



PONY TRACKS

Newsletter of the Northwest Montana Posse of Westerners

Vol. 9, No. 2

Kalispell, Montana

March 14, 2022

Richard A. Hull, Ye Editor, e-mail: richardahull@charter.net

MARCH MEETING

Monday, March 21, 2022

Topic: “Conquering Nature: Libby Dam and the Kootenai River”

Presenter: Posse member **Jeff Gruber**,
Libby, MT

Where: Flathead Electric Cooperative
Community Room, north end of
the FEC Administration Building
2520 Hwy. 2 East, Kalispell, MT

Time: 5:15 pm Grab 'n' Greet
6:00 pm - Dinner (includes the
presentation)
7:00 pm - Presentation

Dinner: \$15 (Posse's traditional March
Sub and sandwiches. Dinner
is payable at the door.

Dinner Reservations: Call (406) 752-9642
(leave message with names and
phone number); or send email to
kbrittonrn@gmail.com

Reservation Deadline:
Sunday, March 20th, at **9:00 pm**

Posse members may join the program
through Zoom at the following address:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89627491198?
pwd=WnRSUThJRFJPaTNWR3luSko3d2tVQT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89627491198?pwd=WnRSUThJRFJPaTNWR3luSko3d2tVQT09)

Meeting ID: 863 2628 8698

Email tim.chris@yahoo.com for more help.

ABOUT THE PRESENTATION



Photo by Rick Hull

Libby Dam was the last dam constructed on the Pacific Northwest's Columbia River System as a part of the Columbia River Treaty. The dam had a three-fold purpose: flood control, electricity production, and recreation.



1948 Flood in Bonners Ferry, Idaho

Photo - Bonners Ferry Museum

To make way for the dam, the town of Rexford was relocated. Besides the dam, other related projects included relocating the GN railroad, two highway construction projects, and construction of the highest bridge ever built in Montana to cross the reservoir at Rexford.

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Construction of the dam created a 90-mile long reservoir backing up into Canada.

The building of Libby Dam and the influx of over 2,000 workers during its construction, changed Libby and forever altered the Kootenai valley.

Presenter, and Posse member **Jeff Gruber** is a historian, a retired educator, and author of history books and articles. He taught high school for 29 years before retiring in 2018. He is an active community volunteer and now operates a small sawmill businesses. Signed copies of his current book "Our Hometown, A Pictorial History of Libby, Montana" will available at the meeting.



Jeff Gruber

GENERAL MEETING INFORMATION

NMPW's meetings are held on the 3rd Monday of the month, except the months of December and January, at the Flathead Electric Cooperative Community Room at 2520 Hwy. 2 East.

All meetings begin with a Grab 'n' Greet for a chance to get acquainted, followed by the evening meal, and a presentation pertaining to Western history.

Covid-19 precautions continue. In addition, all meetings will be broadcast on-line via Zoom for our out-of-County Corresponding and Brigade members and the members who cannot physically or choose not to attend the meetings.

Evening meals are open to both members and non-members. Dinners require advance reservations. Pay for the meals at the door upon arrival.

Walk-in seating will be available free to all Posse members and youths 16 and under and

\$5 each for all non-members.

There will be our usual raffle for door prizes. Local history authors will sign books.

COVID-19 virus protections will be in place. Face masks are only required when passing the Registration Desk and elsewhere where social distancing is not occurring.

FUTURE PROGRAMS

April: Monday, April 18, 2022
"Glacier Lake Missoula"
by Jim Sheldon.
(Part 3 of a Series)

May: Monday, May 16, 2022
"Western Montana in Time-Lapse Photography" by Doug Ammons

June: Monday, June 20, 2022
"Lewis & Clark Expedition"
by Hal Sterns. (Part 3)

CALENDAR OF EVENTS



Members aware of events not listed here are encouraged to contact Ye Editor with the particulars at richardahull@charter.net

- April 5, : History Book Club. The Perfect Horse by Elizabeth Letts. 2 p.m. at the Northwest Montana History Museum.
- Ninepipes Museum, located between Ronan and St. Ignatius, is now open. Hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m Fridays and Saturdays during March and April. To schedule a tour at other times, email jo.cheff@ninepipesmuseum.org.
- This year's Fort Connah annual rendezvous will be June 16-19. The historic 1846 Hudson's Bay Company outpost is six miles north of St. Ignatius, Montana, on Hwy. 93.

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Lights... Camera ... ACTION!

By Tim Christenson

If you follow the Oscars, you know that *The Power of the Dog* has been nominated in 12 categories, more than any other film this year. It's western, set a century ago on a Montana ranch. Just goes to show that topics we focus on in the NW Montana Posse of Westerners have "legs"; they are enduringly popular.

At the end of every movie, there's an incredibly long list of names. They all had something to do with making that film – and had to be planned for. The Posse is going through that kind of planning process right now to provide our programs with the support they require.

Programs: Because we missed many meetings due to COVID, we have a backlog of programs that'll keep us busy for months. They run the gamut from this month's presentation on Libby Dam, which is younger than me, to April's story of Lake Missoula's raging flood waters – 15,000 years ago. That's good. Suggesting topics for future programs you'd like to see – or perhaps present – is the way to ensure that the quality of programs we've provided in the past will continue.

Administration: All those movie folks have to get paid, and we have some necessary administration too. We keep track of our membership; stay in contact with them by a variety of means, including Pony Tracks, email, and Zoom; bring their name tags to meetings; bank their dues and meal payments; reimburse them for expenses; and advertise upcoming events. There's a lot to do, but "many hands make light work." Lend a hand.

Logistics: There's an Oscar for hairstyling, and even the caterer who feeds the cast on location gets a mention in the movie's credits. The Posse's logistics requirements include setting up of the tables and chairs at Flathead Electric Coop (FEC) each month; providing

sound, lights, and cameras for the "Action!" of our presentations; ordering, picking up, and laying out our evening meal; and cleaning up afterwards. An informal poll at last month's meeting suggested that many of us want the meals to continue, even if it's sub sandwiches and soda pop instead of the dinner with tablecloths and waiters. As the Little Red Hen said, "Who will help me pick up those subs?"

Location: Movie makers spend a lot of time scouting locations. (For *The Power of the Dog* they chose New Zealand?!) When the Red Lion became prohibitively expensive, we were fortunate to find the meeting room at FEC as our next venue. That may not become our permanent home, so let the Posse know of other places that might suit our needs.

Contributions of many people's time and talents are required to make a movie – or a monthly Posse presentation.

`Nuff said. That's a wrap.



TRIVIA QUESTION

No one answered last month's question - How did Kalispell get its name?

This conveniently leaves the door open to an issue that has puzzled locals over the years.

According to *Half Interest in a Silver Dollar* by James Murphy, the name came as an off-handed suggestion. Charles Conrad, who led spearheaded the purchase of the town site, was a frequent guest at the hotel in Ravalli, Montana. The railroad town was the jump-off for the stagecoach and steamboat trip to the Flathead. In 1890 Conrad asked Mrs. Henry Larrivee, the hotel cook and manager, about a name for the new town. She suggested "Kalispel."

Kalispel (with one "L") is a tribe closely related to the Flatheads (Salish). They were also known as the Lower Pend 'd Oreille, in

comparison to the Upper Pend 'd Oreille, who were residents of the Flathead Reservation. The Kalispels have a small reservation in northern Idaho and a casino northwest of Spokane.

Most tribal names were given them by other tribes and then converted into French by fur traders. Pend d'Oreille refers to ear ornaments, and Nez Perces to nose piercings.

Couer d'Alene means "heart like an awl", a reference to a reputation for being sharp traders.

Kootenai appears to be an insult coined by the Blackfeet, meaning "pot bellied". And Sioux is said to be a French corruption of a Indian name for "enemy". The sign language for Sioux is an index finger drawn across the throat.

The tribes' names for themselves typically mean "The People", such as the Salish. Some tribes took this further. The Nez Perces are the Nimiipuu, or "The Real People".

The Kalispel and Pend d'Oreille called themselves Q̓ispé. This name caused endless confusion, because Europeans found it impossible to pronounce. Attempts include Kullyspell, Kul-is-pell, or even Capispel.

The name mystery grew when locals asked a local expert, Duncan McDonald, what the name meant. Duncan was the mixed-blood son of early Hudson's Bay Company trader who served as spokesman and translator for the tribes.

He speculated that Kalispel was taken from Kalispelum" and that "Spelum" meant a prairie, and that 'Kalis" was a corruption of Camas, the name of the flower and root that was a tribal food staple. That led locals to conclude the name refers to the flat land north of Flathead Lake.

So the short story is that Kalispell is the name of the tribe.

A final "L" was added to put the accent on the last syllable and solidify the name. The alteration seems to work, since I rarely have a telemarketer stumble over the name.

This Month's Trivia Question

What do U.S. Grant, Pocahontas and Tom Carter have in common?

Submit your answer to Ye Editor at richardahull@charter.net and we will print the names of all those who get it right.



POSSE NEWS

The following new member recently joined the Posse:

David and Malinda Shafman
of Kalispell, Montana.

We are saddened by reports that long-time Posse member **Doc Harkin** was injured in an automobile accident while visiting his son in Florida and was hospitalized. We wish him a full recovery.

Thanks to the following Posse members who contributed to the Live-Streaming Equipment Fund:

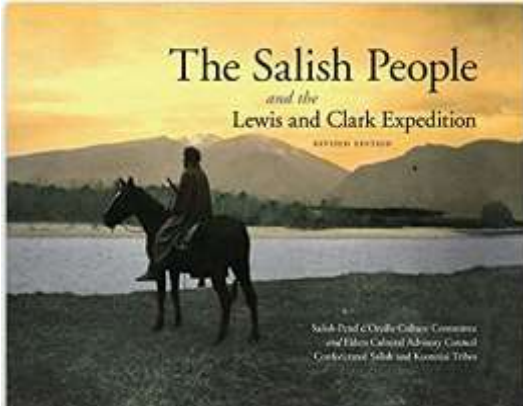
Bill Dakin
Ed and Marge Rothfuss
Mark and Sandra Fennessy
Kyle Statler
Bill and Diane Lundgren
David Highland
Pauline Sjoldal
Stan and Janet Bones
Scott Fisher and Arlis Dailey
Ron Beard

These contributions supports the Posse's top priority of making our award-winning programs available to all of our members and communities.

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FROM THE BOOK SHELF

By Rick Hull



The Flathead Reservation's Cultural Committee and Cultural Advisory Committee has released its revised edition of *The Salish People and the Lewis and Clark Expedition*. The book is divided into three parts: The Salish World when the tribe first met Lewis and Clerk in 1805; the encounter with the explorers at Ross's Hole, south of Hamilton; and a biography of tribal elders and contributors.

The first section is the most interesting. It points out that tribal origins extend back to the Ice Age, and that the Salish and Pend d'Oreille had a migratory lifestyle that satisfied their needs for food, clothing and equipment. One section names these locations and their role. For example, Missoula was the "Place of Small Bull Trout," compared to the confluence of the Blackfoot and Clarks Fork rivers at Bonner, which was the "Place of Bull Trout." Both were important seasonal fishing sites.

The second section contains tribal lore about the meeting with Lewis and Clark and the general confusion of language and custom. Several accounts explain that York black skin was seen as a peaceful sign. The Salish originally thought he was covered with charcoal as mourning after losing a battle. Afterward the sign language for a Black man was rubbing the face with a finger in pantomime of checking for charcoal.

There is an additional section on the Salish language, as expressed in the International Phonetic Alphabet, and a lengthy notes and bibliography. Almost all the pages are accompanied by historic and modern photographs.

198 pages. University of Nebraska Press.
\$24.95



DUES REMINDER

It is time for our annual members renewal and new member drive. Statements have been e-mailed to all current members. Please support our organization and its goals by responding as soon as possible.

We ask that your dues be made promptly to the address on the dues statement or brought to the March 21 meeting.

Do not hesitate to contact us with any questions or comments.

Posse Gold Stars

Recognizing those members and friends whose generosity has assisted the Posse in so many ways:

Parkland Books,
raffle donations

Blacktail Mountain Books,
raffle donations

Flathead Electric Cooperative,
meeting room and facilities

Tim Christenson,
Zoom Guy

Posse member donations
to the equipment fund and
anonymous raffle donations.

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Join the Posse Team

Volunteers are needed to continue the Posse's more than six years of history programs.

- Clerk of the Posse (Secretary-Treasurer)
- Deputy Sheriff for Membership
- Book Wrangler to maintain the Posse library and book raffles
- Assistant Zoom Master to assist and backup the Zoom Master
- Board Members
- Assistant Editor to assist the editor in writing and publicizing Posse newsletters.
- Webmaster for Posse website

Please join our Posse team as we rebuild our organization. Contact Eddy Byrne at 406-871-6001 or edwardjbyrne860@gmail.com to volunteer.

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The Railroad Beneath Lake Kooconusa

By Rick Hull

In the last years of working for the BNSF railroad, my father received a government payment as part of the construction package for Libby Dam. Train crews are paid by the mile, and the money made up for the shortened route after the traditional route on the Kootenai River was flooded by Lake Kooconusa. That same package had also paid for the seven-mile tunnel that rerouted the tracks.

But long before being dammed, the Kootenai River played a major role in why Kalispell lost its main-line railroad status and ended up on a dead-end spur.

It was John Stevens who discovered Marias Pass across the Continental Divide in the last weeks of 1889. But it was C.F. Haskell who turned the discovery into reality for the railroad.

Starting from Kalispell while there was still five feet of snow in the mountains, Haskell, Ed Boyle and Ed O'Brien surveyed the route from Bad Rock Canyon to the summit on snowshoes. They carried all their food on their backs and it didn't last. On their return trip they were on half-rations for four days, and finally had to boil their flour sacks to eke out what remained.

Once back in the Flathead, Haskell was directed to survey a similar route across the mountains to the west. There are several stories why he didn't take the logical route up the Flathead Valley to the break in the mountains at Eureka, and then down the Kootenai. One version says that Sidney Butler – a local who written railroad officials offering to show the way – was out of town and the survey crew couldn't wait. The other is that the officials rejected the ideal of jogging north to nearly Canada.

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Haskell's direct route over the Salish Mountains between Kalispell and Libby proved to be a disaster. The grade was actually steeper than over the Continental Divide in Marias Pass, two high trestles were required, and a tunnel had to be constructed at the top. Haskell did get naming rights, including to the pass and a mountain. And route west to Marion remains known as Idaho Hill.

It is still possible to follow Haskell's long-abandoned route. The first section is now a Rails-to-Trails bike path to Kila. The tracks swung around Kila Hill, and briefly crossed a swamp on a now-missing trestle. Back on dry ground, the railroad grade was blasted into the cliffs along Highway 2.

The railroad embankments are still visible in the town of Marion. Next is the climb past Bitterroot Lake. A now-demolished trestle and a partially collapsed tunnel leads into Pleasant Valley.

Today it is difficult to visualize the former trans-continental main line traveling through the grasslands of the uninhabited Lost Trail National Wildlife Refuge. The historic route continued to Island Lake and headed down what is now a logging road to Wolf Creek and finally along the Fisher River to the Kootenai River.

The picture changed about 1901, when railway president Jim Hill decided to tap the Kootenai coal fields just across the Canadian border at Fernie. Flathead Valley residents view the upper North Fork as wilderness, but the drainage actually borders extensive British Columbia strip coal mines.

Hill's plan was for a railroad up the Kootenai River into Canada.

River routes have a special appeal to railroads. Switchbacks aren't needed and grades are gentle. That means a locomotive can pull more cars. Blasting into rock walls and building trestles over tributaries is well worth the increased revenue.

Railroads consider a rise of 2 feet for every 100 feet as near the limit. Going to the Sun Road rises 6 feet per hundred.

This time Sidney Butler was in town, and locals had their own plan on how to reach the coals field. Their proposed spur line would benefit Kalispell, though the result was the opposite.

The Kalispell Townsite Co. hired Mr. A.L. Jaqueth, a railroad surveyor, to map a route up the Stillwater River from Kalispell to Eureka, and then down the Tobacco River to the Kootenai River. The key was Butler's discovery.

The Flathead is part of a chain of valleys called the "Rocky Mountain Trench" extending from Canada to south of Hamilton. Since it is a geological strike-slip fault and not a true valley, its rivers can flow in opposite directions. Just a small rise separates the Stillwater and Tobacco river drainages near Dickey Lake. Butler knew of a narrow, rocky defile through the rise. Supposedly it had never become



The 1970 Flathead Tunnel is part of a 60-mile rerouting.
Photo from Mansfield Library Collection, Univ. of Montana

used as a popular Indian trail because it was susceptible to ambushes.

According to short history by Kalispell attorney John Duffy, Jaqueth and Kalispell founder Charles Conrad went to railroad headquarters in St. Paul, Minnesota, and presented the survey results to Great Northern President Jim Hill.

Hill quickly realized he was looking at a nearly a level route to the Kootenai River that would tie seamlessly into his new rail line.

According to Duffy, "Putting his finger on the Pass, he is reported to said: 'If that is as you say, what it is wrong with leaving the Main Line at Columbia Falls, and putting the Main Line through there?' And that was done, and Kalispell lost the Main Line, and all it meant, on the evening of October 1, 1904."

Whitefish became the replacement division point, and the new headquarters for train crews, offices and maintenance headquarters. Yet Duffy noted that Kalispell's population loss of about 200 people was made up within a year.

The main line continued through Eureka and down the Kootenai River until 1970. But in preparation for Libby Dam, 60 miles of track was moved to make way for Lake Koocanusa and the town of Rexford moved to higher ground. The shortcut across the Salish Mountains cut off Eureka, which is now on its own spur line.

The tunnel through Elk Mountain was the key to the move. At 7.1 miles long, it is the second longest tunnel in the United States. It took four years and \$49 million to build. A massive ventilation system allows the diesel locomotives to breathe as they rumble underground for the seven miles.

This issue of Pony Tracks is Volume 9, Number 2

The Pony Tracks is published monthly except December and January by the
NORTHWEST MONTANA POSSE OF WESTERNERS

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Notice to Contributors

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Copy must be in the Editor's in-box on or before the first of the month in order to make that
month's issue. Copy received after that date will be held over until the subsequent issue.

For submissions to the Posse Dispatch, contact the Editor by e-mail first for
submission requirements.

The next issue of Pony Tracks will be issued April 11, 2022 (or thereabouts).

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