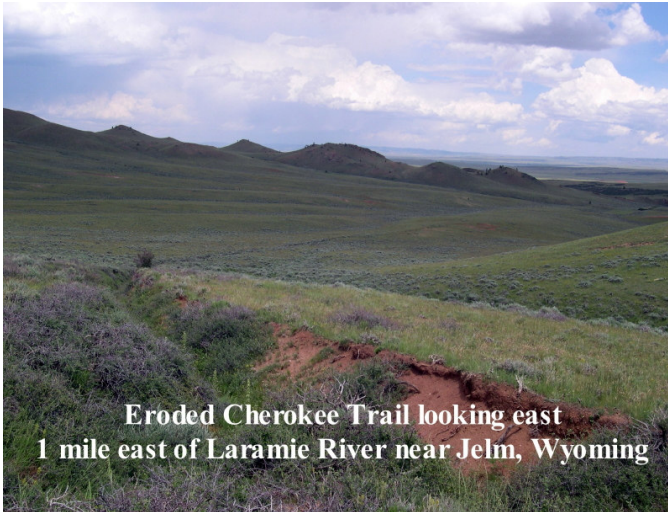
Merry Christmas my friends,

Duane

2007-2008	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Corporate	1	1	1	2				
Emigrant	1,040	1,018	1,017	1,016				
Pioneer	439	422	417	428				
Institutional	4	4	4	4				
Libraries	59	62	62	62				
Life/Meeker Life	74	74	74	74				
Trail Patron	42	42	46	42				
Students	16	15	14	14				
Educator	6	6	8	8				
Merrill Mattes	6	6	5	7				
Totals	1687	1652	1648	1657				

Genealogy, Grandfathers and Gold on the Cherokee Trail

By Chuck Hornbuckle



Eroded Cherokee Trail looking east
1 mile east of Laramie River near Jelm, Wyoming

My wife Suzanne and I became interested in the old emigrant trails when we learned she had 14 ancestors who came by wagon to the Oregon country between 1846 and 1860. Several years later Jack and Pat Fletcher were finalizing their work on the Cherokee Trail. I mentioned to them that I had Cherokee ancestors and happened to mention Lewis Ralston because he was Irish and married to a Cherokee lady.

Pat said Lewis was mentioned in their book and suggested I contact Lois Kennedy in Arvada to learn more about his exploits. Lois had recently

published her book *"First Gold-Lewis Ralston and Arvada – June 22, 1850"* documenting the first gold discovery in Colorado. I was thrilled to learn that discovery was by my ancestor while traveling to California with the Cherokee wagon train. That knowledge inspired me to search for more information about Lewis and his life before 1850.

Lewis was born in 1804 in South Carolina. Long before the Georgia gold rush in 1828, several white men had taken Cherokee mixed-bloods for their spouses, built homes in the fertile valleys, and cleared farmland in Georgia's Cherokee Nation. Notable among those men, and recognized as a leading farmer of the period, was Lewis Ralston. Lewis married Elizabeth Kell great-granddaughter of Cherokee Chief Benge in 1824.

In his book *"Cherokee Planters"* Don Shadburn describes the plight of the Ralston family as typical of losses suffered by the Cherokee after gold was discovered in Georgia. The Ralstons had four improvements on the Chestatee River in Lumpkin County and one on Forsyth County on the Etowah River. The land and all improvements would soon become state land and opened to white settlement.

Ralston's possessions on the Chestatee River included a large double house 1 1/2 stories of hewed logs, a common house, one cabin, two stables, a smokehouse, two cribs, 92 acres of "well improved river lowground", 22 acres of upland, 300 rods of ditching for drainage and irrigation, and a poultry house. In addition to valuations for his home place at \$2,037, Ralston claimed damages for the loss of crops on 33 acres of "first rate land" for four years and 21 acres for three years.

Other improvements on nearby Yahoola Creek received a valuation of \$454, with \$864 added for spoilation on 20 acres "first rate bottom land" and six acres of "first rate upland" for six years. A third improvement was located on the Hightower River *"at the old field ford in Forsyth County."* Valuation records for this place show 30 acres of upland, a hewed log house, a kitchen, smokehouse, crib, two stables, and two lots, with a total assessment of \$457.

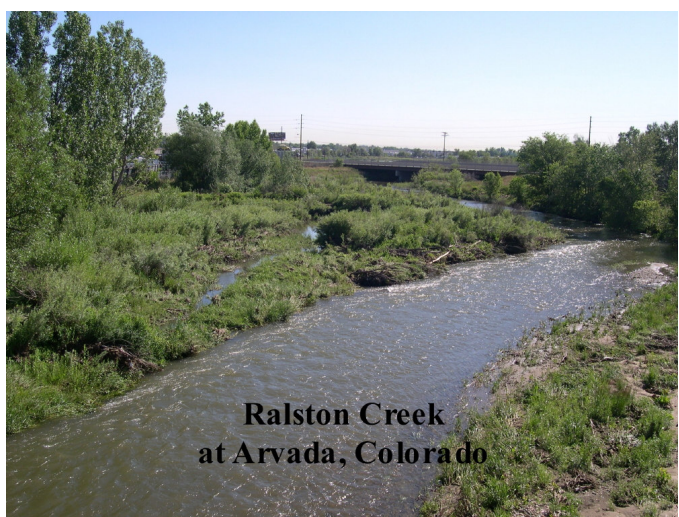
Somewhat modest improvements were also claimed on Amicalola Creek, at its junction with the Etowah River (at or near Bread Town) and others at Tensawatee Town. The two improvements were listed in detail and assigned a total valuation of \$458. Altogether, Ralston's property appraisals reached a figure of \$5,894, a considerable sum in those days. All these he lost. In addition, Elizabeth's grandmother Dorcas Benge Lightfoot Duncan a Full-Blood Cherokee living nearby lost her land and improvements to white settlement.

Compounding their troubles Cherokee families were prohibited from mining gold on land that was once theirs. The intent of both federal and state governments was to remove the Cherokee to the territory west of the Mississippi River. How families endured the hardships is difficult to imagine. With the discovery of gold in California it was no wonder Lewis chose to improve his lot by heading west.

In early 1850 Lewis and his brother-in-law Samuel Simons, who had married Elizabeth's sister Rebecca, left their families to seek their fortunes in the gold fields. Leaving Georgia the two arrived at the great salt spring in Oklahoma the following month. Here they fell in with a Cherokee train of "twenty wagons and a carry-all" making ready to for California.

They joined forces with John Lowery Brown a descendant of two eastern Cherokee Chiefs, George Lowery and David Brown. Both Chief Brown's wife and Lewis' wife were descendants of Chief Benge. That relationship quickly established a bond between the three adventurers.

The train finally left the Cherokee Nation on about May 22nd traveling northwest to the Santa Fe Trail and to Bent's Fort. At the Fort the Santa Fe Trail turned southwest. The wagons continued west along the Arkansas River to Fountain Creek. They camped at the small village of Pueblo on June 13th and the next day turned north along the east range of the Rockies. Arriving at Cherry Creek on June 20th they began the task of crossing the South Platte River. By the 21st all the wagons had crossed the river and they drove north about six miles to the confluence of two small unnamed streams.



The next day Lewis arose from his sleep, took his gold pan from the wagon and, from the bank of the stream, filled the pan with soil. He rotated the pan in the stream letting gravel run over the edge. Soon, in the layer of black sand, a few colors of yellow appeared, glowing like small suns. "GOLD", his shouts rousing the others. On that day John Lowery Brown recorded in his leather bound journal;

"June 22 - Lay Bye. Gold found." In the margin, he added, "We call this Ralstons Creek because a man of that name found gold here."

Under the belief the few colors would not pay wages, most of the group continued west. Those remaining failed to glean much gold from the creek and joined the others a few days later. Eight years later a gold bonanza would occur only a few miles distant.

But the 1850 Cherokee train continued north into Wyoming and west to Fort Bridger. There they turned southwest towards the Great Salt Lake and desert. They followed Mary's (Humboldt) River and Carson's River then crossed the Sierra Nevada Mountains arriving at the gold camps the middle of September. Like many trains of that time lack of water and cholera took its toll on the Cherokee while grass shortages plagued the livestock.

The following year Lewis was once again home in Georgia with his family which would eventually grow to 16 children. Whether he made his fortune I do not know. Records show Lewis lived until his 66th year and Elizabeth until she was almost 85 years old. Both died in Georgia.

Their daughter Rebecca Ralston who married Peter McAllister. Rebecca and Peter's daughter Nancy Josephine McAllister married Miles Fleetwood who was 1/4 Blood Cherokee himself. Miles and Nancy's daughter Rebecca Fleetwood married my grandfather Henry Hornbuckle in 1896 at Chouteau, Indian Territory. In 1906 Rebecca registered as 1/2 Blood Cherokee on the Dawes Roll.

“Lewis Ralston” and his 3rd-great-grandson Chuck Hornbuckle at the Gold Strike Park dedication June 22, 2004



In 1912 Henry and Rebecca and eight of their children left Oklahoma after she was swindled out of her land. They traveled by wagon to Montana and Idaho before finally settling in Washington in the early 1930s. Their family grew to 14 children with my father being the tenth.

When Suzanne and I first met Lois Kennedy in 2002 she shared her vision of creating a City Park where Lewis found gold. Two years later on June 22, 2004 her vision became a reality. Since we were doing GPS work on the Cherokee Trail in Wyoming with the Fletchers, Lois asked

if we would participate in dedicating “Ralston's Gold Strike Park”.

The ceremonies were well attended by state and local dignitaries. A local television personality portrayed my g-g-g-grandfather. He arrived in a covered wagon, and taking his gold pan to Ralston Creek loudly proclaimed, *“Gold! I found gold.”* I was honored to say a few words as the descendant of the man who found gold that day 152 years ago. More importantly, we gained a new friend in Lois Kennedy and continue to visit with her on our Cherokee Trail treks.

**Oregon-California Trails Association
Colorado-Cherokee Trail Chapter
www.octa-colorado.org
Camille Q. Bradford, President
11515 Quivas Way • Denver, CO 80234
303-460-0371
bradford@usa.net**