



PONY TRACKS

Newsletter of the Northwest Montana Posse of Westerners

Vol. 9, No. 5

Kalispell, Montana

June 9, 2022

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

JUNE MEETING

Monday, June 20, 2022

Topic: "Lewis & Clark Expedition:
Eastward Ho, Pacific to Travelers
Rest and Beyond – 1806"

Presenter: Hal Stearns, Missoula, Montana

Where: Northwest Montana History Museum,
Second floor historic classroom
124 Second Avenue East, Kalispell, MT.

Time: Gab 'n' Greet and book signings
start at 6:00 pm

Historic Presentation: Program begins
at 7:00 pm and will require pre-event
reservations or admission on a first-come,
first-served basis at the door.

For reservations call (406) 752-9642
(leave message) or send an email to
kbrittonrn@gmail.com.

Co-Sponsorship: This presentation is made
possible by the support of Humanities
Montana.

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

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82948864049?
pwd=c3NGUUVDZTJBUEUxVjVJkcVc4UlpKUT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82948864049?pwd=c3NGUUVDZTJBUEUxVjVJkcVc4UlpKUT09)

Meeting ID: 840 8718 2510

E-mail Tim Christenson at
tim.chris@yahoo.com for more help.

ABOUT THE PRESENTATION



Meriwether Lewis and William Clark

Source: Wikipedia

The story of the Lewis and Clark expedition continues this month with the fourth in the series.

At last year's presentation before the Posse, renown speaker Hal Stearns left the story at Fort Clatsop, where the explorers survived a wet and monotonous winter at the mouth of the Columbia River.

The story picks up in late March as the explorers retrace their journey up river towards the Rocky Mountains. The group is frustrated as they portage their canoes over waterfalls and rapids while fending off local tribes that steal their dwindling supply of trade goods – including Lewis's dog.

Lewis burns the canoes in a fit of pique as Clark trades in the expedition's last large iron pots for horses.

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Conditions improve once the group meets the Wallawallas and Nez Perce near Idaho. The tribes offered food and horses, and, in one case, rode for miles to return a steel trap and knives that the expedition had accidentally left behind.

However the mountains still had 12 feet of snow and are impassible. The expedition waits six weeks among the Nez Perce. Clark impresses the tribe with his medical skills, while Lewis catalogs the local plants and animals. Members are reduced to trading the brass buttons on their shirts.

Lewis impatiently decides to tackle Lolo Pass in mid-June and quickly runs in trouble. The Nez Perce came to his rescue with guides, and on June 30 the expedition reaches their old camp at Travelers Rest near present-day Lolo.

As agreed, the group splits, with Lewis heading north to answer questions about the Marias River and Clark turns southeast to explore the Yellowstone River.

About the Presenter

Dr. Hal Stearns has had a distinguished career as an educator, researcher, historian, writer and lecturer, and military officer.

He has been honored as Montana's Teacher of the Year and Montana's Outstanding U.S. History Teacher. Today is he is an instructor for the University of Montana's Lifelong Learning Institute, and has led tours and lectured in over 40 states and five foreign countries.

He is a current member of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation Board and the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Commission in Montana. Dr. Stearns has served his country as a Brigadier General in the Montana Army National Guard.



FROM THE SHERIFF'S SADDLEBAG

By Edward "Eddy" Byrne

The Northwest Montana Posse of Westerners has settled into our new location at the NW Montana History Museum (old Central School in Kalispell). Our partnership with the museum and staff, specifically the Director, Jacob Thomas, is growing stronger every month.

Comments from the membership thus far have been overwhelmingly positive. I encourage all of our members to take advantage of the Museum and the additional programs they offer.

The quality of our programs and presenters remains superb. This month we welcome back one of the foremost experts on Lewis and Clark, General Hal Stearns, US Army (Ret). This is part IV that will be titled Lewis and Clark Expedition: Eastward Ho, Pacific to Travelers Rest and Beyond – 1806.

Stearns' style, knowledge, and props of Lewis & Clark are always a crowd favorite. The previous three parts of this series began with "Power Politics and a Momentous Time: The Louisiana Purchase, Thomas Jefferson, and Friends". The second part was "Westward Ho – St. Louis to Travelers Rest (1804-1805)". And last year part III covered "Onto the Pacific and Back (1805-1806)".

The remainder of this year's program is locked in, and we are starting to finalize the 2023 schedule. If anyone wants to propose new topics and presenters for the next two years, please let me know. We are always looking to expand our programs.

In the interim for the remainder of this year, we are still looking for a couple of volunteers to assist with the programs. This includes setting up and manning the registration desk, issuing

name tags, working the book table, and selling raffle tickets.

As always, we encourage everyone attending to spread the word and bring a friend, neighbor, or relative who has a shared interest in history to a meeting. As members, we are the best recruiters to make the NMPW grow.

I look forward to seeing everyone next week. Come early as we are expecting a full house for Hal Stearns' presentation. and volunteers to fill out the Board of Directors.

GENERAL MEETING INFORMATION

NMPW 's meetings are held on the 3rd Monday of the month, except the months of December and January.

This month's meeting is at the Northwest Montana History Museum at 124 Second Avenue East, Kalispell, Montana.

Unlike previous years, there will be no dinner. However a variety of restaurants are within walking distance of the Museum.

Meetings begin with a Grab 'n' Greet session from 6 pm. to 7 pm. for chance to get acquainted. Historical attire is encouraged, but not required.

Local history authors will have their books for sale, and will be available for signing.

The presentation on local or Western Montana history starts at 7 pm.

The program is free for members and youths 16 and under. Non-members pay \$5.

Historic books will be raffled off as a fund raiser.

Pre-event registration is recommended to assure seating. Entry is otherwise on a first-come, first-serve basis.

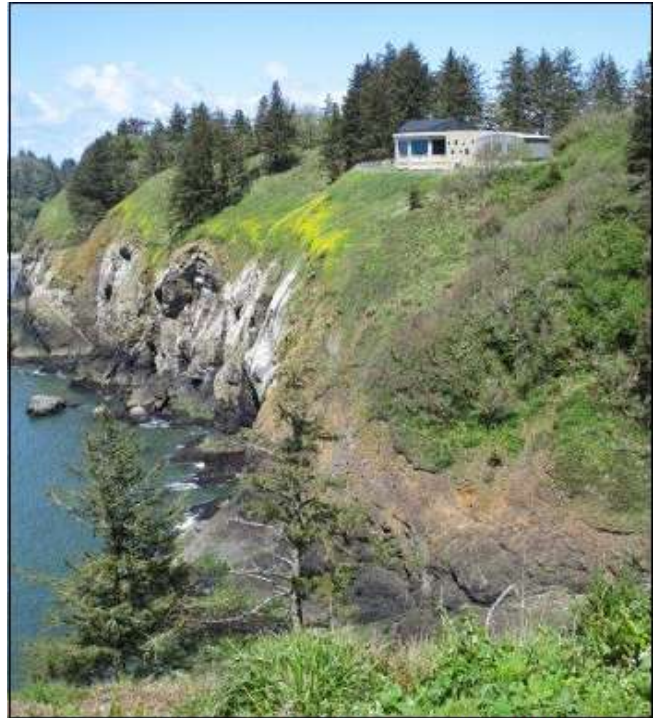
In addition, all meetings will be broadcast on-line via Zoom for our Out-of-County Corresponding and Brigade members and the members who cannot physically or choose not to attend the meetings.

FROM YE EDITOR'S DESK

Cape Disappointment

Article and photos by Rick Hull

Lewis and Clark settled in for the 1805-1806 winter at Fort Clatsop in the woods behind Astoria, Oregon. But first they set up camp on Cape Disappointment on the Washington side of the Columbia River.



Cape Disappointment Museum and overlook

Now a state park, Cape Disappointment has a Lewis and Clark museum that is easy to overlook. And the 2,023-acre park has much more, including a lighthouse, a panoramic view of the mouth of Columbia River, a campground, hiking trails, and beach access.

Though Lewis and Clark abandoned the site, that is not how the name originated. Instead a British fur trader and explorer, John Meares, mistook the mouth of the Columbia River for a shallow bay in 1788, and named it Cape Disappointment and Deception Bay.

Cape Disappointment is at the south end of Long Beach, which is a 28-mile peninsula billed as the nation's longest beach. Leadbetter Point

State Park is on the north end, and Fort Columbia State Park along the Columbia River to the east. A paved bike path runs along the ocean side past resort towns.

The museum is at the south end of the peninsula, and sits on a cliff overlooking the mouth of the Columbia River. The collision of river and sea creates a shifting sandbar and it is the most dangerous harbor entrance in the nation. The museum describes many of the ships that wrecked on the sandbar, especially in the era of sailing ships.



Lighthouse and Coast Guard observation station

Long breakwaters of volcanic rock now define and control the entrance. But ships headed up the river to Portland are required to be guided by a local pilot.

There is a lighthouse a short walk from the museum, and a Coast Guard station at the base of the hill.

The daily pass is \$10 and it cost an extra \$5 to view the Lewis and Clark exhibits. Since Cape Disappointment is a state park, a Golden Eagle pass doesn't apply.

Ignore the first parking arrow on the road to the museum – it is only for employee and handicapped parking.

And don't make the mistake we did, and take the obvious path on the southeast end of the parking lot. That trail is muddy and full of tree roots. The paved path is behind the entrance-pass machine.

FUTURE PROGRAMS

July: Monday, July 18, 2022

"History of the Johnson Flying Service"
Part 3 of a series by the Museum of Mountain Flying at Missoula.

August: Monday, Aug. 15, 2022

"Go West Young Man: The Story of Montana's Paris Gibson"
by **Bill Dakin** of Bigfork, Montana

September: Monday, Sept. 19, 2022

"History of the USFS Smokejumpers"
by Fred Cooper of Missoula, Montana.
Part 2 of a series.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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

- Ninepipes Museum, located between Ronan and St. Ignatius, is now open. Hours are 10 am. to 4 pm Fridays and Saturdays during 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. 9.

NEW MEMBERS

The following new member recently joined the Posse:

Joseph Biby of Kalispell, MT.

Terry A. Hamik of Kalispell, MT.

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TRIVIA QUESTION

The usual suspects, **Barbara Boorman** and **Tim Christenson**, were again correct about how logs were delivered to mills prior to the use of logging trucks.

River drives were used almost exclusively.

The question attracted a number of answers, including the use of flumes. But those methods typically delivered the logs only as far as the landing along a river.

In some cases, logs were dumped in Flathead Lake and rounded up and hauled to the Somers mill by tugboat. And even though a logging locomotive was barged to the head of Swan Lake, the rail cars only took the logs down to the lakeshore. The remainder of the journey involved a trip across the lake, down the Swan River and over the Bigfork Dam to Flathead Lake.

According to Eureka author **Darris Flanagan's** *Skid Trails: Glory Days of Montana Logging*, just getting logs off the mountainside was a struggle. The main problem was logs digging into the ground as they were pulled.

Stationary engines could use a combination of overhead lines and pulleys to lift the log's front end and drag it. The technique is still used, especially on steep terrain. Crews scrambling from log to log to attach the cables bear the interesting job title of "hookers".

Chutes were another solution, and sometimes ran directly to the mill. The cheapest were made of two poles, 4 to 10 inches in diameter, that channeled the logs as slid downhill. Bacon grease was sometimes used to ease the journey. More expensive were water-filled flumes that ran for miles, crossing streams on trestles.

But the most flexible method was by horse. For that reason, most logging took place in the winter. Horses skidded the logs out of woods. Sometime a metal pan was attached to keep the front of the log from digging into the snow.

Once on level ground, the logs were loaded on sleds (which was a process in its own) and pulled by horses down to the river landing.

The logs were dumped into the stream by the hundreds of thousands, where they were wedged in place. It was possible to walk across major rivers, like the Kootenai or Clarks Fork, on the back of the logs. Once high water arrived, winching out the key log would start the mass moving downstream.

Downstream obstructions had to be cleared away first, especially on smaller streams. Sunken logs, stumps and driftwood were removed and boulders dynamited.

Equally destructive were the temporary dams that held back the water on smaller streams, and then were opened in one big "splash" to float the logs. Some dams operated in relays. The Eureka Lumber Company had four "splash" dams upstream of its mill.

"River pigs" followed the drives downstream, pushing errant logs back into the flow. Log jams had to be fixed quickly before more logs arrived. Some jams could be pried apart, others required dynamite.

On the bigger rivers, floating cook shacks called "Wanigans" traveled with the logs. River work was dangerous, and deaths were common. The drives, the splash dams, and the clearing of obstructions, also left streams altered and barren for decades.

This Month's Trivia Question

Again the struggle is finding something that evades the all-knowing gaze of Google. So this month's question is about astronomy.

Alexander McKenzie boasted on his trip to the Pacific that he could now calculate the orbits of the moons of Jupiter. David Thompson was known by Indians as Koo-Koo-Sint or "the stargazer."

Why?

And why didn't Lewis and Clark spend their time examining the heavens?

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



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
- Archivist

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



It is sad for us to report that former Charter Posse member Johanna "Jan" Hardesty, 66, passed away April 2, 2022, in Spokane, Washington after a lingering illness.

As some may remember, Jan made two presentations to the Posse; one on railroad pioneer Louis W. Hill and the other on Columbia Falls founder James A. Talbot.

Her husband of 33 years, Richard Hardesty, was the Posse's Deputy Sheriff for publications and the original newsletter editor.

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,
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Northwest Montana Historical Museum,
Meeting room

Tim Christenson,
Zoom annual subscription

Bill Dakin
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FIRST TO THE PACIFIC

How a clerk beat Lewis and Clark across North America

By Rick Hull



Alexander Mackenzie
Hudson's Bay Company Archive

Lewis and Clark came a distant second in crossing the continent to the Pacific. They were beaten by more than a decade by a Scotsman, Alexander Mackenzie.

And Mackenzie did it twice. First he headed across the Canadian wilderness, following his compass west towards Alaska and the Russian fur market. But his compass was wrong. After a 1,000-mile struggle, he ended up on the shores of the Arctic Ocean.

Honing up on his navigation skills, he tried again. This time his party hauled a canoe across the Rocky Mountains. Initially he thought he was on the Columbia River. Again he was wrong. Switching rivers, he made it to the Pacific Ocean, but not to the coast itself.

Now Mackenzie is known chiefly for a river that averages more than a mile wide, drains a fifth of Canada, and extends for 2,600 miles. Locally, the pizza chain is probably more famous than him.

But his dual expedition answered vital questions about North America and made Mackenzie and his company rich. And he accomplished both trips with a handful of men and women – not a military expedition.

Mackenzie was from the Outer Hebrides, an island off the west coast of Scotland. His family was slightly better off than many, and he received enough schooling to qualify as a clerk. Poverty was the island's main export. Ships headed to America would siphon off hundreds at a time who were willing to contract as indentured servants in return for passage.

In 1774 Alexander, his widowed father and two aunts sailed for New York. They were just in time for the American Revolution. Loyal to the crown, and with the war turning against them, the family fled to Montreal, Canada. At age 16, Alexander went to work for a fur trading company. Six years later he was a partner in the firm.

Mackenzie was not satisfied sitting at a desk, and decided to learn the fur business firsthand. He started at Detroit in 1784, which was then a small fort on the Great Lakes. In 1786 he headed for Grand Portage. Located on Lake Superior, at what is now the northeast corner of Minnesota, the nine-mile river portage was the first stepping stone to the riches of the Canadian interior.

The fur trade followed an annual cycle. Each spring trade goods from eastern Canada would be stockpiled at Grand Portage and packed into bales of 90 pounds. The bales contained rum, gunpowder, bullets, muskets, iron pots, metal knives, sewing needles, wool blankets and more.

Voyageurs would carry the bales, two at a time, up the steep portage, where their birch-bark canoes waited. The canoes would head to tiny trading posts scattered across central Canada. There the voyageurs would pick up the furs purchased from the different tribes. Then, in the fall, the canoes would return to the Grand Portage with their valuable skins of beaver, otter, fox and lynx.

During his winters in the wilderness, Mackenzie ran into Peter Pond, who was infamous for a

couple killings. Pond had studied the voyages of James Cook up the Alaskan coast and was convinced that a major river flowed out of central Canada into Cook Inlet, near present-day Anchorage. It would be the Northwest Passage that everyone had been seeking. Based on Indian accounts collected by Pond, that river started at Great Slave Lake.

Mackenzie got permission from his partners for an expedition in 1789. He rounded up a local Indian chief and his two wives, and four voyagers and their wives. In total, there were ten men and four women and three canoes. The wives were considered essential for their wilderness skills and low maintenance, said to be able to survive on "licking their fingers." Mackenzie took some rubles for when he reached Russian Alaska.

The group started on June 3 and ran into immediate trouble. Great Slave Lake was still frozen. After six days a gap opened up along the shoreline, but another problem developed. No one knew where the outlet was. They hired a guide from a local tribe, who eventually confessed never having been to the outlet. The lake is well over 50 times the size of Flathead Lake. Exploring bay after bay, they found a current after 20 days on the lake.

The journey had problems that Lewis and Clark did not face. The river flowed through marshy terrain, and finding a dry spot to spend the night could be difficult. There were frequent, violent thunder storms and the mosquitoes and black flies were fierce. But one advantage was the June nights at high latitudes – the sky was light enough for travel at 2 a.m.

A mountain range appeared to the west. Mackenzie soon realized his surveying skills with the sextant were not what he hoped, and he relied instead on the compass. But he didn't know that the magnetic north pole had moved south to just short of the Canadian mainland. The river took a 90-degree turn north to avoid the mountains, but Mackenzie's compass continued to indicate he was heading west.

After rapids, food shortages, near mutinies, and fear of the Eskimos, the expedition reached the sea in mid July. But it was the Arctic Ocean, and full of ice floes. His sextant skills were enough to confirm he was above the Arctic Circle.

Returning home against the current and prevailing winds was difficult. The canoes had to be pulled by rope through the narrower canyons.

Mackenzie wanted to call his discovery Disappointment River. But he had proven that the river paralleled the entire length of the Rocky Mountains, and there was no water route to the west. And he had opened a new trading area full of animals with thick pelts because of the arctic cold. At age 25, he demanded a larger share of the company profits in return.

Mackenzie was determined to avoid his original mistakes and find a route to Pacific. But first he had to fill in the gaps in his knowledge. He headed to Cambridge, London, and took classes in astronomy, navigation, mathematics and geography. He talked to merchants on the European side of the fur trade, and quizzed seamen who had sailed with James Cook. On the voyage back to Canada, he spent hours on the deck practicing his navigation skills with the sextant.

In the fall of 1792 he traveled again into the Canadian wilderness to set up an advance camp. Bringing two fellow clerks and six volunteer voyageurs, he built a new fort on the Peace River in what is now west central Alberta. The winter was so cold that his thermometer broke.

This time he would use a single canoe, 25 feet long and four feet and nine inches wide – big enough to carry all the supplies, but light enough to carry across portages.

On May 9 the expedition began.

As they approached the mountains, the rapids increased. Rocks, loosened by the spring thaw, plummeted from the canyon walls. The canoe was pulled by rope or portaged around the worst.

Eventually the river narrowed and rapids proved to be too much. The canoe was hauled up the mountainside and a route chopped through the forest.

There were stretches between the gorges where the canoe could be used. But there were repeated collisions with rocks. Each time the canoe was damaged, it had to be gummed and patched – making it heavier and heavier.

A series of high-mountain lakes marked the Continental Divide, and endless portages eventually brought the expedition to the Fraser River. Mackenzie thought it might be the Columbia River.

Mackenzie decided to abandon the canoe and the river, and continue overland up a different drainage. It was a fortunate decision – the Fraser was impassible downstream where it tumbled through a narrow gap known as the Hellgate.

Each voyageur carried more than 100 pounds of supplies on their backs. The local Salish tribes were friendly and willing to furnish the explorers with salmon and other food. But as they approached the seas, they had to deal with Bello Coola. The tribe had an earlier run-in with sea captain George Vancouver and were still angry about how they were treated.

On July 20 Mackenzie reached a bay with porpoises, strong tides and the smell of the sea. He was on North Bentinck Arm, a small inlet just north of Vancouver Island. He wrote, "Alexander Mackenzie from Canada by land 22d July 1793" on a rock, while four of his crew took a dugout canoe in an unsuccessful search for Vancouver's ship.

After a series of stand-offs with the Bello Coola, the expedition started the trek back home. They found their canoe and supplies where they left them. But then the local tribe stole everything. Mackenzie threatened to direct the English ships to halt the spawning runs of salmon in the rivers unless the items were returned. The supplies reappeared.

Mackenzie also began to buy up furs so the expedition would pay for itself. On September 4, 1793, the expedition was back where it started, just in time for another winter

Mackenzie headed back to Montreal in spring. His firm had merged with the successful North-West Company and soon he was considered one of the richest men in Canada. Returning to London in 1801, he wrote a best-selling chronicle of his two journeys. Lewis and Clark carried a copy on their expedition. The following year he was knighted.

He married at age 48, and had two sons and a daughter. Worn out by his expeditions, he died abruptly of a heart attack at the age of 57.

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The next issue of Pony Tracks will be issued July 6, 2022 (or thereabouts)

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