

July 10 The Grave of Susan O. Hail

Died June 2, 1852 Age 34 years, 5 months, 12 days. Legend says that this pioneer died after drinking water poisoned by Indians. Erected and Dedicated by Hastings Outdoor Club, July 30, 1933. From Susan Hail's Gravestone

Here, where the wagon ruts of the Oregon Trail
cross Barrows Road,
a plum thicket
and a single Russian olive divide the
short July corn from a field left to
brome.

Just above the thicket,
atop a mound, round as a silo,
the Hastings Outdoor Club
has placed an iron railing to guard
the marble slab of Susan's grave.

Twenty-seven of us are here,
distanced by 143 years and an iron
railing.

The wide sky is hot
and weighs on us
like a wool blanket.
The thicket has no ripe plums
and the old Russian Olive, no olives.
There is no wind, and past the hill,
two fields over,
a gasoline engine growls to life,
driving the pump on a center pivot.

It's too late for the plum,
too early for the Olive,
a dry wooden cross lies broken
and no matter how clear,
 how pure the water is,
the pump can't arc it far enough
to wet this mound,
to bring Susan up through the marble
to lay her pioneer hand on this rusty rail,
to lift her wooden cross,
to tell us all what it means

to live,
to die on this land.