



A publication of Trails West, Inc.
Since 1970, a working organization
dedicated to marking the California Trail.

Summer 2018

Alternate Route to Fly Canyon

— By Ken Johnson

This year's Black Rock NCA Survey focused on finding the remainder of the alternate route of 1849 around the steep descent of Fly Canyon.

During the 2011 spring survey, we were able to plot the Alternate Trail from its beginning (where Trails West marker A-16 is located). We found ample artifact evidence to where the alternate trail dropped off a flat ridge into a wash. There we lost the trail. In subsequent years we tried at least twice, without success, to locate it.

Don Buck, looking on Google Earth Pro at the terrain and beginning at the wash, was able to see what appeared to be a continuation of the trail going along the base of a ridge to the west of the wash, where we had previously lost the trail. He determined the UTM coordinates of the apparent trail, and Bill Bishell flagged those points, making it easy for us to locate.

Working with the BLM archaeologists, and using metal detectors, we found many artifacts including a rifle trigger assembly, ox and horse shoes, a knife, lots of square nails, and some small wagon parts. This definitely confirms the alternate route around Fly Canyon. It is a significant contribution to the mapping of the Applegate Trail, which was discovered in 1846 as a southern route into Oregon and avoided the treacherous rapids on the Columbia River that taking the old trail entailed.

Levi Scott had been with the Applegates when their trail was discovered. In 1849, having twice led previous emigrants in 1846 and 1847, he had knowledge of the difficulty the descent up Fly Canyon would present as he led Lt. Hawkins military relief party eastward to Fort Hall in 1849. He discovered this easier route around the difficult area, and journal entries indicate that emigrants on their way to the California Gold Rush started using his route only a couple days after he found it.

While doing our survey, we camped at the BLM "Mouse House" near mud Lake and Soldier meadows, where we enjoyed the traditional Saturday night Dutch oven potluck highlighted by Peggy McGuckian's chili relleno casserole, Kathy Ataman's meatloaf, and Jo Johnston's pineapple upside down cake. Then to round out a perfect ending to our annual survey, Megan Halloran played her guitar and sang by the campfire adding to the ambience. Steve Knight and Herman Zittel waxed humorous with one-liners and kept us laughing as the sun set and the wind died down. We had a most peaceful evening, making us look forward to next year's survey.



Rifle Trigger Assembly (bottom)

Officers

President: Ken Johnston
Vice President: Larry Schmidt
Secretary: Jo Johnston
Treasurer: Linda Black

Directors

Bill Bishell
Bob Black
Jim O'Callaghan
Dwayne Dobbins
Ken Johnston
Dick Poole
Larry Schmidt

Committee Chairs

Membership: Karen Gash
Book Sales: Linda Black
Rail Marker Preparation:
Don Enneking
Rail Marker Maintenance:
Jim O'Callaghan
Trail Trips: Bob Black
Publications: Don Buck

Appointed Positions

Historian: Don Buck
The Marker Editor:
Bob Carlton
Webmaster: Bill Bishell

Next Board Meeting:

Lassen Steak House, Vina, CA.
November 1, 2018

The Marker is a publication of
Trails West, Inc.
P.O. Box 12045
Reno, NV 89510
www.emigranttrailswest.org
Published in January, April,
August and November

Editor: Bob Carlton
Layout: Kristen Tyra
Photography this issue:
Various contributors

Submit articles and photos to
markereditor@emigranttrailswest.org
November 15, 2018

President's Corner

Ken Johnston

2018 continues to be a busy year for Trails West members, as we complete our mission of placing markers on the emigrant trails coming into California, work with the BLM archaeologists to survey the ruts and swales, participate in fun trips to experience the routes followed by emigrants coming to the state, and enjoy the opportunities provided by our scheduled outings.



Bob Black led a work party on June 30 and July 1 to install trail markers along the Applegate Trail in the Umpqua Valley, and he will lead a final work party on September 8-9 to install the last markers on the trail in the Willamette Valley. With this accomplished, we will have installed over 700 markers on California trails and will be looking into other pursuits for our members to enjoy in the future.

It is rumored that the Oregon-California Trails Association (OCTA) is considering following our example of placing rail markers on other trails throughout the West. I believe that if they take over the assembly and installation of the markers, it will not only be a tribute to Trails West, but may provide opportunities for our members to participate in OCTA work parties as consultants and participants.

On June 21-24, we held our annual Black Rock Survey where we confirmed the alternate route of the Applegate Trail around the steep descent of Fly Canyon and into the entrance of High Rock Canyon (see the section on the Alternate Route on page 1). With this significant accomplishment, we may have completed all the sections of trail in the Black Rock National Conservation Area that needed to be confirmed, and will be pursuing other survey projects in the future.

Bill Bishell and Jim O'Callaghan teamed up on July 24-26 to lead the Beckwourth Fun Trip from Sparks Nevada to Lake Oroville above Bidwell Bar on the Feather River. Highlights on the trip included historical insight along the route provided at markers along the way; comradery around the campfire, good food, and Dutch oven donuts at the evening pot luck dinner; and the special tours of the Plumas County Museum, the historic Coburn-Variel Home and historic Mountain House that Jim Beckwourth stayed in. Dick Waugh, president of the California-Nevada Chapter of OCTA, has done extensive work on the Beckwourth Trail and he also provided valuable commentary on different sites along the route.

Our next board meeting will be held at the Lassen Steak House in Vina, California on November 1, and plans are already in the making for another outstanding Spring Banquet in Reno in 2019.

Peace and Happy Trails, Ken Johnston

Help **WELCOME** our New Members!

- **John Caselli**, Reno, NV
- **Allison Cliff-Jennings**, Reno, NV
- **William Faulkner**, Greenwood, CA
- **John and Linda Halliday**, Benicia, CA
- **Annette Laing**, Decatur, GA
- **Stephen Clark**, Framingham, MA
- **Laura Cole**, Chapel Hill, NC
- **Tony Huegel**, Idaho Falls, ID
- **James McQuestion**, San Marcos, CA
- **Dick Leever**, Chiloquin, OR

Applegate Trail Field Trip—June 30-July 1, 2018

by Bob Black

Bright and early— around 9 AM- eighteen hardy souls met at the River Forks County Park along the N. Fk. of the Umpqua River.

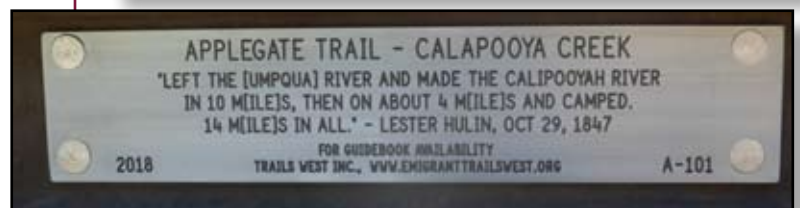
We had a quick round of introductions and were pleasantly surprised to discover that we had members Ken and Pat Heck from Tennessee and a guest, Art Siverling, from Colorado, in addition to the usual familiar faces on our work parties.

We had a short discussion on safety items and the TW Trip Rules and Regulations and then collected the signed Liability Waiver/Release forms. We quickly discussed the plan of work for the week-end, which was to install 9 markers on the trail route between Myrtle Creek and Cottage Grove

We divided the group of folks into two work parties, one led by Leta & Joe Neiderheiser, and the other one by Bob Black. In order to deal with the limited parking at several of the markers, several folks doubled up in cars.

As we have found so far, digging the marker holes in the deep topsoil of the Willamette Valley is almost a fun job! No rocks, though, so we had to bring our own to place in the holes. Joe and Bob had planned for this and paid a visit to the local rock quarry near Grants Pass a couple of days before the Field Trip to pick up an ample supply. Dick Poole and Bob had picked up the concrete redi-mix and Dwayne and Joe had loaded up the markers and water so our logistics needs were quickly dealt with. As usual, everyone brought along plenty of digging tools.

The last marker to be installed the first day just happened to be located next to the North Fork of



Umpqua River on the grounds of the Glaser Estate Winery. After the marker was quickly installed, it seemed only appropriate to show our appreciation for letting TW place the marker there, for several of us to visit the tasting room and sample the product.

The final item of business for the day was to return to the fine facilities at the River Forks County Park where we had our usual great potluck next to the Umpqua River.

Because the teams had worked so efficiently on the previous day, there was only one marker remaining to be installed on Sunday morning. The work party met again at River Forks Co. Park and then convoyed up to the final marker location along the Callapooya River. The marker was quickly installed, and another very successful Field Trip was concluded.



Beckwourth Trail

Fun Trip July 24-26, 2018

— By Grayson and Carol Sorrels

Approximately two dozen Trails West adventurers traveled the Beckwourth Trail, originating near present-day Sparks, Nevada on the Truckee River



After introductions and instructions from able leaders, Bill Bishell and Jim O'Callaghan, without the unpredictability of livestock and with the aid of

CB radios, we still managed to get off to a “rocky start” (presumably so we would have an authentic experience). It only took some of us another one-half day until we were all traveling like a well-oiled machine.

James Beckwourth was instrumental in improving parts of the route which eventually connected the Sparks Nevada area to Marysville. James Beckwourth was instrumental in improving parts of the route which eventually connected between Bidwell Bar (Lake Oroville) and Marysville.

James Beckwourth led the first wagons over the route from present Sparks, Nevada, to Marysville in August 1851. Thousands of wagons used the route from 1851 well into the 1860s, avoiding the infamous Donner Pass.

James Beckwourth was born into slavery in Virginia about 1798 and lived approximately 68 colorful years. During his lifetime, he is said to have been a blacksmith, trapper, fur trader, “Crow Indian Chief,” scout, frontiersman, gambler, soldier, wagon master, store and hotel keeper, rancher, and author. Not bad for someone with four years of schooling, not of course counting the “School of Hard Knocks.” James Beckwourth is reported to have married four times and fathered four children. The one constant in his life seems to be travel and adventure.

During the morning hours, we traveled the route through Golden Valley, White Lake (Border Town),

Hallelujah Junction, Beckwourth Pass, Chilcoot, Vinton, and Beckwourth stopping at numerous trail markers and eating lunch at the roadside rest.

Note: Near Golden Valley Marker B-4 in the same corridor are the remnants of the Beckwourth Trail, an early macadam road circa 1920 that went all the way to Canada and present-day Highway 395.

Following lunch, we stopped at the Beckwourth Museum which unfortunately was closed. We continued up Big Grizzly Creek to Lake Davis where we camped overnight at the Lightning Tree Campground. Four of us took advantage of the lake to cool off and rid ourselves of the trail dust.

A board meeting was held in camp. Dick and Gerri Poole had driven all the way from Anderson so there would be a quorum... What dedication! During the meeting, a nice three-point buck stopped by, but decided BORED meetings were not for him, so he didn't linger long.

The potluck that evening featured snacks and salads, barbecued pork loin, elk sausage, and Dutch-oven donuts... Yum!

The following morning we drove to the west side of the lake to continue “bagging” markers. We were privileged during Day 1 and part of Day 2 to be accompanied by Brent Baader of Old Strand Video Productions. He filmed and conducted interviews along the way.



Another special guest was Ellie, the wonder dog from Quincy, always ready to fetch a stick and, when presented with a spring of water, jumps right in... A cool dog that knows how to have fun!

Our route today took us past the site of the Walker Mine, seven miles northwest of Lake Davis. The Walker Copper Mine was discovered in 1909 and operated from 1911 until 1942. In 1940, there

were 132 company houses, 68 private homes, and four large bunkhouses with a modest business district. The ore was trucked out during good weather, ore, supplies, mail, payroll, and passengers rode an aerial tramway the rest of the year to Spring Garden as heavy snows were the norm.

Our journey next led us up and over Grizzly Ridge. Chester Smith wrote September 26, 1852: "Had a very steep road, steepest I ever saw. Took until noon to go two miles." We had to skip a couple of markers due to deteriorated road conditions, but our excellent leaders pointed out the route from an adjacent ridge, down the steep hill between two prominent rock outcroppings, down and across a brush field, and then down, down. Quite a visual of the hardships of the new and improved wagon road!

After a quick lunch at a rest stop on Highway 70, we drove to Quincy, took in the museum, and toured the Variel home built in 1878. Joshua and Mary Variel journeyed from Indiana across the Plains and over



Beckwourth Pass in 1852 continuing to Camptonville, but returned to Quincy in 1878. Restoration work in 1990 uncovered a board with a message: "Framed by Will Variel October 31, 1878." Joshua Variel's diary has supplied many of the quotes on the Trails West markers. Elizabethtown (site) on the outskirts of Quincy was our next stop. We took a short hike to the site while enjoying cold bottled water provided by the landowner who had improved the trail for us.

Elizabethtown 1852 was named for a woman in the miners' camp, Elizabeth Stark Blakesley. The town was established by the first European settlers in American Valley who had traversed the Beckwourth Trail. These settlers noted the hundreds of friendly peaceable Maidu Indians living in the area. At its height, the town had a population of 2,000 to 2,500 souls. The Masonic Lodge was established 1854. Many buildings were later moved to Quincy.

The trail continues to Snake Lake, Meadow

Valley, and Bucks Valley (Bucks Lake). Bucks Valley was reached after much steep climbing and presented good feed and water for recruiting the stock before continuing.

We recruited ourselves at the Hutchins Group Camp, with excellent bathing opportunities in lower Bucks Lake. Some of our "hardy trail pioneers" recovered in town and next morning regaled us with tales of fish and chips and tri-tip and the bridal suite at a bed and breakfast sporting five large pillows on the bed and two small heart shaped ones too!



On Day 3, we assembled early and continued up and over Grizzly Summit (west of Bucks Lake), past Granite Basin and Soapstone Hill. We hiked a short distance to view wheel ruts worn



into the soapstone near Marker B-38. We had to take a 5 1/2-mile gravel detour off the Oro-Quincy Highway on our way to Mountain House. When we arrived at Marker B-44, we were treated to a tour of the hotel arranged earlier by Bill Bishell. The hotel was built to serve as a stage coach stop for the California Stage Company which started in 1856.

In the late 1860s, Wells Fargo Stage Lines took over the route, and on July 25, 1878, the stage was robbed by the notorious Black Bart near Lake Madrone. Rumors have Black Bart hiding out in the basement of the Mountain House. I questioned my favorite source for all things Black Bart, Lee Dummel. He thought it unlikely as one characteristic of his success was his ability as a former Civil War infantryman to cover great distances on foot and he had told Detective James Hume that he never lingered long near any of his holdups.

We continued down the steep grade stopping at various markers. Dick Waugh shared that he had been born in a cabin at Lake Madrone. Genuine credentials, born on the Beckwourth Trail... Maybe that's why he is president of the California/Nevada Chapter of OCTA.

On the trip, Dick shared valuable insight and had earlier explained the term "ground truthing," proving the route of the trail by finding correct period artifacts using metal detectors. The process involves uncovering, identifying, photographing, GPS'ing, recording, and reburying, all with special permission from the landowner/manager in consultation with archaeologists. Very special artifacts might be collected for museum display.

We ended our trip at Foreman Creek where it was so hot, even the lizards were seeking shade.

Tom Flasch In Memoriam —

Roger Gash

I had tried to reach Tom Flasch, a former member, who did not re-new his membership— I left message on his phones with no return contact. A week ago, his brother John called after finding my message from a month or two ago to let me know he died— something I had already found out by going online after no contact.

John, a former member, wanted to let us know that Tom had passed away February 25, 2018, in Naperville, Ill. Mention of his passing was made at our Spring banquet.

Some members may remember these brothers— Tom would fly to Reno from Illinois just to go on our off-road emigrant trail trips, and on some occasions, brother John would fly to Reno from Houston, Texas, to travel together.

Tom's obituary highlights how he especially enjoyed the off-the-road treks and emigrant trail routes in the high deserts of Nevada and California— a comment also shared by his brother. They would always rent a fwd vehicle, then give it a thorough wash before turning it in. In the recent past, Tom donated many books and other trail materials to Trails West which were sold at our banquets. He will be missed by many.

Brent Baader and old Strand Video Production

The efforts of volunteers working with Trail's West, are getting some special attention. The group's work researching and marking of the pioneer trails is the focus of a new television program in production for KVIE, the PBS station in Sacramento.



It's part of an on going series called "Saving History," produced by Brent Baader of oldstrand.com. He's produced several programs already for KVIE, focusing on efforts of non-profit groups trying to save pieces of our history. KVIE is the launch station for these programs and will offer the program to other PBS stations around the country. "It's expected to be of high interest in several of the western states, but really anything like this appeals to all Americans, and when you mix in video of the Mules, and horses and wagon trains, it just connects with all ages," said Baader.

KVIE has aired several programs from oldstrand.com including "Sturgeon's Mill: Alive Again," which focused on an old steam saw mill brought back to life in the redwoods of Sonoma County, 100 years after it was built. The most recent program: "Saving History: The Battle for Jack London's Mountain," which begins airing August 15th, looks at the efforts of fire crews and volunteers to save the home and many of the historic artifacts threatened in last years wine country fires. Baader is also working on programs about the old barns in Sierra and Plumas County, and about efforts to keep the wagon trains rolling on several of the routes into California.

Trails West Is a perfect story for the Saving History series. Everyday people reading the old diaries of the pioneers, then using those diaries to track the routes of the wagon trains coming west in the 1800s. Imagine the loss to future generations if these trails were not surveyed, confirmed and marked," he said.

He started filming with the recent group re-tracing the Beckwourth Trail from Sparks to Marysville. But he will also travel on the Applegate Trail, and talk with historians and members of Trails West to learn about their passion. A common theme in all these programs is to make people aware of the efforts to save a piece of history – and to reach out to younger people and get them interested in their past.

Carson Trail marker is finally corrected

In May, three of our intrepid members journeyed to marker CR-33 located at Walley's Hot Springs on the Carson Trail. The purpose of the trip was to correct the incorrectly placed marker.

When this marker was first installed it was in a different location, but the owners of Walley's Hot Springs resort liked it so much they pulled it out and reinstalled it in the lawn in front of their restaurant. While we were thrilled to get the additional exposure of its new location, the marker was installed backwards and an additional plaque that had nothing to do with emigrant trails was attached to it. The problems with the additional plaque and incorrect facing has bothered us for years.

Thanks to member Jon Nowlin who spent a lot of time talking to Walley's owners, we finally got permission to correct the problems. So, after years of false starts, Jon, Roger Gash and Bill Bishell headed out to correct the problem.

Instead of doing the usual and using a winch to pull the marker out, they thought they'd dig around it a little first. That was serious luck! About nine inches down they found a one inch water line four inches in front of the marker and a four inch line five inches behind it. If they had just yanked it out, there would have been water everywhere and an extremely upset resort owner. Digging with small trowels much like an archology excavation, the marker was lifted straight up two and a half feet and rotated 180° and placed back in.

Three old guys with a two hundred pound marker – sure glad there weren't any children around as the air turned blue.

Concrete was mixed, lawn sod was replaced and it was repainted sagebrush grey/green. This is done on the Carson Trail markers by mandate of the BLM. The bottom line is that this marker is now installed correctly, facing the right direction and we have been able to cross off one more of our projects.



If any of you want to be notified of future outings like this, contact our Trail Trips Coordinator at: trailactivities@emigrant-trailswest.org and we'll let you know about upcoming work parties.

The Fernley Swales

The emigrant trail to California and original trans-continental railroad passing a mile north of Fernley– is on this year's list of Nevada's most endangered historic places.

Former Governor and U.S. Senator Richard Bryan, chairman of the non-profit group Preserve Nevada, said "Nevada has a rich heritage ... We have an obligation to preserve it."

The announcement of this year's most endangered sites included: "Fernley Swales– Settlers traveling west in the mid-nineteenth century–especially the Stevens-Townsend-Murphy party of 1844, the Donner Party in 1846, and the gold seekers of 1849–crossed Nevada in their wagons, leaving depressions in the soil. Those near Fernley, in the last seven miles of the Forty-Mile Desert (an area between the Humboldt and Carson Rivers that had no water and became legendary on the trail), became known as the Fernley Swales and are still there.

"Volunteers from the Oregon California Trail Association (OCTA) have installed signs. The land cannot be developed, but the Swales face threats from off-road vehicles and a nearby shooting range. The Fernley Swales serve as a reminder of Nevada's early history and its importance to those going West."

A historic display for the Fernley Swales is located at the entrance to Terrible's Travel Center, I-80 exit 48, East Fernley.

California Trail display for Fenley Swales is at I-80 Exit 48



Isaac Butler's Big Adventure

Those of us who are interested in the western migration of emigrants to Oregon and California have no doubt read many books and articles about the trials and hardships of these people. We are told of the incredible efforts and hard work involved in putting together wagons and filling them with worldly goods, of dealing with cattle and oxen and mules and their care on the trail, and the emotional aspects of leaving a home that they and their families knew from birth. The hard work of traveling day to day over rough country and dealing with natives are all part of the saga. The brute physical effort needed by the men and women of the wagon companies is hard to imagine.

Unfortunately, modern school books tend to gloss over these things other than to list some particular dates or persons that stand out in the history. I believe that organizations like Trails West have a responsibility to bring the stories and real history to the attention of those who may not have had any real introduction to what it takes to conquer a continent and expand a nation. I have the good fortune to be a descendant of one such person. He is barely mentioned in any books or research. We have very little information about him and his early history and travels. The relatives I knew growing up could have told me so much more, but I wasn't even aware of his existence until it was too late to gather any information. What follows is his story from the scant information we have. But it illustrates the stories of the western migration and what was involved in making such a trip.

Isaac Butler was born in Alabama in 1820. The actual location is unknown, but we suppose that he was from a poor family and he may have been born on a farm. There is no official record of his birth. His father was John Butler, who was also born in Alabama. His mother was Margaret Thrasher. We know virtually nothing about either John or Margaret. Isaac appears to be the second child following an older sister named Margarette. Isaac's birthdate of 1820 is correct, but if Margarette was two years older, she must have been born in 1818. Dates are sketchy. Margaret Thrasher died in 1830, and John married a second wife named Mary Isom. We believe she also had been married previously. Between 1830 and John's death in 1836, John and Mary had six more children about whom nothing is known.

The family moved from Alabama to Tennessee early on. When Margaret died, they moved again to Illinois and then Missouri. The story of John's death is interesting. A newspaper article in the 1930's tells of "Butler's Snap".

The snap was a sudden change of temperature over a short period of time, something like a drop of 40 degrees in fifteen minutes. The story goes that when it was apparent that the weather was changing, John and Margarette went out to find a cow that had strayed. The temperature was dropping rapidly, and neither were dressed for it. It was said that Margarette's outfit consisted of a thin dress and shawl, and no shoes. Both suffered from hypothermia, and when John saw that his daughter was suffering, he placed her under a tree and gave her his jacket and boots. He then started to the cabin for help. He was overcome with the cold, and did not return. At daybreak, Isaac and another lad who had been at the cabin while courting Margarette went out and found both victims frozen to death and covered with ice.

Isaac was now very much alone. We have no idea of what happened to Mary Isom and her children. And we have a large gap in our time line as the next appearance of Isaac is St. Joseph, Missouri, in 1845. For reasons we do not know, we find Isaac equipped with a wagon and one yoke of oxen. He had decided to go to Oregon in what was becoming the largest western emigration to that time. There had been other wagon trains and groups that made the trip in 1843 and 44, but the 1845 group was by far the largest. Estimates range as high as 450 to 500 wagons, and 2,500 "souls" along with hundreds of cattle and oxen, mules and horses. Clearly this was going to be a big parade.

Isaac's one yoke of oxen, however, was not going to be sufficient. We have no idea how he managed to generate enough money to purchase them. But like many others, he made arrangements with another man to provide more oxen to pull Isaac's wagon if Isaac agreed to be the driver.

Isaac had fallen in love with Miss Tabitha Jane Tucker and she with him. However, her parents would not permit them to marry. We don't know whether they thought he was not good enough for her, or whether the idea of her going to Oregon was the bad part. So, Isaac and Tabitha made arrangements for her to sneak out of the house on March 14th and join Isaac at the moment when the migration began by crossing the Missouri River from St. Joseph. This escape was successful, and their wagon and animals were put aboard a ferry that was operating to take the travelers to the far shore. On the ferry there happened to be a Reverend William Harrison, and they were married by the time they arrived on the other side of the river.

Unfortunately neither Isaac or Tabitha kept a log of their trip. Part of the reason was that Isaac was basically illiterate. Having moved so much as a youngster, he had not attended school. We assume that Tabitha could read and write, but for whatever reason, she kept no log.

The few logs that have survived have been of great help to those authors who have put the story of the 1845 migration together in formal books.

On the trail at Fort Fisher [which so far I have not been able to locate], Isaac and the man who provided more oxen had a falling out. Fortunately, Isaac was able to make arrangements with a second man, and continued the journey. The Oregon trail following the Platte River and through South Pass was relatively straight forward. It had already been used for several years as a growing number of emigrants made the trip. It was unlikely that a group of 450 wagons could remain together as one, partly because the amount of physical space required would be enormous, but more likely because of the nature of the travelers. Some were aggressive and insisted on making the decisions while others were basically followers. Some wagons were fully equipped and supplied, while others had minimal food and essentials with them. Some emigrants brought everything including the kitchen sink and all their furniture, while others brought far less.

Individual wagons provided for perhaps four to six persons each, usually family members or close friends traveling as a small group. These in turn gathered into trains of perhaps 10 to 20 wagons. Such gatherings were based on the travelers being from the same area in the East, family ties, or perhaps religious preferences. The bulk of the travelers from St. Joseph traveled in a large disconnected group, made up of several sub-groups with a captain who was responsible for keeping the smaller groups in line. Groups from other locations like Independence, Missouri, did likewise.

During this time we believe that Isaac and Tabitha traveled with a group led by William Green T'Vault, who had been elected Captain of a group of emigrants from St. Joseph. (T'Vault was apparently unable to manage the fractious members of his train, and resigned the position to become a regular traveler. We believe that Isaac later merged with the group captained by Solomon Tethrow.) The greatest part of this train was intending to go to Oregon. Eventually, some of them split off at various points and instead headed to California. Caleb Greenwood made a great effort to talk the emigrants into choosing California instead, no doubt with great hyperbole. Some agreed to follow him across the great basin and over the Sierras to Sutter's Fort. Others elected to continue to Oregon, partly because that was their plan in the first part and they were sticking to it, and partly because California at that time was still part of Mexico and the Mexican government was not pleased with the influx of Gringos coming uninvited to their territory.

At the first meeting of the trains on the far side of the river, two men came forward to promote themselves as a guide to the trail. Some emigrants thought that since the number of wagons was so large and that the trail had been blazed in previous years, it was not necessary to hire a guide. The first to come forward was Major Thomas Adams from Independence who said he had the latest maps and had already been to Fort Vancouver. (Fort Vancouver was located on the north side of the Columbia River at the mouth of the Willamette River and is the site of the city of Vancouver, Washington, today.) Adams wanted \$500 for the job.

The second guide was Stephen Meek, the older brother of Joseph Meek who would figure in the government of the Oregon Territory. Stephen had been a trapper for some years, and had traveled with Bonneville on a military exploration in 1836. He did his best to talk the emigrants into hiring him at \$250 to take them to Fort Boise. I include here the speech that Meek made to the travelers to sell himself as a guide. It is not directly related to Isaac, but I include it to give the reader a measure of the man.

"Feller beans! [human beings] You don't know what yer undertakin – you don't by the eternal Moses! Jest you tell me whar you think you'll bring up if you pertend to start with narry a guide. If you have any idee of bringin' up short of __ you'll find yerself mistaken by __! Now, I've been to Oregon, an' I reckon as how I know the way. I offer to take on with out of pure love fer my feller men not that I care a __ fer the dollar a day. No query. [i.e., no question about it.] You think thar's a trail – well, so thar is, an' feller beans, that thar trail leads through a howlin' wilderness, an' in that thar wilderness thar's injuns, by __! I've been thare and I know 'em. Ask anybody. An' them injuns will not only take the har off yer own skulps, but off 'en yer wives an' yer innercint prattlers, by the eternal Moses! No Query. I've seed 'em – ask anybody. I tell you I've been thar and I know the whole story from "a" to izzard. An' why woutent I! can you reckon! No by __! You jest caint. Bekaz thar's a road is nuthin! Who has ever hearn of erry crowd, I don't care a __ how small it wuz, that didn't have a guide on the big perarys. Why, even one man coutent travel along without one – not to save his life. No query. I've been thar, I tell you, an' I know. Ask anybody. Jest you go on, an' when them injuns come up on you jest you think what I tole you. But injuns isn't half. You git on the big dessert an' yer'll want water an' so will yer wives and yer helpless orphins, an' so will yer beasts; an' grass, too, by the eternal Moses! Well, yer'll naturally not find any less you have a guide! An' you'll famish even when you've passed by fifty bilin' springs that I know. No query. I

have been thar – I have; and thar ain't narry a drop of water ner a speer of grass, from the big Percific, whar the ragin' bilers roll, feller beans to Sam Owen's store in Independence that I don't know. No query. I've been thar. An' now if you want me, nuff said. An' I'll take you plumb through without loosin a har – I will, by the eternal Moses!" [REF]

Would you buy a car from this man? Nonetheless, the settlers elected Meek to be their guide. The train progressed with some interaction with native Americans and the loss of cattle and horses by theft and straying. But they made it eventually to Fort Hall and then finally to Fort Boise. At every fort along the way, they no doubt obtained what supplies they could.

At Fort Boise, Stephen Meek again approached the train and offered himself as a guide on a path different from the one established a few years earlier. The regular path for the Oregon Trail crossed the Snake River at Fort Boise and progressed west a few miles to the present site of Vale, Oregon. Here, the trains would progress in a general northwesterly direction over the Blue Mountains to a point roughly in a north-south line with the town of Walla Walla, Washington (although the trail did not go that far north). Here they would head west and meet the Columbia River just to the east of The Dalles, Oregon. Some native Americans would be encountered here, and they were not friendly. However, with large numbers of wagons and people in the trains, the natives' impact was not expected to be severe.

Meek had a better idea. He proposed to follow a trail that started in a westerly direction from Vale, then continued more or less south-west. It's not clear whether he intended to continue all the way to the Cascade Mountains and to the southerly portion of the Willamette Valley or whether his plan all along was to intercept either the John Day River or the Deschutes River and follow that north to The Dalles. In any event, he said that it would save about 150 miles compared to the original trail, and that the native issue would be negligible. This was called the Trapper's Trail, and was a trail, not a road. It was not suitable for wagons, just horses and mules. He contended that he had been over the trail at least three times, and knew the way. He no doubt gave a speech not unlike the one above to sell his guiding services. About half of the trains gathering at Fort Boise decided to follow him. Various accounts differ, but the estimate is about 200 wagons, and perhaps as many as 1,200 people. Also included were hundreds of cattle and oxen, horses and mules. All of these creatures require significant water and the animals require fodder as well – an issue which became a major source of discontent in Meek's group.

Isaac and Tabitha followed Meek. The tales of Meek's Cutoff are told in many books and articles. It's interesting to see that in the eyes of some authors, Meek is vilified and the train is called the Lost Wagon Train. Meek is accused of being lost and not knowing where he was, and not able to find a way out. One book, however, looks at it differently. This author claims that Meek knew where he was, and that because some of the followers would not go in the direction he intended, Meek had to modify plans which greatly extended the trip. This author also feels Meek was a good guide and should not be accused of being lost.

We know of only one event on this trail in which Isaac took part, more by observation than participation. It seems that in some of the wagon groups, the water buckets that hung on each side of a wagon had been painted blue. On September 17, 1845, two or three groups stopped at a small stream that flowed through a narrow gorge. In an effort to get water, the emigrants had to dig a bit to get the water to flow. In this digging was found some gold nuggets. These were brought back to camp and when Henry Marlin tried to break one on a wagon wheel's steel tire, it flattened out and was malleable. Watching this process, a lady of the group asked "Is that stuff gold?" When it was said that they thought it was, the lady said "Why there was enough of that stuff in the creek to fill a blue bucket!"

Isaac remembered the sequence and said many years later that if you stood at the creek site you could see a big slide in the eastern slope of the Cascade Mountains from where they crossed that creek. Hence, the tales of the Blue Bucket Mine were born. There are as many interpretations of the story as there are story tellers. This is the way Isaac remembered it.

Eventually the train did arrive at The Dalles. The procedure from here was to abandon the wagons or convert them to some sort of boat. Or, one could build a raft from logs he would cut himself, or hire some natives to row him in a canoe. Whatever the choice, the traveler had to sail down the Columbia River for about 5 miles, then go ashore and portage around about 3 miles of rapids. Eventually, he could make his way to the mouth of the Willamette River where it feeds into the Columbia, and arrive at Fort Vancouver. But he wasn't home yet. It was necessary from that point to navigate or walk up the Willamette past the present site of Portland to Oregon City, the first village in the new area. Here there were more rapids to go around, but above that point, the Willamette Valley began, and the land was flat and excellent for farming.

We have no idea as to how Isaac and Tabitha navigated the Columbia or made their way to their destination. However, instead of going due south to the

Willamette Valley, they turned west at the location of Portland (where there were no humans and nothing but trees) and walked over the hills to the west of the city to the Tualatin Valley. Although greatly developed today, at that time the area was mostly all forest. Here, Isaac and Tabitha took out a Donation Land Claim. The provisional government at that time offered 320 acres of free land for a single man or 640 acres for a couple if they would develop the property— build a house and farm it. So Isaac built a log cabin and cleared some land and began farming. He stayed there for over 40 years, logging and farming.

Isaac was involved in two other events in that area after he settled. In the first, he participated in the Cayuse War of 1847. The Cayuse Indians were located in the area of Walla Walla and surrounding territory. They were increasingly angry about the influx of settlers and attacked who they could when the opportunity permitted. In 1836, Narcissa and Marcus Whitman, missionaries, set up a station about six miles west of Walla Walla, with the purpose of bringing Christianity to the savages. By 1847, the natives had had enough, and attacked the station, killing the Whitmans and 14 people who were located there. The Provisional Government of Oregon called on the Army to respond, and many settlers participated as well. We have no idea what Isaac did there, but we do know that he participated in the military action to some extent.

The other item of note was his participation in the construction of the first wagon road into the Tualatin Valley from the Willamette side of the mountains. This was probably the Cornelius Pass road located north of Portland on the Willamette River. (This pass was no doubt named for the Cornelius family, several of whom came on the same trip as Isaac and Tabitha.)

Isaac and Tabitha had 10 children, all born on the Donation Land Claim. The youngest of these was Lucy Ellen Butler, my great grandmother. She married James Sigler and together they had six children, the eldest of which was Dale Butler Sigler, my grandfather. Tabitha died relatively young, in 1867 at the age of 39. Three years later, Isaac married a widow, known to all as Polly Caroline. Her birth name was Mary Caroline Tidwell. Polly was a common nickname for Mary in days gone by. She first married a Mr. Moore, and had one daughter with him, Eliza. When she and Isaac were married, Eliza was treated by Isaac as his own. Isaac and Polly had five more children together, two of whom died of tuberculosis, and a third contracted the disease but survived. This last was Lottie Hyacinth Butler, the last living member of that generation, and of whom I have fond memories as a child.

Near the end of the 19th century, Isaac rented out the farm and moved to Hillsboro, Oregon, where he died in 1904. Polly died in 1916. We don't know what happened to the farm. No doubt it was sold. A visit to the Oregon Historical Society in Portland provided us with a map that shows the extent and location of the Donation Land Claim. Today, at the southern end is a light railway that runs between Portland and Hillsboro and there is a station there along with lots of condos and shopping. The area is called Orenco, which stood for the Oregon Nursery Company, an early owner of the area. On the north end of the claim there is a huge Tektronix plant which manufactures all sorts of electronic and computer systems. In between there are more housing for workers for Tektronix, and the Intel Corporation that is just down the road. It's too bad that the DNC is still not in the family!

Have you got a pioneer relative? Put their story on paper and share it with those of us who are interested in this amazing part of United States history.

— Ren Colantoni, May, 2018

