



HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION MEETING

City Council Chambers, 33 East Broadway Avenue Meridian, Idaho

Thursday, March 26, 2026 at 4:30 PM

MINUTES

ROLL-CALL ATTENDANCE

Blaine Johnston, Chair

Patrick Gittings

Hailey Stewart

Ken Freeze, Vice Chair

James Abdel-Monem

Harold Wilson (joined online around 5:25)

Heather Giacomo

City Staff: Arts and Culture Coordinator C. Schiffler, City Deputy Attorney A. Breshears, and were also in attendance.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Motion: P. Gittings moved to adopt the agenda.

Second: K. Freeze.

Approval: Unanimous. [01:46]

APPROVAL OF MINUTES [ACTION ITEM]

- 1. Approve:** Minutes from the 2-26-26 Meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission

Motion: K. Freeze moved to approve the minutes from the February 26, 2026, meeting.

Second: P. Gittings.

Approval: Unanimous. [02:15]

NEW BUSINESS [ACTION ITEMS]

2. **Presentation:** Oregon-California Trails Association ~ *Jerry Eichhorst, President of Idaho Chapter of the Oregon-California Trails Association*

Discussion Points:

- J. Eichhorst provided an overview of the Oregon-California Trails Association (OCTA), the largest volunteer organization dedicated to protecting historic immigrant trails. [04:07]
- The Idaho Chapter focuses on mapping, marking, and preserving trails across the state, working with the BLM and National Park Service. [07:26]
- **Refer to presentation slides** for maps of the Oregon National Historic Trail and details on the 2027 National Convention in Burley. [05:56]
- Significant Meridian-area sites include the Staples Monument (Eagle and Chinden Roads) and a historic wagon ramp at the property of Clark Johnson. [13:54]

Questions Asked and Answered:

- **Question:** K. Freeze asked about efforts to preserve the Mayfield townsite.
- **Answer:** J. Eichhorst noted that while some old buildings are set aside, much of the area is approved for subdivision development, making full preservation difficult. [16:47]
- **Question:** J. Abdel-Monem asked what vehicles are required for the upcoming byway tour.
- **Answer:** J. Eichhorst clarified that standard family vehicles are sufficient for the well-maintained gravel county roads. [18:25]

3. **Presentation:** Water Tower Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places ~ *Barbara Bauer, TAG Historical Research and Consulting*

- The 1976 water tower is being nominated under **Criterion A** for its association with Meridian's transition from a rural agricultural community to an urban city. [21:30]
- The tower will meet the 50-year age requirement in 2027. [23:13]
- D. Teller located the original 1912 and 1976 plans in city records to assist with the nomination. [24:54]
- The structure is a "single pedestal spheroid tank" and maintains high integrity of design and materials. [26:45]
- **Project Timeline:** Field photography and research are underway. A draft narrative will be developed over the next two months, with a formal project update and interim report scheduled for the May 28th commission meeting.

4. **Presentation:** Update of the 2022-2023 Downtown Meridian Reconnaissance-level Survey ~ *Elizabeth Jacox, TAG Historical Research and Consulting*

- The survey of over 200 buildings is being updated to fit the new Idaho Cultural Resources Inventory System (ICRIS). [29:36]
- E. Jacox recommended two potential districts: the North Main Street District (extended to include the Avest Building) and a 5-building East Idaho Avenue District. [32:41]
- **Refer to presentation slides** and the memo for specific eligibility recommendations.

- The Masonic Hall (1957) and the Methodist Church (1974) were identified as potentially eligible for individual listing rather than as part of the earlier 1900-1915 district. [34:53]

OLD BUSINESS [ACTION ITEMS]

5. Discuss: Planning for National Historic Preservation Month Activities in May 2026

Oral Histories Panel: Saturday, May 2 at 4:30 PM at Hidden Gem Events; Rental Fee: \$250 [ACTION ITEM: APPROVE EXPENSE]

Venue Selection: C. Shiffler recommended Hidden Gem Events as a more approachable, public-friendly venue for the community compared to the more formal City Council Chambers.

Scheduling: The event is set for Saturday, May 2, from 4:30 PM to 6:30 PM. The later time slot was chosen to avoid a conflict with a morning event regarding the Meridian "Initial Point" at the Old Idaho Penitentiary.

Participants: B. Johnston will serve as the moderator. The panel will feature longtime residents Neva Timmons, Norman Young, and Brent Alger, who will share memories of Meridian's history.

Documentation: Recording of the session is being coordinated through CWI students or the city's video intern to ensure the oral histories are archived. H. Giacomo requested that the city's video intern be prioritized if available, citing the high quality of his previous work.

Logistics & Setup: The commission discussed a weather contingency plan; the event can be held indoors or outdoors at Hidden Gem depending on conditions.

Commissioners are requested to arrive at the venue by 4:00 PM to assist with setting up chairs and tables, as well as cleanup following the event.

Action Item: K. Freeze moved to approve a \$250 expenditure for the Hidden Gem Events rental fee. Seconded by P. Gittings. Approval: Unanimous.

History Walk: Saturday, May 16 at 10:00 AM

Oregon-California Trails Presentation: Following the History Walk on Saturday, May 16 at 12:00 PM at City Hall, Meeting Rooms A & B

History Walk & OCTA Presentation (May 16):

Walk starts at 10:00 AM; OCTA presentation by J. Eichhorst at City Hall at 12:00 PM. [42:19]

5. Training Opportunity: 2026 Commission Assistance and Mentoring Program (CAMP) Training, hosted in partnership with the Coeur d'Alene Historic Preservation Commission and the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions

(NAPC); Held at the Coeur d'Alene Public Library on Friday, May 22 from 9:00AM - 4:00 PM; Registration is FREE [ACTION ITEM: APPROVE ESTIMATED EXPENSE]

Discussion: K. Freeze presented an estimated travel expense of \$640 per person for the Coeur d'Alene training. B. Johnston and K. Freeze expressed interest in attending. [46:23]

Action: The item was postponed to the April meeting to finalize costs and ensure they remain within the \$1,700 budget. [50:13]

7. Other Updates and Discussions:

2026 Guided Walking Tours

Elongated Coin Machine

Walking Tours: B. Johnston will lead the April 18 tour with K. Freeze as secondary. A lead is still needed for the May 16 tour. [51:31]

Elongated Coin Machine: J. Everts is coordinating with the library district; updates expected in April. [51:01]

REPORTS [ACTION ITEM]

8. Report: Social Media Subcommittee

Discussion Points:

- B. Johnston met with H. Stewart and D. Youmans on March 18. [53:07]
- New content series proposed: "Where is it Wednesday" (obscure buildings), "Trivia Tuesday," and walking tour reminders. [53:18]
- Coordination with C. Schiffler: Posts must be submitted one week in advance and include alt-text for accessibility. [57:06]
- **Action:** C. Schiffler will develop a list of requirements for monthly batches of posts to streamline the review process. [58:13]

NEXT MEETING: April 23, 2026

ADJOURNMENT [ACTION ITEM]

- **Motion:** K. Freeze moved to adjourn the meeting at approximately 5:30 PM. [59:43]
- **Second:** H. Giacomo.
- **Approval:** Unanimous.

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ecolXPZSqKU>

***Portions of this meeting minutes document were drafted with support from Google Gemini AI. All content was edited and reviewed by Cassandra Schiffler, Arts & Culture Coordinator.**



Oregon-California Trails Association

Meridian Historic Preservation Council

March 26, 2026

Presented by Jerry Eichhorst

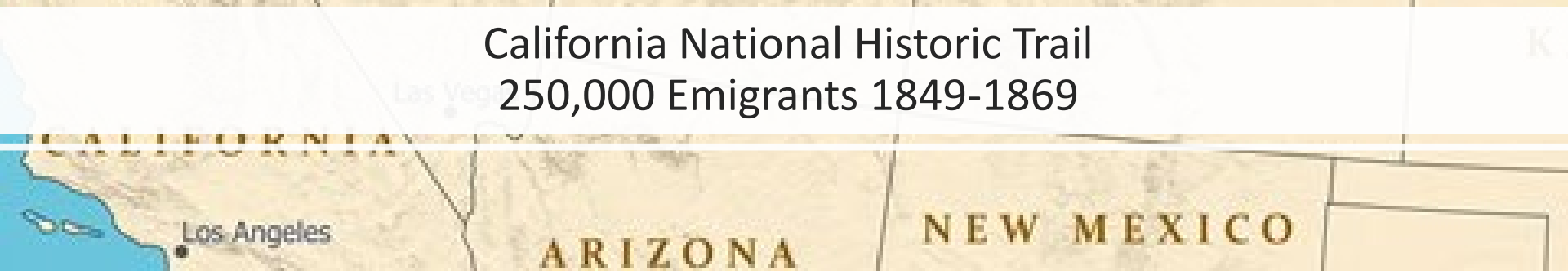
- President of the Idaho chapter Oregon-California Trails Association (OCTA) for 15+ years
 - www.IdahoOCTA.org
- Involved in Oregon Trail work for 30+ years
- Extensive emigrant diary collection (2700+ accounts)
- Researcher, speaker, author, tour guide, videos
- Creator of Main Oregon Trail Back Country Byway
- Contributed to the NPS Idaho driving guide
- ISHS Esto Perpetua Award recipient
- OCTA Merrill Mattis Award for writing (2x)
- OCTA Franzwa Award for meritorious service
- Idaho Humanities Council Inquiring Idaho speaker



Oregon National Historic Trail
50,000 Emigrants 1843-1869



California National Historic Trail
250,000 Emigrants 1849-1869



Oregon-California Trails Association

Largest volunteer organization in the country dedicated to protecting the legacy of historic emigrant trails by promoting research, education, preservation, public awareness, and collaboration



Oregon-California Trails Association

- www.octa-trails.org
- *Overland Journal* magazine
(back issues available online)
- National conventions and
symposiums
- Online emigrant diaries
- Paper Trail research tool
- Quarterly newsletter
- YouTube channel



OCTA Videos on YouTube

- <https://www.youtube.com/@octatrails>

Popular videos



10:19

The Curious Case of Sarah Thomas' Tombstone

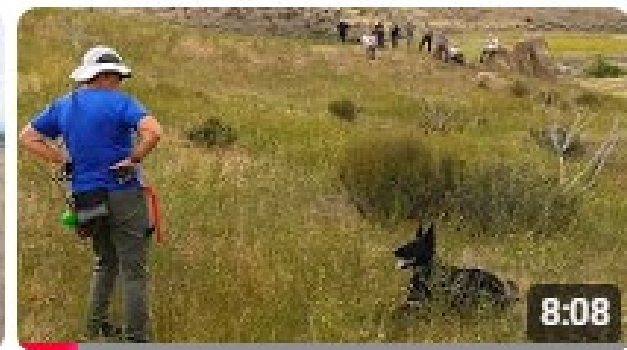
296K views • 2 years ago



8:13

Amazing Oregon Trail Swales in Wyoming

177K views • 2 years ago



8:08

GRAVE DOGS! In Search of a Massacre on the Oregon Trail

152K views • 2 years ago

OCTA Idaho Videos on YouTube



Unveiling the Hidden Gems: Exploring Idaho's Oregon Trail

Oregon-California Trails Association • 1.7K views • 1 year ago



City of Rocks

Oregon-California Trails Association • 758 views • 1 year ago



GRAVE DOGS! In Search of a Massacre on the Oregon Trail

Oregon-California Trails Association • 80K views • 1 year ago



Join the Adventure! The Idaho Chapter of the Oregon California Trails Association

Oregon-California Trails Association • 3.6K views • 1 year ago

OCTA Idaho Videos on YouTube



Main Oregon Trail Back Country Byway Part 1

Oregon-California Trails Association • 1K views • 1 year ago

5:56



Main Oregon Trail Back Country Byway Part 2

Oregon-California Trails Association • 886 views • 1 year ago

6:10



Join the Adventure! The Idaho Chapter of the Oregon California Trails Association

Oregon-California Trails Association • 139 views • 1 year ago

0:15



Main Oregon Trail Back Country Byway Part 3

Oregon-California Trails Association • 1.1K views • 1 year ago

10:14

OCTA Idaho Videos on YouTube



Model A Tour of the Oregon Trail Back-Country Byway

Oregon-California Trails Association • 707 views • 8 months ago

Join us for a unique journey through history as a dozen beautifully preserved Model A Ford antique cars tour a scenic portion of the Main Oregon Trail Back Country Byway in Idaho. Led by Jerry...



Idaho Chapter & Treasure Valley Model A Club

Oregon-California Trails Association • 338 views • 5 months ago

The Idaho Chapter of OCTA and the Treasure Valley Model A Club in Idaho submitted a montage of these old cars doing some offroading along Idaho trail segments. Big thanks to the Treasure Valley...

Conventions

Nampa 2008, Fort Hall 2016, Burley 2027



Speakers and Presentations



Live and Silent Auctions



Awards and Recognition



National Membership Meeting



Raffle and Book Room



Pre and Post Convention Tours



Bus Tours



Fine Dining



Closing BBQ



Idaho Chapter OCTA

- One of 11 regional or state chapters
- Work with the BLM, National Park Service, cities, towns, and historical societies to enjoy, explore, map, mark and preserve the emigrant trails across Idaho
- Friends, outings, tours, meetings, exploring, marking, mapping, *Trail Dust* newsletters
- Presentations

Idaho Chapter Website

- www.IdahoOCTA.org
- Calendar of upcoming activities
- Past issues of the *Trail Dust* newsletter
- *Overland Journal* articles on Idaho
- Maps and driving guides

Website (IdahoOCTA.org)



[NEWSLETTER](#)

[INFORMATION](#)

[CALENDAR](#)

[IDAHO ROUTES](#)

[NATIONAL OCTA](#)



WELCOME TO THE IDAHO CHAPTER OF THE OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION

We are a volunteer organization dedicated to the preservation and enjoyment of emigrant trails which crossed the western United States to the Pacific Ocean from 1841-1869.



UPCOMING EVENTS

February-March, 2024

Community education classes, Boise

March 13-16, 2024

OCTA Spring Symposium, El Paso

[DETAILS AND MORE](#)

RECENT NEWSLETTERS

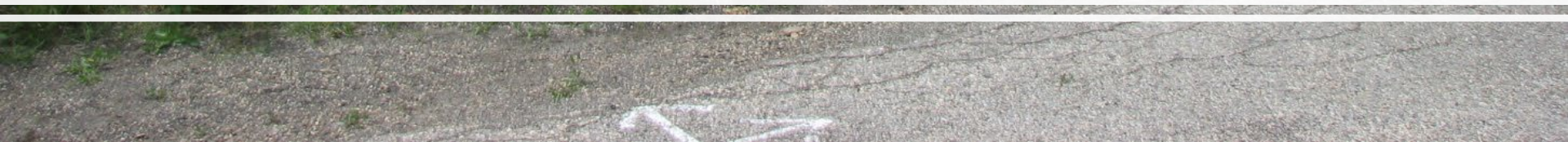
- [Fall 2023](#)
- [Summer 2023](#)
- [Spring 2023](#)
- [Fall 2022](#)
- [Summer 2022](#)
- [Winter 2021](#)



Outings



Annual Byway Tour, May 2011





Annual Model A Oregon Trail Tour

Trail Dust

Newsletter of the Oregon-California Trails Association, Idaho Chapter
Vol. XXII Issue III *Jerry Eichhorst, Editor* October/November 2010



Diaries Across Idaho

North Alternate Oregon Trail Graves

by *Jerry Eichhorst*

Having spent four years researching the North Alternate Oregon Trail (NAOT), I searched many hours for 10 graves in a row referred to in many diaries. I believe there were several such grave sites along the NAOT. We likely will never know for sure, since the diaries had no map and used their own descriptive names for the creeks they crossed. By analyzing the diaries and the clues noted therein, some locations can be deduced. Below are some of the references to graves along the NAOT.

Fri Aug 27 . . . Saw 5 dead cattle to day and 2 graves. There is a great deal of sickness along the road now.

Martha S. Read, 1852

Thursday, Sept. 9. . . . three miles farther on. Came to a fine stream, and several places—some ten feet across—where water and mud boil up through the sand. Stopped here for dinner and had pretty good grass. Here we found 10 graves, all in a row; all had died from the 28th of July to the 4th of August. Disease unknown.

Parthenia Blank, 1852

Sat. [September] 11. Reached Boise River. Since we struck the road leading from the crossing of Snake [Monday the 6th] we saw all along a number of new graves. There must have been a wonderful mortality among the emigrants since the latter part of July. We know not what disease. Only one grave told the cause of death in that case - Cholera.

John Spencer, 1852

August 11th . . . Ten miles from this came to Whitford Springs, beautiful water and grass and camp. Saw 10 graves side by side buried in August 1852 excepting one July this year 1853. Saw 14 dead cattle, one horse. Very hilly this forenoon, road all day. Arrived at 18 miles.

[August] 15th . . . We started early and drove hard. There were eleven graves near camp this morning. As soon as we stopped there a good spring of water rose up to road. We had fine grass at noon. A little before camping we passed eight more graves, all or nearly all of these twenty-four graves were made last August, the cholera having been very bad here. This evening we camped late and had rushes and swamp grass for our cattle.

Basil Nelson Longworth, 1853



Fires on the Trail

Article and small photos by *Jerry Eichhorst*



Fire spreads across hillside west of Hagerman near Oregon Trail. Photo by *Mel Eichhorst*

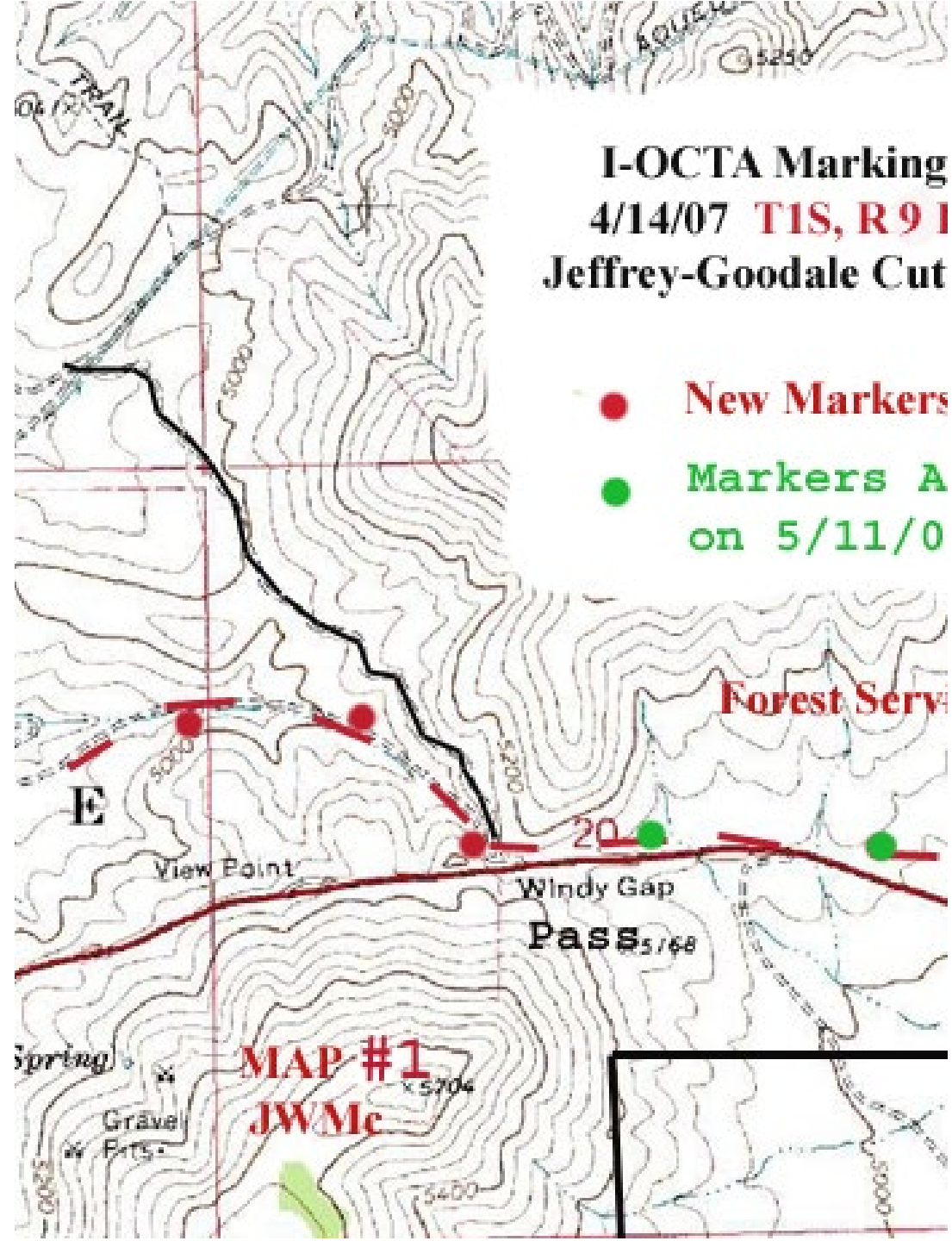
The summer of 2010 was tough for the Oregon Trail across southern Idaho. Two major fires burned large portions of the trails. A fire on King Hill, north of Glenns Ferry, burned across the North Alternate Oregon Trail/Kelton Road. Another fire in the Hagerman area burned across the main Oregon Trail as it climbs the bluff along the Snake River.

Terry Heslin, Trails & Travel Management Coordinator, National Scenic & Historic Trails for the BLM, Idaho State Office, and Kirk Halford, Denavit Preservation Officer/State Archaeologist, also for the BLM, Idaho State Office, joined me to visit the King Hill burn in September. Surprisingly, most of the carsonite markers survived the fast-moving fire.

Trail Dust Newsletter

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Trail Marking and Mapping



Idaho Chapter Recent Projects

- Main Oregon Trail Back Country Byway
- Canyon Creek stage station restoration
- Fort Boise signs
- Lander Road Lane's grave signs
- Birch Creek cleanup
- Keeney Pass interpretive site restoration
- Powerline, solar, wind turbine, and geothermal projects across the state, including mitigation definition
- ITD/ISHS historical marker signs
- Cadaver dog grave verifications
- City of Rocks archaeologist assistance



Canyon Creek Valley – Oasis in the Desert



Canyon Creek Stage Station with Archibald Daniel



Canyon Creek Stage Station Before Restoration





Canyon Creek Stage Station Today



Oregon Trail in Boise

- Ada County Oregon Trail Recreation Area
- Oregon Trail Reserve*
- Oregon Trail Subdivision*
- Meeker Markers
 - Boise Avenue and Broadway
 - State Capitol grounds



Oregon Trail in Meridian

- Staples Monument
- Clark Johnson grade



Old Oregon Trail - West Boise

Between 1842 and 1849 over 300,000 emigrants fulfilled America's Manifest Destiny by voluntarily migrating to Oregon and California. Their early 2,000 mile journey along what is now known as the early Native American trail became known as the Oregon Trail. Many of these early pioneers passed this site, passing to trade with the Native Americans living here and later with traders who drove the fur trade for their own homes. Emigrants drove into the trail's cross passing here.

One of these early emigrants, Ben Meeker, returned back along the route passing near here in 1846 and 1847. His presence led to the city of West Boise in 1848 and the preservation of the Oregon Trail as an important American historical landmark. Engineer Joseph Paulsen, moved by Meeker's efforts, prepared a bronze sculpture, which has been erected and placed in this location. His "Medallion" captures the spirit and the hardships suffered by these early pioneers and preserve the memory of this long journey to a new beginning settled by so many brave Americans.



On August 6, 2008, the Association of Armed Pathfinders in cooperation with English, The Idaho and Northwest Chapters of the Oregon-California Trails Association, and The Snake River Oregon No. 1811 of Saratoga J. Esselton Chapter No. 1811, E. Clappa Vista, Dedicate this monument to the memory of the many people who traveled the "Old Oregon Trail."

Clark Johnson Grade – North Meridian



Upcoming Activities

- www.idahoOCTA.org calendar page
- April 18 Annual Byway Tour
- May 21 & 22 Annual City of Rocks activities
- May 23 Spring chapter meeting

Annual Byway Tour

Caravan tour from east of Mountain Home back to Boise following the Oregon Trail on paved and gravel county roads (Drive your own vehicle)

Saturday, April 18, 8:45 am

Annual Byway Tour

Potluck lunch at Sweetbriar Winery on Highway 20 north of Mountain Home

- Cost **\$5/person to the winery** for burgers, hotdogs, and brats
- Bring a side dish and/or dessert to share, your own water and drinks, and a lawn chair
- Wine can be purchased

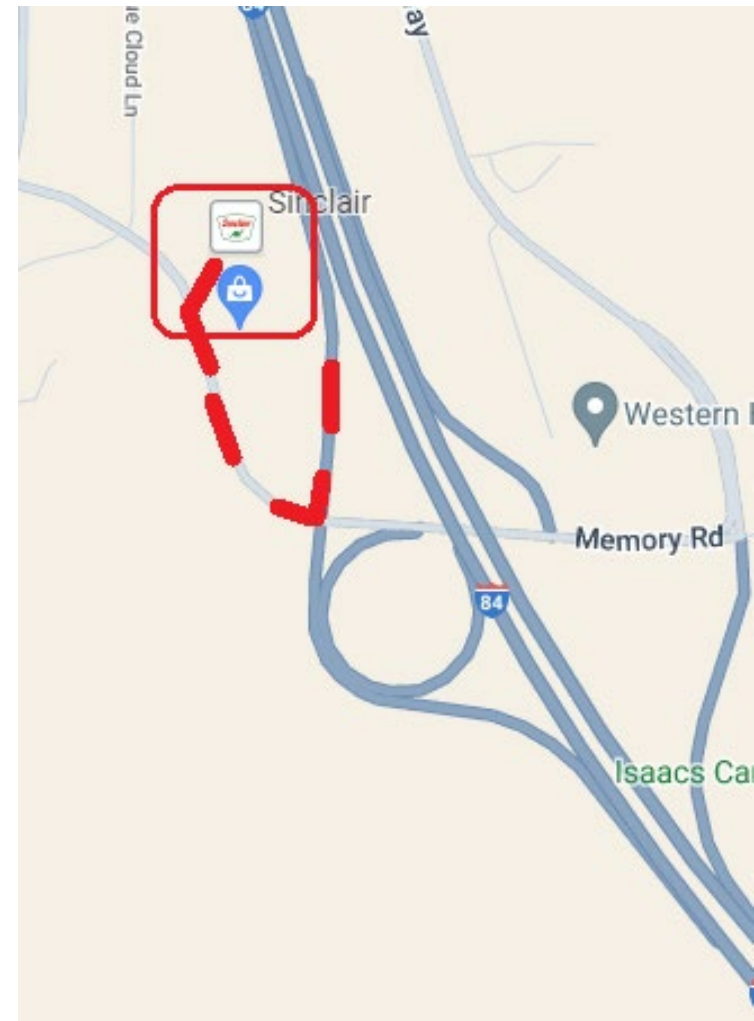
Bring your camera, warm clothing, walking shoes, etc.

Boise Area People

Saturday, April 18, 8:45 am

Meet at west side of Sinclair truck stop on the northwest corner of I-84 at Eisenman Rd (Exit 59a).

Sign waiver, receive instructions, drive to Mountain Home at 9:00 am.



To Become an OCTA Member

Call OCTA headquarters

816-252-2276

and tell Kathy Conway that Jerry sent you

Be sure to join the Idaho chapter as well

\$15 Individual

\$20 Family

Thank you!

IdahoOCTA.org

jeichhotrails@gmail.com



MERIDIAN UPDATE

Meridian Water Tower NRHP

Meridian Survey Phase 1 and 2

March 26, 2026



THE MERIDIAN WATER TOWER


Meridian Water Tower circa
1912



Meridian Water Tower was a
multi-leg elevated water tower.



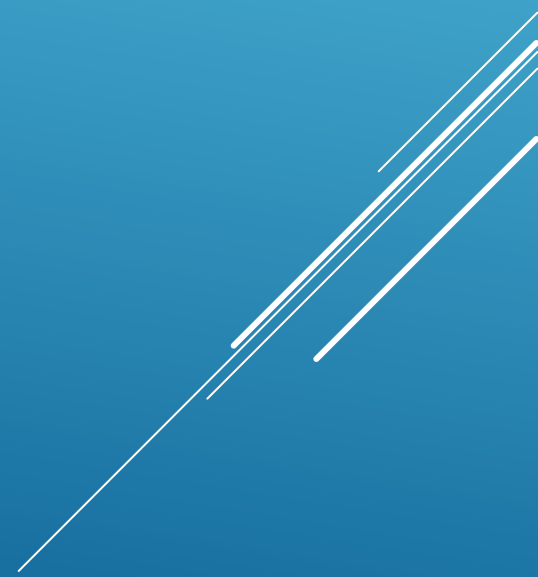
NRHP SIGNIFICANCE- CRITERION A (COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT)

- Associated with Meridian's transition from rural agricultural community to urbanizing city
 - Constructed in response to population growth beginning in the late 1970s
 - Expanded municipal water capacity to support new development
 - Enabled residential and commercial expansion
 - Reflects conversion of agricultural land to suburban land uses
 - Represents investment in critical public infrastructure
 - Illustrates broader patterns of late 20th-century community growth in Meridian
- 



Aerial View of Meridian
1951

Population 2500





Aerial View of Meridian,
Idaho, 1981

Population 6,658



- ▶ 1. 50 years old or older;
- ▶ 2. Retain their historic appearance (called “integrity”); and
- ▶ 3. Are historically important (referred to as “significant”) at the local, state, or national level under one of four Criteria identified by the National Park Service. The Criteria are:
 - ▶ Criterion A: Association with events that have made a significant contribution to broad patterns of history (agriculture, mining, community planning, homesteading)
 - ▶ Criterion B: Association with the productive lives of persons significant to our past (not many properties qualify for this criterion)
 - ▶ Criterion C: Embodiment of a distinctive characteristic of a type, period, or method of construction; represent the work of a master; possess high artistic values; or represent a significant vernacular structure (bridges, railroad trusses, courthouses, residences, etc.)
 - ▶ Criterion D: Properties that have yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in precontact or post-contact (archaeological sites, camps, forts, farmsteads, original town plats)


Minimum Standards to be listed in the NRHP

What type of water tower is this?

Single-pedestal spheroid tank

- Single central column (pedestal) supporting the tank
- Bulbous/spherical tank shape (often called a spheroid or ellipsoidal tank)
- Flared base at the bottom of the pedestal for stability
- Enclosed support structure (unlike older multi-leg towers)

When were these water towers built?

- Commonly constructed 1950s-1980s
 - Associated with modern municipal water systems
 - Often built during periods of suburban expansion and infrastructure upgrades
- 



- ▶ Retains integrity of location, design, materials, and workmanship
- ▶ Continues to convey its historic function as a municipal infrastructure
- ▶ Remains a prominent visual feature of the community

INTEGRITY



Schedule

Feb 1- 13 Kick off meeting

Feb 16- March 20 Field survey, photography, and research

March 23 – May 27 Draft of nomination narrative

May 27 Interim report to HPC attend May 28 meeting for mid-project update

June 1 – August 1 Completion of narrative, associated information





2022 & 2023 MERIDIAN SURVEY REPORT UPDATE



1310 N. MAIN BUILT 1941



211







246 E Idaho Ave

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