

Oregon Historical Marker Committee

Meeting Minutes

Zoom Meeting, Tuesday, November 3, 2020

Committee Participants: Bob Garcia, Chair; Eliza Canty-Jones; Nancy DeSouza, Vice-Chair; Bob Keeler; Ed Washington

Excused: Chris Bell; Gwenn Baldwin; David Porter; Kelly Cannon-Miller

Guest: Zachary Stocks- Oregon Black Pioneers

Staff Participants: Annie von Domitz; Jessica Carbone; Jim Denno

Call to Order/ Introductions: Garcia called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m. Self-introductions were made.

Approval of the Minutes: *DeSouza proposed correcting “maker” to “marker” in the first line under the Second Bristow Marker. DeSouza made a motion to approve the August 04, 2020 minutes as corrected. Keeler seconded the motion. The motion carried.*

New Marker Projects

Beaver Hill: Stocks presented his nomination for a new marker project for the Beaver Hill mine on the Southern Oregon Coast. From 1895-1898 the Beaver Hill mine was the home for 100 Black miners at a time when Oregon’s total Black population numbered less than 600. Black miners were recruited from West Virginia to work the area’s mines during a labor shortage. Lured by the promise of five dollars a day in pay, the men were dismayed to find that their actual pay would be just ninety cents per day. When the Black miners complained about low pay and poor working conditions, they were accused of plotting a strike. The men were fired and ordered to leave their company housing. The white and Asian residents of Beaver Hill helped raise funds to pay for the Black residents’ trip back to West Virginia. Nothing remains at the site of Beaver Hill or the mine today. Stocks feels that this history would be a great marker because it highlights an important site in Oregon’s early industrial history, and it features details about the state’s natural resources. Most importantly, the Beaver Hill story is an opportunity to reflect on Oregon’s African American history. The community represents a rare part of the of the state where Black people made up as much as 20% of the area’s population. It is a chance to share the history African Americans in Oregon outside of Portland and the Willamette Valley. The committee discussed partnering with other current project committees in the area, including working with the Alonzo Tucker Memorial Group.

Canty- Jones made a motion to approve the Beaver Hill Historical Marker nomination. Keeler seconded. The motion carried.

Canty-Jones, Washington, and Garcia will form the subcommittee.

Von Domitz said that she will be reaching out to Marcia Heart, with the Coos Historical Society, to set up a zoom community meeting to reach out to potential partners and build community support.

Ruben Shipley Homestead: Von Domitz presented a nomination for the Ruben Shipley Homestead. Stocks reviewed his notes and comments on the nomination. The NAACP, Corvallis/Albany Branch is a potential partner for this marker. According to the nomination, Ruben Shipley traveled over the Oregon Trail from Missouri as an enslaved person. He achieved his freedom after helping slave-holder Robert

Shiple and his family move and set up their homestead. Ruben then worked to earn enough money to buy a 101-acre farm and purchase the freedom of Mary Jane Holmes from Polk County. This is thought to be the last slave transaction in Oregon. Ruben married Mary and raised six children. In 1861 Ruben deeded two acres of his land to Benton county to serve as a cemetery with the promise that Black residents could be buried there, a then scarce provision.

Canty-Jones said she feels it is an important story to tell. Some of the facts detailed in the story needed to be verified, but the heart of the story is good. The committee discussed the future placement of the marker. Stocks said that there is a lot of community support for the Ruben Shiple story. Canty-Jones suggested scouting out potential marker placement and starting the conversation with potential community partners before we approve the marker. Von Domitz will gather further information about potential marker locations and bring it to the next meeting.

Text Review - Bristow Monument: Von Domitz presented a copy of the text on the plaque. According to past meeting minutes, it appears the plaque was never an official project of the committee but was created by individual committee members. The committee discussed the content of the plaque and how it fits within the current values of the committee. The committee decided to place the plaque on the current priority text review list.

Current Marker Projects

- **Conflict at Pistol River Marker:** Garcia said there are no new updates for this marker.
- **Broughton's Expedition:** Von Domitz said Porter was unable to attend this meeting but emailed that there were no new updates for this marker.
- **Indian Marathon and Nez Perce Marker:** Von Domitz said that Bell was unable to attend the meeting so there is no update at this time.
- **Willamette Post:** Keeler said he had nothing new to report. Von Domitz shared a new contact she had developed with Grande Ronde for consultation.

Von Domitz will update and send out the current priority text review list to the committee. She asked them to look for projects that could be combined and sent in a request for consultation from the Grande Ronde. There is also the possibility of future marker project coordination with the nine federal recognized Tribes around tribal oral traditions. Canty-Jones said the Cultural Trust Partners may be potential partners in that project.

Oregon Trail Interpretive Kiosks: Von Domitz reported that the content outline has been approved and HRA has begun working on some of the interpretive content. There is continued effort to reach out to stakeholders, especially the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs and Burnes Piute Tribe.

Old Business:

- **The Dalles to Canyon City Wagon Road:** Von Domitz said that she is working with SeaReach to find the best way to rebuild the marker.

Committee Member Report/New Business: Canty-Jones said that work is going well with the agency. Travel counts are down due to the current pandemic, but expenses are also down. There has not been significant customer loss in the sign program.

2021 Meeting Schedule

HM Meeting 11-3-2020

February 2, 2021 – Zoom

May 4, 2021 – TBD

August 3, 2021- TBD

Adjourn at 2:23 p.m.