



THE FIFTY-NINER

Quarterly newsletter of the
Colorado-Cherokee Trail Chapter
Oregon-California Trails Association
www.octa-colorado.org
Year-end 2016



WELCOME TO OUR NEW CHAPTER MEMBERS:

- Terry Bennett – Layton, Utah
- Linda Graybeal – Westminster, Colorado
- Theodore Heil – Omaha, Nebraska
- Marlene Smith-Baranzini and Gary Baranzini – Stockton, California

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

By Mark Voth



Our chapter had a wonderful presentation and trail tour on November 12 on the Cherokee-Overland Trail route in Westminster, Colorado, conducted by Linda Graybeal. Linda, a member of our chapter, is President of the Westminster Historical Society, a teacher of 38 years, and has spent many years working on this project. We began the event at the Westminster Historical Society, with a presentation and slide show tracing the historic route through Westminster, including maps and photos. Linda had many “then and now” photos of historic sites with narratives on each.

Our trail tour began at the Westminster Castle, an historic landmark listed on the National Register of Historic Places as Westminster University, located on a predominant hill that gave our group perspective of where the route traveled. We then visited many intersections and historic locations. Many thanks to Linda for the effort she put into this event. Photos of the tour are on page 3.

We have scheduled our annual chapter board meeting on January 7 to plan our 2017 events. Our mapping team, including John Murphy, Ken Van Wyk, and Rich Deisch has completed 15 townships in Pueblo County and has sent the maps and data to the National Park Service and to Dave Welch of OCTA.

In association with Linda Anderson of the Kansas Friends of the Cherokee Trail, a virtual map designed by Berl Meyer and Rich Deisch is on the web site www.cherokeetrail.org. The map and photos depict our chapter trip to Kansas in April 2016.

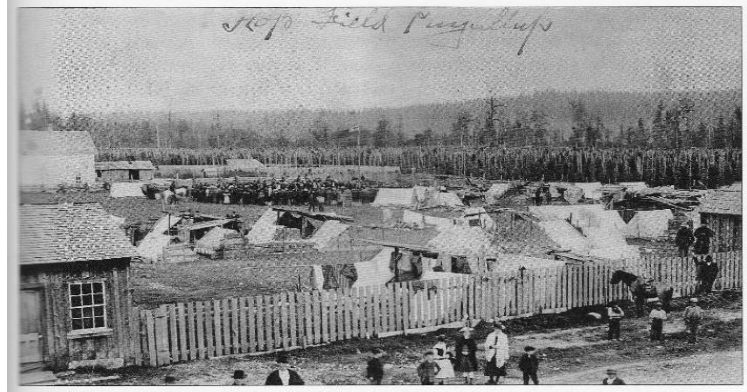


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BOOK REVIEW:

HOP KING: EZRA MEEKER'S BOOM YEARS BY DENNIS M. LARSEN

Reviewed by Pat Meyer



This photograph first appeared in William Bonney's *History of Pierce County*. Bonney labeled it, "Old Ezra Meeker Hop Yard, Puyallup, 1883, Indian camp in foreground." *Washington State Historical Society 2010.0.289*

During Mr. Larsen's road trip to the Blue Mountains of Oregon, he came across a kiosk at Emigrant Springs State Park about Ezra's trek to the West by oxen and covered wagon, becoming obsessed by his story.

Mr. Larsen focuses his writing about the life of Ezra Meeker in this book about the years "1860 to 1896, the rise and fall of his hop empire and his role in the growth of Washington Territory."

Deciding to write a biography about his story, the book becomes a story of the early development of the Northwest Territory and Ezra Meeker's part in it. I feel that the author is at times trying to right some wrongs portrayed about Ezra that have been previously written into his history.

This is a book you would want to read about someone who was a man of his times and epitomizes Manifest Destiny for the Washington Territory. Arriving via wagon along the Oregon Trail with his family, and

Continued on page 4

PHOTOS OF NOVEMBER 12 OVERLAND-CHEROKEE TRAIL PRESENTATION AND TOUR



Mark Voth and Linda Graybeal



Westminster Castle



After our long hike to the top of Westminster Castle, Linda pointed out the trail route from the observatory.



A stop at Hidden Lake on the trail. Members of the Loveland and Westminster historical societies joined us on the tour.

Links for further historical information:

[Cherokee Trail in Westminster](#)

[Church's Stage Stop Well](#)

[Charles and Julia Semper Farm](#)

Continued from page 2

suffering personal losses along the way, he wastes no time in establishing himself and rises to a leader for our country as well as for the Washington Territory. This book is not just about the hop industry because Ezra Meeker was not a one-dimensional man, although it plays an important part of establishing his wealth.

Ezra Meeker, to most of us, is remembered for his 25-year battle to save the Oregon Trail. He was a dreamer and a schemer who lived to the age of 98 years when longevity was not a given. He was more than a historian, but was quite an entrepreneur in forming various businesses - agriculture, and especially hops.

But that is only part of what he was as the author describes very well in his biography. At age 70 he led a valiant effort to save the Oregon Trail and save its story for future generations.

He overcame personal tragedies from the death of his mother from cholera and his younger brother drowning at Sweetwater River near Devil's Gate during the overland trek to Oregon to another brother's drowning while bringing supplies for the store he and his father had started. He had been supplying beef and other supplies to Fort Steilacoom but decided to diversify by selling apples. Then he became selling soap and candles. Ezra Meeker was a man driven by ambition.

Ezra was also a political man, first in 1860 when he attended the Republican convention in Olympia, giving the nominating speech for William Henson Wallace for territorial delegate to Congress. In 1867 he was appointed the Washington Territorial Deputy Surveyor. During one of his surveys near the Muckleshoot Indian Reservation there was a conflict with them and he was forced to use his diplomatic skills to resolve the disagreement. The Indians then actually helped with the survey.

Several chapters deal with the growth of the hops industry that he began in the early years, developing it into an agriculture involving many of the farmers in the area. He took the industry from a regional crop to one that encompassed international countries.

Needing many more workers than the area provided he reached out to Native Americans as well as Chinese to work in his fields. Agents were sent out to recruit employees from as far as British Columbia and even to Alaska. It seems almost unimaginable that he was employing Native Americans to work when the US and western tribes were still engaging in battles. Some Indians ended up making up to \$4000, so the money spent by them enriched not only the workers but the entire area.

Disputes erupted as culture and language created misunderstandings causing work stoppages. The Chinese didn't leave the area as the Indians had creating anti-Chinese sentiment. Never one to stand still Ezra later got into oil and natural gas, incorporating The New Standard Oil Company, and growing sugar beets.

Continued on page 5

Continued from page 4

In 1885 he was appointed by the government of the Washington Territory to serve as Commissioner representing the territory at the American Exposition in New Orleans. He solicited his fellow citizens to “donate or loan articles useful for illustrating resources, scenery, art and manufacturing.” Citizens responded by sending 30 varieties of potatoes, a section of fir tree 39 feet in circumference, a 40-pound cabbage, a halibut weighing 207 pounds, hundreds of varieties of fruit and berries. A speech was given to the crowd about his 1852 journey across the Rockies as well as his early experiences in Puget Sound.

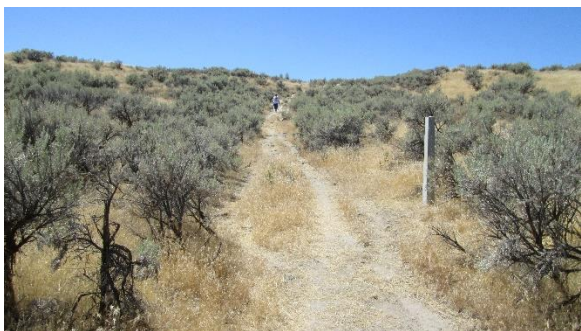
In February 1887, he formed the Northwestern Fire Insurance of Puyallup. He filed articles of incorporation for the Puyallup Water & Light Company, raising money, and becoming a trustee. He also made sure that the Northern Pacific Railroad’s direct line from the East Coast came through Puyallup.

Ezra was a very forward thinking man of the times. During the winter of 1886 while he and his wife, Eliza Jane were in Washington, DC, they both attended the National Women’s Suffrage Convention. Susan B. Anthony was one of the speakers and they met with her. Ms. Anthony asked for donations. Sixteen delegates offered donations with Ezra’s name being the fourth on the list.

Eliza Jane eventually became an officer in the local branch for the National Women’s Suffrage Association. By 1906 Eliza Jane had dementia, dying in 1909, one year before women of Washington won the right to vote. Needless to say, honoring Ezra Meeker as one of our first members of the Emigrant Trails Hall of Fame is well-deserved recognition.

CONVENTION HIGHLIGHTS

By Bruce Watson



The 2016 OCTA Convention was held in the Shoshone-Bannock Hotel at Fort Hall, Idaho. As usual, the slate of speakers was comprehensive and very interesting.

We took two tours, the first was titled Oregon Trail to the west. The first stop on this tour was at the original site of the historic Ft. Hall, accessible only with a native guide. Nothing of the original fort remains, only a monument.

From there, our bus headed westward, where we visited such historic sites as Massacre Rocks, Register Rock, Coldwater Hill, and Parting of the Ways, the junction of the California and Oregon trails.

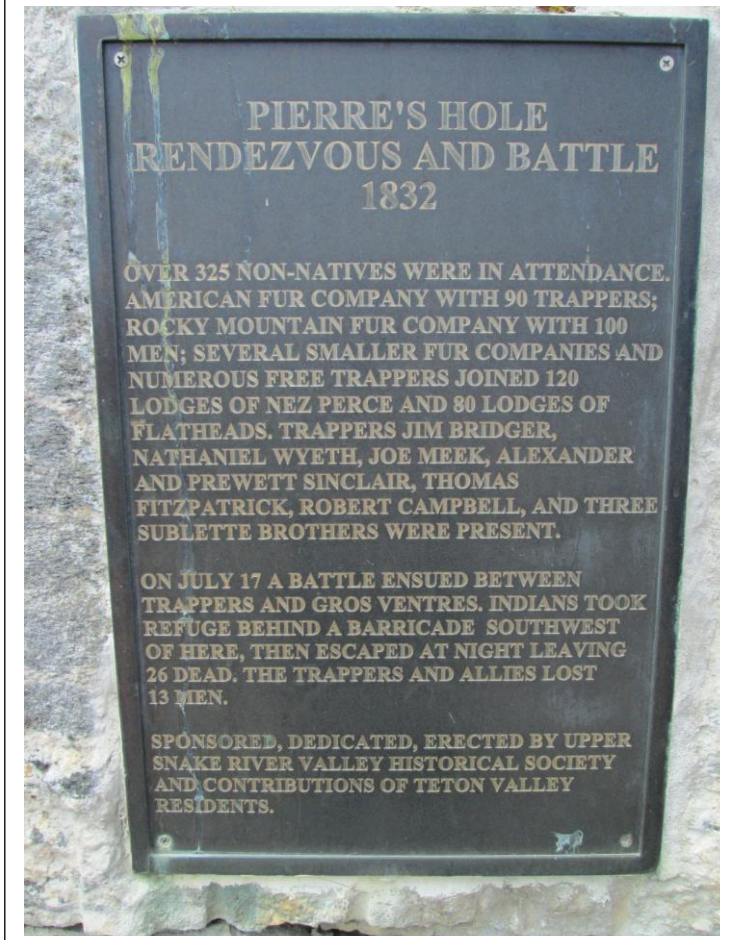
The second tour was the Idaho fur trappers tour, which went east. On this tour, we visited the site of the 1810 Fort Henry, which was only a temporary wintering location for a group of fur trappers. Then it was on to Pierre's Hole, a beautiful valley west of the ever-visible Grand Teton Mountains.

Continued from page 5



We stopped at the site of the 1832 fur trappers' rendezvous, and then proceeded to the approximate location of the battle with the Gros Ventres, which occurred at the end of the 1832 rendezvous. Our tour guide was Jim Hardee, the director of the Fur Trade Research Center, and was wonderfully knowledgeable about all things associated with the fur trade.

Upon completion of the convention, Peggy and I first headed west again, to visit historic sites not yet visited by us. The first day, we drove to City of Rocks, a marvelous area in which the California Trail passed through, much to the delight of the emigrants (and us!). The second day we took Highway 30 westward, which closely parallels both the Snake River and the Oregon Trail. We visited trail ruts in the Milner Historical Recreation Park, passed through the 1000 Springs scenic area, and most impressively, went to an overlook of the Three Island Crossing of the Snake River, adjacent to Glenn's Ferry, Idaho.



The next day we drove to Idaho Falls and visited their downtown falls. Then it was on to the scenic Mesa Falls (upper and lower), once again through Pierre's Hole, and spent the night in Alpine, Wyoming. The next day we drove to Riverton, Wyoming, passing through Jackson (a congested madhouse), along the east side of the Grand Tetons, and then following the Wind River to Lander, where we visited the Sinks Canyon State Park.

There the Popo-Agie River actually sinks into a rock cavern, not to reappear for some distance down canyon. Thanks to Gary and Ginny Dissette for recommending this! After spending the night in Riverton, we headed home, passing by Oregon Trail routes along the Sweetwater River, pretty country indeed.

OREGON TRAIL MARKER RESTORATION



Chuck Hornbuckle speaking at ceremony in Toledo, Washington. Seated, L-R: Shirley Stirling, DAR chapter Regent; Toledo Mayor Steve Dobosh; OCTA Northwest Chapter members Dennis Larsen and Rich Herman.

Our chapter Life Member Chuck Hornbuckle, who lives in Washington, writes that he has been working with the Olympia Sacajawea Chapter of Daughters of the American Revolution on a project for restoration of 100-year old markers the chapter had placed on that branch of the Oregon Trail. The process takes about two hours to restore each of the eleven markers between the Columbia River and Puget Sound.

A dedication ceremony took place at the marker in Toledo, Washington on September 27. In his remarks at the ceremony Chuck shared information about this part of the Oregon Trail, referred to locally as the Cowlitz Trail after the Native Americans who lived there, and after the river of that name where the emigrants left their

canoes and began the final overland trek to Puget Sound.

Chuck's late wife, Suzanne, had been a life member of DAR as well as our chapter, prior to her death last year. Sixteen of her ancestors came West between 1846 and 1860.



Left: Markers before and after their restoration.
Above right: 1916 dedication ceremony

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THE FIRST RENDEZVOUS IN 1825

By Lee Underbrink

If you are exploring Wyoming places, let me suggest you go where very few go these days. That spot is the little valley along Henry's Fork, near the present Burnt Fork and McKinnon, population 60, in Sweetwater County. This is the valley of Elinore Pruitt Stewart, who wrote the excellent book "*Letters of a Woman Homesteader*" in 1913. It is also the location of the first rendezvous of the mountain men who set up their place to buy and sell beaver pelts and supplies.

This was the age of fine beaver hats, which was the driving force for mountain men of the time. Our area was rich with beaver, and the mountain men turned to beaver trapping for a living. The problem was how to get supplies from the east, and how to get the beaver pelts to the purchaser, also in the east. The beaver were plentiful along the small streams away from the navigable rivers, so the rendezvous idea began. Food and supplies could be hauled by wagon from the east to the designated spot where trappers could bring their beaver pelts for trade.

The first rendezvous was organized by William H. Ashley, who operated the first supply train to Henry's Fork on the Green River to supply the trappers so they could remain in the mountains. The location here at Burnt Fork was well advertised from mouth to mouth between the trappers of the area. Ashley states that 120 mountain men and Indians were at the rendezvous, with famous names such as Etienne Provost, Jedediah Smith, John Weber, William Sublette, Thomas Fitzpatrick, James Beckworth, David Jackson and a young Jim Bridger. For months or more, most of the trappers had not seen groceries such as sugar, coffee, tobacco or salt, not to mention gun powder or fish hooks.

Many of the participants arrived at the rendezvous before Ashley, and it turned into a celebration of games and lies. It bloomed into a great social event. At later rendezvous, whisky was introduced in bulk, and the event really got invigorated.

Ashley usually paid \$3.00 per pelt and sold tobacco for \$3.00 per pound. Other goods that he brought were priced accordingly because it was a trade, not cash, transaction.

When the spring was over, Thomas Fitzpatrick and James Clyman took some of the furs back to St. Louis and spread the word that the beaver were abundant around the Green River. Ashley sent most of the furs up to the Big Horn River, with 80 to 100 packs of beaver pelts arriving in St. Louis valued at \$40,000 to \$50,000. The average number of pelts in a pack was 32, so a lot of beaver started their way to someone's hat that year.

The streams froze in the winter and made trapping difficult, so many of the mountain men wintered in warmer areas such as the Cache Valley of Utah. Jim Beckworth estimated that 600-700 men, including Indians, were at these winter quarters. When spring began, it was back to the trapping and the next rendezvous, which were carried on at various locations until the last one in 1840.