

A BGES' Americana Field University Program:
**The Oregon Trail: Trekking to the Great
Northwest**

Presented by Neil Mangum
July 9-18, 2023; from Kansas City, MO

With the discovery of gold in California, a need for rapid communication between potential investors and vendors produced an early precursor to Federal Express and UPS: The Pony Express. The concept of operations was based around an endless run of riders changing horses and riders at relay stations. The system was designed to sprint alongside the Oregon, Mormon, and California Trails, making the 2,000-mile run in just 10 days. It was a spectacular financial bust, and yet few innovations better captured the imagination and spirit of the Wild West.

Today we can retrace significant elements of the route and share the stories of an enterprise that will leave you in awe of the unforgiving landscape and the optimistic execution of the long, lonely route. Ultimately it was negated by the Civil War, and overcome by the development of the telegraph and transcontinental railroads. Come on and join us.

Sunday, July 9, 2023

7:00 PM: Check into the Drury Inn and Suites Kansas City Airport, Missouri. Neil Mangum and Len Riedel will meet you in the lobby and distribute readings and other information about the program. Kansas City is famous for steaks and BBQ, and the Drury is famous for its Icebreaker Reception with free drinks and heavy snacks. So arrive early, and if you have an appetite afterward, seek your pleasure for dinner.

Your hotel is included.

Monday, July 10, 2023

8:15 AM departure: The Oregon Trail is an experience of many years, harsh days, and cold nights. We are following the trail and, with our master storyteller and historian, Neil, moderating the content, you will get a robust menu of narrative and interpretation on each day. Today we will stop at Lone Elm Campground and Gardner Junction, where the Santa Fe and Oregon Trails part. We will drive past the prominent landmark "Blue Mound," and then jump over to Lawrence, Kansas, where we will see the stuffed remains of the famous War Horse and Little Big Horn Survivor, "Commanche." Before we end the day at the Heritage Inn in Marysville, we

will stop at St. Mary's Mission, Vieux Cemetery, the Cholera Cemetery, Alcove Springs, Marshalls Ferry, and the Pony Express Barn.

Hotel, breakfast, lunch, and dinner are provided.

Tuesday, July 11, 2023

8:15 AM departure: As we follow the track of the Oregon Trail—it is familiar to many travelers, as it follows the route of several other western trails, such as the California, Mormon, as well as the Pony Express—imagine the pace of covered wagons occasionally being disrupted by the startling instance of a sprinting horse carrying a mail pouch and ridden by an aggressive and focused young man racing to a waypoint where he will change mounts and carry on. We have several significant sites today—Hollenberg Stage Station; Rock Creek Station, where a Pony Express employee named James Butler Hickok, known to history as “Wild Bill” Hickok, shot and killed three men; The Narrows (scene of 1864 Indian attacks); Susan Hail's grave; Fort Kearny; and the site of the Plum Creek Massacre.

We overnight at the Best Western Plus North Platte, Nebraska. Breakfast, lunch, and hotel included.

Wednesday, July 12, 2023

Keeping in mind the nation was embroiled in a destructive Civil War, our stops today cover several small engagements between the Native Americans and remaining U.S. soldiers—this was the American frontier, and antebellum military service almost certainly included postings in the West. Indeed, it should not escape your notice that the entire route to date is chocked full of these sites.

We will visit a rarely seen battlefield of that period at Blue Water. Today you will also notice that we have transitioned from the farming country of the Great Plains to the wide open spaces of the Nebraska panhandle. We will see navigational landmarks such as Frogs Head Bluff, Chimney Rock, and Courthouse Rock. Our featured stop today is Fort Laramie. Throughout the day, we will make three or four stops to view the rutted sandstone landscape of hundreds of intrepid travelers along the Oregon Trail as we move to Guernsey, where we overnight.

Breakfast, lunch, and your room at the Cobblestone Inn are provided.

Thursday, July 13, 2023

The changing landscape will become very pronounced today as we move to Lander, Wyoming, for our overnight stop. We start the morning at Register Cliff and seeing the trail ruts across Guernsey. Our next encounter is the National Interpretive Trails Museum in Casper. We will then head to Fort Casper and cross Bessemer Bend at the North Platte River as we ascend toward South Pass—a significant milestone in

the trails west. Other stops include Independence Rock, Devil's Gate, and Mormon Handcart Park.

Breakfast, lunch, and lodging at the Shoshone Rose Hotel are included.

Friday, July 14, 2023

Today we pass through the mountains at South Pass. These awe-inspiring geological formations must have fomented fear in those immigrants traveling west, and yet they were unavoidable. Without the breaks in the mountains such as at South Pass, one imagines that the spirit of the traveler would have been broken. As we move through South Pass, we will split from the California Trail and pick up the Oregon Trail—of course we should, because the California Trail terminus was Sacramento. As we move toward the north, we will see Pony Express sites at Big Spring, the Little Sandy Crossing of Green River, Simpson's Hollow, and Lombard's Ferry. Our afternoon stops feature the National Oregon/California Trail Center in Montpelier, Idaho, and legendary camping grounds at Soda Springs and Hooper Springs.

Breakfast, lunch, and the Fairfield Inn hotel in Pocatello, Idaho, are included.

Saturday, July 15, 2023

Moving into the wild and spectacular Pacific Northwest, we will move along the Snake River and visit numerous sites along the route, including a reconstructed Fort Hall. We will visit Raft River crossing sites and the actual separation point of the California and Oregon Trails. Our afternoon takes us to Thousand Springs, and Three Island Crossing over the Snake River.

We will overnight at the Best Western Vista Inn Boise, Idaho. Breakfast, lunch, dinner, and the hotel are included.

Sunday, July 16, 2023

As is wont to happen in all these treks, the end comes rapidly, and we will cover more than 200 miles today, starting with quick stops at the Ward Family Massacre site and Fort Boise, which is a reconstructed Hudson Bay Company Trading Post. We enter Oregon with views of Keeny Pass and a final crossing of the Snake River at Farewell Bend. We will spend a good portion of the afternoon visiting the Oregon Trail Interpretative Center near Baker City.

We will overnight in Pendleton at the Rugged Country Lodge. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner are included, along with the room.

Monday, July 17, 2023

Our final full day starts with our travels to Vancouver, Washington. The morning stops include Biggs Junction and numerous Deschutes River markers overlooking the Columbia River. We will reach a point in which the trail splits, forcing travelers to make a last-minute decision at The Dalles. They could either raft down the Columbia or take the Barlow Cut off to the south (Len says he would have taken the river). Either way, you would end up at the trail's end in the Willamette Valley near Oregon City. (Neil selected the Barlow Road.) We will reach the Barlow Gate and Pass, our travels completed.

We will overnight in Vancouver, Washington. Breakfast, lunch, dinner, and the hotel are included.

Tuesday, July 18, 2023

We will make a morning stop at the Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, focusing on the Hudson Bay Company's Trading Post; and the impressive Oregon Trail Interpretative Center in Oregon City.

Depart at your leisure after 6 PM from Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (SEA). If you want to spend the night, the hotel and reservations are on your own as you depart back on July 19. Seattle has several nonstop flights back to Kansas City if you flew or left your car there, or you can book back directly to your own airports. Thank you for coming.

About the Faculty:

Neil Mangum, one of the nation's foremost historians, is an expert on frontier life. A retired National Park Service official, he served as Superintendent at the Little Big Horn National Battlefield as it transitioned from Custer National Battlefield. The popular Mangum only allows himself two or three tours a year, and BGES is fortunate to enjoy his favor. He enjoys the cliental and the small folksy nature of the group that is usually well prepared. Mangum is the author of *The Battle of the Rosebud: Prelude to the Little Big Horn*. He has a following, and most people on this trip will have traveled with him before, which makes this event even nicer.

Hotel Information:

Your registration fee includes 9 nights, single- or double-occupancy lodging.

Transportation:

The arrival airport is Kansas City International (MCI), and the departure airport will be Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (SEA). If you drive to Kansas City, we will make arrangements for you to leave your car parked there—an additional charge may apply, or you may want to park in long-term parking at the Kansas City airport

and take the hotel shuttle back to the hotel. The hotel will be easily accessible by automobile. Amtrak services Kansas City.

The return from Seattle to Kansas City includes a choice of nonstop early morning or evening and some red-eye overnight flight options. We will assist you if you find any challenges in making arrangements.

Recommended Reading:

You will be provided with a reading book and maps upon arrival. The following books are suggested to enhance your readiness for the program.

Rinker Buck: [*The Oregon Trail: A New American Journey*](#)

David Klausmeyer: [*Oregon Trail Stories: True Accounts of Life in a Covered Wagon*](#)

David McCullough: [*The Pioneers: The Heroic Story of the Settlers Who Brought the American Ideal West*](#)

Francis Parkman: [*The Oregon Trail: Sketches of Prairie and Rocky Mountain Life*](#)

Registration Form
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Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Registration includes nine nights lodging, nine breakfasts, nine lunches, and four dinners; a reading book with maps; the academic program; support of a professional historian; tour director; all admissions; and transportation. We also will provide snacks, bottled water, and a limited selection of sodas.

_____ Registration \$3,695 Single

_____ Double occupancy \$3,195 per person

_____ Dues paying BGES member \$3,600 Single

_____ Dues paying BGES member \$3,100 per person Double occupancy

_____ I am sending a deposit of \$600 per person plus full payment for any memberships.

Total enclosed is \$ _____.

**Make checks payable to BGES and mail to BGES Seminars, P.O. Box 1176,
Chatham, VA 24541.**

You may also fax your registration with credit card details to 434-432-0596.

Charge my (circle one): Mastercard VISA American Express Discover \$ _____

_____ Exp: _____

VIN Code: _____ Signature: _____