

THE MARKER

A PUBLICATION OF *TRAILS WEST, INC.*
P.O. BOX 12045
RENO, NV 89510

Since 1970

A Working Organization Dedicated to Marking the California Trail FALL 2011

The Story of Susan's Bluff and Susan

Story by Denise Moorman
Photos by Jim Moorman and Larry Schmidt

It's 1849 on the Carson Trail. Emigrant wagon trains and 49ers are winding their way through the newly acquired Upper California territory (western Nevada) on their way to the goldfields, settlements and cities of California. One of the many routes through running through this area follows along the Carson River between the modern Fort Churchill Historic Site and the town of Dayton.

Although not as popular as the faster Twenty-Six Mile Desert cutoff, which ran roughly where U.S. Highway 50 goes today, the Carson River route provided valuable feed and water for the stock pioneers still had. Along this route the wagon trains hugged the left bank of the Carson until they reached a steep bluff jutting out almost to the river. Although foot traffic could make it around the point of the bluff, wagons had to ford the river before they reached it. Trails West recently installed the last Carson Route marker, Marker CR-20, near this ford at the base of the cliff known as Susan's Bluff.



New Trails West Marker, CR-20 at Susan's Bluff.

Viewed from the direction the emigrants were approaching, the bluff hides behind other ridges until you are past it. However, looking back, it looms powerfully against the sky. This makes one wonder how something so imposing came to be known as "Susan's Bluff?" *continued on page 4*



Near the Carson River ford.



Looking back at Susan's bluff.

TRAILS WEST DIRECTORY

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Bill Bishell
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Hospitality – Dolores Nelson
Marker Maintenance – Dick Halford
Marker Preparation – Don Enneking
MARKER Publication – Dave Hollecker
Membership – Sandy Theiss
Photography – Alison Portello
Trails West Bylaws – Rod Latimer
Webs Site Manager – Bill Bishell

TRAILS WEST CONTACTS

Trails West, Inc.
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Reno, NV 89510

www.EMIGRANTTRAILSWEST.org or TRAILS-WEST.org or TRAILSWESTINC.org

TRAIL ACTIVITIES DURING 2011

(status since the last TW Board Meeting)

FUN TRIP

LASSEN TRAIL—Completed October 15 -16 —
Alison Portello, Trip Leader.

SCHEDULED FIELD TRIP

JOHNSON CUTOFF— Installed 14 new markers.
Markers JC-12 thru JC-25 — John Winner, Trip Leader.
Completed September 20-21.

UNSCHEDULED FIELD TRIPS

JOHNSON CUTOFF-- Installed 2 new markers.
Markers JC-5 & JC-7— Larry Schmidt, Trip Leader.
Completed August 24, 2011

CALIFORNIA TRAIL— Installed 1 new marker.
Marker C-80 — Bob Black, Trip Leader. Completed
September 22, 2011.

TRUCKEE TRAIL — Replated 2 existing
markers, Markers T-25 and T-68 — Bob Black, Trip
Leader, Completed August 23, 2011.

APPLEGATE TRAIL- Replated Marker A-1/C-67
Sept. 22, 2011, Bob Black, Trip Leader.

CARSON TRAIL— Installed 1 new marker --
Marker CR-20-- Jim Moorman, Trip Leader. Completed
November 6, 2011.

PLANNED TRAIL ACTIVITIES FOR 2012

FUN TRIP

APPLEGATE TRAIL—Rye Patch Res. to Goose
Lake — Jon Willer, Trip Leader, planned for September
21-24, 2012

SCHEDULED FIELD TRIPS

BECKWOURTH TRAIL--Marker
Replating/Relocation—Bill Bishell, Trip Leader. Planned
for June 22-24, 2012. Replate 23 markers. Relocate 5
markers.

BECKWOURTH TRAIL—Marker Replating — Bill
Bishell, Trip Leader. Replate 22 markers. Planned for
September 7-9, 2012

UNSCHEDULED FIELD TRIPS

PLACERVILLE (Johnson) ROAD -Marker
Installation -Trip Leader, John Winner. Install 3-5
markers between Junction House (Marker CR-61/JC-25)
and Placerville (Marker CR-69).

LUTHER PASS TRAIL – Marker Installation —
Trip Leader, Larry Schmidt. Install 3-5 markers between
Hope Valley (Marker CR-40) and Johnson Pass.

LASSEN TRAIL--Bruffs Camp -Install a wood
replacement sign at Bruffs Camp.

LASSEN TRAIL-WESTWOOD -- Replate the
marker at the Community Center.

MARKER MAINTENANCE -- On Applegate (A-
14), Lassen (L-15) and Hastings Cutoff, (HN-34) markers.

POSSIBLE FIELD TRIPS IN 2013-2016

Central Overland Trail — From the Nevada/Utah
state line to Fort Churchill — Estimate installing 30
markers.

Heness Pass Road —Truckee Trail (Marker T-
29) to Highway 49 — Estimate installing 25 markers.

Volcano Road — From the Carson Trail (Marker
CR-54) to Volcano — Estimate installing 10 markers.

Grizzly Flat Cutoff — Carson Trail (Marker CR-
56) to Grizzly Flat—Estimate installing 5 markers.



BECKWOURTH TRAIL WORKING GROUP UPDATES . . .

There was a good turn out at the Beckwourth Emigrant Trail (BET) work group, Dan Elliot and Crista Weinberg, USFS, John Winner, Bill Bishell and Scott Lawson. We established priorities for the upcoming season; determined some segments to investigate and set tentative dates for 2012. The first area will be the one we were unable to get to this fall in the Quincy area. It will centered on Trails West marker # B25 and explore a possible alternate trail in the Elizabethtown area.

The first date will be Wednesday and Thursday March 7-8, 2012. We will meet at the U.S. Post Office parking lot, 222 Lawrence Street, Quincy, CA. That is downtown on the west bound one way street. I will resend this info and more details prior to the work dates. Those tentative dates are:

March 7-8, 2012

April 4-5, 2012

May 2-3, 2012

June 6-7, 2012

July 11-12, 2012

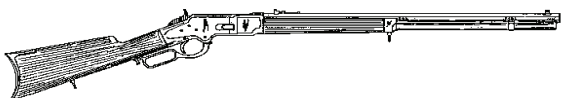
August 1-2, 2012

September 5-6, 2012

October 3-4, 2012

The dates will also be posted on the CA-NV OCTA and Trails West websites. If you know of someone else who I should put in the BET group email list let me know at:

camalobo@comcast.net, have a great holiday season, Dick. ~



Trails West Board Minutes of November 5 – A Brief Look

This is a quick look at some of the happenings at the board meeting in Loomis, Ca.

Guide Books: No *Applegate* guides are in stock, however, it is being sent to the printer and should be available very soon. *California Trail: Along the Humboldt* is not in stock. New edition should be available by April of 2012.

Marker Inventory: 34 rail markers are fabricated and there is enough rail to make another 70 markers.

Web Site Names: Two additional web names have been acquired, they are: trails-west.org and trailswestinc.org. Our current web name is still good and it is emigranttrailswest.org. Also, you need the password to enter the 'members only' window of the web site – get that from Bill Bishell at: scattertrans@gmail.com

MARKER: A motion was made and approved to print the newsletter quarterly.*

Brochure: Bob Carlton is working on a new color version of a brochure – very different than our current 'wordy' version.

Banquet: It will be held, again, at the Sands Hotel and Casino in Reno on April 14. Prices are \$17.50 for board meeting lunch, \$31.50 for dinner and \$18 for the Farewell breakfast. Room rates are \$51. Registration materials will be sent to members; also, check the web site for updates. ~ *Your editor just loves surprises.

Continued from page 1 - There are several versions of the story, but none are well documented. All agree that "Susan" is Susan O'Brien, a teenage daughter of an emigrant family travelling the Carson Trail. Susan died tragic death at the bluff site. The most dramatic version comes from an article in a portfolio of historic paintings published by Harold's Club in 1964. According to this source, the O'Brien family was in a party of 40 wagons and 50 head of cattle on the California Trail.

During the wagon train's stop at Goose Creek, the story says a few Indians appeared at the camp while the men of the party were out hunting. Believing they wanted provisions, the women offered the natives food. However, they were looking for whiskey and things became ugly. According to the tale, a 15 year old girl, Susan O'Brien, grabbed two of her family's guns and pointed them at the unwelcome intruders. The Indians backed away and everyone breathed a sigh of relief. The incident quickly faded in memory as the Forty-Mile Desert loomed ahead of them.

The O'Briens and their party made it through the desert and decided to take the Carson River cutoff of the Carson Trail. (Approximately one third of the emigrants took this route.) According to this version of the story, the O'Brien family was in the advance party of the wagon train as they followed the Carson River into a canyon just above the river ford where they would cross. It was here Indians, assumed to be Paiutes once again, ambushed the small group. Susan witnessed the brutal murder of her father, mother and 12 year old brother in the surprise attack.

Thinking quickly, she hid herself in a trunk, hoping to be overlooked. The Indians left nothing unturned and eventually found the frightened girl's hiding place. Here the article turns dramatic—Susan is dragged from the trunk. With her dress torn and her hair hanging loose, she is thrown, scratched and bleeding into a cave on the top of the bluff to await her fate.

That night, as her guards slept, she made a terrified dash to escape. The guards quickly awoke and came tearing after her. Realizing she would surely be recaptured and face a "fate worse than death" as an Indian slave, Susan made a desperate decision. She dashed headlong to the edge of the bluff and threw herself over to certain death on the jagged volcanic rocks below.

The story continues that passing wagon trains found her body and buried her at the foot of the cliff and named it "Susan's Bluff".

A less exciting, but perhaps more factual recounting of the story is found in the *Third Biennial Report of the Nevada Historical Society, 1911-1912*. This publication listed the names and origins of locations and sites in several western Nevada counties, including Lyon County where Susan's Bluff is located. The report states "At its foot are the graves of three emigrants with a sunken wagon tire at the head of each grave the name of one of the emigrants was Susan, hence the name of the bluff." This information is credited to Mr. C.M. Davis of Carson City. Trails West historian, Don Buck, reports that this is the earliest reference he's found naming the location as Susan's bluff. None of the 325 emigrant diary entries he has for the Carson Trail refers to the bluff by this name, though.

Recently, Laura Tennant, a Dayton, NV historian and columnist for the Fernley Leader, published an article tracing the history of Susan's Bluff. She found much the same information, but also talked to Curtis Harnar, a Pyramid Lake Paiute, who had a slightly different version of the story.

Harnar told her that his ancestors' version "is the same, except that Susan was taken to the top of the bluff to be held for ransom, hopefully for rifles." There Indian women there were busy preparing a meal. Susan began demanding to be released and defiantly threw an Indian woman's mano and metate (mortar and pestle grinding stone used for grinding grain into meal) over the cliff. The woman became so angry she threw Susan over the cliff. Indian women, Harnar explained, spent much effort honing their mano and metate cooking implements and valued them immensely.

He ended his story with a thought provoking conclusion: "The white people assumed Susan jumped to 'save her honor' but they weren't there to tell the real story and 'assumed' the story's details. We were there as witnesses to what really happened."

Whether Susan jumped of her own volition, or was thrown, the imposing cliff named for her is a stark reminder of the sudden perils and dangers that faced our emigrant forebears at every turn. It's also a reminder of the importance of documenting these trails and the records of them left behind by the emigrants, so another generation won't have to wonder "which is the right story? ~

TRAILS WEST HISTORY

THE FIRST 10 YEARS (OR SO) 1969 to 1980

Copied from the Meeting Minutes

Edited by Bob Black on 7-30-2011

October, 1969. Marker plates were installed on the markers at A-14, A-15 and A-17 by Dorothy Hildreth (Amos), Robert Hunt, Francis Page and Jim Linebaugh. (Verbal report by Dorothy).

These plates were replaced by TW on September, 1999.

8-6-71—TW installed markers with copper plates on the Applegate Trail at: Fly Creek, Lower High Rock Canyon, Upper High Rock Canyon, Stevens Camp, Pole Corral, Massacre Ranch and Painted Creek.

8-4-72—A Board Meeting was held in Bieber, Ca. Bylaws will be changed to reflect the non-profit standing of Trails West, Inc. Dues are \$ 5/Yr for singles, \$ 10/Yr for family. Treasurers Report: Balance is \$ 320.75

12-4-72—A Board Meeting was held in Reno, Nv. Board Members attending are: Art Kountz, Art Broten, Jim Linebaugh, B.M. Zimmerman, Bob Griffin, Webb Brown and John Irwin. 10 markers will be planted on the Lassen-Applegate and Nobles Trails.

2-9-73—The Annual Mid-Winter banquet and Business meeting was held at Boomtown. 72 members and guests were present. TW will run the Lassen-Applegate Trail in June from Imlay, Nv. to Black Rock and the Nobles Trail from Black Rock to Susanville for the purpose of placing 14 markers. TW will re-run the Lassen-Applegate Trail in August from Fandango Pass to Malin, Or for the purpose of setting 6 markers and 8 brass plates. Committee Chairs appointed are: Arranging Tours, Jim Linebaugh; Placement of Markers, Devere Helfrich; Wording on Placques, Helen Helfrich; Maps & Records—Webb Brown; Wagon Masters, Zim Zimmerman and Devere Helfrich. Railroad iron was picked up at Hawthorne, Nv. and delivered to the Nevada State Prison for fabrication into trail markers. 5

6-9-73. A Board Meeting was held at Robber's Roost campsite.

8-5-73. A Board Meeting was held at Crowder's Flat C.G.

11-15-73. A Board Meeting was held in Reno, Nv. Pres. Art Broten ran the meeting. The General Membership meeting and banquet will be held on 2-16-74 at Boomtown. Art Kountz will make the arrangements. Summer trail runs will be: in June on the Lassen Trail; in August on the Fremont Trail. Jim Linebaugh will get the permissions for marker placement.

2-15-74. A Board Meeting was held in Reno, Nv. Membership is 116 total. NETMC is disbanding. They offered maps, supplies and 72 markers to Trails West, Inc. A Motion was adopted to accept all items and extend a 5 year honorary membership in TW for 8 NETMC members. The Bylaws Committee was appointed by the President to update the Bylaws:-Chairman Bob Griffin plus 5 members. TW license plates were donated to TW-to be presented to active members for a \$ 5 deposit. \$ 200 allotted for the purchase of expensive and hard- to- get brass for plates.

2-16-74. The Annual Meeting was held at Boomtown. The membership voted unanimously to accept the Board recommendation to accept all NETMC items. 100 Charter Members of TW were recognized.

6-16-74. A Board Meeting was held at Bieber, Ca. Tentative plans were made to fence Granite Creek Station.

10-10-74. A Board Meeting was held in Reno, Ca. Art Broten will deliver all NETMC maps and materials to TW Pres, Bob Griffin. NETMC planted their last marker at the Coliseum in Reno. 1975 tours planned are: Fremont Trail starting at Summer Lake; the California Trail from Wells to Imlay; the Nobles Trail. Sandy Theiss was appointed the Scrapbook Chairman.

11-11-74. A Board Meeting was held. Attending were: Pres. Bob Griffin, VP-Jim Linebaugh, Sec/Treas, Marge Kountz, Board Members, Jack

Horgan and Sandy (for Ralph). TW received a letter from BLM. They plan to set wood and cement markers along the Pony Express Trail in Nevada. They want to know if TW wants to participate. No definite plans were made for June and August Tours due to lack of iron.

6-14-75. A Board Meeting was held in the Theiss trailer at the Button Point Rest Area. Aug. 2,3 &4. Fremont Trail tour will be along Abert Rim, Abert Falls and the Hogback Road. Aug. 3 will be potluck. Sandy will coordinate. TW will not participate with the BLM on the Pony Express Trail. Honorary Memberships were awarded to Tom Hunt, Robert (Van) Adams and Liz Adams. Appreciation was expressed to Sandy for being the Acting Sec/Treas and to Ralph, Mel Anderson & John Radowicz for obtaining a truckload of iron from the Klamath-Oregon Railroad.

8-3-75. A Board Meeting was held. 11 members went to Klamath Falls and picked up the iron. Tom Hunt arranged for Southern Pacific Railroad to donate 500 feet of rail. The President noted that Devere and Helen Helfrich had done nearly all the trail research to date. TW is working with Klamath and Lake County Historical Societies. Devere wants to complete the marking on the Applegate and Nobles Trails. Jim Linebaugh will mail out a newsletter.

11-8-75. A Board Meeting was held in Reno, Nv.. Jim Linebaugh, Pres. Membership is 137 total. Board Members are: Jim Linebaugh, Art Broten, Wally Griswold, Sandy Theiss, Ralph Theiss, Tom Wilson; Bob Griffin, Bob Elliot and John Irwin. Committee Chairs are: Obtain Steel, Ralph; Publicity, Tom Wilson; Permanent Location of TW Documents, Art Broten; Midwinter Banquet, Sandy; Awards, Art Broten; Location of Markers, Devere Helfrich; Nominating Committee, Bob Griffin; BLM marker permissions, Jim Linebaugh; Maps w/Marker Locations, Webb Brown; Other Marker Permissions, George Shier, June Tour, Tom Gilbanks. Tom Hunt has a proposal for a

National Monument at Black Rock Desert and would like input from TW.

2-28-76—A no-host lunch was held in Nubieber, Ca. On the June 18-20 tour, TW will place 16 markers on the Nobles Trail from Susanville to Hat Creek.

3-27-76. A Board Meeting was held at the residence of Art Broten in Reno. Jim Linebaugh presented a plan for publishing 3 booklets. One on the California Trail from NE Nevada to Imlay; One on the Applegate Trail from Imlay to Davis Creek; One from Davis Creek to the end of Applegate Trail; TW will not publish booklets until all missing markers are in place. Eddie Fisher has the photos for the booklets. Sandy is the TW Historian. TW will not take a position on the Black Rock National Monument.

6-19-76. A Board Meeting was held at Hat Creek C.G. TW has 136 active members. Unpaid members will be terminated. TW discussed amendments to the Bylaws. Devere Helfrich needs help with the trail research. Devere has the info needed in order to place 8 markers on the Lassen Trail. Tom Hunt reported that a proposal is going forward for a Soldier Meadows-Black Rock Desert National Monument with travel only on existing roads. The August tour will place markers on the Nobles Trail at: Big Spring, Bridge Creek, Feather Lake and on the Lassen Trail at: Patterson Flat, Dixie Spring, Lodgepole, Bruff's Camp, Norvell Flat, Robber's Creek and Bunnell Point.

8-7-76. A Board Meeting was held at the Pinetown Picnic Area. Jim DeLaHunt was appointed as a special assistant to Devere Helfrich to aid in trail research.

8-8-76. A General Membership Meeting was held at the Pinetown Picnic Area. TW placed 16 markers in June and 11 markers in August. The Boy Scouts may maintain all the TW markers. Jim Linebaugh replaced the marker at Pot Hole Spring. A Special plaque is being made for B.M. Zimmerman who is in the hospital. He helped incorporate TW and served as its first president

for two years. The Slate of officers proposed by the nominating committee are: Pres, Ralph; VP, Marshall Guisti; Sec/Treas, Sandy; Board Members, Bob Galau and Wally Griswold. All officers were elected unanimously.

9-9-76. A Board Meeting was held in Reno, Nv. The Washburns replaced the brass plates at Double Hot Springs, Black Rock Point and Vya. TW was requested by the owner to remove the marker at Big Springs. The new policy for TW is to get permission slips approved before planting markers. The Secretary will hold all permission slips and marker location maps. Liability insurance and the use of a waiver form were discussed.

11-20-76. A Board Meeting was held at the Theiss Residence. The Permission slip was revised to include the TW letterhead and P.O. Box #. A P.O. Box will be rented so TW has a permanent address. Tom Hunt and Bob Griffin are working with Diamond National to get the Bruff's Camp site deeded to TW. TW is trying to develop a map that shows where each marker that has been placed is located. On the June, 1977 tour, TW will finish placing markers on the Nobles Trail. On the Aug, 1977 tour, work will be on the Lassen Trail. 23 brass plates are on hand.

3-5-77. A Board Meeting was held at the Theiss Residence in Reno, Nv. The TW President and Secretary are authorized to purchase supplies as needed. The brass plate was replaced at Rabbit Hole. Brass plates are missing at Vya and Norvell Flat. Tom Hunt was asked to write up a history of each marker. The June tour will place 9-12 markers on the Nobles Trail. The Aug. tour will place 12-16 markers on the Lassen Trail and mark the graves at Bruff's Camp. The UNR Library may store all TW materials.

6-11-77. A General Membership Meeting was held at Hat Creek C.G. Treas. Report—Balance is: \$ 888.58. TW will prepare a position letter on the Black Rock National Monument. SP still has 250 feet of rail for TW.

8-6-77. A Board Meeting was held at Lake Almanor. The Bylaws need 3 changes in order to meet the non-profit corporation requirements.

8-6-77. A General Membership Meeting was held at Cross Roads, Lake Almanor. The Membership approved the 3 proposed changes to the Bylaws. Tom Hunt was thanked by the President for the great job he did in writing the history of the markers placed on this trip.

8-7-77. A Special Meeting was held at Bruff's Camp. The purpose was to appoint two additional members to the Board. Tom Wilson and John DeLaHunt were appointed.

11-12-77. A Board Meeting held in Reno, Nv. The June, 1978 tour will be on the California Trail. The Aug. 1978 tour will be on the California Trail from Elko to Rye Patch Reservoir. There is a problem in getting the brass plates engraved at the Nevada State Prison. The marker at Rabbit Hole has been destroyed. (to be continued next issue)



Clarence "Clancy" Barger (1919 – 2011)

Clarence "Clancy" Barger left this earth on August 30, 2011 at the age of 92.

He was born in Eugene, OR, moved to Salinas, CA at an early age and later moved to Shasta Lake City. He was a plumber and upon retirement moved to Old Station, CA.

He is survived by his wife of 69 years, Wanda, five children, Donna Hawkins of Oregon, Patricia McRae and Gloria Bolin, both of Redding, Roberta Lewis of Oregon and Chester Barger of Sparks, Nevada. He has seven grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren.

He served in the military for five years, three years in the Philippines where he manned a radio station for the Army Signal Corps. He was a charter member of the American Legion Post #720 in Shasta Lake City and instrumental in the building of the American Legion Hall.

There was a memorial service at the American Legion Hall in Shasta Lake City on September 9.

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FIRST CLASS MAIL

Please send all TRAILS WEST articles & photos to: twmrkr@aol.com
Next issue will come out around May 2012.

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