

## Commentary... Of a certain age...

By Sue Stafford  
Columnist

The speed limit on freeways in Wyoming is 80 mph, even for large semis. The roads run straight for miles up and down over rolling hills. There's very little traffic. We've only encountered one traffic jam on the entire trip and that was at rush hour in Boise due to two accidents.

What a contrast to the months it took my ancestors to traverse the Oregon Trail by covered wagon in 1852, the height of the pioneer migration. Ruts can still be seen where the wagons crossed the prairie. The vistas in Wyoming are vast, the rock formations are challenging, and rivers like the Green, Sweetwater, and North Platte required dangerous crossings where many wagons, animals and people were lost to swift currents.

On Thursday, August 4, the dangers and difficulties of the trail came up close and personal as I visited the actual ground crossed 165 years ago by my great-great grandfather John Tucker Scott's family, including wife Ann and nine children.

At the steep Emigrant Hill near Guernsey, Wyoming, the pioneers had to unload everything from their wagons at the bottom of the hill. One by one the wagons were pulled up the hill, empty, by multiple teams of oxen. The wagon's occupants then had to carry all their belongings up the hill to repack the wagons.

From there the wagons progressed, at over a 5,000 feet elevation, across grass-covered high prairies, always searching for the treed evidence of springs. Fresh water

and grass were in constant demand, and often in short supply, for the livestock and thirsty humans.

Unfortunately, the pioneers didn't understand the importance of keeping the water clean, free of animal and human waste. Consequently, diseases like cholera took the lives of thousands of adults and children.

Abigail Scott (Ann's 17-year-old daughter) almost daily mentioned in her journal passing graves. Sadly, one of those graves was that of John's wife and Abigail's mother, Ann Roelofson Scott. After the arduous climb up Emigrant Hill, Ann took sick, and in a day she was gone.

*June 20th '52 Sabbath Day:*

*...our mother was taken about two o'clock this morning with a violent dierrehea (sic) attended with cramping. She however aroused no one until daylight when everything was done which we possibly could do to save her life; but her constitution long impaired by disease was unable to withstand the attack and this afternoon between four and five o'clock her wearied spirit took its flight and then we realized that we were bereaved indeed.*

*A lady died last night in a train camped near us and they this morning interred her lifeless remains and started off without apparent delay being occasioned by her decease.*

The family chose a lovely spot called Alder Clump (now named Box Elder Spring) to bury Ann. There were alder (also called box elder) and juniper and pine trees, a large spring, and lush green grass around the

spring.

*June 21st*

*"The place of her interment (sic) is a romantic one and one which seems fitted for the last resting place of a lover of rural scenery such as she when in good health always delighted in; The grave is situated on an eminence which overlooks a ravine intersected with groves of small pine and cedar trees; In about the centre of this ravine or basin, there wells forth from a kind of bank a spring of icy coldness, clear as crystal; In the outskirts of this basin clusters of wild roses and various other wild flowers grow in abundance; And from an eminence where all this can be viewed at a single glance, reposes the last earthly remains of my mother.*

Through synchronicity, I made contact a year ago with the rancher, Larry Cundall, on whose land the spring is located. Cundall's family has owned and worked their ranch for 100 years this year. Cundall runs mostly Black Angus on his 20,000 acres,

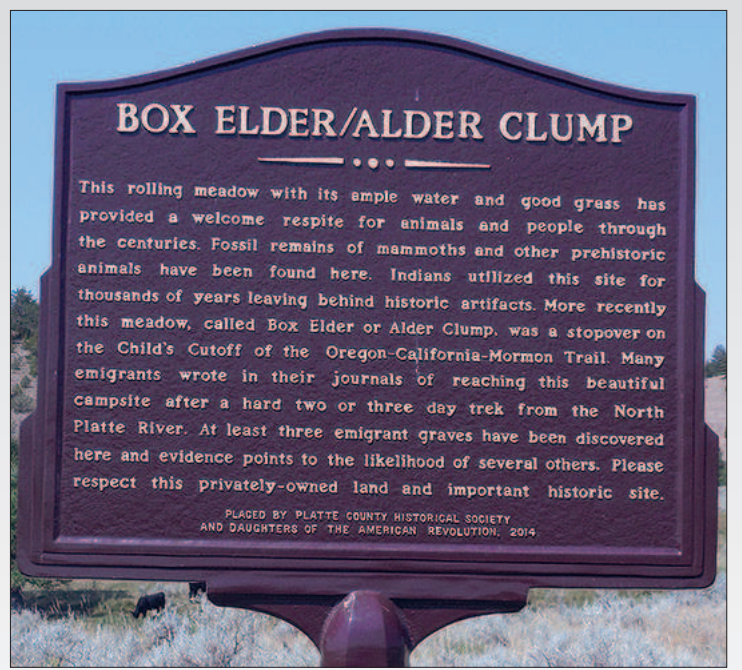


PHOTO BY SUE STAFFORD

Plaque erected by Platte County Historical Society and Daughters of the American Revolution.

which contain six springs. Larry took us to see where the still-visible wagon ruts dug into the earth and stone as multiple teams of oxen pulled the fully loaded wagons toward their far-off destination.

We received an onsite history and geology lesson while picking up small chips of rocks left everywhere from Indians making arrowheads and small tools. He pointed out Sheep Mountain up above the trail where

Indians had laid in wait to swoop down and steal horses from the wagon trains.

We ended our tour at Alder Clump/Box Elder Spring and the gravesite, which contains the remains of three people — a young woman, an older woman, and a teenaged boy. Over a period of 31 years, the three skeletons began to emerge out of a gravel county road and were eventually excavated by the

See OREGON TRAIL on page 22

**YEAR-ROUND  
FIREWOOD  
SALES**  
— KINDLING —  
**SISTERS  
FOREST PRODUCTS**  
**541-410-4509**  
SistersForestProducts.com



Come taste why our breakfast and lunch are the best in town...  
*Vegetarian & gluten-free options*

**THE  
COTTON  
WOOD  
CAFÉ**

Breakfast, lunch and libations,  
Open 7 days  
8am to 3pm  
**541.549.2699**  
403 E. Hood Ave.

**The Garden Angel**  
**541-549-2882**

A natural approach to lawn care

LCB#9352

The average adult is **MISSING AT LEAST 2 TEETH**

Sisters Denture can help.

**SISTERS DENTURE**  
Free consultations!  
**541-549-0929**  
36 YEARS EXPERIENCE | LOCALLY OWNED

**Quilt Roundup**

**SAMPLE QUILTS & OTHER ITEMS FOR SALE...**

Several sizes of finished quilts available from baby to bed sized. Plus table runners, purses, and bags.

Selected Yarn & Sewing Notions  
**25% - 50% off**

**Stitchin' Post** 541.549.6061  
311 W. Cascade Ave.

**STEP & SPINE**  
PHYSICAL THERAPY

How Can Physical Therapy Help You?  
Call to schedule an appointment!

**Ten - Ten - Tues**  
**10 MINUTES, \$10, ANY TUESDAY**

Thomas Wilkinson PT, DPT    Seth Wilkie PT, DPT, OCS    Barrett Ford PT, Cert. MDT

**541-588-6848**  
625 N Arrowleaf Trail (near Ray's shopping center)