

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

# ELEPHANT SIGHTINGS



Summer 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](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 the first electronic issue of *Elephant Sightings*, our quarterly newsletter.

Our biggest news for this issue is that the California Trail Center is now officially open to the public for the summer, 2010 season! If you haven't seen the inside of the trail center yet, come out and visit us Wednesday through Sunday from 10:00 a.m.

to 5:00 p.m. As always, the California Trail Center will host evening events like history talks and dances this summer.

If you have questions or comments 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](mailto:Gary_koy@blm.gov)

## Contents:

- Words from the Wagon-master - David Jamiel
- Just Around the Bend - Bulletin of activities at the Trail Center for the Summer of 2010
- “Featured Article” - Article by
- Trail Traffic - Recent activities, events, and new construction
- Exhibit Update - What's new in the exhibit halls
- Volunteer Bulletin - Information about opportunities and activities for our volunteers
- An Intern's Experience - Cheyna Burton

## 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:

Approximately 1,000 people attended the 2010 Trail Days, May 28 and 29 making it the a record attendance for the seven year old event. Trail Days also marked the first time the Trail Center was opened to the public on regular basis. Summer hours began on

Sunday May 30<sup>th</sup>. The Trail Center will continue to be open for the public Wednesday through Sunday from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM. There is no entry fee.

Staff and volunteers will be on hand to answer questions about the Trail Center, future and exhibits and upcoming public events. Open hours will continue through Labor Day. After Labor Day the Trail Center will go back to be open for scheduled activities and special events. Staff kicked off summer hours for the Trail Center.

## Just Around the Bend Upcoming Events at the Trail Center

**July 21<sup>st</sup>** Two Sisters - the "History Along The Humboldt" Series continues with a presentation by Shirley Jamiel and Jan Petersen about the correspondence of two sisters separated by the overland emigration. This talk will begin at 7:00 p.m. at the Trail Center.

**August 4<sup>th</sup>** - The California Trail Center continues the "History Along the Humboldt" Series with a talk by Great Basin Institute Intern Suzanne Miller. Topic to be announced.

**August 10<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup>** OCTA Convention - Elko will host the 2010 Oregon and California Trails Association national conference. The Trail Center will host their annual banquet, and Trail Center staff will lead several tours to trail locations near Elko.

**August 18<sup>th</sup>** - The California Trail Center continues the "History Along the Humboldt" Series with a talk by Great

Basin Institute Intern Cheyna Burton. Topic to be announced.

**August 27<sup>th</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup>** - **Great Basin Native Market Committee Summer Market and Cultural Exchange** the Trail Center will host a market for Native American artisans, which will include art, music, and demonstrations.

**September 1<sup>st</sup>** - **Contra Dance** on the California Trail Center Plaza. The dance will begin at 7:00 p.m.

**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 David Low at [DAVDLOW@gmail.com](mailto:DAVDLOW@gmail.com) with a note asking to be added to the list. We are sometime 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

The **Seventh Annual Trail Days** was a record breaker! Despite the first cold weather we've seen at Trail Days we had nine-hundred eighty-two visitors. That's one hundred-fifty more than last year! Although we were forced to cancel the free wagon-rides we had advertized everything else at the event took place more or less as planned. This year's Trail Days was a wonderful way to kick off our first season open to the public.



**Lamoille Canyon Environmental Education Week** - as in years past the California Trail Center participated in the Elko School District's Environmental Education week in Lamoille Canyon. However, this year due to the unseasonably cold and wet weather the Trail Center also acted as the rain-location for the event, and hosted two of its five days beneath our roof. That brought a record number of kids through our doors and gave us the chance to introduce our community to the Trail Center.



**Contra Dances on the Plaza, May 15<sup>th</sup> & June 30<sup>th</sup>** - We moved the dances outside! With the hills as our walls and the sky as our roof the Trail Center staff and about seventy visitors kicked up our heels like the emigrants did. Our trail dances have been one of our biggest successes of the past year, and we plan on holding at least two more dances out on the plaza this summer. See the “Just around the Bend” section of this newsletter for dates and details.

**July 7<sup>th</sup>** - The California Trail Center continued the “History Along the Humboldt” Series with a talk by Park Ranger Brian Smith - “Let No Good Deed Go Unpunished”. Brian changed our understanding of the interaction between the overland emigrants and the Native Americans they met on the trail

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

**Pony Express Sesquicentennial Exhibit,** In 1860 America's western-most state, California, was swelling with emigrants and gold-miners. In order to connect them with the rest of the country in the east riders set forth from St. Joseph, Missouri, carrying the mail on horseback. This year America celebrates the 150 year anniversary of an early attempt to offer a service that connected the nation across the whole continent. The California Trail Center has installed an exhibit composed of art inspired by the Pony Express and artifacts from the riders themselves. It will be on display for the rest of 2010.

The exhibit includes some remedies that have stood the tests of time, and some that will make you glad you live in the twenty-first century and not the nineteenth! This exhibit will be on display until the beginning of October.



In April we installed the temporary **“Strong Medicine” Exhibit**, which details how common people and healers alike aided the sick and injured on the frontier.

Three long-awaited **bronze bas-relief sculptures** have been installed on the plaza walls, as well as twelve interpretive panels all around the plaza. The sculptures show scenes of life on the trail, and a representation of the Shoshone experience of the California Trail. The **interpretive panels** are designed to explain the plaza's map and illustrate the emigrants' passage through the Great Basin.

October will see 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

see the result of her next commission with us. For details see the "Around the Bend" segment of this newsletter on page two. Date to be announced.



## Volunteer Bulletin

Thanks to all our volunteers from this year's Trail Days and the many school programs that we put on this spring. Our volunteers donated two-hundred eighty-three hours of their time at trail days, without which we never could have pulled off such a great event!



With the opening of the California Trail Center to the public for the summer, 2010 season our volunteer needs have changed significantly! Our staff has doubled in the past two months, which has given us the ability to staff the trail center during the days, but for our special events we still need your help. Our dances

and talks in the evenings and our special educational events on the weekends stretch our manpower to the limits, and we welcome anyone who would like to lend a hand. Teachers, front desk staffers and people who would like to work the cash register at our store are all needed.

In August Elko will host the **2010 OCTA Convention** and we expect to be swamped with trail enthusiasts, so anyone who would like to help please contact us! The convention is also looking for help, so if you would like to volunteer at the OCTA convention, contact Jan Petersen (778-5478).

Also remember that all of our speakers last summer were 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 fall, contact Suzanne Miller or email her at [mille2sm@cmich.edu](mailto:mille2sm@cmich.edu) and she'll work with you to develop your program and get it scheduled.

## Volunteer Spotlight

In the last issue our volunteer spotlight illuminated a volunteer who helps us out in some of the most visible ways - staffing the front desk and working with our school programs. In this issue we're turning the beam to someone you may never have seen in the Trail Center, even though she has logged more volunteer hours than anyone else so far this year.

The Trail Center has amassed a formidable little library about the overland migration to California. We've got books and magazines and journals and CD's and DVD's and VHS cassettes. We've had all this great material, but we haven't had the time or expertise to organize it into a useful library. That's where Linda Stapley comes in. Along with Arlene Coffman and Carol Sanders, Linda has spearheaded the massive organizing and cataloging project that has turned this confusion of materials into a library.

Linda brought a career of experience to bear on the task. She was born and raised in Chicago, Illinois, and began working as a library assistant at the Chicago Public Library while still in high school until she married and moved to Salt Lake City. In 1964, they moved to Las Vegas where she began a twenty-six year career as a paraprofessional librarian for the Las Vegas Public Library - Clark County Library System, and finally the North Las Vegas Public Library. When I asked her what it was like moving to Vegas she said she felt lucky to have moved there when she did - during the boom years when casinos were sprouting up like weeds, and it was just like the movie "Casino". Her husband, Leland, is a retired Las Vegas firefighter, and they were married in the Circus Circus casino 32 years ago this August. They raised four children and decided to move up to Elko after regularly coming to northeast Nevada to vacation at Wild Horse Reservoir. She said moving to Elko was like moving back in time to the 1950's and she just loved it.

Here in Elko Linda worked for nine years at the Great Basin College library, and is very active in her church in Lamoille, the historic Lamoille Community Presbyterian Church. It was here that she organized the church library and published her first book - a history of the "Little Church at the Crossroads". Linda has also organized the library at the Northeast Nevada Museum in Elko, and most recently we've been lucky enough to have her do us the same service.



Linda lost a daughter ten years ago this Christmas, and the loss has since led her to help others come to terms with their losses by becoming a certified grief counselor. She is planning to start volunteering at the Elko Senior Center with the Bereavement Support Group soon. Linda also donates time to the Horizon Hospice in Elko.

In February Linda became a fixture at the Trail Center while she, Arlene, and Carol worked on preserving, organizing, and finally cataloguing the library. She has brought the trail center staff warmth, a wealth of energy, and even a crock-pot full of lunch on several occasions! When I asked her why she began volunteering at the Trail Center she said three things led her to it: she'd heard we had books and library work is always a labor of love for her, she was looking for a new project, and the good people who work there kept her coming back. We'd like to extend our

heart-felt thanks to Linda for her service to her community and all the people who

will benefit from the library she helped make worthy of the name!



As always, thanks to *South Wind* music ensemble and our Trail Days Volunteers! Lately our events have one success after another, and we owe it to you!

**Volunteer Opportunities in 2010** - This summer we will need your help! Because we are open to the public for this summer season one of our chief needs from our volunteers is for people to work the front desk and cash register in the book-store. **Volunteer register training July, 21<sup>st</sup>** Contact Gary Koy or Suzanne Miller any time 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](mailto:saunderw@nevadaculture.org), or call the **State Historic Preservation Office** at 702-486-5011

## **An Intern’s Experience** by Cheyna Burton

When first entertaining the thought of wanting to become involved with the California Trail Interpretive Center, I was excited to see and know about the history of such a monumental trek across the nation. I have knowledge about westward expansion’s impacts on the local Western Shoshone population, because I am of Western Shoshone descent. However, I wanted to gain more experience in my field of study by learning more about this important period in American history.

During my days as an intern here at the Trail Center, I have acquired a considerable amount of information that I was previously ignorant of. First, I was always under the impression that many of the over-landers faced impossible odds. Like many folks who aren’t privy to the facts regarding the westward trail, I believed that most emigrants did, in fact, perish on their journeys. Now that I have been working amongst and researching throughout this historical period, I have come to understand that out of the quarter-million westward travelers only five percent did not make it to California or Oregon. Also, I was unaware how much Native Americans actually assisted the travelers as opposed to popular opinion or myth, which reported that native populations along the California Trail were hostile towards emigrants and that they were thieves. Truth be told, the local native populations along the California Trail were more help to the emigrants than hindrances.

Though I will only be here at the California Trail Center for several months, I look forward to gaining a better knowledge of our abundant local history, as well as gaining a better understanding of what effects the California Trail had on this community. I love having been involved in the development of this establishment and it has been pure joy to watch visitors grasp the concepts and themes of the trail in the same way that I have. I also hope to broaden and refine my public speaking skills as well as becoming comfortable in interpreting the message of the trail. I hope to also gain a better understanding of my own culture and to have a chance to teach others about the Native American perspective of the trail. As I work here and absorb this experience, I aim to bridge the gaps between the Native American and emigrant trail perspectives.