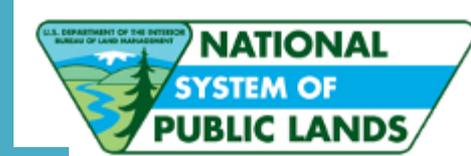


DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

ELEPHANT SIGHTINGS



Winter 2010

Elko District Office, 3900 E. Idaho Street, Elko, NV 89801, (775) 753-0200
http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/elko_field_office.html

The California Trail Center Newsletter

Greetings from the Department of the Interior, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Staff of the California Trail Center! This is *Elephant Sightings*, our quarterly newsletter.

After our first summer open to the public, the California Trail Center is now closed to the public so we can focus on finishing our exhibits. The season was a great success, and the Trail Center will continue to offer opportunities to see the exhibits while we host evening events like history talks, workshops, and dances throughout the winter and spring. The

next opportunity to see the Trail Center will be during the week of the National Cowboy Poetry Gathering, when we will be open from 10:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. January 25th through the 29th.

If you have questions about the California Trail Center you can reach our staff at the below telephone numbers.

Contact

Phone: 775-738-1849

Email: Gary_koy@blm.gov

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California Trail Center Mission Statement

The mission of the California Trail Center is to interpret the California Trail experience, its related themes, and provide educational and cultural enrichment to the general public. Through interpretation the Trail Center will contribute to the appreciation and preservation of historic and cultural sites and, by forging strong community partnerships, enhance sustainable tourism throughout the region.

Words from the Wagon-master

From the Trail Center Director's Desk:

Much like the participants who formed the wagon trains that crossed the west in the 1850s and who had to plan for the journey West, the California Trail Center staff must also plan for their journey into the future. Planning for 2011 began years ago with staff working closely with our non-profit partner, the Southern Nevada Conservancy (SNC) and the staff of H.B. Stubbs, the Trail Center's exhibit contractor. Together we are putting the final touches on the second phase of the Trail Center exhibits that will be installed in early May this year. We have also begun to develop the details for phase III that will complete the inside exhibit plan for the Trail Center. These will be installed by the spring of 2012.

Exhibit planning also included discussion on how the Native American exhibits that are planned for the Great Basin Room of the Trail Center will be developed. On November 19, 2010 I met with several Native Americans from all over the Great Basin region. The BLM wanted to discuss how best to tell the stories of the overland migration from the perspective of the indigenous people who lived in the area when thousands of emigrants with their livestock and wagons traveled through the area. How

did these travelers impact the natural resources that Native American people had depended upon for centuries? What were the interactions like between the emigrants and Native Americans, and what kinds of things would they want people to know about their life-ways and culture?

The BLM wants to make certain that the Native American stories are told accurately. Those individuals who participated in the meeting did so as interested individuals and not as representatives of any Tribe or Band. They included historians\educators, artist and craftsmen. Although no specific plans were developed as a result of the meeting the information from the gathering is being developed into a document listing several ideas for interpreting the messages shared on November 19th. This document will be reviewed, and from it a plan will be developed to create the new Great Basin Room exhibits.

Jan 11, 2011
Dave Jamiel

The Trail Is in the Detail: How Exhibits Are Made by David Low

There's an old saying about the similarities between sausage and laws - you don't want to know what goes into making either one. I'm happy to say the same isn't true about exhibits. I've spent the last year working with the rest of our staff and our contractors on the displays that will fill the Trail Center's halls, and I'd like to give you a behind-the-scenes peek at how our exhibits go from concepts on paper to works of art.

When the Trail Center is complete and open to the public, the dioramas,

interactive maps, listening stations and interpretive panels of our exhibits will be the main focus for our visitors. While we hope that we'll have enough staff to offer face-to-face interpretation, we're taking great care to make sure that our exhibits alone can help our visitors appreciate and support the preservation of our national heritage. How do they do that? Well . . .

Panels provide factual information about what happened and when. Interactive maps orient our visitors

geographically so they understand the settings of personal experiences, which are told in the listening stations sprinkled throughout the entire exhibit. Finally, the minute details of our dioramas are the key elements that transport our visitors out of the 21st century and back to the 19th, giving them a feel for what life was like on the trail.

It's the small things in our surroundings that make us feel at home. Anyone who has traveled abroad will tell you that it's the little things that stand out the most: the foreign shapes of electrical outlets, the feel of an odd doorknob in your hand, or the smell of morning in a strange city. By stepping back one-hundred and sixty years our visitors *are* entering a foreign country, and we've taken pains to make sure they know it! We've got the doorknobs, and believe it or not, we've even got the smells. Expect to experience life on the trail with *all* of your senses when you visit the California Trail Center.

Much of our job consists of things like finding out just what a doorknob in St. Joseph Missouri in 1850 would have looked and felt like. As part of our exhibit design work we have researched types of exterior paints in use on the American frontier, how to correctly tie an 1850's cravat, where an Oglala Sioux man would have worn his knife, what hairstyles would (or wouldn't!) be appropriate for a ten-year-old girl, and finding out what breed of chicken was most common in America in the 1850s. It's the Dominique, by the way.



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We send the research we've done and details about what we want to contractors all over the country who custom build our exhibits for us. They do things we couldn't possibly do, like program the computers that will run our interactive maps and take face and body casts of models for the figures who will inhabit our dioramas.

When you consider how many people's hands have worked on the exhibits - the multitude of contractors who fabricated them, the mural artists, the Trail Center staff who researched it all - the number of staff hours devoted to the Trail Center is impressive. Next time you're in the Center, take a closer look at the details in the exhibits. There's a good chance someone spent an hour, or a day, or even a week, making sure to get those hair styles, panel text, or sunset just right. The second of three exhibit installations will happen in early May this coming year, and we plan to install the last of the exhibits in December. That will leave us a few months to work the bugs out of everything before the Trail Center is scheduled to open to the public permanently in May of 2012.

Just Around the Bend Upcoming Events at the Trail Center

- **January 11th - Quilt Exhibit arrival:** The California Trail Center will host an exhibit of historical quilts this spring. These quilts typify traditional American quilting techniques and have been lent to us to Northeast Nevada museum.
- **Sewing Circle with Suzanne -** Want to sew? Spin? Trade patterns and textile tips with friends? Come to Suzanne's sewing circle at the Trail Center starting

- January 22nd, and every other Saturday until April 16th. Saturdays Noon-4:00. For more info call or email Suzanne at 269-876-7219 or ctc-suzanne@hotmail.com.
- **January 25th - 29th National Cowboy Poetry Gathering:** Open 10-5, activities will include tours of the California Trail Center, wool spinning, historical firearms and fire-starting demonstrations, and a "Singing Cowboy" movie series, with two movies per day showing at 1:00 p.m. And 3:00 p.m.
 - **February, Date TBA - Old Time Family Fun Dance:** Caller Rob Snow from Salt Lake City and local music group "Southwind" return to the Trail Center to bring you an evening of family entertainment. No dance experience is required to kick up your heels at this evening of American heritage fun! Look for email updates and listen to the radio for information about this dance in early February.
 - **May 21st - 22nd 8th Annual California Trail Days:** Come help us bring the California Trail to life! Join us for two days of living history, games, crafts, music, dancing and fun. Speakers, musicians and costumed interpreters will be there, and maybe even some live animals! 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. no admission fee.

There are more events to be announced! Want to stay in the loop? If you would like to be informed about events at the California Trail Center we would be happy to add you to our email list. Just send an email to Gary Koy at

Gary_koy@blm.gov with a note asking to be added to the list. We sometimes schedule events on short notice that do not make it into any newsletter, so this may be your only way to keep informed!

Trail Traffic Recent Activities, events, and New Construction

July 21st - Two Sisters - the "History Along the Humboldt" Series continued with a presentation by Shirley Jamiel and Jan Petersen about the correspondence of two sisters separated by the overland emigration. As always, Shirley and Jan packed the house and didn't disappoint. Their program was a big hit!

August 4th - Americorps and Great Basin Institute Intern Suzanne Miller gave a presentation entitled "Eating Up the Trail" about the food that gave the emigrants the strength to make it to California. This included some trail-side delicacies made fresh by Suzanne herself.

August 10th-14th OCTA Convention - Elko hosted the 2010 Oregon and California Trails Association national conference, and hundreds of trail enthusiasts descended on the Trail Center. We played host to their annual banquet, and Trail Center staff led several tours to trail locations near Elko.

August 18th - Great Basin Institute Intern Cheyna Burton presented a talk entitled "The Truckees: An American Family". Cheyna shed light on the importance of one Native American family to the history of the California Trail, and in turn to the history of Nevada and the United States.

August 28th - 29th -First Annual Great Basin Native Summer Market and Cultural Exchange Organized by the Great Basin Native Market Committee. The Trail Center was host to a market for Native American artisans, which included art, music, and cultural demonstrations. The event was a resounding success, with one-hundred ninety visitors. We can't wait to do it again next year!

September 17-19th Great Basin Quilt Festival - The California Trail Center hosted this quilt festival, organized by the Great Basin Quilt Festival Committee. Four-hundred seventeen people came to see ninety historic and modern quilts that were displayed in our halls.

October 9th - Dr Doris Dwyer of the Western Nevada College performed a Chautauqua performance as Margaret Breen to a packed house.

Dec 4th - Indian artisan and historian Mike Williams gave a workshop on how to make duck decoys out of tule reeds for the benefit of the Te-Moak Tribe. Mr. Williams' ducks are based on 2500 year old tule duck decoys found near Lovelock, Nevada.



Dec 18th - Dr. Doris Dwyer returned to the Trail Center to run a living history workshop for our volunteers. She performed for them and then spoke about how to research and develop a living history persona.

Exhibit Update What's new and what soon to come at the California Trail Center

October saw the installation of **five bronze figures by sculptor DiAnne Cooper** on the plaza. DiAnne is the sculptor who did our ten-foot tall elephant sculpture, and we are excited to showcase more of her work. This group of sculptures is based on William Tylee Ranney's 1853 painting "Advice on the Prairie", and depicts a mountain man advising a group of emigrants on the trail.

Construction of the **walking trails** in the hills behind the Trail Center is done, and the trails will be completed with the installation of seven interpretive signs in 2011. This was funded through a Nevada State Lands Grant in cooperation with Elko County.

Early May - Phase II Exhibit

Installation: The California Trail Center will install the second of three phases of

our permanent exhibits. These will include two new dioramas showing emigrants and Indians trading on the plains, and a wagon company struggling to make it across the Forty Mile Desert. Come see what we've been working on!



Volunteer Bulletin

Last summer with the addition of two interns and a seasonal ranger to our permanent staff of three, we had enough staff to cope with the better-than-expected but still-moderate number of visitors that came through our doors. As a result, we haven't seen as much of our

volunteers as in the past, but that is soon to change - we hope!

Although we've welcomed a new education specialist intern, we will sadly lose Suzanne when her internship ends in April. We are not sure what our staffing

will be when we open this summer, and may need all the help we can get.



Coming up at the end of January we will be open during the week of the Cowboy Poetry Gathering and will likely need some help. Suzanne will be running a **Volunteer Orientation Meeting** on January --- to get up-dated volunteer agreements from you and bring you up to speed about what's happening around the center.

This spring we hope to continue hosting dances and talks in the evenings

and you might be getting an email from us asking for your help to run these events. You can also count on hearing from us when school groups begin arriving in March and April. Spring is the season for school field trips, and we had one-thousand forty-one children come through our doors with their classes last year. We expect word-of-mouth to spread among teachers and bring even more this year.

Also remember that almost all of our speakers are volunteers! If you have a special interest in the California Trail or the natural history of northeastern Nevada and are interested in giving a talk at the California Trail Center this winter or spring, contact Suzanne Miller or email her at mille2sm@cmich.edu and she'll work with you to develop and schedule your program.

Volunteer Spotlight

It has been a busy and productive time at the California Trail Center, and our successes would not have been possible without the assistance of our volunteers. From weekday school groups to California Trail Days, our volunteers have helped fill in the gaps, and we are extremely grateful to them.

Our newest volunteer, Dennis Groneman, is a great example of kismet. Since returning to Nevada, he'd been looking for volunteer opportunities, and discovered that he and the California Trail Center were a perfect fit. Dennis comes to us with an extensive living history background, both as a re-enactor for the Free Artillery Company, Army of the Marquis of Montrose, and as a historic interpreter at Jamestown Settlement. Apart from his time at Jamestown Settlement, Dennis has lived in the West all his life. Born in Provo, Utah, he spent his childhood in southern California. As an adult, he has lived primarily in Nevada, and worked for the state in a variety of

capacities, most notably as a fire investigator.



Though he appreciated the history and beauty of Virginia, Groneman eventually returned to Nevada to be nearer to his family. His daughter lives in Elko, and his son is captain of the Reno Fire Department. In addition to his two children, Dennis has six grandsons.

A history buff, Dennis also has a keen interest in firearms, and attended Lassen College in Susanville, California, where he obtained a degree in gunsmithing. He now serves as a gunsmithing instructor. Dennis also enjoys hunting, and has been pursuing the elusive chukar as of late.

We're very lucky to have Dennis at the California Trail Center, and he has already helped tremendously with some of our school groups. We hope everyone will have the opportunity to meet him in the near future and welcome him into the fold.

Volunteer Opportunities in 2011 - We will need volunteers for the following events at the California Trail Center.

- **Cowboy Poetry Gathering, January 24th -29th** - Volunteers to welcome visitors, give brief orientation talks as needed, monitor the quilts currently on display, and help run the book store cash register.
- **School Field-trip Programs, Dates To Be Announced** - Based on how many groups came to the Trail center last year, we expect at least eight school groups this spring, starting in March and continuing on until the end of June. We will need volunteers to act as greeters and bookstore-cashiers, "rovers" to keep the kids out of the dioramas, and front-line interpreters to help with the programs we put on. If you'd like to get dressed up in 19th century clothing, this is your chance!

Contact Gary Koy or Suzanne Miller for information. Helping hands are always welcome!

Get decked out! - Our wardrobe of 1850's-era clothing and footwear in a variety of sizes is available to you anytime you volunteer with us at the California Trail Center! In the coming year we hope to get you, our volunteers, dressed in period-correct attire for our public events! We plan for next year's Trail Days to feature a large "emigrant camp" to be staffed by costumed volunteers, complete with tents, wagons, and cooking fires. If you would like to take part contact Suzanne Miller.

Nevada Archaeological Site Stewardship Program - Want to get out on the trail? The BLM is looking for active people to help protect the remnants of the California Trail and other sites of historical and archaeological importance. The Nevada Archaeological Site Stewardship Program cooperates with volunteers to monitor the condition of at-risk sites for natural or man-made damage. Stewards do the following: make an initial visit to the stewardship site with an archaeologist to determine the site's baseline status, attend a six-hour course, visit the stewardship site four times per year, and fill out a brief site-status report. If you have an itch to get out on the California Trail this is a great way to satisfy the "rut-nut" in you and help ensure that future generations will be able to enjoy the history that surrounds us in northeastern Nevada. For more information contact Sali Underwood at saunderw@nevadaculture.org, or call the State Historic Preservation Office at 702-486-5011

Westward the Mercury Sable: a Michigander on the Trail

by Suzanne Miller

It was with great enthusiasm—and more than a little trepidation—that I made my journey westward 10 months ago, leaving my home state of Michigan for a position at the California Trail

Center. After spending nearly five months searching for work, I was eager to relocate, even if it meant leaving family and friends behind. Traveling I-80 from Chicago onward, I was following

in the footsteps of the original emigrants, though the assistance of an automobile made the journey considerably easier and faster. Still, the motives for the move were the same now as then, and my desire to earn a living and continue on my career path outweighed the loneliness and worry I initially felt.



As someone who grew up east of the Mississippi River, I'll admit the landscape of northeastern Nevada initially seemed desolate and alien. On my trip, as the green of the plains slowly gave way to desert and mountains, I gained a new appreciation for the emigrants and their struggles. Accustomed to ready access to water sources, ample precipitation, and shade from trees, it must have been an unimaginable hardship to travel for miles while experiencing thirst and an unrelenting sun. Walking for days toward a mountain range that never seems to get closer no doubt inflicted further psychological torment upon those already at their limits.

In my previous life as a costumed interpreter at a fur trade outpost, I learned much about the *voyageurs*. These men were essentially the truck drivers of the era. They paddled the canoes in which goods and pelts were packed, for upwards of eighteen hours per day. In storms, rapids, and streams, they exited the canoes and ran along the shoreline, carrying multiple ninety-pound bales, until safer waters were reached and they could return to their vessel. Both the *voyageurs* and the emigrants on the overland migration possessed a willingness to endure physical and emotional discomfort in hopes of some payoff for their families and themselves. Then, as now, the fortunes of some would rise; for others, hopes and aspirations were dashed time and again.

There is nothing as incredible in humanity as resilience, and this resiliency, to varying degrees, exists in each of us. Every risk we take, whether it pans out or not, creates a connection with those who came before, who endured tremendous toil to create their livelihoods.

My own journey has been far less difficult, of course, though I do miss my home. However, I have been fortunate to meet some very generous and wonderful people here, and that made my arrival and transition as pleasant as can be hoped. There is much work to be done, but the chance to be a part of this project has been a real privilege. The best is yet to come, and, upon completion, the California Trail Center will both honor the past and be a source of pride in the present.