

TRAILS HEAD CHAPTER HISTORY - Part 1 **Covering the founding from 1983 through 1987**

Note: Most of the dates and information on meetings are verified by **Ross Marshall's** file of notes and minutes plus his yearly personal pocket calendars (The notes in parenthesis are **Ross's** comments about that segment of text)

After Trails Head Chapter was ten years old, the chapter decided to document chapter history because "institutional memory" was already beginning to fade a little with some who had been around since the beginning.

So a project was begun to record on audio tapes what could be remembered. Ten people who had been present during the founding of the chapter volunteered to spend an hour or so in a structured recording session. Those tapings were done in 1996 to 1998 led by members **Harold Smith** and **Niel Johnson**.

All ten of the recorded tapes were transcribed in 2013 into 20 to 40-page documents by **Jewell Willhite**, a Lawrence friend of 2013 Trails Head Vice President **Sandy Wiechert**. **Mary Conrad** has prepared a time-line history from excerpts from our newsletters. When Jewell was unable to play back some of the tapes, **Sandy** through trial and error, ended up contracting with Cytek of Topeka to produce regular analog audiotapes from the digital tapes.

Ross Marshall went through each of the transcriptions, not deleting any of the transcribed text, but adding names that were not clear to Jewell and inserting comments where **Ross** thought the facts or dates were maybe not right. That way the committee was able to look at the transcriptions and reached consensus on what is really correct to use in the narrative history of the chapter. And since **Ross** is a 'hoarder' of old documents, his files that date back to the beginning were of invaluable help.

Trails Head Chapter still has the original tapes, the Cytek tapes, **Jewell's** transcription originals totaling about 300 pages, the edited versions, plus a published narrative and time-line history of Trails Head Chapter. The chapter spent about \$1300 to retrieve this valuable historic resource, which chapter members feared was either lost or unusable. Pretty exciting!

Trails Head Chapter members hope you all, as readers, enjoy the story and accomplishments of a fairly busy OCTA chapter, that at this writing has been in existence about 35 years in the preservation and interpretation of the Oregon and California National Historic Trails.

Ross Marshall

TRAILS HEAD CHAPTER HISTORY PROJECT

<u>Taping date</u>	<u>Interviewed</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Text Transcribed</u>
July 30, 1996	Barbara Bernauer	RLDS Archives	12/17/13
August 6, 1996	John Leamon	Park College Archives	8/26/13
Sept. 25, 1996	Jim Budde	NFTC	8/29/13
Sept. 26, 1996	Duke Sumonia	By phone from his Denver home	8/29/13
October 21, 1996	Rich Nolf	By phone from his St. Jo home	9/21/13
January 30, 1997	Pauline Fowler	NFTC	12/27/13
Feb. 25, 1997	James Lee	NFTC	1/4/14
May 19, 1997	Ross Marshall	NFTC	12/4/13
May 11, 1998	Barbara Magerl	NFTC	11/19/13
May 29, 1998	Sylvia Mooney	NFTC	10/30/13

PREPARATION FOR THE 1983 OCTA CONVENTION IN INDEPENDENCE

The first organized OCTA activity in the Kansas City area followed very soon after the founding of OCTA **August 12, 1982** in Denver by the “Dirty Dozen”, hosted by **John Latschar** at his National Park Service office. There were 12 people present.

Greg Franzwa was elected the first president. Elected to the first Board of Directors were **Merle Wells, Merrill Mattes, Charles Martin, Sr., Bertha Rennells, Jim Bowers, E. G. Chuinard, John Latschar, James Johnson, Robert Tucker, Greg Franzwa, Troy Gray, Stanley Kimball, Tom Hunt, and Russell Dickinson.**

They needed to plan the first OCTA Convention and they decided the most appropriate place would be where the trail started at the eastern end, which was Independence, MO.

According to **Barbara Magerl’s** transcript,

“That all happened because of a lady rather well known in this area named **Sally Schwenk**. I said to **Sally** several times, “What did I ever do to deserve this?” Good-naturedly, of course. Probably in **1982** I was president of the Heritage League of Greater Kansas City, which is a consortium of local organizations. So **Greg Franzwa**, who I had never heard of, called **Sally**, because she was then the director of the Jackson County Historical Society. He kept asking her questions. “Who do you know who does this? How could I contact this organization?” She kept saying, “Call **Barbara Magerl**.” So eventually he started calling me all the time. One day he said, “Why don’t you put together our first convention for us?” So I said, “How much is in it for me?” He said, “Nothing.” I said, “Let me think about this.” So as a matter of civic pride I did, kind of as a tribute to my ancestors.

NJ: The first convention. That’s a real landmark.

BM: I understand that what **Greg Franzwa** said to **John Latschar** of the National Park Service in Denver was, “Boy, have I found a patsy. Here’s patsy.”

Barbara said further “I have a book at home, a first edition of maps of the Oregon Trail. And it arrived on the same day that we were having the Heritage League board meeting. In the mail I received this very big, impressive book. Inside was a dedication to me in appreciation by **Gregory Franzwa**. That was **September 20, 1982**. That was like the first or second interaction I had ever had with him. The detailed planning of it probably didn’t begin until **January, 1983**.

In 1982 **Greg** said to me, “You are a member of OCTA and I have never heard of you.” So he told me a little about the organization and their dreams and aspirations. And I said, “I think you are asking the wrong person because I really don’t have any identity with OCTA or Oregon, other than (unclear) family who moved there in the 1900s. So **Greg** said, “Come cut your teeth with our organization”.

“**Greg** had a company called Patrice Press in a town called Gerald, which is west of St. Louis. He ran his own publishing company. He published, for instance, the history of St. Genevieve, some things, I think, on St. Louis history, and I think this is what instigated his curiosity about the Oregon Trail. You know, his *Oregon Trail Revisited*, I’m quite sure, and *Maps of the Oregon Trail* had both been published before OCTA’s Overland Journal started. I know that because I had read that and was so taken with it that I invited him to speak to the Platte County Historical Society. **November 1982** was when we had our meeting. Since we had a big response, we had our meeting in Leavenworth. I was almost thrown out as president for taking the meeting outside of Platte County. He was sold on the Oregon Trail.”

“He was definitely a mesmerizer. I think I have looked several times at the introduction in the front and marveled about the early date on that book. He talks about his curiosity and traveling the trail as opposed to when OCTA started.”

From Ross Marshall’s transcript “I bought **Franzwa’s** *Oregon Trail Revisited* in the early 1970s. I think it had 1972 authorship on it. There was an ad in some magazine and I bought the book. By virtue of that I got on the publisher’s list for Patrice Press. I suppose the next thing I heard of from **Greg Franzwa** was after OCTA was actually formed and the first convention was planned here in Independence in 1983. I got the letter to not only be part of the convention but to be a charter member of the organization, which I responded to very quickly and said that sounded like a good idea. In the meantime after having bought *The Oregon Trail Revisited*, back in whenever it was, back in the mid-70s, I hadn’t really done anything with it. I had not taken any of those tours that I had said I was going to someday. So I didn’t know a whole lot more about the Oregon Trail than when I bought the book. The first time I ever met **Greg**, as I recall, was a meeting where he was brought in to speak to a group. I could be wrong on this but the way I remember it was at Cedar Roe Library back in 1983, probably before that convention, probably in early ’83.

Niel Johnson: You have here [my letter to Niel before the interview] on **May 19 in 1983** you met him in the Cedar Roe Library.”

Ross Marshall letter before the 1996 interview:

“The following spring, I got a call from a lady by the name of **Barbara Magerl** asking if I was interested in attending the first Convention of this organization in Independence. I did not know her, but she sounded very enthusiastic, and I told her yes.

Soon thereafter, I received a notice in the mail inviting my wife **Jana** and I to a talk given by **Greg Franzwa** at the Cedar Roe Library in Roeland Park, Kansas. On **May 19, 1983**. He gave a slide presentation and talked about his travels on the Oregon Trail which resulted in the publication of his book *Oregon Trail Revisited*. I was not familiar with the sites he talked about, but it was all very interesting.”

From Marshall’s transcript:

NJ: How many were at this convention? Do you recall?

RM: I don’t have any specific numbers but my memory serves that there were upwards of 200, say between 150 and 200 people there. [183 were pre-registered] And by virtue of attending that convention, at people’s option, of course, they had the right to become charter members. So early on the organization had some 200 charter members.

NJ: Where did they have the meetings?

RM: It was over here at the Sermon Center over on Noland Road.

NJ: There wasn’t a meeting here before that. That was the first meeting that you can recall.

RM: Except for **Greg’s** slide presentation. And I’m sure there were meetings here in preparation for the convention. But I was not a part of that.

NJ: You said here that these were interesting speakers and some of them are still close friends and that you learned about the trail in the local area on one of the treks. Did you go on the first trek then? Were you on the first trek that they had here in Jackson County after that convention?

RM: Well, as part of the convention there were a couple of bus tours. One of them clear to Alcove Springs around Marysville, Kansas. I did not sign up for that and the reason for that was

in 1983 we already had our vacation time planned and I didn't have time off. I was able to go to some of the sessions, either morning or afternoon sessions. My wife went on the local bus tour. But actually I didn't go on any of the tours, just simply didn't have the time."

THE FIRST OCTA CONVENTION IN INDEPENDENCE

This Charter Convention began on Friday morning **August 19, 1983** at the Sermon Center with something close to 200 people registered. It was a very hot weekend, over 100 degrees.

--**Mayor Barbara Potts** welcomed everyone.

--**Merrill Mattes** was the keynote speaker on "A Tribute to the Oregon Trail Memorial Ass'n".

--**Tom Hunt** gave a slide presentation on the California Trail.

--**Russell Dickinson**, Director of the National Park Service, spoke on their plans for the Oregon National Historic Trail.

--**Stanley Kimball** lectured on the Bridger Pass and Overland Trail.

After lunch, buses took people to the Upper Independence (Wayne City) Landing for a dedication of a monument and plaque installed by the City of Sugar Creek. Then down the Independence Route through the Square to Cave Spring, then to Minor Park and a stop at the Alexander Majors House, ending with a picnic supper at the Shawnee Indian Mission. Afterwards, buses took people to Westport for a tour of the Harris-Kearney House, plus some that stopped off at Kelly's Bar! Kelly's was the Ewing-Boone building built in 1850 that was a trading and supply store for trail travelers.

Saturday began with a panel on "Women and the Overland Trails", presented by **Betty Burnett, Barbara Burgess and Sharon Brown**. This was followed by **Charles Martin, Sr.**, speaking on "Alcove Spring: a Case Study for Agency/Association Cooperation." Followed by presentations by **Martin, Franzwa, and Robert W. Richmond**, Kansas State Historical Society Assistant Executive Director.

During the noon luncheon, **Mayor Ron Thom** of Oregon City, Oregon invited OCTA to hold its **1984 convention** there. After lunch, the Board of Directors held a business meeting.

Saturday night was the first annual banquet, held at the Adam's Mark Hotel. Keynote speaker was **E. G. (Frenchy) Chuinard, MD**, a founder of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation and an OCTA board member.

Sunday was an all-day bus tour (two buses) to the Red Vermillion River Crossing, with lunch at the nearby Louis Vieux Cemetery. Then to Alcove Spring where owner **Stella Hammett** greeted everyone and showed them the grave of **Mrs. Sarah Keyes**, mother-in-law of **James Frazier Reed** of the 1846 Donner-Reed wagon train. One bus had tire trouble, but the passengers eventually made it back!

It was a very successful first convention. **Barbara** did an excellent job as coordinator! **Ross Marshall** remembers it well and met a lot of people there who became long-time friends.

Ross Marshall's article from the KC Star (probably Sunday, **August 21, 1983**) (by the "Star's staff") which reads:

History Buffs Gather To Preserve Trails

While men in dress shirts and ties talked inside about federal historic preservation laws on Saturday, **Jim Bowers and Richard Lane** stood in the parking lot of the Roger T. Sermon

Community Center in Independence and talked of their love affair with the Oregon and California trails.

“Mary Holmsley’s gravesite”, read **Mr. Bowers** from a book on historic sites he had dug from the back of his four-wheel drive vehicle. “I’ve been there. I can tell you the story of that”, said the retired schoolteacher of the site near Fort Laramie, Wyo.

Mr. Bowers, who came to Independence from near Denver for the weekend of historical chitchat, is treasurer of the Oregon-California Trails Association. The association was formed a year ago in an attempt to preserve the vestiges of the westward trails.

Mr. Bowers, like **Mr. Lane** of Omaha, Neb., has spent scattered vacations traveling over sections of the trails. Both men say they have covered nearly all of the 2,170-mile trail, which began in Independence.

About 175 history buffs interested in preserving the westward trails gathered in Independence this weekend to swap stories, share photographs, chart a course for increasing the association’s membership and for bolstering interest in preserving the trails. Talk among members centered on salvaging depressions made by wagon wheels, visiting snatches of the trails around Kansas City and using federal, state and local laws to advance their cause.

The convention began Thursday and ends today with a tour of additional trail sites.

Ross Marshall’s copy of a second article (undoubtedly KC Star) written the week after the convention as follows:

Oregon Trail is a link to history

A partnership between government and private interests will be needed to save vestiges of the historically famous Oregon Trail, a federal official noted last week in Independence. Based on the limited participation by Washington since the 2000-mile route was designated a National Historic Trail in 1978, the major responsibility will fall on such organizations as the Oregon-California Trails Association, which held its first meeting last weekend.

Gregory M. Franzwa, OCTA’s founder and president, is an author and publisher of books on the Oregon Trail. The group, he believes, should concentrate much of its attention on stirring interest at the local level. He cites as a splendid example of community effort, a recently dedicated monument in Sugar Creek calling attention to the Wayne City Landing where settlers disembarked from riverboats to begin their overland trip west. In this instance the Sugar Creek City Council and a private firm cooperated to erect the marker.

Most of the deep-rutted trail between Independence and Oregon’s Willamette Valley is long since gone. The goal of the 175 people who gathered in Independence is to preserve what is left of this link to the past. Though estimates vary somewhat, trail authorities believe 15 to 20 percent remains - including stretches in Missouri and Kansas. One of the association’s main missions is to educate the public about the location of the trail so that no more of it will be needlessly destroyed.

The wonder is that remnants have survived at all. The trail blazers, without the benefit of civil engineering degrees, carved an ideal route which is underscored by the many miles of interstate highways that have been built along the same way west.

More than 140 years have passed since the first wagonload of pioneers headed westward on an adventurous trek to a new frontier. Between the early 1840s and the late 1860s, an estimated 300,000 men, women and children crossed the plains and mountains in one of the most stirring migrations in history. What has survived of their route west is a national treasure. Wherever

possible, it should be rescued and preserved as a reminder of an extraordinary chapter in the American experience.

EVENTS AFTER 1983 OCTA CONVENTION BEFORE TRAILS HEAD FOUNDING

--The first issue of the quarterly Overland Journal was published by **Greg Franzwa** just before the 1983 convention;

--The membership of OCTA grew very fast after President Greg Franzwa sent out 2500 membership brochures to his Patrice Press mailing list:

--End of February, 1983 – 56

--By end of March – 100

--End of July – 301

--All who joined by the close of the August, 1983 convention were charter members.

--End of December – 393

--July, 1984 – about 600

--February, 1985 – 660

--August, 1985 at the Scottsbluff Convention it was 735.

--The first meeting of the California Chapter was **April 14, 1984**, led by **Tom Hunt**, who would become the second OCTA President in 1985.

--The second OCTA Convention was held **August 15-20, 1984** in Oregon City, Oregon.

Barbara Magerl always said that after she was elected to OCTA-Board of Directors in **August, 1984**, **President Greg** asked her to go home and found a chapter in Kansas City.

--The Study Bill for the California Trail passed Congress and signed by President Reagan on August 28, 1984 (the Oregon National Historic Trail was fully designated in 1978).

--The Idaho Chapter was formed on April 20, 1985.

Quoted from **John Leamon's** transcript of interview with **Harold Smith**:

“HS: What led to the beginning of Trails Head?”

JL: The thing that began Trails Head really was the fact that we had a national organization. There were some other chapters developed and being developed. And Barbara Magerl, to my knowledge, she's the one who was really behind Trails Head. She has a very active mind. She was in there developing a chapter. She called me a couple times. Yes, I thought it was a heck of a good idea. But I didn't really do anything to help her get it going. I know other people we could mention, Keith Connors [?]. But I don't think so. I think the person who really went out and started doing things was **Barbara**. She's the one you could say was the mother of Trails Head.

HS: But Trails Head wasn't part of that first meeting, was it?

JL: No. Trails Head didn't develop until a couple years later, I don't think. I don't really remember the dates. I remember **Barbara** called me a couple of times. And I think on one occasion she wanted me to help her and I didn't help her much in services.

HS: Well, I have a note here in my notes that says **Franzwa** wrote a letter to **Magerl** on **November 21, 1985**. That would be a couple years after it started, in which he says, “**Barbara** has a Chapter 3 off the ground.” I assume what he means by that is that there were a couple of other local groups and that probably Trails Head was the third one to form as a chapter.

JL: That could be. I don't know. We could probably call **Greg** and find out.

HS: Well, then here is another notation that **Tom Hunt**, who was president-elect of OCTA, wrote just about the same time in **October, 1985**. In the letter he said, “I am delighted to hear

that our OCTA members back in Missouri and Kansas are getting together to form a regional chapter.”

JL: That was in '85?

HS: This was in the fall of '85.”

ALEXANDER MAJORS BARN MEETING

On **November 10, 1984**, **Barbara Magerl** coordinated a meeting at the recently completed Alexander Majors barn at 83rd and State Line, with upwards of 100 people there on the ground floor and in the loft. **Greg Franzwa** presented a program on the Oregon Trail. He also sold his *Oregon Trail Revisited* book.

At the end of the meeting, **Barbara** asked several of us in attendance to meet soon to discuss the potential for the start of an OCTA chapter.

1985

First exploratory meeting in Duke Sumonia's house – January 22, 1985

This first exploratory meeting took place in **Duke Sumonia's** living room at 9116 Catalina **January 22, 1985**. About a dozen people attended, including **Duke, Barbara Magerl, Jane Mallinson, Ken and Elaine McNabney, Les Vilda, Anne Regan, Jerry Masters, Lois Daniel and Jana and Ross Marshall**.

In **Barbara's** transcript she says “We had a series of kind of informal informative meetings. The first one, if I remember correctly, was at **Duke Sumonia's** house in Leawood. **Duke** had contacted me asking me how I had become involved in the trails and what my background was because he had been an independent trail buster for a long time. He grew up, I think, in Sugar Creek or Independence and lived in Leawood. But he had explored all the Blue River areas all by himself and was just very knowledgeable about the trails there.”

According to **Ross Marshall's** notes, future Trails Head organizers decided rather than formally organizing, those interested would have a series of activities during the coming 1985 year. One of these was to be a program at Avila College on **March 5** presented by **Barbara Burgess** on the family aspects of the trail experience with a heavy emphasis on the woman's point of view.

MEETING AT AVILA COLLEGE

Ross Marshall has a copy of the invitation to the **March 5** meeting at Avila, attractively handmade, from **Barbara Magerl**. Also two pages of **Ross's** notes of that meeting of all the Kansas Oregon Trail history **Barbara Burgess** spoke about. It was all new to **Ross** at the time!

Ross has an article copied from a newspaper (KC Star?) which announced the upcoming **March 5, 1985** meeting at Avila College as follows:

Oregon Trail

The Oregon Trail, scene of one of the most significant migrations in human history, would be marked in Kansas where it is near or crosses public highways under a measure now before the Legislature.

The proposal by **Sen. Audrey Langworthy** of Prairie Village would enhance recognition of this historic route to the West. It has won unanimous approval of a Senate committee and awaits floor debate.

Signs of sharpening awareness of the trail are increasing. **Barbara Burgess** of Wamego, Kan., will lecture on “The Oregon Journey – A Family Adventure”, Tuesday night at Avila College. She is a student of the trail in Kansas and in particular the role’ played by women in the trek across the raw frontier.

An estimated 300,000 emigrants made the rugged and dangerous trip of about 2000 miles between the early 1840s and the late 1860s. The trail is important to this area because many of the pioneers began their trip from local points.

Other states, especially those to the West, have done a better job of marking the trail. Now Kansas has an opportunity to focus attention on this historic part of American history. The program was well publicized and over 100 people attended.”

LONE ELM CAMPGROUND EVENT

The next event was **May 12, 1985** (Mother’s Day) at the historic Lone Elm Campground at 167th & Lone Elm Road south of Olathe, arranged by **Barbara Magerl**, aided by **Duke Sumonia**. **Mrs. Willsey** was a member of the DAR and had a real interest in history and appreciated the history of the campground as did the original 1850s owner Newton Ainsworth. She and her husband **Don Willsey** had bought this property as an investment because it was very close to the city limits of Olathe and the next jump south by the city in its rezoning would need to include this property and its value would immediately increase.

The event was a picnic down at the windmill area from 4:00 to 6:00 next to Cedar Creek (where the Rendezvous Shelter is today in Lone Elm Park), and **Don Willsey** gave attendees a tour of the whole farmstead and down the lane to the creek area. **Duke** drew a map of the location so people could find it. **Ross Marshall** has a copy of this map and the written invitation.

Trails Head members pursued a relationship with this family for many years in the hopes of, when it was sold, an acre or two could be set aside at the SFT DAR marker at 167th & Lone Elm Road for interpretive markers that could be accessible to the public. That dream would not be realized until about 17 years later after Don passed away.

At that later date, **Ross Marshall** attended an Olathe Zoning Board meeting and was able to persuade Zoning Board members of the historic value of the property. Soon, under the leadership of **Kevin Corbett**, Director of the Olathe Parks and Recreation, the farm was purchased by the City for a multi-use sports recreation park. **Kevin** was very careful to preserve the historic resources on the property and erected interpretive exhibits (for which **Craig Crease** and **Ross Marshall** wrote the historical texts) and also erected a spectacular Rendezvous Shelterhouse.

It was a wonderful success story and what proved to be the key event that unlocked doors all over the Kansas City area for trail preservation and interpretation in the coming years.

Ross has a page of notes from the **July 3, 1985** meeting at **Barbara Magerl’s** house where those present planned future speakers and meetings.

Ross also has a copy of the **July 25** invitation to the dedication of the Oregon Trail sign arranged by **Barbara Magerl & Peggy Smith**.

And **Ross** has a copy of an article from the Lenexa News newspaper dated Friday, **August 23, 1985**. It has a wonderful picture of **Senator Audrey Langworthy** looking up admiringly at that first Oregon Trail NPS Logo sign newly mounted on a post. In the background are **State Senator August “Gus” Bogina** of Lenexa and **State Senator Paul Burke of Leawood** looking on, who were also co-sponsors of the Kansas Legislature bill that funded those road signs for the Oregon National Historic Trail as it traversed through Kansas.

Soon-to-be Trails Head Chapter members organized the event. **Audrey Langworthy** had just been elected to the Kansas senate and had sponsored a bill to provide for the purchase of National Park Service triangular Oregon Trail 9”x12” logo signs that could be used to mark trail intercepts through the state of Kansas. This was the first one mounted in the nation, there on State Line. Many dedicated that one and in the ensuing months and years most of them finally got put up clear to the Nebraska border – but not all. A good crowd was there that day.

The text of the article is as follows:

Oregon Trail in Kansas to be marked

The first sign in the nation to use the new National Park Service logo to mark the Oregon Trail was placed in Kansas. **Senator Audrey Langworthy**, sponsor of legislation which brought about this event, unveiled the sign at the State Line in Leawood on July 25.

Assisting with the unveiling were several dignitaries: **John Kemp**, Director of the Kansas Dept. of Transportation; **Dr. John Latschar**, trail historian with the National Park Service in Denver; **Gregory M. Franzwa**, president of the Oregon-California Trails Association; and Lenexa’s **Senator Gus Bogina**.

Immediately preceding the sign ceremony, local members of OCTA hosted a breakfast (at Leawood Middle School) which was attended by 83 people. The sign ceremony attracted 100 people, which **John Latschar** of the National Park Service commended.

The trail to be marked is called the ‘primary route’ by the NPS – that roadway which was used in the 1841-1848 period, before the California gold rush brought about a proliferation of trails.

The primary route originates in Independence, Mo., and runs for nearly 2,000 miles to Oregon City, Oregon, just outside Portland. It is the longest western trail in our nation’s history and the most significant settlement pathway.

The trail marking event at 123rd and State Line (see also **Magerl** Transcript pg 10 -11)

NJ: It was held at 123rd and State Line?

RM: Yes. Actually, I was not there. For some reason I think I was in Atlanta or some place, if I remember, as part of my job. Even though it was on a weekend day, I was still gone.

NJ: So that project got completed.

RM: Oh, I don’t think it ever really got 100 percent complete, but nearly so.

See **Barbara Magerl’s** transcript – page 11:

NJ: This is the New Santa Fe sign at 122nd?

BM: Correct, on the Kansas side.

NJ: On the other side of the line.

BM: It seems to keep disappearing every time they change the roads. We have no idea what happened to the original first sign. It’s long gone.

NJ: So we have pictures of it. I remember that day very well.

BM: There were legislators, local VIPs. **Bob Richmond** came down from Topeka.

NJ: I've got a bunch of pictures I'll have to show you.

PLAZA LIBRARY MEETING

Ross has a copy of the invitation to the **September 21, 1985** meeting and also a page of notes.

It was a pre-planning meeting on how OCTA planners might begin a chapter. Attendees were **Barbara Magerl, John Leamon, Bill Bullard (City Manager of City of Independence) and wife Donna, Lois Wilson, Elaine McNabney, Sylvia Mooney, Peggy Smith, Duke Sumonia and Ross Marshall.**

This was the meeting where I first heard about the planning for the new Trails Center and that OCTA Headquarters might also be there. That all was nearly five years away but it happened.

In addition, the Kansas City area OCTA planners talked about the name of the chapter being "Trails Head", four officers with one-year terms, dues at \$10, members must also join national OCTA, and chapter boundaries.

Barbara must have reported this initial progress on discussing the formation of the chapter because **October 5, 1985** new **OCTA President Thomas Hunt** sent a letter to **Barbara Magerl** in which he said, "I'm delighted to hear that our OCTA members back in Missouri and Kansas are getting together to form a regional chapter."

He also went on to stress that OCTA policy dictated that "no one could join a regional chapter who is not in good standing with the national chapter organization".

And secondly, that "those belonging to the national organization should not be pressured to join the local chapter. Such involvement must be strictly voluntary. (**Ross** doesn't know what that means – being aggressive in enlisting chapter members was never frowned upon – I think that may have been a California Chapter issue with the Trails West organization out there.)

MEETING AT CAVE SPRING

Ross has notes from that meeting at Cave Spring **November 12, 1985** which **Ross** thinks he had with him at the taping.

Ross had noted that 19 people were present, but the names **Ross** had written down are **Barbara Magerl, Peggy Smith, Barbara Bernauer, Harold Smith, Milt & Janet Perry, Rich Nolf, Denise Ayers, Bill & Donna Bullard, Duke Sumonia, Ona Gieschen, John and Brad Leamon, Mike Duncan, Sylvia Mooney and Ross Marshall** – a total of 17. **Ross** may not have known a couple of the people.

A lot of things were talked about including purpose, the name of the chapter, dues, structure, election of officers, but the only firm action was the establishment of a "steering committee" (**Ross's** words), consisting of **Barbara Bernauer, John Leamon, Peggy Smith, Rich Nolf, Polly Fowler, Mike Duncan and Ross Marshall.**

(at the meeting on **January 22, 1986** at the Rodeway Inn, **Chairperson Mike Duncan, Elaine McNabney, Ross Marshall, Peggy Smith, Richard Nolf, and Barbara Bernauer** were the ones who showed up. **John & Polly** did not)

This was the first meeting the Kansas City area OCTA planners had that actually got down to planning the steps toward forming a chapter.

A letter from **Greg Franzwa** to **Barbara Magerl** **November 21, 1985**, was received in which he said that **Barbara** had OCTA's chapter #3 off the ground. This was the third chapter that was

organized after California was **April 14, 1984** and Idaho **May 20, 1985**. (page 7 of this same document says Idaho Chapter was formed on April 20, 1985. April? May?)

1986

RODEWAY INN MEETING

Nomination of officers at lunch at Rodeway Inn– Jan 22, 1986. **Ross Marshall** has the minutes from that meeting as typed up **February 11, 1986** by **Mike Duncan** on Mahaffie House and Farmstead letterhead (he was the Director of Mahaffie House), which were intended to be the agenda for the February 27 meeting at the Cedar Roe Library – as follows:

TO ALL O.C.T.A. MEMBERS:

The Executive Committee chosen to implement organization of a local chapter of O.C.T.A., met at 11:30 a.m. at the Rodeway Inn, I-35 and Metcalf, Overland Park, Kansas **January 22, 1986** with the following present: **Chairperson Mike Duncan, Elaine McNabney, Ross Marshall, Peggy Smith, Richard Nolf and Barbara Bernauer**

AGENDA

Recommendations of the Executive Committee on organization of the local chapter is as follows:

1. Election of Officers - after discussion, it was decided to recommend the following:

--President:	Michael Duncan
--Vice President:	Richard Nolf
--Secretary:	Barbara Bernauer
--Treasurer	John Leamon

A suggestion for length of term for officers was recommended as one-year terms with a maximum of two consecutive terms. We encourage nominations from the floor for any of these positions.

2. Purpose of Local Chapter – It is the committee’s recommendation to use the National OCTA four paragraphs of the National Statement of Purpose, with particular emphasis on this region, after the National’s first paragraph.
3. Title of Chapter – The committee is recommending that this regional chapter incorporate O.C.T.A. into its name. An organization name was not chosen by the committee. The committee recommends that the chapter nominate and vote on a chapter title. The committee came up with two possibilities as follows:
 - A. Mid-American Chapter of O.C.T.A.
 - B. Trails Head Chapter of O.C.T.A.
4. Meeting Frequency and Format – The committee is recommending that the organization have five meetings a year. The fifth meeting should be held in November, as the annual business meeting. At this meeting election of officers will be held and any other business

needed to be taken care of. Suggested meeting months for the remaining four meetings would be March, May, July and September. These meetings would be scheduled by the Program Chairman.

5. Dues Structure – The committee is recommending that the dues for the Regional Chapter would be \$5 or \$10. Keep in mind that any person or organization wishing to join the local chapter will also have to join the National Organization at an added amount of \$20. This would mean that the new member would have to pay either \$25 or \$30 per year. The second recommendation pertains to students. Student membership is suggested at \$1. A student is defined as 21 years of age or younger, with proof of full-time student enrollment. Discussion was held by the committee pertaining to reduction of dues for the chapter, for charter membership, but no recommendation was made.

As Chairman of the committee, I hope you will plan on attending this organizational meeting of this new chapter of O.C.T.A. This will be the most important meeting for this organization. Please bring your ideas and comments pertaining to any of the above or any other matter you wish to discuss. You will find a map of the location of Cedar Roe Library attached. Please be in attendance by 7:30 pm, for the meeting will commence at that time. We do have to vacate the library by 9:00 pm. We have a lot of business to take care of and it would be nice to complete this business and have time to get acquainted with each other.

Sincerely,
Michael E. Duncan, Chairman
Planning Committee O.C.T.A.

Barbara Magerl's transcript says:

“I came up with that name and I fought very hard for it because a number of people there wanted it to be called Gateway. And as we say in this area, we know our community isn't the gateway. St. Louis has laid claim to it. We didn't want people thinking we were from St. Louis. So I proposed Trails Head for two reasons, to pay respect to Blue Mills, Independence, Westport, and St. Joseph, which at that time was part of our territory. So it was a very animated discussion. But by hands, Trails Head won.”

CEDAR ROE LIBRARY MEETING

Ross has a copy of the minutes of the **February 27, 1986** meeting at Cedar Roe Library in Roeland Park (even though **Ross** was not present!) as prepared by **Secretary Barbara Bernauer**. A summary follows:

It was called to order by **Michael Duncan, Planning Committee Chair** at 7:30 pm. Twenty people were present including **Carl Sloan, Peggy Smith, Barbara Magerl, Sylvia Mooney, Bill Davis, Denise Ayers, James Lee, Jim Budde, Barbara Bernauer, John and Brad Leamon, Duke Sumonia, Mike Duncan, plus Esther Kreek, Sheridan Logan, Jackie Lewin, Mildred Roundy, Richard Nolf, and Darlene & Francis Peniston** from the St. Joseph area.

Mike then presented several recommendations from the Planning Committee, which had met **January 22, 1985** at the Rodeway Inn.

1. The following were recommended and elected:
--**President:** **Michael Duncan**
--**Vice President:** **Richard Nolf**

--Secretary: Barbara Bernauer
--Treasurer John Leamon

A motion was also made and approved that officers serve one-year terms, maximum of two consecutive.

2. The committee recommended that bylaws be written soon
3. Name of the chapter recommendations were Mid-America Chapter or Trails Head Chapter. In addition, suggestions from the floor were Trails Gateway Chapter, Prairie Rivers Chapter and Head of Trails Chapter. Trails Head was chosen.
4. Meetings. The recommendation was made and approved that there be four meetings plus an annual business meeting each year. **Ross Marshall** was appointed chair of the Program Committee with **Barbara Magerl, Peggy Smith and Duke Sumonia** as members.
5. Dues were set at \$10.00 per year
6. A bylaws committee is to be enlisted. **Sylvia Mooney** volunteered and someone suggested **Elaine McNabney**.

Barbara Magerl, national OCTA board member, then made remarks about national OCTA issues.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 pm.

OFFICERS MEETING

Trails Head had its first (?) officers meeting **Monday, April 7, 1986 at 4:00 p.m.** at the Mahaffie House. In attendance were **President Mike Duncan, Vice President Richard Nolf, Treasurer John Leamon, Secretary Barbara Bernauer and Ross Marshall**.

These planners talked about future meeting possibilities and the formation of committees. **Greg Franzwa** was coming to St. Joseph in May to talk about increasing the membership and getting the new chapter off the ground in preparation for the 1988 St. Joseph OCTA Convention.

There may have been another officers meeting before or after April 7, but **Ross** has no record of it. And it probably would have been attended by **Barbara Magerl**, who in 1985 had been elected Vice President of OCTA.

CHAPTER MEETING

Trails Head Chapter had a meeting **Thursday, May 22 at 7:30 p.m.** at the Sermon Center in Independence, which was the site of the first OCTA convention. It was a slide show entitled "OCTA – Past and Future Conventions" and included the first three OCTA conventions which were Independence in 1983, Oregon City, Oregon in 1984, and Scottsbluff, Nebraska in 1985. Also included were slides of sites around Carson City, Nevada, the site of the 1986 convention. The slides had been collected by Don Buck of the California Chapter.

Ross is sure there were other officers meetings, but since he was not an officer, he probably would not have been in attendance.

However, **Ross** has some notes of a meeting **September 26, 1986** at Platte Woods Bank, discussing that the chapter should think about planning a field trip on the trail in and around Independence.

ANNUAL MEETING

The annual business meeting was held the evening of **November 18, 1986** at the Rodeway Inn in North Kansas City at 1211 Armour Road, now renamed the Park Inn International.

The Nominating Committee for the above annual meeting was composed of **Sylvia Mooney, Chair, and Jane Mallinson, Elaine McNabney, and Jackie Lewin** as members.

Recommended and elected were:

President - Barbara Magerl
Vice President- Milton Perry
Treasurer - Elaine McNabney
Secretary - Barbara Bernauer

Suggested new committees were publicity, bylaws, and trail signage.

As Program Chair, **Ross Marshall** presented a slide show on the 1986 OCTA Convention in Carson City, which **Mike Duncan** called "Pics & Clicks".

(Ross does not seem to have a record of the 1986 Annual meeting minutes)

1987

OFFICERS MEETING

An officers meeting was held **March 19, 1987** at **Elaine McNabney's** home at **2:00 to 4:00 p.m.** The four officers **Magerl, Perry, McNabney and Bernauer** were present. (**Ross Marshall** has the minutes as recorded by **Bernauer**)

Letters were to be written by **Secretary Barbara Bernauer** to Independence **Mayor Barbara Potts and Councilmember Millie Nesbitt** congratulating them on the successful meeting held **March 15** regarding the kickoff program for planning the new Trails Center.

Planning for the **March 21** general membership meeting was discussed. Among the other issues mentioned were:

- Trails Head logo being prepared by **Sylvia Mooney**
- Oregon Trail publicity in newspapers across the country
- How to increase chapter membership
- Supporting a Johnson County parade entitled "We the People"
- Promoting the "Oregon Trail" computer game
- The need to start a chapter newsletter (which happened in July)
- A barbeque dinner at Benjamin Stables on May 17 for **OCTA Vice President Dick Ackerman's** RV trail caravan.
- Trail exhibits at libraries.
- How to erect NPS trail signs on existing poles.
- A contribution to the new Westport sculpture project involving John McCoy, Jim Bridger and Alexander Majors.

CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Trails Head had the membership meeting at Midwest Research Institute Mag Center at **1:30 p.m. on Saturday, March 21, 1987**. The agenda showed 1:30 – 2:00 Social time, 2:00 – 2:45 Business session, and program at 2:45. (Again, **Ross** has the minutes by **Barbara Bernauer**)

Part of the business session had to do with the starting of the planning for the new Trails Center in Independence. **Frank Davis, Historic Preservation Officer of Independence**, gave an update on the kickoff ceremony held **March 15 at 1:00 p.m.** Design work about to begin.

In addition, **Jane Mallinson** was leading the way for a support group for the Center. That first meeting was to be at the Sermon Center **March 31 at 7:30 p.m.**

In the absence of **Rich Nolf, Ross Marshall** reviewed the planning and sought support for the 1988 OCTA Convention in St. Joseph.

In addition, support for the Two Trails West Foundation was highlighted by **Barbara Magerl**, a new organization to create an on-going outdoor historical drama based on the role the Kansas City area played in the history of the trails. She was seeking membership dues and other financial support. This organization never gathered the support needed and gradually went away.

Sylvia Mooney was appointed to chair a bylaws committee and **Elaine McNabney** to chair a fundraising committee.

Ross Marshall will chair a committee to seek a marker to be placed on Blue Mound on the trail near Lawrence. (the landowner never agreed to it)

Elaine announced the progress on a Girl Scout event to walk the Minor Park swale on **May 2** and **May 16**. Trails Head members will be leading the walks.

Progress is being made by the Kansas Dept. of Transportation on the erection of the NPS logo signs through Kansas. Some counties have yet to complete their erection of signs.

Barbara Magerl reviewed the status of Senate Bill #349, introduced by **Senator Nancy Kassabaum** of Kansas **January 21, 1987**, which seeks to have the Santa Fe Trail made a National Historic Trail. She asked for people to write to her about their support for the bill. She was to go to WDC to testify on behalf of the bill in August with **Greg Franzwa** and others.

A welcome dinner was being planned **May 17** for **OCTA Vice President Dick Ackerman** and his group on his Gold Rush Tour. (The tour never happened)

Discussion was had on the Johnson County parade, Oregon Trail game, libraries outreach with **Peggy Smith** leading the effort, and the Westport Pioneer Statue.

The program was **Ona Gieschen** speaking on "Watts Mill and the Great Migration of 1843".

OFFICERS MEETING

An officers meeting was held at **Barbara Magerl's** home **June 18, 1987** from **7:30 to 10:00 p.m.** with the four officers in attendance. (**Ross** has a copy of the minutes by **Secretary Barbara Bernauer**)

Many of the topics were similar to the above two meetings, but a few things were new:

Polly Fowler's husband Frank passed away.

Elaine McNabney was appointed membership committee chair and was sending membership invitations to all area OCTA members.

Bylaws Committee Chair Sylvia Mooney discussed the advantages of having not-for-profit status for the chapter to avoid paying sales taxes (actually OCTA national has that, so it was not needed by the chapter).

The chapter will have a table at the Shawnee Indian Mission Festival **October 10-11**.

Diane Hinshaw will pursue getting the Overland Journal into local libraries.

The first Trails Head Chapter newsletter was published by our **1987 President Barbara Magerl** (Trails Head's second president) in July. Barbara gave it the name "Tidings".

CHAPTER MEETING

A general membership meeting was held in the pavilion at Cave Spring **Sept. 19, 1987 at 1:00 p.m.** New **OCTA President Dick Ackerman** was on hand and reviewed activities at the national level. The following items are among those listed in **Bernauer's** minutes.

Elaine McNabney reported on the successful Girl Scouts walks at Minor Park in **May**, which resulted in a \$150 donation from the Scouts. The "Walk A Swale" project attracted 125 Scouts, their leaders and families. Chapter helpers were **Barbara Bernauer, Jim Budde, John Leamon, Kendall McNabney, Howard and Barbara Magerl, Ross Marshall and Sylvia Mooney.**

OCTA has requested each chapter to have a preservation committee. **John Leamon** agreed to chair this committee.

OCTA headquarters has been established at the Independence City Hall. **Elaine McNabney** will be the temporary office manager.

A chair for a signage committee is needed to promote the NPS signs through the state of Kansas.

The Santa-Cali-Gon booth Trails Head had over the Labor Day weekend worked out very well.

The meeting was adjourned at **2:00** to allow everyone to be at the nearby dedication of a NPS sign on Blue Ridge Blvd. **Sylvia Mooney** moderated the ceremony with **Raytown Mayor Willard Ross, Cave Spring Association President Bob Burge, plus Independence City Manager Bill Bullard and City Councilman Don Merker** were present. A reception in the Cave Spring Interpretive Center followed the dedication.

The **October 10-11** Shawnee Indian Mission Festival booth was coordinated by **Lois Daniel.** Some Trails Head members distributed trail info at the Festival on the 11th before leaving to join other members at the Dedication of the Westport Pioneer Park at **2:30 p.m.** Included in the dedication was the John C. McCoy, Jim Bridger and Alexander Majors sculpture there at the north edge. Many donations were given for that sculpture, including from Trails Head Chapter.

CHAPTER MEETING

A general meeting was held at **10:00 a.m. Saturday, December 12, 1987** at Loose Park Garden Center, 53rd & Wornall Road, KCMO. 24 members and guests were present, according to **Ross's** copy of **Secretary Barbara Bernauer's** minutes.

Treasurer Elaine McNabney presented a written report as follows

January 1, 1987 balance = \$377.76
March 21, 1987 balance = \$636.12
June 18, 1987 balance = \$851.12
December 10, 1987 bal. = \$345.32

President Barbara Magerl presented Certificates of Appreciation to:

Audrey Langworthy, Kansas State Senator
Barbara Burgess, OCTA member, in absentia
Larry Jochims, Kansas State Historical Society
Jean Wise, former Mayor of Leawood, in absentia
Carole Roper Park, Missouri State Legislator, 52nd District
Millie Nesbitt, Independence City Council member, in absentia
Bill Bullard, City Manager of Independence, MO

Jerry Darter, Director of Kansas City Parks Department

After reviewing 1987 chapter activities, **Barbara** turned the meeting over to **Elaine McNabney, Nominating Committee Chair**, who presented the following 1988 nominees, who were elected:

President:	Ross Marshall
Vice President	John Leamon
Treasurer	Jim Budde
Secretary	Mary Conrad

Immediately after the general meeting was adjourned, new **President Ross Marshall** called a brief “board meeting” with **John Leamon, Mary Conrad, Jim Budde, Barbara Magerl, Elaine McNabney, Polly Fowler and Ross and Jana Marshall** in attendance, per **Ross’s** copy of new **Secretary Mary Conrad’s** minutes.

The Trails Head planners discussed having an enlarged meeting for planning, not just officers, but including appropriate committee chairs, etc.

Since the chapter needed to have bylaws, **Ross** appointed **John Leamon** chair of that committee and **Barbara** and **Polly** as members, with **Ross** as ex officio.

He also appointed **Mary Conrad** as editor of the chapter newsletter, since **Barbara Magerl** resigned from publishing the newsletter, which she had begun this year and named it “Tidings”.

He also planned to appoint **Henry Boppert** as Membership Chair.

New **Preservation Chair John Leamon** said he would invite **Polly Fowler, Mary Conrad and Ross Marshall** to a first meeting.

In addition to the many comments above, the following additional accomplishments were achieved in 1987:

Facilitated selection of Independence as OCTA National Headquarters and the chapter provided volunteer help.

Printed and distributed 12,500 children’s bookmarks on the Trails.

Contributed funds to the Pioneer statues and engraved floor map.

Improved chapter treasury.

Arranged placement of the first two Oregon National Historic Trail signs in Missouri

Barbara Magerl produced the first two Tidings newsletters in July and December.

Trails Head staffed information table at the October Shawnee Indian Mission Fall Festival

Polly offered to present the next program on how to research local records. Trails Head planners set the date of **February 11, 1998 at 7:30 p.m.** **Elaine** was to check on availability of the Mag Center.

The next “board meeting” was set for **Saturday, January 9 at 10:00 a.m.** at **Elaine’s** house.

1988

The **January 9, 1988** meeting was held but no minutes can be found, just **Ross’s** notes. The only important notes were about the urgency on composing bylaws, planning for the chapter **February 11, 1988** general meeting, and the upcoming OCTA Board of Directors meeting in Independence in **March**.

Mary Conrad published her first Tidings newsletter, replacing **Barbara Magerl**. She published five issues in 1988.

CHAPTER MEETING

A membership meeting was held at **7:30 p.m. February 11, 1988** at the 2nd Presbyterian Church at 55th and Oak, KCMO. 14 were present as recorded by **Secretary Mary Conrad**.

Ross Marshall distributed copies of newsletters from other OCTA Chapters.

Jim Budde reported that 29 members have paid dues for 1988.

Ross Marshall – July 30, 2020

End of Part One of Trails Head History – 1983 through 1987