



## THE FIFTY-NINER

Quarterly newsletter of the  
Colorado-Cherokee Trail Chapter  
Oregon-California Trails Association  
March 2010

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### Upcoming Chapter Events

#### Chapter meeting

- **Date:** Saturday, May 8, 2010
- **Time:** 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
- **Location:** Loveland Museum/Gallery, 503 North Lincoln Avenue, Loveland, Colorado.
- **RSVP by May 5:** Camille Bradford, [bradford@usa.net](mailto:bradford@usa.net) or 303-460-0371.
- **Speaker:** Duane Kniebes. Presentation: *Locating Your Ancestors Underground*. The meeting will be followed by a trip to Lakeside Cemetery for a demonstration of the use of dowsing rods.
- **Cost:** OCTA members and Seniors: no charge. Non-members: \$2.00.

#### Santa Fe Trail Trek

- **Date:** June 11-13, 2010
- **Route:** Lamar, Colorado to Santa Fe, New Mexico
- **RSVP by June 4:** Berl and Pat Meyer, [kynature@bellsouth.net](mailto:kynature@bellsouth.net) or 502-608-7806.
- **See page 3 for information regarding this trek.**

### Upcoming Tour

Sponsored by the Loveland and Berthoud Historical Societies

#### Trails Across the Thompson Valleys

- **Date:** May 29, 2010
- **Time:** 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
- **Location:** Tour departs from Loveland Museum/Gallery, 503 North Lincoln Avenue, Loveland, Colorado.
- **Cost:** \$22 for members of LHS and BHS; \$27 for non-members. Non-refundable after May 15.
- **RSVP:** Sharon Danhauer, [sdanhau@yahoo.com](mailto:sdanhau@yahoo.com) or 970-290-0169.

The Loveland Historical Society and Berthoud Historical Society organized this comprehensive local history tour for OCTA's 2009 Convention. It was a popular tour and they are conducting it again this year. The tour covers the history of the earliest thoroughfares of the region, the Trappers Trail, the Cherokee Trail, and the Overland Stage Route and why modern roads closely follow routes traversed by diverse people of the past. Bring your own lunch. A full description of the tour is on our chapter website: [http://www.octa-colorado.org/thompson\\_valleys.htm](http://www.octa-colorado.org/thompson_valleys.htm).



## WELCOME TO OUR NEW CHAPTER MEMBERS:

- Lynn Beauregard – Bennett, Colorado
- Alan Bushbaum – Aurora, Colorado
- Marie Henthorn – Casper, Wyoming
- David Jessup – Loveland, Colorado
- Harry Smith – Carlsbad, California
- Arlene Wegner – Casper, Wyoming

## OCTA Recruiters!

By Duane Iles

National Vice President and Membership Chair

Greetings fellow members! As I implied in the title, you are all recruiters. Whether you speak at service clubs, go to other organizations or just have family and friends, you know someone who would be a good member of OCTA.

With the coming of spring, all chapters are planning events, speakers and tours for the rest of the year. Now is when we all get excited about the prospects of days on the trail or sharing events with our trail friends. Plan to have a diverse program so that everyone's interests are addressed.

Make this a buddy year. Whenever you have an upcoming event, dinner, meeting or speaker bring a buddy. What better favor could you do for a buddy than introduce him or her to OCTA. Be sure to publicize your events in newspapers, other club meetings, etc.

Just think, if everyone recruited one member we would be huge. Be an OCTA buddy!!!!

## National Awards Committee

Dick Nelson is the new Chair of the National Awards Committee, succeeding Roger Blair. Nominations should now be sent to Dick. The deadline is June 1.

Information regarding the various awards and the procedures for submitting nominations is contained in the *Members Area* of the national website [www.octa-trails.org/members/index.php](http://www.octa-trails.org/members/index.php). Fill-in forms can also be downloaded from this site. Please contact Dick directly for further information:

Dick Nelson  
12812 West 100<sup>th</sup> Terrace  
Lenexa, KS 66215-1704  
[kcnelson42@sbcglobal.net](mailto:kcnelson42@sbcglobal.net)  
913-888-8386

## Santa Fe Trail Trek



Chapter members Pat and Berl Meyer (left) will be the Tour Leaders for this trek from Lamar, Colorado to Santa Fe, New Mexico. Originally planned as a two-day trek, it was expanded to three days after a number of members expressed an interest in having more time to visit the various sites along the route. Highlights are noted below. The full description of the tour is on the chapter website:

[www.octa-colorado.org/calendar.htm](http://www.octa-colorado.org/calendar.htm).

- **Cost:** \$10 registration fee per car. Participants will pay their own charges for meals, lodging and admission fees at the various stops.
- **Lodging:** Choice of overnight lodging is at the discretion of each participant. Berl has reserved a block of 10 rooms at each of the three Super 8 motels indicated below, which will be held until June 4. If you wish to stay at any of these motels, please contact the motel directly and provide the credit card information to hold the reservation in your name. Further information regarding each facility is on Super 8's website: [www.super8.com](http://www.super8.com).
  - June 11: Super 8 Trinidad, 1924 Freedom Road (I-25 Exit 15), Trinidad, CO. Phone: 719-846-8280.
  - June 12: Super 8 Las Vegas, 2029 North Grand Avenue, Las Vegas, NM 87701. Phone: 505-425-5288.
  - June 13: Super 8 Santa Fe, 3358 Cerrillos Road (I-25 Exit 278), Santa Fe, NM. Phone: 505-471-8811.
- **Highlights:**
  - June 11: Meet at 9:00 a.m. at Colorado Welcome Center, 109 East Beech Street, Lamar.
    - Lamar: Madonna of the Trail Monument; Big Timbers Museum
    - Las Animas: Kit Carson Chapel; Fort Lyon
    - Boggsville Historic Site
    - La Junta: Bent's Old Fort
    - Trinidad: Baca House, Bloom Mansion and the Santa Fe Trail Museum operated by the Colorado Historical Society
    - Overnight in Trinidad
  - June 12:
    - Stop at New Mexico Welcome Center in Raton
    - Wagon Mound
    - Fort Union
    - Watrous
    - Las Vegas: Tour the historic Plaza District
    - Overnight in Las Vegas
  - June 13:
    - Pecos National Park
    - Kozlowski's Ranch
    - Pigeon's Ranch – referred to as "Glorieta Battlefield"
    - Santa Fe: Santa Fe Plaza, Palace of the Governors, La Fonda Hotel, San Miguel Mission.

## Notes from the President

By Camille Bradford

I attended OCTA's Mid-year Board Meeting in Independence, Missouri on March 5 and 6. Chapter members Marvin Burke and Pat Surrena also attended the meeting and presented reports. Marvin is OCTA's new national Treasurer and Pat is serving on the national Public Relations and Marketing Committee.

Among the highlights of the meeting was the report by Association manager, Travis Boley, upon on the success of OCTA's movie, *In Pursuit of a Dream*. The movie recently won a film competition in Oregon and is entered in a number of other film festivals around the country. We hope to schedule a showing of the movie in Colorado later in the year.

The meeting was held in the Frontier Trails Museum adjoining OCTA's national office. Board member John Mark Lambertson, the Museum's Director and Archivist, conducted a tour of the Merrill J. Mattes Research Library for those attending the meeting. Another highlight of the two days was a beautiful dinner at the Harry S. Truman Library, at which "Harry Truman" mingled with guests and addressed the group after dinner.



**Top row** - Left: Board Member Quackgrass Sally, Field Producer of *In Pursuit of a Dream*. Center: OCTA officers Bill Martin, Glenn Harrison, Marvin Burke, and Association Manager, Travis Boley. Right: Frontier Trails Museum lobby display. **Bottom row** - Left: "Harry Truman" and Marvin Burke. Center: Pat Surrena. Right: John Mark Lambertson. Photos by Camille Bradford.



Board member Pat Fletcher (left) presented a report at the meeting on the website Geocaching.com, which enables users to enter a zip code and exchange information about sites of interest in that locale. The website describes itself as “a high-tech treasure hunting game played throughout the world by adventure seekers equipped with GPS devices. The basic idea is to locate hidden containers, called geocaches, outdoors and then share your experiences online.” Board member Matthew Ivory volunteered to prepare a report on how this site might be of benefit to OCTA.



## **CHEROKEE TRAIL TRAVELER – 1853**

**By Emerson R. Shipe**



The large tombstone (left) has a dark, grayish cast from years of weathering and now is tilted slightly to the left as one stands in front of it and reads the engraved epitaph:

“Member of the Baptist Church at Union. Deacon of the church to which he belonged. Drove a team of six head of oxen in Maj. Moore’s emigrant train across the Western Plains in 1853 from Ark. to Cal. Requiring 6 mos. and 11 dys. to make the journey.”

At the top of the stone is an engraved Masonic emblem and below the following inscription: “James Walker Shipe, Feb. 26, 1830 – July 27, 1901.” The other side of the stone is engraved “Ruth C. Crippen, Wife of Jas. W. Shipe, Aug. 8, 1833 – Jan. 5, 1914.” The graves of six of their nine children and their spouses as well as numerous other descendants are also found nearby in the small, rural cemetery.

*Emerson Shipe*

The burial place of my great-grandparents is the Union Baptist Church cemetery located in northeast Knox County, Tennessee, a few miles from Knoxville. Growing up in the area, I was always intrigued by the engraved reference to the “California trip.” Stories told by my father about his grandfather James also stimulated my interest. I have attempted to learn more about the trip and his time in California over the past few years.



James left an 1855 pocket diary which contains sketchy information about food costs (he called it grub), hours worked “hunting cattle”, and teamster jobs while in California but there is no mention of the journey. We also have other of his personal items from the trip including a small travel trunk and his money vest (left). Most of my information about the trip comes from the research of Jack and Patricia Fletcher<sup>1</sup> and David Johnson.<sup>2</sup>

Apparently James left his home near Knoxville, Tennessee sometime in the early 1850s and traveled first to Batesville, Arkansas where he worked in the leather tannery of Henry Neill. An entry in the Neil Dickinson Tannery Business Ledger 1837-1856, now archived at the Old Independence Regional Museum in Batesville, indicates he was paid \$96.83 in wages on December 23, 1852. I speculate he traveled to California with at least one cousin, Joseph W. Major, and there may have been other cousins or friends. James’ and Joseph’s mothers were sisters, Deborah Skaggs Shipe and Susannah Skaggs Major, respectively. An 1857 letter to James Shipe from one of Henry Neill’s sons, Robert, mentions Joseph Major as well as Bill Taylor who may also have made the 1853 journey from Batesville to California. James, Joseph, and possibly other cousins or friends may have traveled to Batesville by steamboat leaving from Knoxville and traveling via the Tennessee, Ohio, Mississippi, and White Rivers but that is not documented.

James was a teamster and drove one of the wagons in the Moore-Williams emigrant train from Batesville, Arkansas to Sonora, California probably earning his way to “the land of gold.” Major William Moore was in charge of the train or at least the section with which James traveled. The train was composed primarily of members of the Moore family and the Williams family of Batesville. From one reference in *The Independence County Chronicle* we find, “There were 12 large prairie schooners and a goodly number of freight wagons, and they took along quite a number of sheep and cattle. There were about 75 adults in the train, about 35 of whom were women, and a number of children.” There were also “a number of single men” [from the Batesville area] in the train.<sup>3</sup> A large number of sheep and other livestock were being driven to California along with the wagons. One account indicates the train departed April 7, 1853 and arrived in Stockton, California on October 26, 1853. James stayed in the Sonora area upon arrival in California so the time of 6 months and 11 days engraved on the tombstone is quite close to the 6 months and 19 days indicated by this reference. Another account gives the arrival date in Stockton as October 23, 1853.

An abbreviated description of the journey is contained in the article entitled “On to California” found in two different publications and most recently published in the *Independence County Chronicle*. Specific events mentioned include a buffalo stampede, encounters with Indians, one of the children burned when she stood too close to a campfire, and the arduous trek over the Sierra Nevada mountains.

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<sup>1</sup> Jack E. Fletcher and Patricia K.A. Fletcher, *Cherokee Trail Diaries, Volume III, 1851-1900* (Sequim, Washington 2001).

<sup>2</sup> David H. Johnson, *Sonora Pass Pioneers*, (Tuolumne County Historical Society, Sonora, California, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> Nancy Britton, “Not for Gold Alone: The Moore-Williams Wagon Train of 1853,” *Independence County Chronicle* (Independence County Historical Society, Batesville, Arkansas 2006).

“The trail to California was strewn with abandoned furniture, broken down wagons, skeletons of oxen, and occasionally a lonely grave. ... When they reached the Sierra Nevada mountains, they had to fell trees in places to widen the narrow paths so that the wagons could proceed; sometimes the wagons were lowered with ropes and they were compelled to abandon some of them. Their provisions ran low so the food was divided and all were put on ration; a few of the able-bodied men crossed the mountains into California on horseback to procure food.”



*James W. Shipe (second from left in front row) with his wife, Ruth, and eight children in a photo believed by the author to have been taken about 1890.*

A more detailed account of the journey especially related to moving the sheep west is found in the diary of Joseph Williams, excerpts of which are provided in *Cherokee Trail Diaries* and *Sonora Pass Pioneers*.

Information from a biography of James Walker Shipe in Goodspeed Publishing Company's *History of Tennessee* does not mention the journey but briefly describes his time in California as follows: “[H]e remained there [in California] for three years and six months spending his time in mining for gold and lumbering. He returned to his home in Knox County January 30, 1857...”

From the disconnected notes in his 1855 pocket diary it can be deduced that he worked in the Sonora area while in California. From the diary and other documents, it appears that he labored not only in mining but also as a teamster working for a man named Farnsworth at one time. The “lumbering activity” and a note in his diary indicate he drove a team of oxen, or perhaps mules, in moving logs to a saw mill. Again from the diary, he listed some of the materials he hauled to include food items (butter, sugar, potatoes, fruit, and syrup) and feed for livestock, specifically hay and barley. One entry from 1856 indicates his wages as a teamster at \$75 per month.

I have no information, either oral or written, to indicate how successful he was at mining for gold. For some reason, unknown to me, he returned to his home in East Tennessee in 1857. My father told me that he came back by the ocean route. Again, I have been unable to find any written references about his return, but I speculate that he took a steamboat from San Francisco to Panama or Nicaragua, crossed the isthmus, and then caught another steamboat to New Orleans or an east coast city.

He married Ruth Caroline Crippen soon after returning to Knox County on July 1, 1857. After his return from California, he worked at farming and as a leather tanner. We have tax records indicating he owned over 300 acres of land in Knox County and his tannery business ledger from the 1870s details his purchase of hides, tanbark, and the sale or barter of harness and shoe leather. He also made and sold shoes and boots.

My father told me that his grandfather bought and traded mules and would drive them from East Tennessee to South Carolina and sell them to farmers there. The route to South Carolina followed the French Broad River gorge through the mountains of Tennessee and North Carolina, passing through Asheville, North Carolina, and ending somewhere around Spartanburg, South Carolina.

For me there are still many unanswered questions about my great-grandfather's journey "across the Western Plains," his sojourn in California, and his 1857 return trip to Tennessee. I truly appreciate the research work of Jack and Patricia Fletcher, David Johnson, and others who have provided a view of what it was like to travel the Cherokee Trail in 1853.

*> Emerson Shipe, a member of OCTA and the Colorado-Cherokee Trail Chapter, is a native of Knox County, Tennessee, where he grew up on farm land originally owned by his great-grandfather. He is a Professor of Crop Science at Clemson University and lives in Seneca, South Carolina with his wife, Pamela.*

## **Upcoming newsletters**

**By Camille Bradford**

The next issue of the newsletter will be published in June. As always, I welcome all your suggestions for newsletter articles, photographs and other items of interest to chapter members. Book reviews and letters to the editor are also welcome! Please contact me regarding any material you might want to submit.

## **Plan now to attend OCTA's 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention**

**August 10-14, 2010**

**Elko, Nevada**



### ***Emigrants, Elko and THE Elephant***

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**OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION**

**Colorado-Cherokee Trail Chapter**

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