



Trail Talk

The Newsletter of the California Nevada Chapter
Number 60 July 2003

OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION

KANSAS CONVENTION

By Patricia Loomis

The California /Nevada chapter is expected to be well represented at OCTA's 21st annual; convention next month in Manhattan, Kansas

The planners have filled the 5-day convention with historic tours, interesting speakers, hikes, and the old standbys – auction, raffle, bookroom, and workshops.

The keynote speaker will be Don Coldsmith, author of 40 books and finalist six times for the Western Writers of America Golden Spur award.

Coldsmith's subject will be the use of the trails by Native Americans, pioneers, and present-day users.

There will be a pancake breakfast August 13, author's night is set for August 14, and a barbecue will close the annual get-together August 16.



Trail Talk Changes
See page 4.

TRAIL TALK CHANGES

Following are the new dates for submitting articles for the newsletter, and the new mailing date for each issue.

<i>Oct. 1</i>	<i>Nov. 1</i>
<i>Jan. 1</i>	<i>Feb. 15</i>
<i>Apr. 1</i>	<i>May 15</i>
<i>July 1</i>	<i>Aug. 15</i>

Articles received after the deadline will be held for the next issue.

"Trail Talk" reflects the interests and concerns of the membership, so it is up to YOU – committee chairmen, outing leaders, and general membership – to contribute and to make the deadlines.

It is NOT up to the newsletter staff to chase down articles. It doesn't matter if you only have a paragraph or two to submit, we're not looking for novels.

*Thank you.
Trail Talk Staff*



GUIDELINES FOR SUBMITTING ARTICLES & LETTERS

All articles and letters should be mailed to: Editor, Virginia Hammerness
1765 Hicks Ave., San Jose, CA 95125
(408) 269-6068

In addition, to facilitate transfer of data to Trail Talk format, you may send email, disk, or hard copy to:
Desktop Publisher, Norine Kimmy
<nkimmy@batnet.com>



1. Email, with or without an attachment, is the quickest and requires the least modification to transfer the information to the *Trail Talk* format. Sending email with an attachment retains the formatting. (i.e. a document that has been formatted in MSWord can be opened and retains the formatting).
2. Zip or floppy discs are acceptable, but require use of the US mail service.
3. Hard copies require scanning and proofing (from an original) before being transferred to *Trail Talk* format; both the Editor, Virginia, and Desktop Publisher, Norine, use hard copies in their work.

NEW COED ASSOCIATE

By Shann Rupp

In keeping with the well-advised recommendation that all committee chairs and persons in key positions have a trained back-up person, Shann Rupp asked Kathy Buob to be her back-up and assistant in the performance of the COED Documents Assignment Coordinator.

Kathy willingly accepted the job at a very crucial time, and plans were made for her to spend a weekend with the Rupps in Jamestown. Dave Welch sent Kathy the new COED program which uses *Access*. Shann had lost her *Access* to a virus almost three years ago, as well as all ability to make changes and additions to the Assign List. What good news to hear that Kathy could purchase *Access* for COED at a discounted rate!

Two days before Mother's Day, Kathy arrived at the Rupps with her very complete "mobile office," a large binder containing printouts from the new COED program, and of course, the vital CD's.

Kathy has many talents and brings to this job her many computer and organizational skills, as well as her natural instincts regarding what to tackle first and how to go forward.

With the installation of *Access* and the new COED program, Kathy showed Shann how to move around in the Assign program. It's totally different from what Shann was used to. While Shann explored, Kathy began industriously writing a manual or guidebook for operating the program. Between the two of them, questions, suggestions, and requests were listed, and at the appointed time a three-way conversa-



Kathleen Buob
New COED Associate

tion with Dave Welch took place. This proved to be very beneficial. The result was that Dave needed to create an adjusted version CD, and Kathy would need another visit to Jamestown.

Work went on during the daytime and evening hours, but mealtimes were for getting acquainted and for story telling. It's probably just as well that Kathy didn't complete the instruction manual on the first visit, as some things needed to be altered according to changes Dave made in the second version of the program.

After Dave made the necessary changes, he notified Shann that he had e-mailed the updated version to Kathy. How was Shann to get something on her computer that was e-mailed to Kathy? It should not come as any surprise that Kathy, very much keeping up with the 21st Century, burned a CD for installation on Shann's computer.

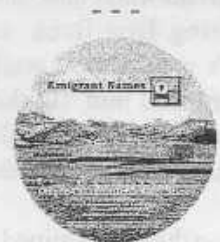
On Kathy's second visit to Jamestown, she completed the In-

struction Manual for the Assign Program. It is beautiful! As it turned out, there will need to be a version three of the Assign Program to correct a few more glitches. As the month of June ends, the new program should be functional, thanks to Kathy and Dave.

Meanwhile, very dedicated people on the COED committee (see Spring Issue of *Trail Talk*) are making wonderful things happen, such as a new streamlined COED Manual, with crisp, clear maps - thanks to Rose Ann Tompkins.

You're not on the committee, but would like to help in this part of preservation? Here's a suggestion. You can donate an Emigrant Names CD to your local library or Historical Society. (Several people can go in together on the purchase, if desired.) This was done for the Tuolumne County Library.

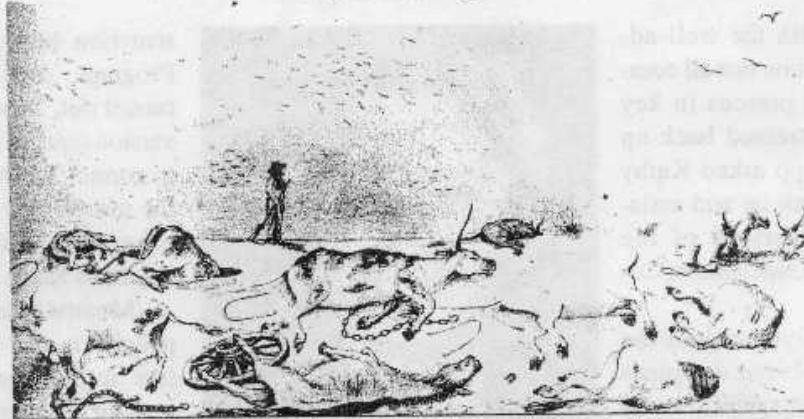
Then Bill Rupp did his part by telling about it to his barber and the room full of men waiting for haircuts. The genealogists in the room became very excited to learn about the CD. Barber shops are wonderful places to get the word spread!



To order the compact disc contact OCTA headquarters at (816) 252-2276 or (888) 811-6282. Or write OCTA at P.O. Box 1019, Independence, MO 64051. The price is \$29.95 plus \$3.85 for priority mail postage and handling.

TRIP TO RABBITHOLE SPRINGS

By Steve Knight



Rabbithole Springs – J. G. Bruff

The Black Rock Desert is my favorite place and I was eager to explore the area again. Chuck Dodd and the BLM archeologists arranged with volunteers to do a survey of the Rabbithole Springs site.

This event attracted 15-20 OCTA and Trails West desert rats to participate in the weekend.

Chuck Dodd's email note said he was leaving from Bruno's in Gerlach at 5:30 pm Friday. So Patty and I hurried on our way from Las Vegas as soon as school ended for the year, and arrived in Gerlach several hours early. We parked across from Bruno's under the shade of the old railroad water tank and waited.

Seeing Don Buck walk into Bruno's restaurant, I walked over and surprised him. He thought we were just driving through and had seen him. What a coincidence!

Soon the others joined us as Jim Allison, Joyce Everett, Tom Fee, Dave Hollecker, and others had been out in the desert for a week already doing research on the Nobles and Applegate Trails. They said they had gone through High Rock Canyon, Stephens Camp and

over Fandango Pass to Goose Lake earlier. The last time I was in Stephens Camp several years ago, the wagon train reenactment had just passed through and signed the guest register. What a great place to visit.

We decided to head out early and allow Chuck to catch up with us later. With Don in the lead and Jim and Joyce as "tail-end-Charlie" we headed to the springs. I immediately felt pity as soon as we hit the dirt as my one ton Ford kicks up a lot of dust and Jim soon disappeared from view. Jim has done this before and hung way back to avoid the blinding dust and we soon were strung out with several miles between us. Don said on the CB that he was going to hold 55 MPH to stay above the washboard surface but soon had to slow down as the road twisted, turned and dipped.

It is about 30 miles from Gerlach to Rabbithole Springs along Old Highway 48. At least my GPS plotter said it was Old Highway 48, I know of no new highway in the vicinity? Only Nevada labels a graded gravel and mud road a highway.

I half expected to see a slow to 25 sign at side road "exits". The highway generally follows the railroad tracks on the south edge of the Black Rock Dessert heading east. About 20 miles out we took a "Y" to the right at a Trails West marker indicating that this is the Applegate Trail to Rabbithole Springs.

This portion of the trail was not as well graded as the "highway" and had numerous deep dips which threw stuff around in our camper.

Arriving at the springs about 6 pm we all selected camping spots with some privacy. Some elected to go on to Barrel Springs to camp as there was a tree there. I admire those that don't feel they need to have a house on the back of their truck to go "camping".

We were met at camp by Dave and Joey, the BLM archeologists. After putting up a 30x30 shade tent and setting out chairs we all retired to our camp sites. We all agreed to assemble at 7 am the next morning to begin the survey.

After a quiet night except for the croaking of the huge bullfrogs in the springs, we assembled Saturday morning at camp center under the

tent to learn how and what we would be doing. Dave described the spear and arrow points, scrapers, flakes and other tools we might find as well as chips from obsidian and chert left over from making those tools.

Rabbit-hole Springs has had human occupation and use for thousands of years in addition to the heavy traffic seen during wagon migration of the 1840s-50s. During the depression, the local county paid for gold prospecting and numerous miners and their families lived at the springs and did what I call dry washing for placer gold. Several tailing piles are left indicating where they had worked near the springs. The springs are located on a bench which is the remnant of an ancient beach before Lake Lahontan receded 12,000 years ago after the last ice age.

Dave had us assemble in a line while he and Joey anchored each end and we proceeded to walk to the east shoulder to shoulder, pinning (marking) with small flags on a wire anything of interest which included glass fragments, rusty tin cans, bullet casings and rock fragments and flakes. After everything was marked, groups went back and documented each object along with a description and location using their GPS units.

I learned that their GPS plotting uses Continental United States NAD27 which is the 1927 survey, and also uses the UTM format instead of the familiar Lat/Long. Evidently quad sheets are based on these early surveys. This allows Dave to take the information back to his office and plot everything and hopefully make sense of what we found. I am used to using the Lat./Long. coordinates for surveying and

flying so this was a real learning experience.

We marked lots of obsidian flakes identified as possibly human made and used along with lots of early 1870-1914 hole-in-the-top cans, identified with their soldered seams and sealed hole in the top.

Food was boiled in the cans and the hole sealed with lead before cooling, making a vacuum seal. Later manufactured sanitary cans have rolled seams and no hole in the lid. We found many examples of both types of cans indicating human habitation over the last 130+ years.

Except for time off for lunch in 94° weather, the survey continued through Saturday afternoon. I think we completed 5 survey scans including locating, note taking and picking back up the pins covering over 1000+ feet in detail around the springs site.

Jim and Joyce had a steak feed at their camp while Patty had prepared a bean and salad feed at the tent. Several eaters sneaked between the two feeds. Chuck promised (threatened) to do a history lesson Saturday evening after dinner.

Assembling the scattered campers, Chuck read from a paper he had prepared several years ago, which included many diary excerpts. It is amazing to hear of hundreds of wagons, a thousand head of stock all trying to water using a tin cup at the undeveloped springs. Many of the stories chronicle wagon parties continuing on to the next spring at Black Rock as it was too crowded and lacked enough water and grass to stop.

Hastings and others developed the springs in the 1850s which included building an 80,000 gallon tank using "hydraulic cement".

They reported returning to the springs three weeks later to find it full of water. This was recorded in a Report to Congress in 1861.

Either owing to the passing years or subsequent development of the springs, no evidence of the earlier development could be found.

Descriptions of the granite boulders didn't quite fit the area, nor did the now existing two big ponds with dirt dams impounding the water. No reference is made in diaries to the large spring 200 yards to the east which flows across the trail out into the wash.

As a mining geologist and archeologist I was surprised and somewhat disappointed at what I thought was a lack of wagon train era artifacts. The soil is very alkaline and reduces anything iron to dust quickly. I only saw a few objects that might date to that time, however, this area has been picked over for more than a century.

Of much interest, though, was the discovery and recording of 13+ potential grave sites. The alignment and orientation of rocks, as well as the sunken centers, is very unique and together indicate what may be graves. I am told that these sites will be included in a guide that is being prepared about the trail.

We all departed Sunday morning after two more surveys. Thank you Chuck Dodd for organizing the event. Thank you Dave and Joey for your archaeological expertise. Thank you OCTA, Trails West, BLM and Friends of the Trail.

I didn't anticipate that I would be asked to write about our adventures, so my apologies if your name is not mentioned in this short article. I will take notes next time. We all enjoyed the camping, friendship and history.

LUTHER PASS OUTING

June 6, 2003

By Carol March



In view of the snowrapped peaks of the Sierra, Luther Pass participants, Leslie Fryman, Mike Scuffo, Karen and Carol March, follow evidence of rust marked rocks across Hope Valley. Photo by Norine Kinney

On a perfectly beautiful Sierra morning, ten California-Nevada Chapter members met at the Forest Service kiosk in Hope Valley at 9 am. We were there to explore and examine the network of trails over Luther Pass, to substantiate already identified trail segments and to discover further evidence of emigrant travel over that route. Besides the original trails, the whole area is crisscrossed by later roads. One of our group described our task as, "Doing a crossword puzzle in the woods without a picture to peak at!"

Soon after the discovery of gold in California, the Carson Pass opened and by 1850 it was the most used route to the gold fields. However, looking for shorter, easier and more direct routes, various cutoffs and branches of the Carson route were developed in the next few years. Two individuals important to our interests this June day were John Calhoun Johnson and Ira M. Luther.

In 1851 or 52 Johnson laid out an alternate route from Carson Valley to Placerville (Johnson's Cutoff), including a pass from Lake Valley to the top of Echo Summit (Johnson's Pass). About the same time, Luther negotiated a pass between Hope Valley and Lake Valley (Luther's Pass). Using these two passes, emigrants could take "a cutoff to a cutoff," following the Carson

route to Hope Valley, taking Luther Pass to Johnson's Cutoff where they could climb to the summit and continue into Central California.

Using Luther Pass, emigrants avoided longer, much higher routes with steeper climbs. By 1855 it was a well established road and the preferred way to get to the Placerville area. It was included in a survey for a state sponsored wagon road which resulted in improvements to parts of Johnson's Cutoff and along the West Fork of the Carson River. Further improvements, including the construction of Hawley's Grade, eventually saw the route evolve into the Placerville-Carson Valley Wagon Road. And with the discovery of the Comstock Lode near Virginia City, it became an important west to east route from Placerville to the silver mines.

To have a close-up understanding of Luther Pass, we car pooled to the top of the pass, where Frank Tortorich led us in a hike down to Hope Valley, following the Luther Pass trail. Designated as a Class I trail, it provided lots of evidence of rust and polish on rocks, rocks moved aside to make the route passable for wagons and some wonderful swales on the forest floor. Giving us a taste of what the trail was like for emigrants who traveled this route in the early 1850s,

