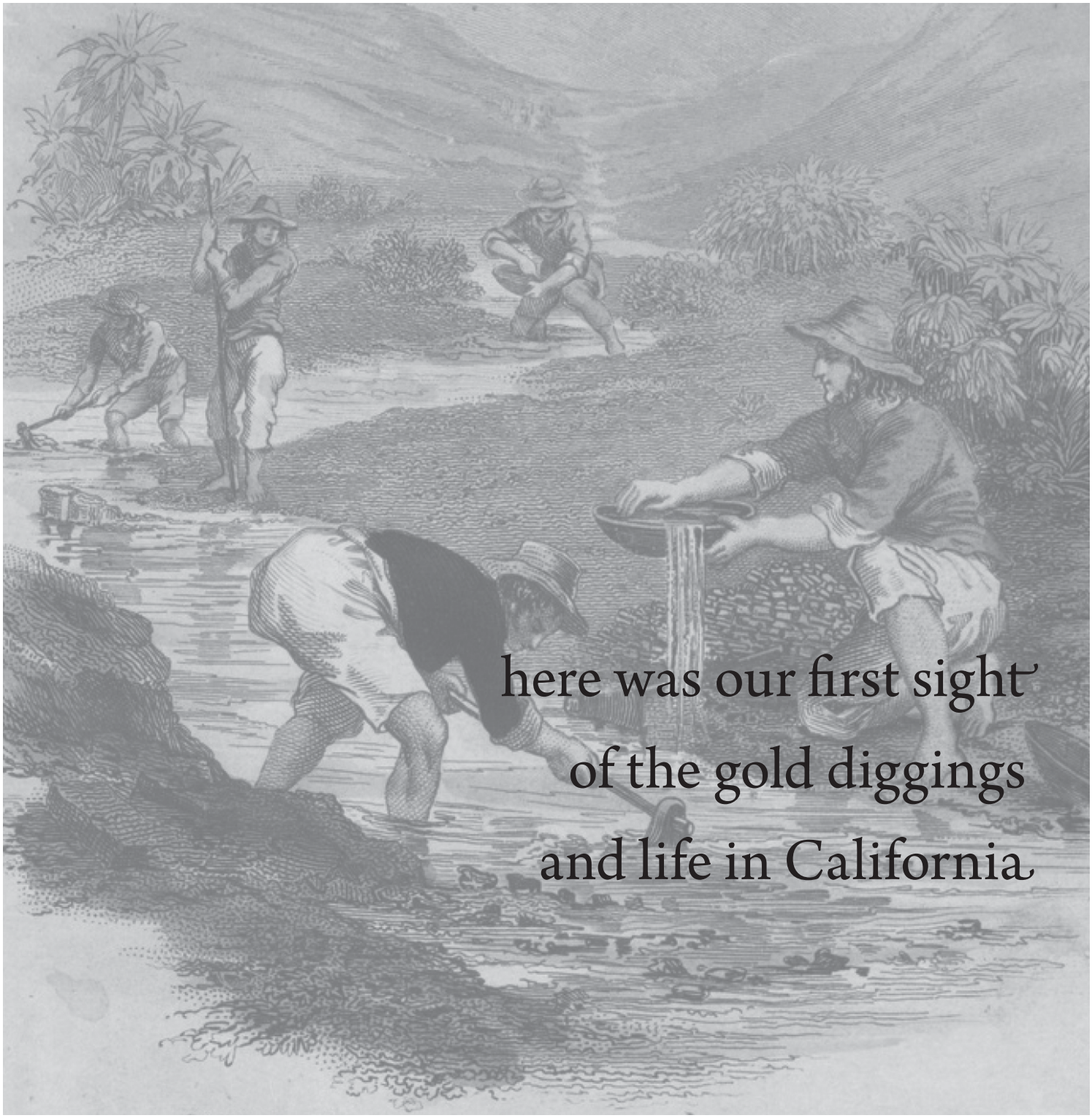
QUARTERLY OF THE OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION

OVERLAND JOURNAL

VOLUME 35 · NUMBER 3 · FALL 2017



here was our first sight
of the gold diggings
and life in California

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SUBMISSIONS AND EDITORIAL CONTACT

Prospective authors should send a query or one paper copy of their article to Marlene Smith-Baranzini, *Overland Journal*, P.O. Box 7041, Stockton, CA 95267 (email: tealblue1@gmail.com). Manuscripts should be typed and double-spaced, without embedded illustrations. When possible, include suggestions for illustrations. Inquiries concerning suitable topics and author guidelines are welcome and should be addressed to the editor. Neither the editor nor the Association is responsible for unsolicited manuscripts, photographs, artwork, or other material sent for editorial consideration.

The Oregon-California Trails Association

P.O. Box 1019 · Independence, MO 64051
www.octa-trails.org · (816) 252-2276 · octa@indepmo.org

PRESERVING THE TRAILS

OCTA's membership and volunteer leadership seek to preserve our heritage. Our accomplishments include:

- Purchasing Nebraska's "California Hill," with ruts cut by emigrant wagons as they climbed from the South Platte River.
- Protecting emigrant graves.
- Initiating legislation designating the California and Santa Fe trails as National Historic trails.
- Persuading government and industry to relocate roads and pipe lines to preserve miles of pristine ruts.

CONVENTIONS AND FIELD TRIPS

Our annual convention is held in a different location with proximity to a historical area each August. Convention activities include tours and treks, papers and presentations, meals and socials, and a display room with book dealers, publishers, and other materials.

Local chapters also plan treks and activities throughout the year.

PUBLICATIONS

Overland Journal—Issued four times each year, *O.J.* contains new research and re-examinations of topics pertaining to the history of the American West, especially the development and use of the trails.

News from the Plains—Also issued quarterly, *News* contains updates about members and the organization, convention reports, legislative action, genealogy, trail preservation, and special activities.

Special Publications—Periodic book publications in the Emigrant Trails Historical Studies Series (numbered documentary editions) and the Special Publications Series (trail studies monographs).

RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

- Developing instructional materials to help students understand the western migration.
- Marking the trails and maintaining weathered or damaged markers.
- Developing a computer-based census of emigrant diaries, newspaper accounts, letters, and other documents.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purposes for which the Association is organized are as follows:

1. To initiate and coordinate activities relating to the identification, preservation, interpretation, and improved accessibility of extant rut segments, trail remains, graves and associated historic trail sites, landmarks, artifacts, and objects along the overland western historic trails, roads, routes, branches, and cutoffs of the Trans-Mississippi region.
2. To prevent further deterioration of the foregoing and to take or pursue whatever measures necessary or advisable to cause more of the same to become accessible or more so to the general public.
3. To implement these purposes by acquiring either alone or through or jointly with others—federal, state, local, or private—title to the land or lands on which any of the same is located or a preservation or other easements with regard to the same—by purchase, gift, or otherwise—and by cooperating with or initiating, coordinating, and assisting the efforts of such others to do so.
4. To publicize and seek public exposure of the goals and activities of the Association so as to create popular awareness of and concern for the necessity of preserving the foregoing.
5. To facilitate research projects about the aforesaid and to publish a journal as a forum for scholarly articles adding to the sum of knowledge about the same.

It shall be the further purpose of the Association to be exclusively charitable and educational within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

 ISSN 0738-1093. *Overland Journal* is published quarterly by the Oregon-California Trails Association, P.O. Box 1019, Independence, MO 64051-0519. Members receive each *Overland Journal* issue as part of their membership privileges. Articles are abstracted and indexed in *Historical Abstracts, America: History and Life*, and online in *Uncover.*

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ON THE COVER
Detail of *The Emigrant's Guide to the Golden Land, shewing him when to go, where to go, how to go . . .* COURTESY BEINECKE RARE BOOK AND MANUSCRIPT LIBRARY, YALE UNIVERSITY. CN: ZC72 850CDB. See the inside back cover for the full image and more information.

ON THE BACK COVER
Buffalo crossing the Platte River, by Charles B. Gillespie. COURTESY THE REES-JONES COLLECTION.

A Walking Arsenal

Observing the forty-niners streaming past Fort Kearny, one writer said they constituted a "walking arsenal." This was borne out by William Kelly, who wrote that the men in his company were "well equipped, each man carrying in his belt a revolver, a sword, and a bowie-knife; the mounted men having besides a pair of holster-pistols and a rifle slung from the horn of their saddles, over and above which there were several double and single-shot guns and rifles suspended in the wagons . . . where they would be easily accessible in case of attack." The hazards inherent in so much firepower multiplied as the weapons were kept loaded and primed. It is said that fatalities resulting from the careless handling of firearms were second only to drowning. Adding the number of injured to those killed produces an even grimmer picture.

A young man of my company (Donn) put the charges intended for 2 barrels, by mistake into one barrel of his double gun, and when discharged, it burst, and hurt his left hand badly.

J. G. Bruff, August 12, 1849

A mournful accident occurred in the camp this morning—a young man by the name of Shotwell while in the act of taking a gun out of the wagon, drew it, with the muzzle towards him in such a manner that it went off and shot him near the heart. He lived about an hour and died in the full possession of his sense.

John Bidwell, June 13, 1841

A young man . . . was standing by a wagon, tieing his horse to a wheel. A loaded musket lay on a knoll at a little distance, and a horse was feeding near it. The horse passed over it, when his halter caught in the lock, and discharged the musket, the whole charge taking effect in the young man's knee, inflicting a dangerous wound, and it was found necessary to amputate the limb to save his life.

Alonzo Delano, June 28, 1849

Levi Freddenburg, one of the teamsters [while descending a steep ravine] had carelessly thrown his rifle into the wagon without taking off the cap, and . . . the rifle slid out at the front of his wagon, and bouncing off the tongue startled him. He snatched and caught it up quickly, the cock caught, and the ball struck above his left eye, taking away the skull to the ear.

James Mason Hutchings, July 5, 1849

. . . one of our men . . . had been running a buffalo, and was about reloading the gun, which he had just discharged, when the powder in his horn was ignited by a burning wad remaining in the barrel; the horn was burst to fragments, the poor man dashed from his horse, and his face, neck, and hands, burnt in a shocking manner . . . His eyes were entirely closed, the lids very much swollen, and his long, flowing hair, patriarchal beard and eye-brows had all vanished in smoke. It will be long ere he gets another such crop.

John Kirk Townsend, July 25, 1834

. . . melancholy to relate, a fine young fellow, John Coulter, in drawing out a loaded gun by the muzzle, brought the cock sharply in contact with a box, which caused it to explode, sending thirteen buck-shot clean through his body, instant death ensuing.

William Kelly, April 27, 1849

. . . Captain Brown in pulling his coat out of his Wagon, pulled at the same time his Gun which discharged itself thro' the hind end of the Wagon, shooting the horse belonging to Barney in the near fore leg, the ball breaking the bone & lodging in the flesh.

Thomas Bullock, April 27, 1847

Just after daylight . . . Mr. Ringo stepped on top of the wagon, . . . and his shot gun went off accidentally in his own hands, the load entering his right eye and coming out the top of his head. At the report of his gun I saw his hat blown up twenty feet in the air, and his brains were scattered in all directions.

William Davenport, July 30, 1864

Jim Andera has been a ham radio operator for forty-four years, and has come to appreciate the value of blending ham radio with his outdoors activities, including backpacking, fishing, and bicycling. He teaches ham classes and emergency communications, writes for ham radio publications, and uses Morse code when on the air. He is also an engineer, designing long-range communications radios for aircraft.

Margaret C. Bowen was born in Champaign, Illinois, and spent her formative years in South Dakota where her father was an Air Force pilot. She graduated with a degree in Geology from the College of William and Mary. Her career in IT management was spent on Capitol Hill and at Centers for Disease Control. In 2010 she retired, and began the research that led to *Jersey Gold: The Newark Overland Company's Trek to California, 1849*. She and her husband live in Jefferson, Maryland.

Andrew "Andy" W. Hammond (1925–2012) was a charter member of octa. After his retirement, he and his wife, Joanne, moved from Seattle to Chico, California. They mapped the Beckwourth Trail for the National Park Service. Andy's books include *Following the Beckwourth Trail* and *The Look of the Elephant: The Westering Experience in the Words of Those Who Lived It, 1841–1861*.

David J. Welch served as octa's president and national trails preservation officer. His work often involves cooperative efforts with local, state and federal agencies; energy and land developers; and landowners. He is chair of octa's mapping and marking committee and the investment advisory committee. Dave is a retired aeronautical engineer and lives with his wife Wendy in Lacey, Washington.

BOOK REVIEWERS

Jim Hardee is the Editor of the *Rocky Mountain Fur Trade Journal*, an annual, peer-reviewed publication of the Museum of the Mountain Man and the Sublette County Historical Society in Pinedale, Wyoming. He is the author of *Pierre's Hole! The Fur Trade History of Teton Valley, Idaho* and *Obstinate Hope, The Western Expeditions of Nathaniel J. Wyeth*. Jim lives in Pierre's Hole, Idaho.

Lee Kreutzer is a cultural resources specialist/archeologist with the National Park Service, which administers the Oregon National Historic Trail, and has written numerous trail tour guides for that office. She and her husband retraced the Lewis & Clark route on bicycles in 1990, following the river route as closely as practicable. She lives in Salt Lake City, Utah. The opinions expressed in her review are hers alone, not those of the National Park Service.

Bill Martin is a past president of octa and current editor of *News From The Plains*.

Josie Reifschneider-Smith is an octa member, freelance editor, and shy historian who lives in Chico, California. She recently authored *Images of America: Tehama County* (Arcadia Publishing, 2016). She is a board member and the publications editor/layout designer for the Association of Northern California Historical Research (anchr), and the Tehama County Genealogical & Historical Society.

Martha Voght is an author/historian/quilter who lives in Bishop, California. She has written numerous historical monographs and educational film scripts, plus seven historical novels. She is currently investigating western narratives as a literary genre. OJ

The Fall 2017 issue of *OJ* arrives on the vanishing heels of OCTA's annual August convention, our most significant event of the year. During the Awards Banquet, I had the honor of presenting the Merrill J. Mattes Award for Excellence in Writing to co-authors LeRoy Johnson and Tom Sutak for their study, "The Old Spanish Trail and the Southern Route: Salt Spring to Resting Spring, California." The article appears in Volume 35, no. 4 (Winter 2016–2017). Congratulations to both of you for your outstanding research and writing!

Celebrating authors Tom Sutak *(center left)* and LeRoy Johnson *(far right)* for their 2016 Merrill J. Mattes Award for Excellence in Writing are OCTA President Pat Traffas *(left)* and editor Marlene Smith-Baranzini *(center right)*. PHOTO COURTESY OF ROGER BLAIR.

In this issue you'll find interesting highlights from a distinguished New Jersey group who organized as the Newark Overland Company and set out for the California gold mines in 1849. Excerpts from their journal entries clearly portray their individuality, describe where and why they quickly split up, and how they adapted to challenges of life in California or (mostly) returned to establish themselves in various professions and trades at home. In her article, "Voices of the Newark Overland Company," author Margaret Bowen also describes the physical conditions of several travel diaries and how experts discern the original version from a sometimes-quite-convincing revision.

Many celebrations marked the centennial anniversary of the National Park Service in 2016. In "Making Our Historic Trails Radio-Active," author Jim Andera describes what at first may seem an unlikely way to interest the public in our national historic treasures—setting up amateur radio stations at important trail sites and welcoming communications with other amateur radio operators in distant places. Jim's group also welcomed visitors, including our own Bill and Jan Hill, driving home from the Fort Hall Convention. *OJ* readers who aren't very conversant in "ham" radio technology or its value for groups like ours soon will be. Thank you, Bill, for suggesting Jim share this interesting approach to introducing the public to the national trails.

We also present a full slate of interesting book reviews, a range of subjects evaluated honestly. And while the editor strives for perfection, sometimes the mark is missed. Check the Letters and Corrections to see what our readers caught or have taken the time to comment about. We apologize for all errors.

As winter sets in and field work pauses, to everyone who dedicates their energies to preserving the physical trails and the history that illuminates them, we extend a big thank you.

Marlene Smith-Baranzini

BY MARGARET C. BOWEN

Voices of the Newark Overland Company

"That the events, the trials & dangers of our campaign may at some future day afford amusement (small though it may be) to several of my valued friends & relatives, as well as to myself, is my wish & hope—"

And so ended the journal of twenty-eight-year-old Manhattan native and bookkeeper Charles G. Gray, his words written in San Francisco on November 19, 1849.[1] Never could he have imagined that more than a century later his overland trail diary would afford amusement—not just to friends and relatives, but to tens of thousands of western history enthusiasts.

Charles Gray was a member of a "company from New Jersey, styled the Newark Overland Company," according to the *St. Louis Republican*.[2] In all, more than forty men were at one time associated with this gold-rush company, with no less than twelve of them leaving some written account about their overland trail and early California experiences. An unprecedented number of documents—six trail journals, and more than forty letters from this single company, along with letters from two wives—are known to exist, some freshly unearthed during the research for *Jersey Gold: The Newark Overland Company's Trek to California, 1849*.[3]

The daily records kept by Charles Gray from May 1, 1849, to the closing words he penned almost seven months later, were believed to be composed in two leather-bound journals which were eventually donated to the Huntington Library in San Marino, California. There, in 1964, his works came to the attention of University of Kentucky historian Thomas D. Clark, who was coincidently researching a Forty-niner journal written by Elisha Douglass Perkins.

Dr. Clark found Gray's writing compelling. He began a decade-long project to transcribe the handwritten entries and learn more about their Shakespeare-quoting and sometimes plaintive author. Despite years of writing back and forth to New York and New Jersey libraries and archive institutions to

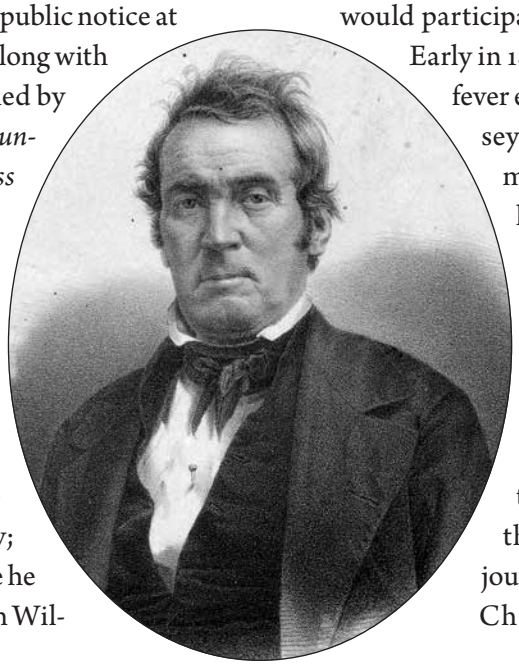
1 Charles G. Gray, "Journal of an Overland Passage from Independence, Missouri to San Francisco, California in 1849," entry dated November 19, 1849, Huntington Library, HM16520, San Marino, California.

2 "Local Matters," *Newark Daily Advertiser*, April 27, 1849, quoted from a "correspondent of the St. Louis Republican . . . writing on the 9th." The practice of newspapers sharing such items was "robust" during the nineteenth century and still common today.

3 Margaret Casterline Bowen and Gwendolyn Joslin Hiles, *Jersey Gold: The Newark Overland Company's Trek to California, 1849* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2017). This article describes some of the company's experiences during and after their journey to California.

uncover details about what became of Charles G. Gray, Clark's findings fell short of discovering the young New Yorker's full life story. Clark could only conclude that Gray spent his life "bowed low over a shipping house clerk's desk," and that he "passed from this mortal scene leaving no public notice at all."[4] The transcription of Gray's journal, along with annotated research by Clark, was published by the Huntington Library in 1976 as *Off at Sunrise: The Overland Journal of Charles Glass Gray.*

In fact, Gray's life was far from mundane. It was spent in the company of some of the finest artists of the mid-nineteenth century, including his brother, Henry Peters Gray, a renowned portrait painter and president of the National Academy of Design in New York. California would again beckon Charles Gray; he returned to San Francisco in 1856. There he would spend four years in association with William H. Oakes, a popular music engraver, and his wife, landscape artist Abby Tyler Oakes. Gray lived the remainder of his life in New York City, surrounded by the rich culture of the fine arts community he craved.



Gen. John Stevens Darcy, organizer of the Newark Overland Company, was sixty-one years old when he set out for California. He was a highly regarded physician throughout the greater Newark, New Jersey, region and also served as president of the New Jersey Railroad. Darcy sent a number of lengthy letters about the overland journey and gold mining experience on the Yuba River to the *Newark Daily Advertiser*. This portrait was made ca. 1847.

The most questionable outcome of Thomas Clark's research on Gray was his attribution of "Glass" as Gray's middle name. Research by *Jersey Gold* authors at both the Huntington Library and the special collections of the Margaret I. King Library at the University of Kentucky, where Clark's papers are housed, provided no clues about why Clark made this assumption. Yet the error was solidified in the publication's title, *The Overland Journal of Charles Glass Gray* and, as often happens in secondary sources, was then perpetuated in many subsequent projects that cited the words of this noted Forty-niner. Clearly identified on his death certificate, recorded in September 1897, was Gray's middle name, Gedney, the surname of his maternal grandparents.[5]

Dr. Clark was successful, however, in learning the reason why Gray, a man with a desk job and little outdoor experience, would participate in the 1849 rush for California's gold. Early in 1849 Gray found himself swept up in gold-fever excitement when his uncle, iconic New Jersey general and doctor John Stevens Darcy, made the decision to lead a contingent of his fellow merchants from Newark, New Jersey—mostly prominent men—to the California placer country. Specifically, John S. Darcy also expected his educated young nephew to serve as secretary and keep the company books. In addition, Gray saw the venture as an opportunity to exercise his writing skills by recording the day-to-day events of the remarkable journey.

Charles Gray was the most prolific and dedicated writer of General Darcy's loose-knit company. Like Gray, several others took writing tools and materials with them when they left New Jersey and made their way west to Missouri in March 1849 to begin the process of outfitting for the overland travel.

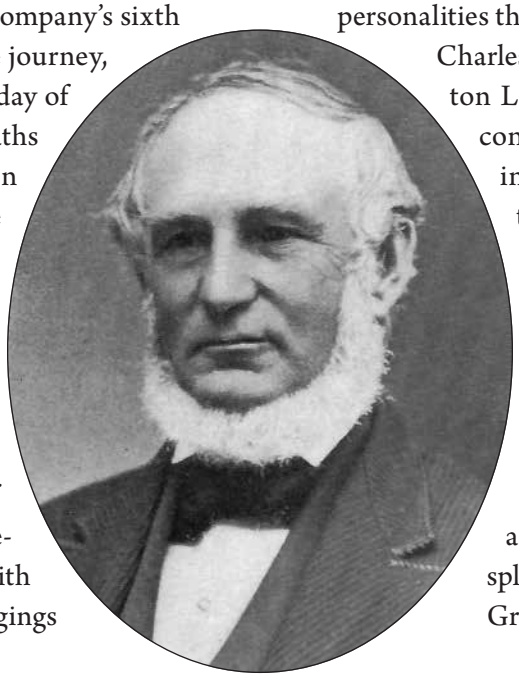
Before the company reached Independence, however, disputes had broken out over which stock animals to use for the journey. The mules-versus-oxen showdown caused their division. Unable to resolve it by group consensus, the organization splintered into three smaller contingents, a circumstance experienced by many overland companies. The largest group, which included twenty-five associates from Newark and the surrounding communities, was led by Darcy. They outfitted with ox-driven teams. In this party were three who kept trail journals: Charles Gray, Maj. Stephen Harris Meeker, and Robert Bond. A breakaway group that preferred mules included two

4 Charles G. Gray, *Off at Sunrise: The Overland Journal of Charles Glass Gray,* edited by Thomas D. Clark (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1976), xxiii.

5 Certificate and Record of Death for Charles Gedney Gray, 1 September 1897, File No. 27127, State of New York. Copy in possession of author.

more diarists: Alexander Joy Cartwright, Jr., an early New York Knickerbocker baseball player,[6] and Cyrus Currier, a cousin of famed engraver Nathaniel Currier.

Traveling with the third group, which also preferred mules, was Charles B. Gillespie, author of the company's sixth written account. For the first half of the journey, Gillespie and his men traveled within a day of the Darcy party, occasionally crossing paths and only breaking ahead somewhere in western Wyoming. Major Meeker made reference to their proximity when he wrote on June 11, 1849, while camped near Fort Laramie, "We are almost daily overtaking ox and mule teams, which started many days in advance of us, and are within one days' travel, (should no accident befall us) of overtaking some of our original company, who left us at Independence, and started in advance of us with mules, expecting thereby to reach the diggings long before us."[7] In fact, Gillespie's small group was the last to leave Independence on May 3, 1849.



Cyrus Currier, a mechanic by trade, maintained daily entries in his journal for the duration of the overland travel. Once in California, Currier did not mine for gold; instead he engineered a steam-powered saw mill near Redwood City. He wrote frequently to his wife, Nancy, but did not return home until the summer of 1850 after a fifteen-month absence. FROM JOHN WHITEHEAD, *THE PASSAIC VALLEY, NEW JERSEY, IN THREE CENTURIES*, VOL. 2 (NEW JERSEY GENEALOGICAL COMPANY, 1901).

Typical of 1849 journal writers, who were enthusiastic early on the trail, was the failure of many to continue the regimen of recording daily events as the weeks stretched into months. As trail conditions deteriorated, so did the writing. Only Charles Gray and Cyrus Currier were faithful in writing daily entries during the entire journey, from the day each departed Missouri to the day of their arrival in California. The last known entries written by messmates Robert Bond and Stephen H. Meeker were recorded in Salt Lake City on July 17 and 18, 1849, respectively.

The recorded entries of these six men reveal their different views and experiences of the Oregon-California Trail. Likewise, the current locations of their journals span from Connecticut to Hawaii—almost symbolic of the wide variety of personalities that emerge through their written words.

Charles Gray's journal, donated to the Huntington Library by his nephew Joseph D. Cone, contains well-written entries, often including comparisons between conditions on the trail and those in his native New York. For example, of South Pass Gray wrote on June 30, 1849, "We never saw finer roads than yesterday & todays—our own 3'd avenue can not surpass them & my ideas from this famous locality entirely erroneous. I had supposed it to be a narrow define, rocky & steep, but found it to be a long wide plain (about 18 miles) with a splendid road."[8]

Gray's journey west included struggles both physical and emotional. Apparently he was not particularly popular among company members, and he often lapsed into sourness in describing relationships with them. Language, such as the following rant, recorded on May 12, 1849, flows freely throughout his writing, exposing firsthand emotions rather than later, editorialized revisions:

> These past few days I have been so disgusted that if an opportunity could have offered itself I should have returned home—our wagon a hospital—up at all hours of the night—hardly a place to sleep in—all our men disputing and wrangling about the merest trifles, all my exertions to keep things in order impossible—everything used and thrown down in a filthy state—& I expected to keep it all clean.[9]

6 Alexander Joy Cartwright, Jr. (1820–1892), was a founder of the Knickerbocker Base Ball team, which played in Hoboken, New Jersey, during its early years. For another view on Cartwright, visit https://sabr.org/bioproj/person/09ed3dd4.

7 "Further from the Darcy Party," Letter from S. H. Meeker, *Newark Daily Advertiser*, August 23, 1849.

8 Charles G. Gray, "Journal of an Overland Passage from Independence, Missouri to San Francisco, California in 1849," June 30, 1849, Huntington Library, HM16520.

9 Ibid., May 12, 1849.

This print, *Out for a Day's Shooting*, by Nathaniel Currier, shows cousins Cyrus, the Forty-niner, and Nathaniel, the engraver, seated in front, and Cyrus Currier's son in the back. In the background is Cyrus's residence in Madison, New Jersey. The Curriers supported the Underground Railroad and this house was used as a station. IMAGE PROVIDED BY THE CURRIER & IVES FOUNDATION.

Suffering from a number of ailments, from scrapes and bruises to a badly infected wound on his face to a severe dysentery-like illness, Gray frequently turned to brandy as a remedy. On some occasions his uncle Dr. Darcy opened his medical supplies and provided morphine to his nephew, the side effects of which left him confined to the wagon for days at a time.

The partial diary of Robert Bond is held in the Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University in New Haven. Bond began writing in his journal the day he left Newark. His entries were sparse, however, often amounting to fewer than a dozen words on any given day. A very religious man, Bond made note of attending church in Cincinnati, St. Louis, and Independence, where he wrote on April 8, 1849, "Went to church and heard western eloquence."[10]

While sojourning in Great Salt Lake City, on July 16, 1849, Bond and a number of the Newark men attended a Mormon meeting, and described the Latter-day Saints as "very confident of salvation."[11] The following day Bond made the last entry in his journal, citing a trip to a local warm spring. Six weeks later Bond was dead, having succumbed to an illness described as "malignant typhoid," less than twenty-four hours after company member Job Denman's death from the same malady. The two men were buried side by side in the desolate Black Rock Desert of northwestern Nevada. Following the same path a month later, diarist J. Goldsborough Bruff remarked about seeing two graves in the region of Great Boiling Springs.[12]

The first page of Bond's diary carries the following notation:

Robert Bond
Direct to Wm. S. Bond
Or Mr. D. Price
Newark, NJ[13]

10 Robert Bond, *Diary, 1849,* entry dated April 8, 1849, Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

11 Ibid., July 18, 1849.

12 Joseph Goldsborough Bruff, *Gold Rush: The Journals, Drawings, and Other Papers of J. Goldsborough Bruff, Captain, Washington City and California Mining Association, April 2, 1849–July 20, 1851,* ed. by Georgia Willis Read and Ruth Gaines (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), 154.

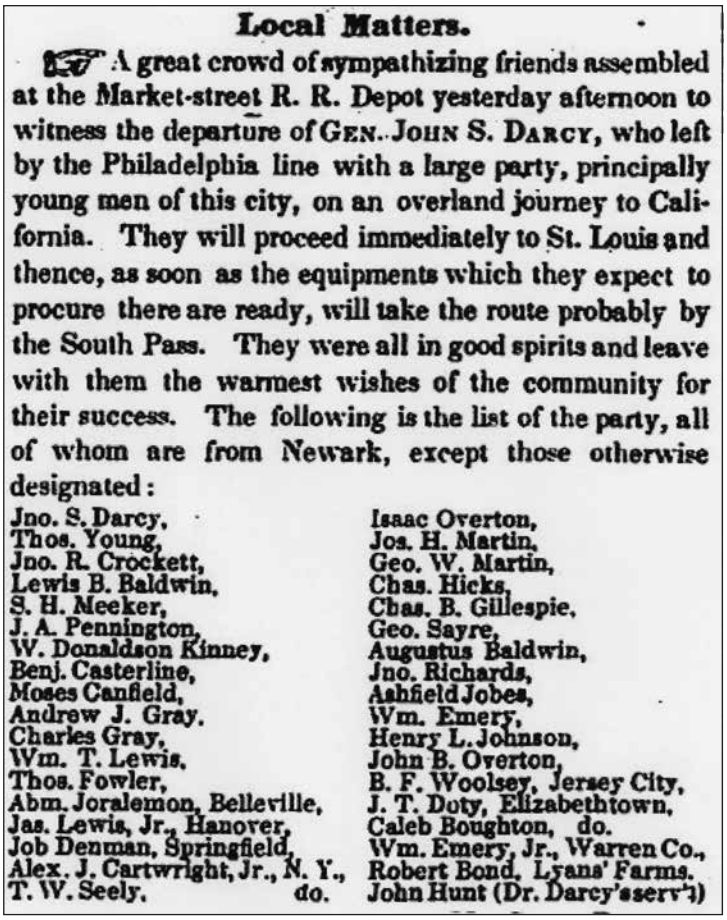
13 Bond, *Diary,* p. 1.

In fact, the document made its way back to family members in New Jersey. Notes added later by a descendant state that Bond died in Salt Lake City in July 1849, an assumption made based on the final written entry. Like the misstep of Thomas Clark in identifying Charles Gray's middle name as Glass, Bond's diary was eventually titled "Diary of an Overland Trip to Great Salt Lake City, 1849," and is cited with the misleading title in many subsequent works.

Two of the Newark Company's original diaries have yet to be located. Stephen H. Meeker's account of his journey survives today only as excerpts in the *Newark Daily Advertiser,* where segments were published on August 24 and October 16, 1849. These were mailed to his hometown newspaper while he was en route, from post offices at Fort Laramie and later Great Salt Lake City, where the company replenished supplies at the Mormon settlement. Typical of Meeker's style was the following entry:

> June 4th.—Breakfast at 4½ A.M. Soon entered the ravine of Ash Hollow, which we found by far the most wild and rugged looking place our wagons had yet entered; plenty of wood and good spring water in the Hollow, being the first good water we had tasted for more than 200 miles. Found a party of Indians encamped, who seemed entirely peaceable, and of whom we bought some moccasins and breeches. Buffalo carcasses which had recently been killed, flanked our road on either side in great numbers.[14]

In addition to entries from his partial diary, Meeker also sent the newspaper lengthy, informative letters that were published. Numerous other letters were written privately to family and friends. Meeker was businesslike in describing events on the trail as well as the life he established in California. A merchant by trade, he likely never intended to mine for gold but instead sought opportunities in the booming marketplace of Sacramento. There he initially opened a consignment shop on Front Street along the waterfront. In June 1852 he moved to a new location "on the southwest corner of K and 2d streets, a spacious, substantial and elegant brick store."[15] It is likely that Major Meeker's diary perished at this location in November 1852



Local Matters.

☞ A great crowd of sympathizing friends assembled at the Market-street R. R. Depot yesterday afternoon to witness the departure of GEN. JOHN S. DARCY, who left by the Philadelphia line with a large party, principally young men of this city, on an overland journey to California. They will proceed immediately to St. Louis and thence, as soon as the equipments which they expect to procure there are ready, will take the route probably by the South Pass. They were all in good spirits and leave with them the warmest wishes of the community for their success. The following is the list of the party, all of whom are from Newark, except those otherwise designated:

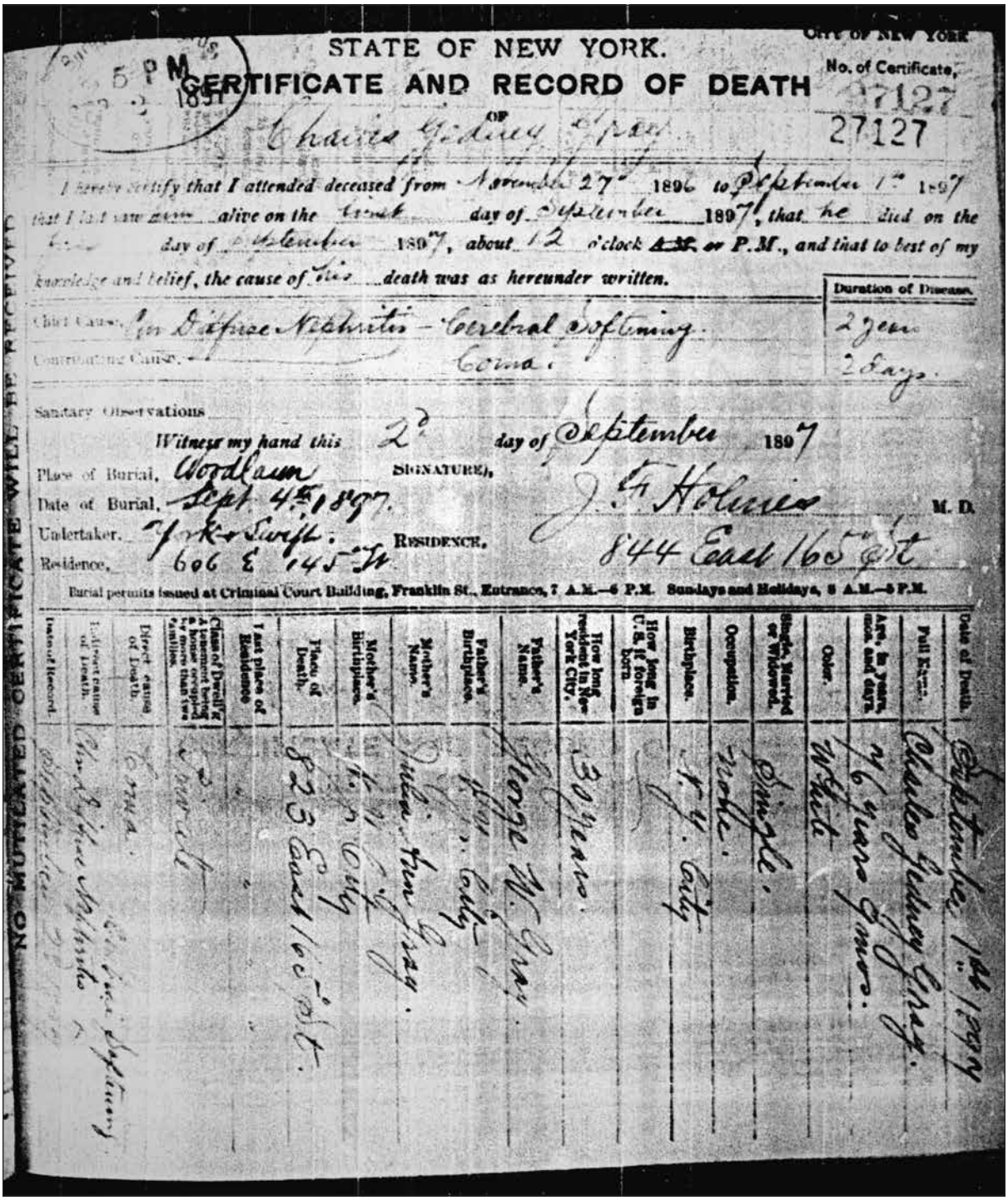
Jno. S. Darcy,	Isaac Overton,
Thos. Young,	Jos. H. Martin,
Jno. R. Crockett,	Geo. W. Martin,
Lewis B. Baldwin,	Chas. Hicks,
S. H. Meeker,	Chas. B. Gillespie,
J. A. Pennington,	Geo. Sayre,
W. Donaldson Kinney,	Augustus Baldwin,
Benj. Casterline,	Jno. Richards,
Moses Canfield,	Ashfield Jobes,
Andrew J. Gray,	Wm. Emery,
Charles Gray,	Henry L. Johnson,
Wm. T. Lewis,	John B. Overton,
Thos. Fowler,	B. F. Woolsey, Jersey City,
Abm. Joralemon, Belleville,	J. T. Doty, Elizabethtown,
Jas. Lewis, Jr., Hanover,	Caleb Boughton, do.
Job Denman, Springfield,	Wm. Emery, Jr., Warren Co.,
Alex. J. Cartwright, Jr., N. Y.,	Robert Bond, Lyons' Farms.
T. W. Seely, do.	John Hunt (Dr. Darcy's serv't)

ROSTER OF COMPANY

List of the thirty-six members of the Newark Overland Company upon their departure for California on March 1, 1849. There would be a number of changes to the roster as the company moved west. FROM THE *NEWARK DAILY ADVERTISER*, MARCH 2, 1849.

14 "Further from the Darcy Party," Journal entries of S. H. Meeker, *Newark Daily Advertiser,* August 23, 1849, n.p.

15 "New Mercantile House," *Sacramento Daily Union*, June 21, 1852.



STATE OF NEW YORK.

CERTIFICATE AND RECORD OF DEATH

No. of Certificate, 27127

Charles Gedney Gray

I hereby certify that I attended deceased from November 27th 1896 to September 1st 1897 that I last saw him alive on the 1st day of September 1897, that he died on the 1st day of September 1897, about 12 o'clock A.M. or P.M., and that to best of my knowledge and belief, the cause of his death was as hereunder written.

Duration of Disease.

Chief Cause: Epidemic Nephritis - Cerebral Softening. — 2 years.

Contributing Cause: Coma. — 2 days.

Sanitary Observations

Witness my hand this 2d day of September 1897

Place of Burial, Woodlawn

Date of Burial, Sept. 4th 1897.

Undertaker, York & Sawyer.

Residence, 606 E 145th St.

SIGNATURE, J. H. Holmes M. D.

RESIDENCE, 844 East 165th St

Burial permits issued at Criminal Court Building, Franklin St., Entrance, 7 A.M.—6 P.M. Sundays and Holidays, 8 A.M.—5 P.M.

Date of Death.	Full Name.	Age, in Years, Mos. and Days.	Color.	Single, Married or Widowed.	Occupation.	Birthplace.	How long in U.S. if foreign born.	How long resident in New York City.	Father's Name.	Father's Birthplace.	Mother's Name.	Mother's Birthplace.	Place of Death.	Last place of Residence.	Class of Dwelling, A tenement being a house occupied by more than two families.	Direct cause of Death.	Duration of same.	Date of Record.
Sept 1st 1897	Charles Gedney Gray.	24 years 9 mos.	White	Single.	Student.	N. Y. City		30 years.	George W. Gray.	N. Y. City	Julia Gedney.	N. Y. City	823 East 166th St.			Coma.	2 days.	

Charles Gray, one of those who kept a journal of the journey to California, died in 1897. His original journal was housed at the Huntington Library, San Marino, California. Historian Thomas D. Clark incorrectly believed "Glass" was Charles Gray's middle name when he published *Off at Sunrise: The Overland Journal of Charles Glass Gray* in 1976. Upon Gray's death in New York City on September 1, 1897, Gray's sister provided his official name as Charles Gedney Gray. NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF RECORDS, MUNICIPAL ARCHIVES, NO. 27127.

when his Sacramento business was destroyed in a massive fire that turned many of the city's downtown structures into ash.

Despite the floods and fires that plagued Sacramento in the early 1850s, Meeker continued to rebuild with success, committing to a lifetime in California. After partnering with future railroad magnate Leland Stanford for a brief period,[16] Meeker moved his business to San Francisco where he became the exclusive importer of various lines of fine wine and liquor. In so doing, he amassed a fortune.

In contrast to Stephen H. Meeker, who settled in San Francisco, Cyrus Currier looked forward to returning home. Meanwhile, he too found profitable work beyond the mines. Although his original handwritten trail journal has not been found, the Wyoming State Archives in Cheyenne holds a digitized copy of it. No information seems to exist there that identifies who supplied the journal for photocopying, or when. Despite an intense effort during the research for *Jersey Gold*, which involved contact with several direct Currier descendants, including Scott Currier of the Currier and Ives Foundation in Colorado, no clues regarding the journal's whereabouts have surfaced. Currier's writing was the most ragged of the Newark Overland Company members. His spelling was often phonetic and he seldom included punctuation, as represented in this descriptive entry dated May 26, 1849: "saw the remains of a deceased Indian depossited on the branch of an oak tree the Buffalo robe was wound round him tight and was bound to the branches by strips of rawhide it is the manner of burial by some tribes came to Fort Larime at 6 Oclock, P.M."[17]

In addition to the journal at the Wyoming State Archives, Currier's descendants have transcripts of several letters that were exchanged between Cyrus and his wife, Nancy, after his arrival in California. In them, Cyrus expressed affection for the family he left at home and also his determination to be a good provider. Instead of mining, Currier went to work with fellow Newark business partner Stephen Dehart, who had traveled to California with Currier. The men engineered a sawmill near Redwood City, located about twenty-five miles south of San Francisco and at the time was known as Brown's Redwoods. Regarding the business he left in Newark, Currier advised his wife, "I think you will have to act as my Attorney and counsult with some of my friends what is best to do I shall send you five hundred dollars in Gold dust." Cyrus Currier confessed his homesickness in these private letters, writing, "I want to be with you and the Children but have stoped in hopes to earn money for yours and my benefit also the Childrens I am comfortably situated considering all things we have a plenty to eat and drink."[18]

The couple and their three children were reunited in the summer of 1850 when Cyrus returned to New Jersey and resumed work at his Newark machine shop. His reputation grew over the years and his successful business was passed on to two of his sons.

Alexander Cartwright, another family man in the company, kept a journal for perhaps six weeks, from April 24 to June 5, 1849, in which he expressed almost daily his fascination with the journey as he encountered a new world on the western plains. In particular were his observations of Native populations, including his description of the Pottawatomies as "the wealthiest tribe under the protection of the U.S.,"[19] and later writing in some detail of the Sioux as "a magnificent race of Indians, the men are tall and finely formed with fine classic features and noble carriage, frank and open in their manner of address, the women many of them the most beautiful I have ever beheld they were principally clothed in beautiful dressed skins some of them very richly ornamented and as white as snow."[20]

At Scotts Bluff (Nebraska) Cartwright and his group met "Mr. Robidoux," who kindly offered Cartwright a cup of his homemade alcoholic brew, which he called "A No 1 Brandy." Cartwright obliged, and then described the experience:

> I can compare it to nothing but liquid hell fire, I writhed and twisted in agony my contortions of visage must have been fearful, rushing to a bucket of water, I caught up a tin cup full and

16 "Permanent Business Houses," *California Farmer and Journal of Useful Sciences*, April 23, 1858.

17 Cyrus Currier, "Cyrus Currier's Journal to California by the Northern Overland Route from Newark, State of New Jersey," May 26, 1849, transcription by Richard L. Rieck, 1999, Wyoming State Archives, Cheyenne, MSS 1123.

18 Cyrus and Nancy Currier, Letters and Bible records. Private collection of Nancy Currier Dorian and Ewen Currier McEwen.

19 Alexander Joy Cartwright, Jr., "Journal of a trip across the Plains from Independence to San Francisco via South Pass, Rocky Mountains, and the Sierra Nevada," April 27, 1849, Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum Archives, MS Doc 55, Honolulu, Hawaii.

20 Ibid., May 19, 1849.

tossed down my throat, but then only appeared to aggravate it, I could feel my stomach hiss as the water came in contact with the fiery fluid, God what a ten minutes of agony I endured after that bumper of No 1—it was fully two hours before I was fairly relieved from its influence.[21]

In fact, Cartwright's sensitive stomach was the source of much of his discomfort on the trail. He wrote at one point, "I am still suffering with dysentery caused by eating too freely of buffalo."[22] When Cartwright arrived in California he was still unwell. With various sicknesses thriving in the mining camps, he was advised to leave California. He did so in mid-August that year, aboard the brig *Pacific,* bound for Honolulu in the Sandwich Islands. There he clearly found a paradise. He sent for his wife and children, and made his lifelong home in the islands. Active in his new community, he served as Honolulu's first fire chief and later became an advisor in some capacity to the Hawaiian Royal family.

The only Pennsylvanian in the Newark Overland Company was Charles B. Gillespie. The discovery of his trail notes was, for *Jersey Gold* authors, a journey in itself. Located only through heaps of uncanny luck, the Gillespie papers were generously shared by his great-grandson Richard Rogers. Charles B. Gillespie not only wrote, he sketched avidly while on the trail. Images of Chimney Rock, the Platte River, Laramie Peak, and the Sierra range are included in Gillespie's gold-rush chronicles. In 2015 Rogers was fortunate to have this wealth of original gold-rush documentation placed with a private collector and curator, both of whom were most gracious in supporting the production of *Jersey Gold*.

Charles B. Gillespie's writing style was unlike that of his companions. For the majority, like Stephen H. Meeker, accurate observations of events such as river crossings, Indian encounters, even the deaths of travelers on the trail, along with informational recordings of weather and mileage, filled their pages. For many of them, producing a formal record and conveying the sense of a scientific expedition was important. Not so for Gillespie. Rather than keeping a record of conditions on the trail, Gillespie reported on the unique situations that characterized emigration parties and mining camps. In this he had a keen eye for observing scenes and incidents that exposed human nature. During his 1849–1851 adventure he captured many such observations and translated them into compelling articles, later published, that were written in a playful and anecdotal style.

It was not just Gillespie's writing style that exuded an upbeat tone. He was a bounding optimist, always progressing forward in life's endeavors. While Charles Gray had contemplated that his journal "might" one day provide amusement to others, Gillespie did not leave the matter to chance. In the late 1880s he successfully marketed the stories of his Forty-niner days to *The Century*, a literary magazine founded in New York in 1881, at a time when memoirs of the western frontier were gaining in popularity. In his *Century* articles are found polished versions of his gold-rush notes, written during his days in the American River mining camps surrounding Coloma. The following journal entry, dated October 10, 1849, is typical of Gillespie's characteristic style:

> Our town is increasing rapidly. We have already four stores in full operation, and one tavern where for two dollars a hungry miner can satisfy his appetite on rancid bacon, black frijoles and leathery slap-jacks, and for a dollar extra will have the privilege of sleeping in a bunk, where he will be food for fleas and likely carry away with him the progenitors of a hungry race of lice, from whose clutches there is scarcely any escape.[23]

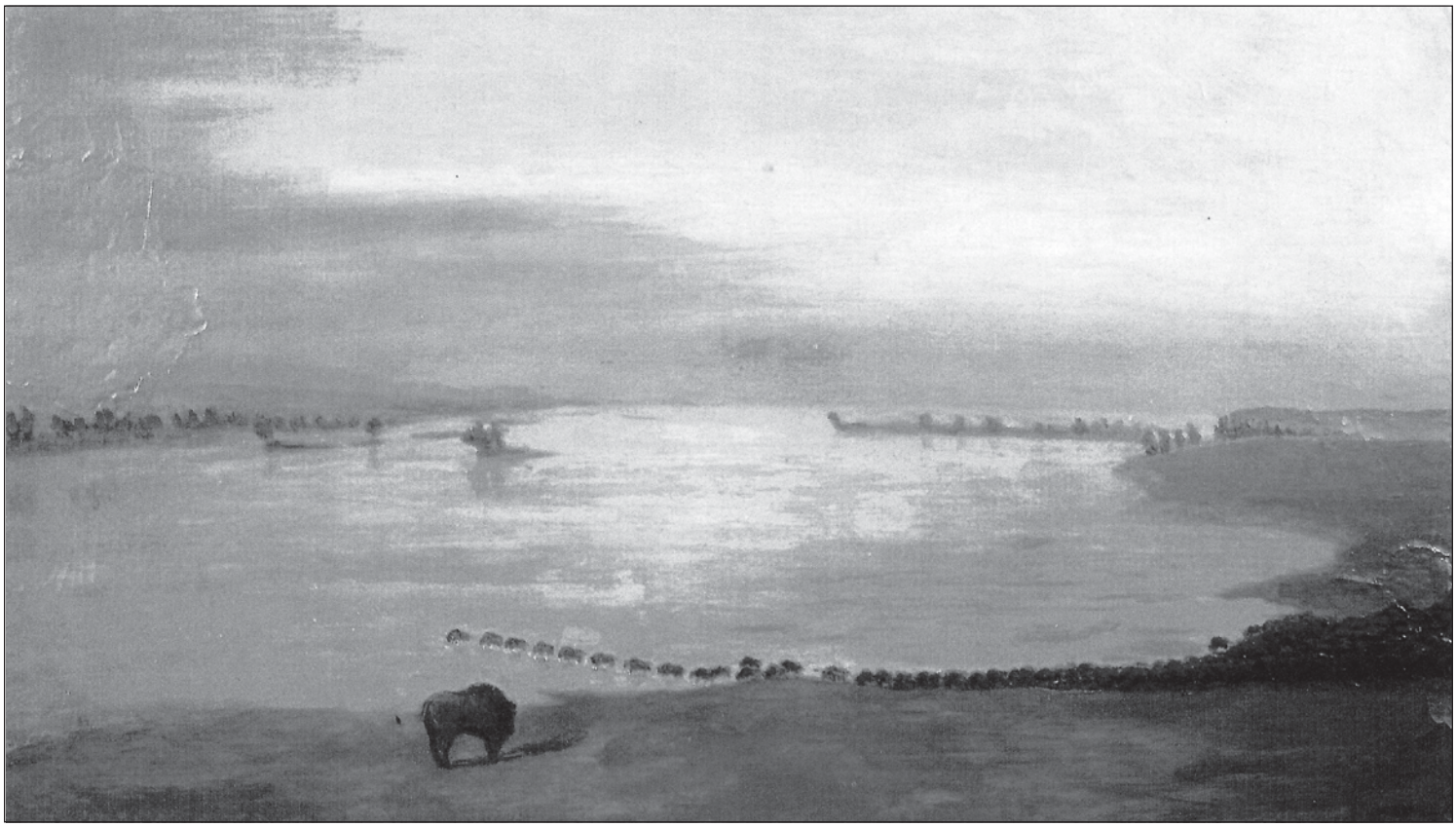
Gillespie meandered about the California mining regions for nearly eighteen months before returning to Pennsylvania. Within several years he had completed coursework at a medical school in Philadelphia. As the Civil War began, in 1861 Dr. Gillespie joined the Union forces and became Captain Gillespie of Company F, 78th Pennsylvania Infantry. His military career spanned three years with the U.S. Army, crossing Tennessee to Lookout Mountain, and marching across Georgia with Gen. William T. Sherman, who had been the lieutenant governor of the California Territory when gold was discovered.

21 Ibid., May 25, 1849.

22 Ibid., May 17, 1849

23 Charles B. Gillespie, Journal, August 4–October 25, 1849, entry dated October 10, 1849. Copy given to author on February 25, 2014, by Gillespie's great-grandson Richard M. Rogers. Gillespie's essays in *The Century* were "Gold Hunters of California: A Miner's Sunday in Coloma," *The Century* 42, no. 2 (June 1891): 259–269, and "Gold Hunters of California: Marshall's Own Account of the Gold Discovery," *The Century* 41, no. 4 (February 1891): 537–538.

This charming engraving of the courthouse, Independence, Missouri, 1855, belies the Newark Company's earlier fragmentation in that city over which animals were best to pull their wagons. Unable to reconcile the matter, the company split into three groups as they continued west. FROM THE U.S. NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION, ARTIST UNKNOWN. COURTESY WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.



This painting of the buffalo crossing the Platte River, by Charles B. Gillespie, was made during the company's 1849 journey. COURTESY THE REES-JONES COLLECTION.

A challenge for archivists, trail historians, and many others who work with historic documents is to verify the authenticity of each particular artifact. The task of verifying the originality of overland trail journals can be—and in some of these cases was—a test of careful observation, fact-checking, and the work of experts.

Of the six known diaries the Newark Company members carried on their journey across the plains and mountains, only the diary of Robert Bond is believed to be the original volume that traveled across the country. There is no question that both the digital version of the Cyrus Currier journal held at the Wyoming State Archives and entries by Stephen H. Meeker that survive only in the *Newark Daily Advertiser* are copies. The three remaining documents by Charles Gray, Charles B. Gillespie, and Alexander Cartwright are handwritten, likely penned by their authors. But they were not necessarily the exact pages written during the overland journey itself.

The practice of making a *clean copy* of trail journals was not uncommon among diarists. Many travelers who completed the overland journey to California or Oregon found that their bound journals were stained and tattered after months of exposure to wagon travel and nature's elements. Perhaps recognizing the magnitude of their cross-country travel, trail journalists carefully penned a copy of their original version, believing, as Charles Gray had suggested in his final entry, that others would find their accounts a worthwhile read. A hands-on examination of Charles Gray's journal at the Huntington Library, as well as the privately held papers of Charles B. Gillespie, suggest that both men likely followed this practice.

Thomas Clark's research on the Elisha D. Perkins journal had taken him to the Huntington Library in 1964 for this very reason. Clark understood that the University of Kentucky held Perkins's overland trail diary, and only a fortuitous inquiry to the Kentucky Historical Society exposed the fact that the *original* Perkins diary was held at the Huntington Library. Clark set out for California to resolve for himself the question of which one was, in fact, the original diary. At the Huntington, he found the "trail-rubbed" journal authored by Perkins, with the front cover missing and "the first pages . . . badly stained and blurred." Clark recognized its authenticity. He learned that after Perkins had died in California, "This document was taken home to his wife Harriett as an eloquent testimonial of her husband's struggles. . . . Out of deep sentiment Harriett made a fair copy of the journal in a notebook that resembled the original. Writing in a clear, legible hand, she produced a document that had every appearance of being an original."[24] It was Harriett's copy that had been donated to the University of Kentucky and had fooled historians for half a century.

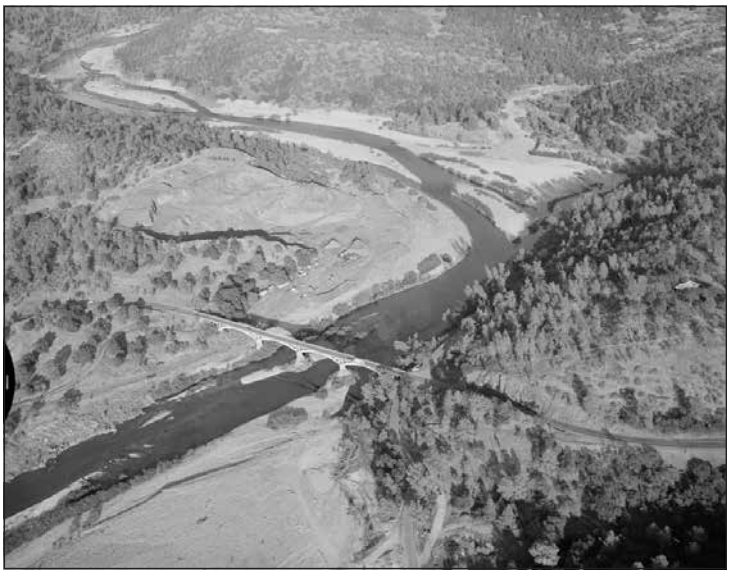
Similarly, the two volumes of Charles Gray's journal are not tattered, and show nothing more than shelf wear. The pages are neatly numbered and absent of mistakes and crossed out words. The penmanship is strong and legible, as though written at a desk rather than from the interior of a wagon or beside a rock. As Harriett Perkins had done, Gray appears to have been diligent in making an exact likeness of the work he painstakingly produced on the trail. Had he chosen to later edit his daily entries, he may have altered some of the language that portrays him as somewhat sour and whiney.

Charles B. Gillespie is believed to have filled as many as four journals with his writings on the trail and during his eighteen months in California. His fourth volume, an account of his final months on the Pacific coast and the journey home in April 1851 via Panama, appears to be the original—leather-bound and measuring approximately four by six inches. The remainder of Gillespie's pages are understood by family members to be ones he reproduced upon his return home.

And then there is the controversial journal of Alexander Cartwright, which is in the collection of the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum in Honolulu. This handwritten account has faced the scrutiny of historians for several decades in response to suggestions that it is not written in Cartwright's own hand. However, those who dispute its authenticity are not historians of western emigration—they are enthusiasts of baseball history.

In the mid-1840s baseball was developing into an organized sport, with the first official game played at Elysian Field in Hoboken, New Jersey, on June 19, 1846. Alexander Cartwright was a member of the famed Knickerbocker Club that participated in this event, and he has been credited with developing a rulebook as well as specifications on the layout of the baseball diamond. For these endeavors Cartwright is enshrined as a member in the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York.

24 Elisha Douglass Perkins, *Gold Rush Diary: Being the Journal of Elisha Douglass Perkins on the Overland Trail in the Spring and Summer of 1849,* ed. Thomas D. Clark (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1967), vi.



One of the gold mining spots the men worked with success was on Parks Bar, on the Yuba River. This view of the bar, 1991, is looking to the northeast from downstream. The Parks Bar Bridge spans today's CA Highway 20 at Smartsville. in Yuba County, California. COURTESY NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, PHOTOGRAPH BY LYNN HARRIS. LOC: HAER CAL, 58-SMAVI.V-V,1-3.

Speculation, however, developed over the origin of Cartwright's journal after several versions appeared over time, prompting suspicion that descendants were enhancing Cartwright's entries to suggest that he carried the game of baseball along the Oregon-California Trail in 1849. Yet the handwritten journal held by the Bishop Museum in Hawaii makes no mention of baseball. Examination of this document holds some subtle clues that it was, in fact, produced shortly after Cartwright's arrival in Honolulu. It is clearly a copy, as it includes *on the front page* the identification of the trail companions with whom Cartwright arrived in Coloma on the American River:

> At St. Louis took in our mess Isaac Overton
> At or near Ft. Laramie took in Caleb D. Boylston
> At Green River exchanged Overton for John Shaff
> So that our mess stood on arrival at Sacramento as follows
>
> | | |
> |---|---|
> | Capt. Thomas W. Seely | New York |
> | Capt. Benj-n F. Woolsey | Jersey City |
> | Caleb D. Boylston | New York |
> | John W. Shaff | Newark |
> | Alex-r J. Cartwright Jr. | New York[25] |

The copy is dated March 1, 1850—perhaps a mistake or perhaps a deliberate effort on Cartwright's part to recount his journey on the anniversary date of his departure from New Jersey. The most telling evidence that the journal was rewritten shortly after Cartwright's arrival in Hawaii, and not decades later, is the layout of entries in the journal—first the set from the overland trail dated April to June 1849, followed by entries of a voyage Cartwright took back to San Francisco in June 1850. Further evidence exists in the back pages of the volume where there is an "address book," including entries for Major Meeker in Sacramento and Tom Seely[26] in San Francisco—both places the men had lived between 1850 and 1855, suggesting the copy was made no later than this time frame. Had Cartwright made the copy of his journal any later than this, he would have had no reason to include addresses from the early 1850s.

25 Alexander Joy Cartwright, Jr., "Journal of a trip across the Plains from Independence to San Francisco via South Pass, Rocky Mountains, and the Sierra Nevada," Front Page, Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum Archives, MS Doc 55, Honolulu, Hawaii.

26 Tom Seely, like Cartwright, was a native New Yorker and traveled the entire journey sharing a wagon with Cartwright. He remained in California where he was readily employed as a steamship captain.

As for the mules-versus-oxen dispute that split the Newark Overland Company in Missouri at the very start of their journey, the decisions made in Independence resulted in dramatically different outcomes for the three splintered groups.

Alexander Cartwright and six of his mule-defector traveling companions are believed to be the first wagon company to arrive in the gold region from the overland route, as reported by an observer from Coloma on July 24, 1849, "a party of seven from New Jersey, the first party that has arrived across the mountains this season. They came about half the way with wagons, but abandoned them and packed with mules. Whole time [from St. Joseph we suppose] eighty days."[27] In fact, the departure point was actually Independence, and the wagons were not abandoned until they started crossing the Sierra. However, the date of July 24, 1849 (when they were reported to have arrived in Coloma), coincides exactly with the final entry recorded in the journal by Cyrus Currier:

> Came to weavers Creek at 9 Oclock A.M. here was our first sight of the gold diggings and life in California stopt at a store and bought 2 lbs Sugar at 4/- per pound could buy the same in Newark for 5¢ this was our first Introduction to California Prices took the road to Sutters Mill and arrived there at 4 Oclock PM. . . . I took a glass of Porter sat down and read the Newspaper which was a rare treat. I almost felt myself at home again.[28]

Somewhere near Fort Hall (Idaho) Charles B. Gillespie's small group fell apart, leaving each man to reconnect with other travelers. For Gillespie it was a fortuitous exchange that led him to cross paths with a doctor traveling with an Illinois company. Gillespie had suffered for years from chills and fever, which returned while he was following the bleak margins of the Humboldt River in August 1849. The Illinois doctor recognized the symptoms and administered a large dose of quinine to Gillespie,[29] thus ending what was likely chronic malaria. Gillespie arrived in California about two weeks later, healthy and eager to sketch and write about the diverse scenery and population that surrounded him.

The Newark Overland Company's organizer, Gen. John S. Darcy, and his core contingent, which purchased oxen rather than mules, fell far behind with their teams. Their delay in arriving in California led to sickness, death in the Black Rock Desert of northwestern Nevada for Robert Bond and Job Denman,[30] and a difficult, confusing course through the mountains of northern California after taking advice about the existence of a shortcut, proposed by agents of Peter Lassen. The Darcy Party arrived at the Yuba River in late October, disheartened and disorganized. Yet the remnants of Darcy's company, some eight to ten men, were the only members of the Newark Overland Company to find success in gold mining when they set up camp on the Yuba River near Parks Bar. For eighteen months they worked a claim and returned home with "comfortable fortunes."

Approximately 35,000 individuals traveled the Overland Trails in 1849 to seek wealth in the gold country, sharing the experience of trail hardships and varied success once they made it to California. The men of the Newark Overland Company were typical participants of this historic migration. While the majority of men returned to their homes in the East, about 20 percent remained on the Pacific Coast, where a few, such as Stephen H. Meeker, made fortunes in business ventures. Some, including Charles B. Gillespie, lived to see the fiftieth anniversary of the historic gold rush and to achieve status as an original Forty-niner. The many journals and letters written by these men have a common theme, perhaps best described by Newark Overland Company leader Gen. John S. Darcy, who wrote in March 1850 that success in California "is too much of a lottery."[31]

And so it was.

27 "An Overland Jersey Company," *Newark Daily Advertiser,* October 23, 1849.

28 Cyrus Currier, July 24, 1849, "Cyrus Currier's Journal to California by the Northern Overland Route from Newark, State of New Jersey," MSS 1123, transcription by Richard L. Rieck, 1999, Wyoming State Archives, Cheyenne.

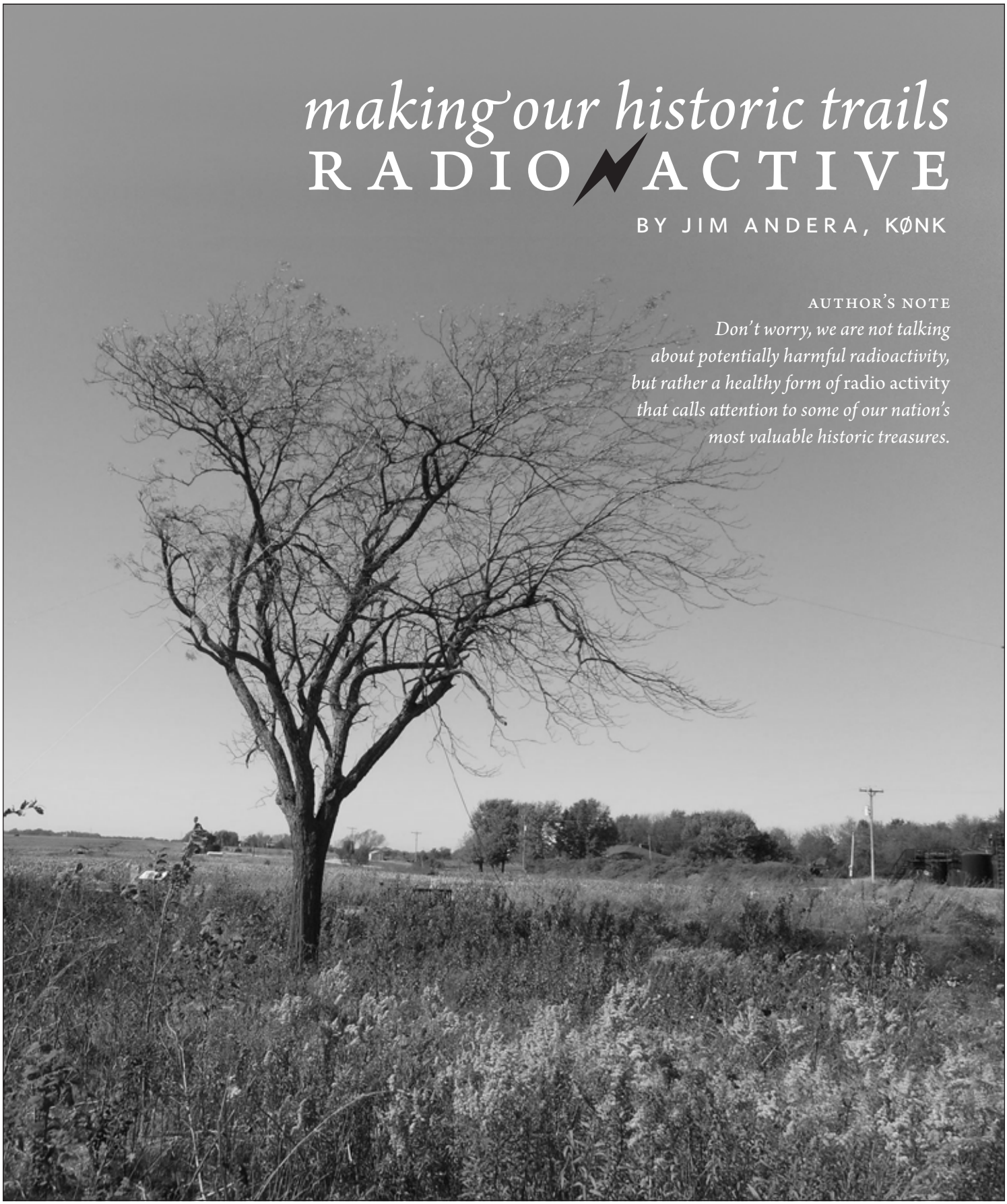
29 Charles B. Gillespie, Journal August 4–October 25, 1849, entry dated August 6, 1849. Copy given to author on February 25, 2014, by Gillespie's great-grandson Richard M. Rogers.

30 Job Denman was one of the twenty-five members of General Darcy's Newark Overland Company contingent. He was from Springfield, New Jersey, in his twenties, and single.

31 "Camp on the Yuba River, March 17th," Excerpt from letter by John S. Darcy, *Newark Daily Advertiser,* May 8, 1850, n.p.

making our historic trails RADIOACTIVE

BY JIM ANDERA, KØNK



AUTHOR'S NOTE

Don't worry, we are not talking about potentially harmful radioactivity, but rather a healthy form of radio activity *that calls attention to some of our nation's most valuable historic treasures.*

all across this great nation

ARE WONDERFUL SITES AND POINTS OF INTEREST. SOME ARE HUGE AND WELL KNOWN. OTHERS ARE TINY AND OBSCURE, MAYBE EVEN HIDDEN. SOME ARE HISTORIC AND OTHERS ARE SCENIC—AND OFTENTIMES THEY ARE BOTH.

Amateur radio operators have come up with a way to unlock the hidden, commemorate the well known, and celebrate the value these treasures hold for the nation and the world.

In 2016, in recognition of the centennial anniversary of the National Park Service (NPS), amateur radio operators across the nation helped the NPS celebrate by temporarily setting up amateur radio stations in our national parks and similar sites—including along many of our nation's historic trails. Throughout the year these amateur radio stations helped call attention to notable NPS-related points of interest and allowed other amateur radio operators from across the country and around the world to "visit" these scenic and historic sites over the radio.[1]

Called National Parks on the Air (NPOTA), these events were immensely popular among amateur radio operators (also known as ham radio operators or, more simply, as "hams"). The activity took on a bit of the flavor of a game. Hams who set up radio stations on the trails and in the parks were called "activators" because they were enabling that site to be active on the air. Other hams who visited these sites over the radio were called "chasers." The chasers tried to talk to as many activated sites as possible on the NPS list. In the process, everyone's knowledge about NPS points of interest was increased.

In October 2016, our Olathe, Kansas–based Santa Fe Trail Amateur Radio Club (SFTARC) participated in an NPOTA event from a unique location—Gardner Junction, Kansas—where the Santa Fe and Oregon/California Trails split off.[2] This point, about forty miles southwest of the trails' starting points of Independence and Westport, Missouri, is now marked by a two-acre roadside park, built in 2008 as a cooperative effort between multiple organizations and agencies, including the National Park Service. Today Gardner Junction is managed by the Gardner (Kansas) Parks and Recreation Department.

On a beautiful Saturday morning in October, members of the SFTARC gathered at the junction to set up multiple ham radio stations. One of the stations operated on frequencies that supported communications generally within the midwestern United States. Another station operated on frequencies that would reach the east and west coasts and as far away as Europe. While two stations operated in voice mode, a third station engaged in communications using the Morse code. With three stations on the air, SFTARC members had the opportunity to tell those on the other end of the communications link about Gardner Junction and its significance in the westward overland migration of the 1800s.

Some estimates place the number of emigrants who traveled through this area during the westward movement between 350,000 and half a million people. From Gardner Junction

1 The inspiration for this article came from OCTA members Bill and Jan Hill, who I had the chance opportunity to meet at the 2016 Hollenberg Pony Express Station Festival in August 2016, as they were returning home after the Fort Hall OCTA Convention. Fellow Crown Amateur Radio Association member Charlie Hett and I visited with Bill and Jan and shared with them an overview of the NPOTA events. They suggested that OCTA members might enjoy hearing about the NPOTA. Thus the seed for this article was planted. In return, we were introduced to OCTA and the *Overland Journal*.

2 Gardner Junction Park has a paved 400-foot nature walk planted with six species of native grasses and thirty types of wildflowers that travelers would have encountered on their way west. Three display panels tell the story of the three trails. (Information courtesy of http://www.kansastravel.org/gardnerjunctionpark.htm.)

OPPOSITE The lone tree at the Gardner Junction Park serves as a support for one of our antennas. While the wire antenna tends to blend in with the surroundings, readers with a keen eye may be able to see multiple wires extending from an upper branch of the tree. Agricultural activity has erased the wagon ruts along this part of the trail. PHOTO BY JIM ANDERA.

the California and Oregon Trails veered off to the northwest, crowded with emigrants looking for a new home. From this same spot the wagons traveling the Santa Fe Trail headed southwesterly, generally loaded with cargo and merchandise to support a developing Santa Fe population.

The trails that separate at Gardner Junction are three of seventeen historic trails that were recognized by the NPS as part of the NPOTA activity (see sidebar 1). Numerous national parks, monuments, grasslands, battlefields, and scenic trails were also part of the NPOTA activity. Each location has its own story to tell about the part it played in our nation's history, or the role it plays today in allowing the public to experience the physical beauty and splendor the United States has to offer.

During the five hours we were on the air at Gardner Junction, SFTARC members exchanged greetings with hundreds of other radio operators, some as close as just up the road or as far away as Germany and Bosnia. As an added benefit, every SFTARC member who participated gained a deeper understanding of this unique place in American history that sits in our own backyard.

With 2016 behind us, the NPOTA events have come to an end. But that does not mean amateur radio will disappear from our parks or along the trails. At the time of this writing, however, the American Radio Relay League (ARRL) has not announced an organized event similar to the National Parks On The Air 2016 activities to celebrate 2018—the fiftieth anniversary of the National Trails System Act.

Amateur radio operators tend to enjoy operating from unique and interesting places. As an example, through the efforts of another Olathe-based club, the Crown Amateur Radio Association (CARA), every August for the past eighteen years, an amateur radio station has taken part in the Hollenberg Pony Express Station Festival near Hanover, Kansas. Built in 1857, this Pony Express stop and Cottonwood Creek crossing on the Oregon Trail is another one of the state's historic treasures. During the festival, which depicts life in early America, our amateur radio station takes the form of an 1860s telegraph office, where visitors can observe a working telegraph office and try their hand at sending the Morse code. Through the telegraph office, ham radio operators from around the country get to talk to the Hollenberg Station using Morse code. They also receive a certificate in recognition of their "visit" with the Hollenberg site. Such an on-the-air operation, called a Special Event Station, helps people from around the country learn about a wide variety of places, festivals, and activities that add to the richness of American culture.[3]

Like other amateur radio operators across the county, SFTARC members look for opportunities to operate from historic sites. They may do it as individuals, or as part of a radio-club activity. In October 2017, for example, SFTARC members operated a Special Event Station from the grounds of a one-room school house museum, the Lanesfield School Museum. This well-preserved limestone structure is a unique piece of Kansas history that sits in our backyard yet seems hidden away on a gravel road—but is now a little more revealed with the help of amateur radio. Throughout 2017 our club operated from sites of historic significance ranging from the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve in eastern Kansas to the World War I Museum and Memorial in Kansas City, Missouri, to the Ensor Museum in Olathe, Kansas. The fiftieth anniversary of the National Trails Systems Act may inspire some similar operations from points along our trails.[4] Without a doubt, hams across the country will continue the practice of operating their radio equipment from scenic and historic places throughout the nation.

OCTAns (and others) who travel along historic trails and enjoy the nation's parks may come across radio equipment set up under a canopy or on a picnic table. Think "amateur radio." Stop by, take a look at the setup, and feel free to talk to the radio operators and ask questions. Hams love to talk about radio and explain what they are up to.

If you ask amateur radio operators what motivates them to set up these temporary stations, you may get a variety of answers. Some hams may say it is always fun to operate from a unique and interesting location and tell others about it. Others may reply that as enjoyable and educational as amateur radio is, there is also a serious side to the hobby. They are right. One of the basic functions of amateur radio is to provide emergency communications in the aftermath of tornados, hurricanes,

3 A searchable list of Special Event Stations can be found online at http://www.arrl.org/special-event-stations. You can search for events by parameters such as city and/or state or keyword. Note that the addresses given are often mailing address, rather than the physical address of the event. The links that are provided may offer more details on the event.

4 As new year-long, on-the-air celebrations like these are organized and added in 2018, they will generally be posted online at http://www.arrl.org/on-the-air. For example, if the National Trails fiftieth anniversary were to become an event celebrated by the ARRL, this is where the event site would be listed.

Members of the Crown Amateur Radio Association (CARA), Olathe, Kansas, have made ham radio communications a part of the Hollenberg Pony Express Festival for eighteen years. Here, Charlie Hett, KØTHN, stands ready to explain the Morse code to visitors. This display is really multiple exhibits in one: On the front counter of the telegraph office is a display of Morse code-sending apparatus, and behind that is the radio station. During the festival we are engaged in communications with other ham radio operators around the country, letting them participate in the festival. Many visitors remark that "this is the first time I have ever seen anyone using the Morse code to communicate."
PHOTO BY JIM ANDERA.

Some 490 parks, trails, and other sites

were part of the 2016 NPOTA activity, each one called an NPS Unit. Each Unit is given a four-character designator to help hams keep track of their various locations. Seventeen NPS Units are national historic trails. They are:

- TR07 Oregon National Historic Trail
- TR08 Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail
- TR09 Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail
- TR10 Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail
- TR11 Santa Fe National Historic Trail
- TR12 Trail of Tears National Historic Trail
- TR13 Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail
- TR14 California National Historic Trail
- TR15 Pony Express National Historic Trail
- TR16 Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail
- TR17 El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro National Historic Trail
- TR18 Ala Kahakai National Historic Trail
- TR19 Old Spanish National Historic Trail
- TR20 El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail
- TR21 Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail
- TR22 Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail
- TR23 Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail

For a full list of the 490 sites, visit https://www.arrl.org/npota-list.

floods, and anything else nature might deliver. Each time we set up and operate our stations in a temporary fashion, we are honing the skills that provide communication support when regular means of communications fail or become overloaded. Amateur radio operators have a unique ability to communicate over hundreds and thousands of miles—independent of the complex communication infrastructure that other communication services—such as cell phones and television networks—rely on.

That same unique ability to communicate can be very useful to the everyday person on an everyday basis. It can be particularly valuable to those who enjoy traveling and exploring. When you are in the middle of "nowhere," following 150-year-old wagon ruts and you look down at your cell phone and see the dreaded "No Service" message, how can you communicate with the rest of your party or call for help if needed? What if someone in your party needs an ambulance, or if you break down beside the road? Having a ham radio operator in the group could be very beneficial in situations like these.

In addition to being fun, amateur radio offers a lot of utility. For example, when I go on backpacking trips into the Rocky Mountains I carry two ham radios: One is a small handheld radio used primarily to communicate with the other ham operators in my party. The other radio, somewhat larger, lets me reach distances of a thousand miles or more and talk to other hams around the country, including my ham radio buddies back home in Kansas. As we are generally in wilderness areas well beyond cell phone range, we often regard this second radio as our wilderness version of a 911 system. In a distress situation, we would send an SOS-type call and ask any ham operator who replies to us to make a telephone call to the appropriate responders in our area—typically the closest county sheriff's office.

Ham radio, however, is not an off-the-shelf, plug-and-play tool the way a cell phone is. Ham radio use requires that the operator be licensed by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), which includes passing a thirty-five-question exam that covers radio regulations and basic radio and electronic knowledge. Self-study and classroom study are both common ways people prepare for the license exam. Both printed and on-line study guides list all the approximately four hundred possible test questions—and

Each August, the Hollenberg Pony Express Station comes alive with Old West activities and exhibits during its annual festival. To help visitors get a flavor for early American transportation, visitors may get to ride the grounds 1860s style in a covered wagon. On loan from the Rock Creek Station in Nebraska, this wagon is driven by Kirk Schroder, whose son Ethan rides along. The Rock Creek Station is another Pony Express stop on the Oregon-California Trail. Here the wagon is only a stone's throw from our Telegraph Office, where visitors can experience a taste of early communications. PHOTO BY JIM ANDERA.

associated answers—that could be found on the thirty-five question exam. Often those pursuing a ham radio license can find a local ham radio club to help mentor them in their studies. Volunteer examiners administer the test on behalf of the FCC.

Several levels of Amateur Radio Licenses are available. As a person obtains higher levels of licenses, he or she is rewarded with more frequencies to operate on. The entry-level license, called the Technician Class license, permits the operator to use radios and frequencies that generally support short-range communications, typically ranges within fifty miles or so. (However, there are some tricks and techniques that allow for much greater communication distance.) The next license class, General Class, provides for operation on frequencies that are more suitable for communication ranges of hundreds and even thousands of miles. General Class—as one might guess—also requires passing another thirty-five-question exam. Upon passing the exam(s), the FCC issues the Amateur Radio license, which includes a call sign generally consisting of four or five letters with a number in the middle, which is unique to the operator and his or her radio station. That license authorizes the holder to transmit on the air using amateur-radio frequencies.

After obtaining a license, the next step in your adventure with ham radio is purchasing the radio (called a transceiver). For many people the most practical radio to purchase first is one that can be installed in your vehicle. Those who want to stay in contact with the rest of the party as they explore the trails may also consider purchasing a handheld radio that can be clipped to their belt as they hike. There are at least 101 choices of radios and antennas to select from. Here too it can be beneficial for the newly licensed ham to locate a ham radio club in their area to take advantage of advice from experienced radio operators. Those who decide to learn about ham radio operation should pay special attention to the lessons on radio-wave propagation, that is, how radio signals travel. Radio frequencies, called VHF and UHF, in their simplest forms are direct line-of-sight

On a picture-perfect October day, Santa Fe Trail Amateur Radio Club members came together to place the historic Gardner Junction on the air. Just as amateur radio is made up of a mix of people working together, this Gardner Junction Park was built through the combined efforts of multiple organizations, including the National Park Service. PHOTO BY GIL LUDWIG.

Located near Hanover Kansas, the Hollenberg Pony Express Station is said to be the only Pony Express Station in the nation to be preserved and left on its original foundation. This station was located at the Cottonwood Creek crossing of the Oregon Trail and served as a general store and tavern for the early travelers. Some reports suggest that as many as a thousand wagons a day crossed the creek here in the height of the westward movement. Today this station and associated visitor's center are operated by the Kansas Historical Society. PHOTO BY JIM ANDERA.

communications, where the antennas of the two radios must more or less "see" each other to allow communications to be received. In open areas, radios used in a vehicle can provide ranges of ten miles or more to another vehicle, although this range is very dependent on the terrain.

The next step-up in communication range involves the use of repeaters. Repeaters are special amateur radio stations located on tall buildings, towers, or mountaintops, which instantly relay a radio signal to extend the range often to fifty miles or more. In many areas of the United States, multiple repeaters are linked together to give wide-area coverage, often coverage over an entire state. For example, a ham may be in one corner of Colorado talking into a local repeater, and if that repeater is permanently linked to other repeaters across the state, he or she may have clear communications with someone in the opposite corner of the state. Taken one step further, some repeaters are linked to the internet, so that from a local repeater a person can (on demand) connect to a repeater in a distant U.S. city of choice, or even in another country. And what surprises many who are not familiar with ham radio is that there are no charges or fees for accessing and using these repeaters. Part of the culture of amateur radio is sharing these communication resources for the benefit of everyone. This sharing also means there is no such thing as a truly private conversation with ham radio; others can hear what you are saying. As a practical matter, however, that "party-line" environment also provides an advantage over cell phones when working with a group such as a trail maintenance crew: everyone automatically hears what others are reporting over the radio, providing much better situational awareness.

Another form of radio frequency propagation involves the use of what are called the HF frequencies. These frequencies have the unique characteristic of being reflected back to earth by an upper layer of the atmosphere—the ionosphere. This permits communications over hundreds and thousands of miles without the need for any manmade infrastructure in between. This is what many hams regard as the "magic" of radio communications and it holds special allure. It lets us talk to our friends many miles away, or perhaps better yet, meet new people. By sending out a radio call over the air using the term CQ (which means "I am calling anyone who wants to answer me"), the sender never knows who may respond for a casual conversation. It could be a student, farmer, engineer, retiree, nurse, teacher, pilot . . . the list is endless.

WHO ARE *amateur radio operators?*

Amateur Radio operators, or more commonly called "hams," are everyday people from all walks of life. Some are technical geeks; others have little or no technical background. The hobby draws in boys and girls (sometimes as young as eight or ten years old) as well as men and women of all ages. Collectively we come together to make up the Amateur Radio Service, as defined by the Federal Communications Commission in the United States. All U.S. hams are licensed by the FCC after successfully passing examinations that deal with electrical and radio principles, as well as the rules and regulations governing radio communications. Similar governmental agencies are responsible for issuing amateur radio licenses in other countries. The FCC license comes with a call sign, a unique identifier that distinguishes each individual from the other 2.6 million hams worldwide (the author's is KØNK). Radio clubs, too, can be issued call signs, such as KSØKS, used by the Santa Fe Trail Amateur Radio Club, or KØASA, used by the Crown Amateur Radio Association. We set up radio stations in our homes and cars for the purpose of communicating with other hams. As ham radio operators interspersed throughout our communities, we are close at hand when disasters strike. Amateur radio operators also provide safety communications during events such as bike-a-thons, walk-a-thons, or Pony Express re-rides.

Thousands of ham radio operators across North America take their radios outdoors in an annual Field Day event that is held the fourth weekend of June. SFTARC members Peg Nichols, KDØVQO, and Ed Kurtz, KUØRTZ, operate the radios from the front porch of the 1890s house at the Ensor Park and Museum in Olathe, Kansas, during a Field Day event. The story of the Ensor Museum is rich in ham-radio history and is a blend of radio, life on a dairy farm, and woodworking craftsmanship set in the early-to-mid-1900s. SFTARC members also serve as tour guides for the museum. PHOTO BY JEFF DARBY.

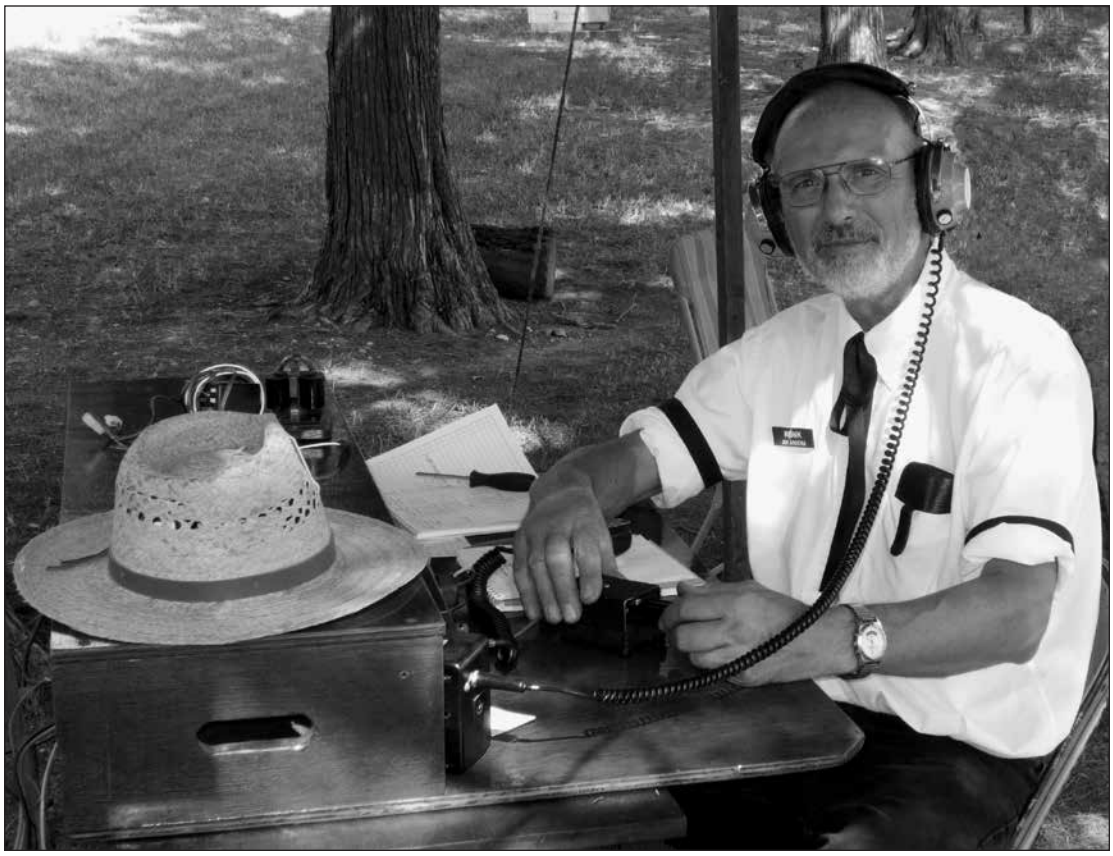
Topics discussed over the radio may range from the weather to the radio equipment the hams are using, to other hobbies they enjoy, to grandkids, to the latest projects they are building or books they are reading. Or they may exchange a little bit about the history of the area they are in. Conversations over the radio are informal, friendly, and introductions are done on a first-name-only basis; after all, hams have no need to use last names over the air—their call signs uniquely identify them.[5] These conversations may involve two people or dozens of people in a round-table manner. They may be operating from their home or car, a campground, a boat, a historic site, or a local festival. More adventurous hams (carrying radio gear) may even kayak out to an uninhabited island a few miles offshore and spend an afternoon talking on the radio from the island. Others may climb a mountain peak to operate their radios. On multiple occasions, while on winter backpacking trips I have had the opportunity to operate from igloos in the Colorado wilderness. There are even hams who go on expeditions to desolate islands in places ranging from the tropics to near Antarctica—just to talk on the radio from these distant and exotic locations.

Readers who find this appealing may want to make obtaining an amateur radio license a winter project. And don't be shy about inviting other members of your family to join you. My wife and daughter are both hams; for many years we have used ham radio to support family activities. And the amateur radio community is delighted to see an ever-increasing number of women becoming hams.

In some areas, local clubs conduct ham radio classes during the winter months. Then in the spring, as a new ham you can add a radio or two to your vehicle. By the time summer rolls around and you find yourself on a trail following historic wagon ruts, you will have the pleasure of using a ham radio. And when the cell phone says "No Service," you can just smile to yourself knowing that you have other communications options. Even before you hit the road you may want to set up a station in your house so you can talk to other hams in your area, or those on adventures across the county or even around the world.

5 Many hams post short ham radio–related autobiographies on a ham radio website called QRZ.com. To learn more about a specific ham radio operator, go to the website. In the "by Callsign" search window, type in the call sign of that ham radio operator. If the ham has a biographical note posted, it will be here. For example, type in KØNK to learn about the author (note: the second character in the call sign is a zero).

We all hope to pass the passion we have for our favorite hobbies down to the younger generations. Here, eleven-year-old Jim Krentzel, KEØGEY, tells another ham radio operator about Gardner Junction, while grey-whiskered Jim Alexander, KIØCT, uses a laptop to log the communications into the electronic logbook. Our Gardner Junction event was an educational experience for both the young and the not-so-young. PHOTO BY JIM ANDERA.



The author of this article, Jim Andera, KØNK, becomes a telegraph operator each August during the Hollenberg Pony Express festival, using Morse code to greet other amateur radio operators around the country. Jim has been an amateur radio operator for over forty years, and tends to prefer Morse code communications to the use of voice or digital (computer-to-computer) modes; all three modes are popular among ham radio operators today. In addition to operating from historic sites, he is involved in the educational aspects of ham radio and is active in emergency-communications organizations. Jim can be reached at jandera@embarqmail.com. PHOTO BY CHARLIE HETT.

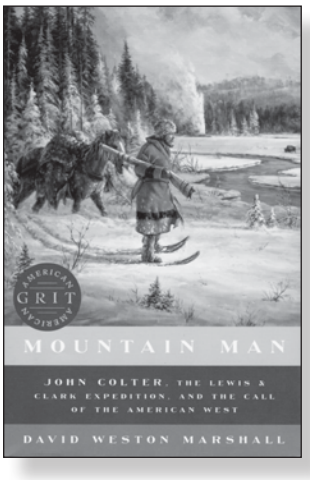
The American Radio Relay League (ARRL) website can help those who are interested find classes and study materials as well as testing locations and radio clubs in their areas.[6] The ARRL also publishes several study manuals and guides for each class of license. Another popular selection of study guides is available from the Gordon West Radio School, offering both printed and audio versions.

Historic emigrant trails are one of our nation's most valuable treasures, a resource we all want to spread the word about and encourage younger generations to appreciate. In the same way, amateur radio is often said to be a valuable national resource, promoting education, international goodwill, and communication in times of emergency. Blending history and amateur radio together has proved to be a winning combination. If you choose to become a ham radio operator, perhaps we will get to talk to each other over the radio—maybe while you are operating your radio from your favorite places on the California or Oregon trails. OJ

6 The online site http://www.arrl.org/licensing-education-training is a good place to start. This website also offers a wealth of information about ham radio operation as well as insights into what makes amateur radio so valuable.

BOOKS FOR REVIEW SHOULD BE SENT TO THE EDITOR WITH ALL BIBLIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS AND ORDERING INFORMATION: OVERLAND JOURNAL, P.O. BOX 7041, STOCKTON, CA 95267

REVIEWS FROM THE TRAIL



Mountain Man: John Colter, the Lewis and Clark Expedition, and the Call of the American West

By David Weston Marshall

New York: The Countryman Press, 2017

238 pp., photos, maps, bibliography, index

ISBN-13: 978-1682680483

Hardcover, 9 × 6 in., $24.95

Reviewed by Jim Hardee

John Colter is a familiar name to people who study the early history of the West. A participant in the Lewis and Clark Expedition, Colter withdrew from the Corps during its return journey to join trappers in search of valuable furs. Though others predate Colter's excursions into the Rocky Mountains to trap beaver, author David Marshall uses this backdrop to examine Colter's explorations, making numerous comparisons to experiences of mountaineers who would soon follow.

Marshall does an admirable job of describing the reasons these men ventured into unchartered regions of the Rockies. He provides numerous quotations along with his own interpretations, based on the journals and letters of these courageous trailblazers. It is evident that the author delved into the primary accounts looking for evidence to support his tale.

However, Marshall does not make it easy for his readers. He frequently scrutinizes a topic for several pages at a time, providing numerous quotes and analysis, but provides no source. When an endnote finally appears, it is crammed with an overwhelming number of citations, many of which do not seem to relate to the topic. Additionally, though Marshall denigrates or contradicts the findings of other historians, source material a reader might use to investigate that opinion and form an independent conclusion is absent.

This is particularly true of Marshall's dealings with the manuscript map drawn by William Clark over a period of years following the famous expedition. The map, digitally enhanced in recent years, provides a wealth of information about Colter's travels. However, Marshall conveniently chose not to include its image in the text even though he makes nonstop reference to it. Perhaps, since Marshall finds discrepancies with the map (p. 121), he fears readers will find plenty of other inconsistencies with his own invented interpretation.

Though historians have debated Colter's route for years, the spectacular trail Marshall lays out for his hero will find little credibility amongst that group. The author would have readers accept that Henry Breckenridge's report of Colter having traveled five hundred miles and "proceeded thence to several other tribes," is enough to account for Marshall's imaginative trek taking Colter over a thousand miles (p. 36).

The author sums up his viewpoint saying, "while searching for every available scrap of useful information, the researcher must dismiss many sources" (p. xii). In other words, if something does not fit the hypothesis, ignore it. Only cherry-picked references that support Marshall's story are deemed "useful." That explains why the many works of eminent geographer and well-known Lewis and Clark scholar John Logan Allen are not cited. That clarifies why the late historian John C. Jackson, who has written extensively on John Colter, is not listed as a reference. That simplifies why Marshall would not acknowledge the 2015 biography of John Colter written by Larry Morris and Ron Anglin.

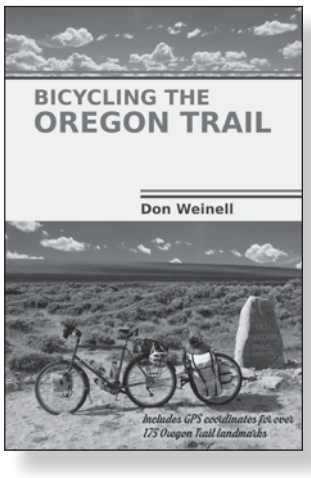
The reliability of the author's sources is further undermined by erroneous conclusions presented as fact. For example, Marshall states that western explorers found traveling on foot preferable to riding a horse (pp. 81–84). Apparently, the author missed the prodigious references to

horses in all primary accounts—or ignored them. Period diarists like Osborne Russell, Joe Meek, Warren Ferris, and countless others consistently wrote about the importance of their riding and packing animals. Marshall cited several hardships mountaineers endured, ignoring their willingness to do so precisely because of the integral role riding stock played in the trappers' lifestyle. In fact, when these intrepid men wrote of going afoot, they used words like being "compelled" or "forced" to walk. Being deprived of one's horse was used as punishment for sleeping on guard duty. One wonders if Marshall did not notice the horse in the painting on his book's dust jacket!

Marshall's narrative is plagued with supposition; the use of "probably," "likely," "perhaps," "might have," and the like, grows quickly tiresome. Certainly, he is trying to paint a historically based image for readers; all the more important because Colter left no primary account. All that is known of his adventures comes second- and third-hand from men who knew him or were told stories about him. Still, the subjectivity of Colter's story is never fully admitted by this author and the reader is left to trust his too often flawed analysis.

For example, Marshall would rather bank on Robert Campbell's aged memory than the contemporary diary of Warren Ferris (p. 109). Campbell's reminiscences were dictated to William Fayel over forty years after the fact. Fayel then waited another ten years before writing them down, relying on his own memory to fill in the gaps. Nevertheless, when Campbell says Pierre's Hole was named for an Iroquois who was killed in the valley, Marshall accepts that despite Ferris noting that the death occurred on the sources of the Jefferson River—exactly as Campbell/Fayel reported just a few lines earlier. While he ignores Ferris in that instance, Marshall later mistakenly quotes the trapper as describing a hot spring in Pierre's Hole—despite the passage clearly stating the fountain drains into the Wisdom River (p. 41), more than two hundred miles north.

Marshall attempts to establish a high degree of detail but repeatedly omits facts about the era, which, given the specificity, should have been included. The imprecision of omitting data due to a biased conviction that they are not important results in the author "verifying" facts that can be disputed by a critical, informed examination of source material. Ultimately, this Colter story is misleading in the sense that it is presented as complete, when it is not. Either Marshall failed to keep up with recent scholarship so as to supplement or challenge current examinations of Colter, or, he chose to ignore it. In the end, Marshall's statement that only "sources deemed valid and pertinent" are consulted (p. xii) denies his book a place on this reviewer's bookshelf. OJ



Bicycling the Oregon Trail

By Don Weinell

Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Press, 2017

220 pp., with 74 color photos, 5 maps, compendium of GPS coordinates, bibliography

ISBN 978-087004-612-4

Paper, 6 × 9 in., $17.00

Reviewed by Lee Kreutzer

**The opinions expressed here are the reviewer's alone, not those of the National Park Service.*

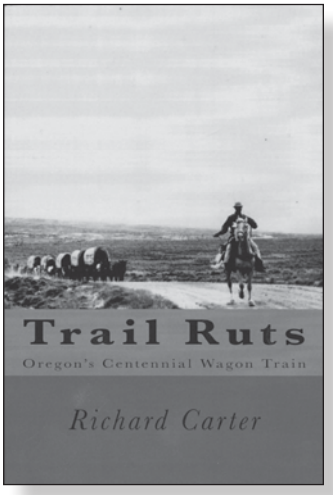
Author Don Weinell is a self-described "crazy guy on a bike." Between 2012 and 2016, for a few weeks each summer, the government biologist from Louisiana rode a touring bicycle along the Oregon Trail between Independence, Missouri, and Oregon City, Oregon. That's 2,100 miles of pedaling along two-tracks, county roads, and freeways, by himself, without a sag wagon or support vehicle, while in his mid-fifties. Then he engaged the self-discipline to sit down and write a book about his adventures.

Weinell's title, *Bicycling the Oregon Trail*, suggests that he has written a how-to guide for planning a bike trip along the Oregon Trail. It is not that at all. The tiny, small-scale maps at the back of the book are not legible or useful for routing a trip, and the author offers little practical planning advice for bikers (other than his equipment list and a compendium of GPS wayfinding coordinates for key sites). But the book should not be judged for what it was never intended to be.

It is actually one cyclist's latter-day Oregon Trail journal: a day-by-day account of miles pedaled, conditions endured, sites seen, and thoughts thunk. Weinell describes each Oregon Trail site he visited, reports the key historical events that occurred there, and includes nice color photographs from his travels (although, regrettably, not one shot of the author himself on his trusty steed). Trail enthusiasts will appreciate that Weinell did his homework, contacted knowledgeable individuals and land management agencies for routing advice, and secured advance permission to enter private land—unlike another recently published trail re-tracer who savaged a landowner in print for having confronted him for trespass.

The cyclist's perspective is an enjoyable aspect of what is otherwise a pretty routine Oregon Trail travelogue. Weinell's daily journal entries brought back vivid personal memories for this reviewer of a long-distance bike trip made years ago along the Lewis and Clark Trail: exhausting headwinds and heat, threatening thunderstorms, the vagaries of small-town diners, close encounters of the canine kind (although Weinell's Oregon Trail dogs are unaccountably friendlier than Lewis and Clark dogs!), and of course the slow traveler's close-up connection to the land and its history. The day-to-day cycling aspects of Mr. Weinnell's travels will be appreciated by others who have pedaled long distances or who dream of making such a trip.

The book does not serve well as an Oregon Trail travel guide, though, regardless of one's mode of transportation. It delivers the trail and its history piecemeal, site by site and bite by bite, without a compelling, chronological historical narrative, and of course it does not provide useful maps of the emigration route. More holistic guides and travelogues are available. Go find one and, with Weinell's book as a model but not a manual, plan your own crazy adventure! OJ



Trail Ruts: Oregon's Centennial Wagon Train
By Richard Carter
Seattle: Self-Published, 2016
259 pp., appendices
ISBN 978-1522726371
Paper, 6 × 9 in.,
$15.50 from Amazon,
$4.49 Kindle
Reviewed by Bill Martin

In emigrant days, individuals and families were thrown together for the common purpose of finding new homes in the largely unsettled Northwest. Sometimes just getting along during a six-month, 2,100-mile exodus was an unrealistic expectation. Arguments, hurt feelings, and even fist fights were not unusual.

In a more civilized society a century later, with seven wagons and a traveling party of about thirty, all of them just trying to get back home to Oregon, you might think personalities wouldn't grate quite so frequently. Not so fast, pilgrim. Arguments and hurt feelings dot the pages of Richard Carter's entertaining *Trails Ruts: Oregon's Centennial Wagon Train*. If there is a risk of overstating it, consider that one of the participants pulled a knife on the author toward the end of the journey. "The problems of group loyalty vs. self-interest were just as real in 1959 as in the 1840s and 50s," the author notes. "The twentieth-century group was not menaced by cholera or Indians, but instead fought tourists and traffic." And each other, as he notes in almost every chapter.

Still, it's an interesting story and, when people weren't arguing, they had quite an adventure, with twin goals of paying tribute to the pioneer emigrants and promoting Oregon tourism in connection with the 100th anniversary of statehood. Richard Carter is a good writer and tells the day to day (and sometimes, it seems, almost meal to meal) story of the Centennial wagon train's adventures from Independence, Missouri, to Independence, Oregon, during four spring and summer months in 1959.

Carter served as business manager, advance scout, public relations representative, and occasional referee and peacemaker. He apparently took copious notes since he is able to recite the names of many of the local officials, residents, and chamber of commerce managers who greeted the wagon train along the way. The book suffers at times from too much of that kind of detail.

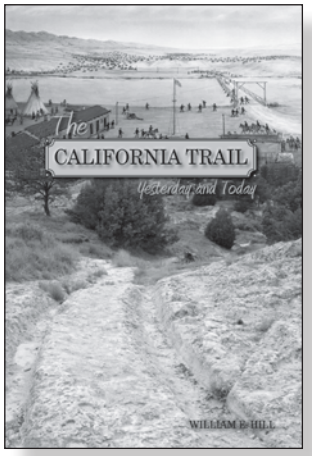
Carter wrote the book in 1976. Unable to get it published, it wasn't until the ease of self-publishing that he was able to get it out, forty years after it was written and almost six decades after the journey. The result is a book that provides a look at the Oregon Trail as it was in the late 1950s, long after the emigrants but before interstate highways, cell phones, email, and other modern-day luxuries. Carter includes background on various trail landmarks and communities as the wagons tried to follow the original trail as much as possible and suffered through rain, heat, dust, and intrusive sightseers.

Although local hospitality along the way was usually appreciated, being treated like celebrities wore on them. One of the most irritating things they had to put up with was large groups of autograph seekers and well-wishers who wanted to get a close look at the wagon train in camp. It was encouraged at first and the travelers enjoyed it initially, but as time went on it made it hard to relax when they felt like they were constantly on display.

Still, as Carter notes early in the book, "Our struggles with personality differences in our self-formed community, clashes with property owners along the trail, illness, fatigue, disappointments, joys, new friendships, and much laughter surely paled in comparison to the Oregon Trail pioneers."

There are some humorous stories, like the time a snake got into the coffee pot and was boiled with the grounds, and the morning Carter watched a visiting reporter "flopping around in her sleeping bag," telling him when she finally wiggled out that she was just trying to get her girdle on. Ah, the good old days.

Despite the rigors and arguments, Carter maintains it was a life-changing experience. The book will be of most value to Oregon residents or those along the trail who may remember the "On To Oregon Cavalcade," as it was styled, but there's enough here to keep the interest of anyone who wants a peek at the Oregon Trail of sixty years ago. OJ



The California Trail: Yesterday and Today

By William E. Hill

Boise, Idaho: Caxton Press, 2017

360 pp., richly illustrated, maps, index, bibliography

ISBN 978-087004-604-9

Paper, 6 × 9 in., $18.00

Reviewed by Josie Reifschneider-Smith

This book will introduce you to the California Trail and the emigrant experience. Other books go into much greater detail . . . but this one will let you "sample" the trail—to be introduced, to read about, to see and feel the way [the] west was through the eyes and comments of the emigrants. William E. Hill

This is a history book and a field guide wrapped into one that an armchair historian or road trip adventurer can enjoy. William E. Hill is author of several trails books and this latest edition expands upon the previous one with more content, more illustrations, and information about newly identified sites along this trail.

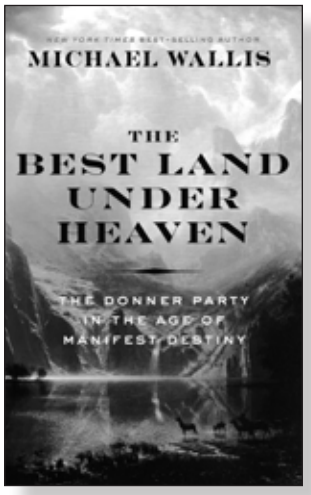
Hill's interest in the California Trail began as a young boy reading a road sign about the travails faced by determined pioneers crossing the Forty Mile Desert. That personal curiosity never faded and developed into a professional interest after he became a history teacher.

The book is divided into nine chapters. Chapter 1 is an overview of trail development with a comparison of the pros and cons between going overland versus using the sea route (either around Cape Horn or sailing to Panama, crossing the jungle to the Pacific Ocean, and resuming the sea voyage to California). Chapter 2 is a chronological list about the history of the California Trail from 1810 to the 1860s and the broader historical events that helped shape it. Chapter 3 explains the publication of guidebooks— from the earliest that didn't really know much about the trails to the later ones that were more detail-specific as more reliable information became known. Excerpts from two guides are included in this chapter. Chapter 4 touches upon diaries kept by emigrants who trekked west. Excerpts from three diaries—Wakeman Bryarly (1849), James Wilkins (1849), and Eleazar Stillman Ingalls (1850)—are included with a brief history of which trails were used and how the parties traveled to California (mule team, oxen, or horse).

While diarists preserved a written record of the trail, artists captured its varied landscapes and emigrant hardships with illustrations, paintings, and photographs. Chapter 5 highlights four artists (James F. Wilkins, William Henry Jackson, J. Goldsborough Bruff, and William M. Quesenbury) whose works provided (and still do) a unique visual perspective of the trail during its heyday. Chapter 6 shows some of the maps that may have been used by emigrants. Chapter 7 is the largest chapter in the book. It is a pictorial journey using historical illustrations and contemporary photographs of areas along the trail. Chapter 8 lists museums, parks, modern-day highways, and towns connected to the California Trail from the Midwest to California. Chapter 9 summarizes previous works readers might enjoy pursuing. An extensive bibliography is provided, as well as an index. A large foldout map of the trail, with sites highlighted along its route, is also included.

I enjoy the approach this book takes: weaving good history about the trail "through the eyes and pens of the early emigrants" into a guide you can follow on the ground if you wish to. Chapter 7 is where all this comes together. Diary entries, historical illustrations, and modern photographs and commentary by the author as he traveled the trail over the years all provide an overview of specific sections of the trail or emigrant experiences such as storms, dust, lack of water, even death. The colored, foldout map is a very nice touch and an improvement over the previous black and white edition that didn't fold out.

This new edition would have benefitted from a thorough editing. My enjoyment of the book was hampered by errors in the text—misspellings, citation/bibliography style mismatch, wrong names, etc. I tried not to be critical as I read, but as an editor, I tripped over these details. Errors such as these detract from an otherwise good book and should have been caught before this edition was printed. OJ



The Best Land under Heaven: The Donner Party in the Age of Manifest Destiny
By Michael Wallis
New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2017
453 pp., one map, illustrations, bibliography, two appendices, endnotes, index
ISBN 978-0871407696
Hardcover, 6 × 9 in., $27.95
Reviewed by Martha Voght

In the introduction to *The Best Land Under Heaven,* author Michael Wallis justifies a new history of the Donner Party by quoting Kristin Johnson: ". . . none of the currently available histories of the Donner Party was written by a trained historian. . . ." And, he continues, much new evidence has come to light in recent years, not only from documents, but from archaeological work. Indeed, Wallis has discovered much information about the lives of the Donner and Reed families in the years before they set out for California, tracing the peregrinations of the Donner family, from North Carolina, to Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois, through public documents and a trove of materials in an archive accumulated by Donner descendants.

The introductory chapters offer details on the business dealings of James F. Reed in mining and railroads, and new bits of information: that James Reed knew Abraham Lincoln not only through military service, but employed him as his personal lawyer; that Mrs. Donner spelled her name Tamzene, not Tamsen; that Reed had a friend in Independence with whom he carried on a correspondence about western migration. Wallis's account of the actual journey is less ground-breaking. Approximately one-quarter of the endnotes in this section of the book cite the works of the non-historians—journalists and English professors—who preceded him. For the most part, the old account stands as recorded decades ago. Reading Wallis's chapter on the "Forlorn Hope" I experienced *déjà vu,* becoming again a horrified ten-year-old clutching *Ordeal by Hunger.*

Wallis's subtitle, *The Donner Party in the Age of Manifest Destiny,* signals his intention to place the Donner/Reed party within the context of the western movement. He credits them as "early foot soldiers of Manifest Destiny." Yet the evidence he lays out does not, to me, justify that description.

According to Wallis, ". . . Hastings's guide [*The Emigrants Guide to Oregon and California*] motivated the Donners and Reed. A well-thumbed copy of the book was tucked into a saddle bag." If that is true, the Donners read much more than the one-sentence description of a possible new road to California. From Hastings they learned that the Mexican government gave land grants that measured by the league, not the acre; that these estates pastured cattle by the thousands; and that willing Indian peons performed the manual labor. The Americans who owned these interior grants lived independently, like medieval dukes, contemptuous of the Mexican government on the coast.

The only written record George Donner left—an advertisement in the *Sangamo Journal* (Springfield, Illinois) recruiting hired hands—verifies this. He does not appeal to patriotism, but promises land: "You can have as much land as you want without costing you anything. The government of California gives large tracts of land to persons who have to move there."

Is it possible that George Donner's dream was closer to that of Lansford Hastings than the vision of John L. O'Sullivan, who rallied the country to "the right of our manifest destiny"?

James Reed had a more immediate motivation for leaving Illinois than patriotism. By 1845 his many business enterprises had failed and he faced bankruptcy. In the spring of 1846 he abandoned the men who had trusted him, outfitted his family in relative luxury for the journey, and headed for California with assets that by law should have gone to his creditors. (Wallis suggests he accomplished this with the connivance of his lawyer, Abraham Lincoln.) We must conclude that Reed thought his future more secure in a place where his creditors would have difficulty following him, either in person or in court.

For anyone new to trail history, *The Best Land Under Heaven* serves as a marvelous introduction to the story of the Donner Party. Western history fans will find it a modern summary. Since the book offers very little detail on routes and campsites, trail aficionados will return to Frank Mullen's *The Donner Party Chronicles* for a better view of the day-to-day progress of the company.

Wallis has not been well-served by his editors. The narrative consistently mislabels the mountain range where the drama occurs, with a distressing variety of corruptions of Sierra Nevada. The source of the title is never explained, and only personal contact with the

author informed me that it is a quote from a poem about Illinois, not a description of the future awaiting the "foot soldiers of manifest destiny."

How should historians view the Donner Party? The group is certainly not representative of most emigrants, for, as George Stewart pointed out, "The Smart Ones Got Through." The Donner Party did not pioneer a route that advanced the California Trail, they did not contribute to any dramatic event by their sudden arrival, they offered only a bad example to those who followed.

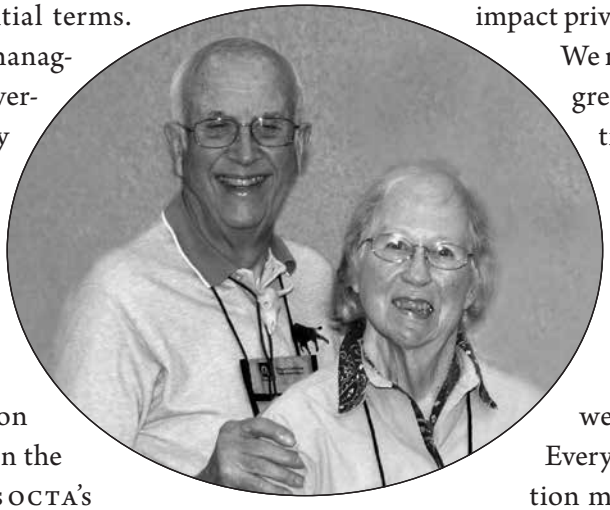
We do not write the history of the Oregon migration by concentrating on the Meek Cutoff disaster. We do not focus on derailments when writing the history of the transcontinental railroad. So, the Donners ate each other. That is no reason to exaggerate their place in the history of one of the most dramatic, unorganized events in history—the sweep of Americans across a continent. OJ

BY DAVID J. WELCH

LOOKING WEST
Politics, History, and Preservation

OVER THE PAST FEW MONTHS *I have been struggling to find an optimistic approach for an article on trail preservation. Given our current dysfunctional political environment, it has not been easy—but there are factors that may make the situation a little better than we think.*

To begin with, there is an inertia in the political system that, to the frustration of some and the approval of others, moderates the pace of change so that we don't whiplash back and forth between competing perspectives. The process of planning, designing, permitting and implementation of a project like a transmission line, solar array, or wind farm takes years, typically longer than two presidential terms. Also, regional government agency managers (BLM, Forest Service, etc.) who oversee the process respond deliberately to changing political dictates from Washington, D.C. Most are personally committed to the protection of the resources under their purview and move slowly in response to changing political inputs.



BILL AND JEAN WATSON. PHOTO BY ROGER BLAIR.

The late Bill and Jeanne Watson strongly influenced my perspective on the politics of preservation. They served as OCTA's liaison with Congress for about thirty years and emphasized that preservation is not a partisan issue. A corollary of this statement is that we should not seek to make it one. While liberals in government are more inclined to support (i.e., provide public dollars for) preservation activities, the difference in passing legislation often boils down to a few bipartisan Congressmen who view preservation from the historical perspective.

The problem with getting legislation passed, like our effort to add to the National Historic Trails (NHT), is not so much a disagreement on that issue as the partisanship that extends from unrelated issues. There is also a misconception that NHT designation is like the controversial creation and expansion of national monuments. It is not. The NHT designation does not impact private land.

We need broad-spectrum support in Congress. This requires continuous interaction, support, and encouragement to build a bipartisan constituency. That is what the Watsons did so well. Sometimes this takes biting your tongue when you are in strong disagreement on an unrelated issue.

The Watsons also recognized that we are advocating for a good product. Everyone loves trails. History and preservation may not be loved by all, but they are respected. We have a good story to tell and need to make sure it reaches decision-makers. With the passing of Bill and Jeanne, a valuable resource has been lost. It is up to each of us to help fill the void whenever an opportunity arises to inform our representatives of our mission to preserve the legacy of those who crossed America on our historic trails.

August 4, 2017

Dear Editor,

Although Andy Hammond hadn't found any first-hand accounts of "O, Susanna" sung on the overland trail for "The Look of the Elephant," there is at least one. In "Crossing the Plains in '49" (Oakland, CA, 1903), G. W. Thissell wrote,

> The most pleasant part of the trip across the plains in '49–'50 was around the camp-fire. Supper over, dishes and pots out of the way, we would gather around the camp-fire and relate the scenes of the day, and spin long yarns. Some played the violin, others the accordeon. A few would play cards, while the young men would sing their favorite California songs:
>
> It rained all night, the day I left,
> The weather it was dry.
> The sun so hot I froze to death,
> Susanna, don't you cry.
> CHORUS: Susanna, Don't you cry for me,
> I'm going to California,
> Some gold dust for to see.

After that Thissell quotes two more verses.

So historical re-enactors can rest easy; it is indeed a historically authentic song!

VIVIAN WILLIAMS
Co-author, *Songs and Dances of the Oregon Trail and Early Pioneer Communities* (Voyager, 2012)

In Andy Hammond's column, "O!, Susanna," Summer 2017, line 9 should have read: "Music has charms to soothe a savage breast." (William Congreve, 1697)

In their review of the Rowland Willard book, *Overland Journal* 34, no. 2 (Summer 2016), Deborah and Jon Lawrence stated:

> In the autobiography, Willard relates what Glass told him about his having been attacked by a female grizzly bear in the Rocky Mountains two years earlier. This segment will certainly be of interest to readers who saw the film *The Revenant* or who have read Michael Punke's novel by the same name.

Willard made a reference to Hugh Glass having been in "the mountains" in the paragraph to which they referred. However, that reference related back to a prior time and it appears they overlooked the Editor's footnote accompanying that portion of the text, clarifying that the attack occurred in South Dakota. Note 14, p. 148 of Williard's book reads:

> The reference to the white bear is a grizzly bear that attacked Hugh Glass in 1824 when he was employed by Maj. Henry as a trapper at Grand River, South Dakota.

The high interest in this incident—as a result of the movie—makes it appropriate to note this correction. OJ

Complete title page of *The Emigrant's Guide to the Golden Land, shewing him when to go, where to go, how to go . . .* Scene on a Branch of the Sacramento. Color plate, G. A. Fleming, creator, 1850. Printed for the booksellers Genre, London, 1850. COURTESY BEINECKE RARE BOOK AND MANUSCRIPT LIBRARY, YALE UNIVERSITY. CN: ZC72 850CDB.

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