



PONY TRACKS

Newsletter of the Northwest Montana Posse of Westerners

Vol. 9, No. 7

Kalispell, Montana

August 8, 2022

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

AUGUST MEETING

Monday, August 15, 2022

Topic: "Go West Young Man" – The Story of Montana's Paris Gibson.

Presenter: Posse Member **Bill Dakin** of Bigfork, Montana

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

Time: Grab 'n' Greet, raffle and book signings start at 6:00 pm.
No dinner offered, but there are downtown restaurants within walking distance.

Historic Presentation: Program begins at 7:00 pm. No reservations are required, but seating will be limited; so come early. Call (406)-309-0938 with any questions.

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

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81942990610?pwd=dFVITnRTWmxnbm4vSIFna3hyK3ZuUT09>

Meeting ID: 819 4299 0610

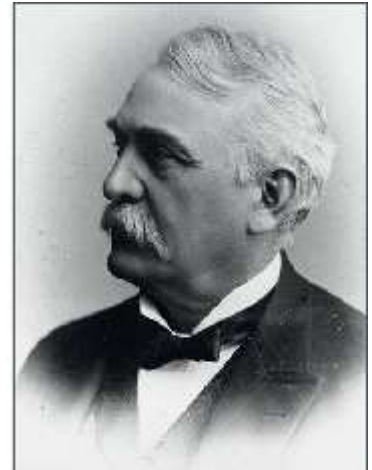
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E-mail Tim Christenson at tim.chris@yahoo.com for more help.

ABOUT THE PRESENTATION

Posse member **Bill Dakin** will tell the story of Paris Gibson (1830-1920), who rose from bankruptcy to become the founder of Great Falls, Montana, and one of the state's early U.S. Senators.



Paris Gibson

Gibson is also recognized as an avid promoter of irrigation along Montana's eastern front. Gibson Dam on the Sun River is named in his honor.

Gibson's story begins with his education, marriage and civic life in Maine. Following are his pre-Civil War ventures as a grain and woolens industrialist and civic leader in St. Anthony's Falls, Minnesota – a town that soon evolved into Minneapolis.

Abandoning his failed business interests and heading westward in mid-life, Gibson became a pioneer sheep rancher and wool merchant at Fort Benton, Montana.

In 1880 he visited the Great Falls of the Missouri... as pristine then as when they were first beheld by Captain Lewis. For two years he explored the 10 plus miles of rapids. At age 52, from a hill overlooking the confluence of the Sun and Missouri Rivers, he decided on the location for his new city.

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His acquaintance with James J. Hill, president of the Great Northern Railway, and his knowledge of water power and the dawning “age of electricity” provided him huge opportunities. Wool and wheat, real estate, dams and hydroelectric power, promoting railroads and boosting his new city became his life’s calling. Gibson’s many ventures entwined him with “empire builder” Hill, and with Montana’s “copper kings” in Butte, and the founders of the Montana Power Company.

He would become a delegate to Montana’s Constitutional Convention and a U.S. Senator at the turn of the 20th Century. His efforts to build the Milk River, Marias and Sun River irrigation projects transformed vast regions of Montana.

His personal life included accolades and tragedies. As was common in their time, Paris and his wife Valeria lost two infant children, which shadowed the rest of their lives. Valeria died by suicide, and a son was institutionalized.

His last active years were highlighted by annual summer trips to Lake McDonald with his children and grandchildren, always including visits to Charlie and Nancy Russell at their beloved Bullhead Lodge near Apgar.

About the Presenter



Bill Dakin

A Gibson descendant, **Bill Dakin** has a Bachelor’s in History from Montana State University (1971) and Master’s in Anthropology from the University of Montana (1981). He previously presented our program on the construction of the Going To The Sun Road.

Historians have long been frustrated at the

dearth of Gibson’s papers...the lifetime of correspondence and records that existed as he promoted milling, agriculture, railroads, his city, and was affiliated with Butte’s emperors... but that are lost to history. Challenged by his undergraduate advisor, Dr. Michael Malone, to “...find them – they are so important!”, Bill will recount solving the missing archives question after four decades of collecting clues.

GENERAL MEETING INFORMATION

NMPW 's meetings are held on the 3rd Monday of the month, except the months of December and January, at the Northwest Montana History Museum at 124 Second Avenue East, Kalispell, Montana.

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 starts at 7 pm and is free for members and youths 16 and under. Non-members pay \$5.

Historic books will be raffled off as a fund raiser.

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.

FUTURE PROGRAMS

September: Monday, Sept. 19, 2022
"History of the USFS Smokejumpers, Part 2" by Fred Cooper of Missoula, Montana.

October: Monday, October 17, 2022
"Civilian Conservation Corps in Glacier National Park" by David Butler of Santa Fe, New Mexico



FROM THE SHERIFF'S SADDLEBAG

By Edward "Eddy" Byrne

As we enter August and the final stretch of summer culminating with the unofficial end of summer Labor Day weekend and the kid/grandkids gearing up for another school year.

However, before that we look forward to "Fair Week" and the rich history and traditions it brings to the Flathead.

The Northwest Montana Fair and Rodeo is celebrating its 120th year in Kalispell running from the 17th thru the 21st. Over the years some traditions remain while many have faded away only to be remembered in a historical sense.

The biggest change this year is the absence of the traditional kick-off parade in downtown Kalispell. Still, the rodeo grounds will host an evening concert and three nights of PRCA Rodeo action. The carnival rides and games, and the local "cuisine" lining the interior walkway with many long-standing organizations and their signature foods – St. Matthew's funnel cake; Flathead Marines BBQ chicken; Vista Linda's Country Kitchen and Glacier Shave Ice just to name a few. Local and regional individuals and organizations show off upwards of 8,000 entries highlighting their arts, crafts and animals and of course the youths representing 4H and FFA culminate their year(s) long effort with the livestock auction. In addition, the businesses and organizations that highlight their wares, interests/causes.

As I look holistically at the NW Montana Fair and Rodeo, I reflect on what is missing. The horse races are gone, many of the arts and crafts from the fine arts have faded away, and most of the farmer events have disappeared. I recall watching in wide wonder as farmers

competed in the tractor competition that encompassed backing up a tractor with a loaded irrigation trailer. A feat nearly impossible as I can attest to.

So this year as you roam the fairgrounds and visit your favorite vendors, businesses, organizational booths, take in the concert and/or rodeo, or simply ride the Ferris Wheel, take in all that the Fair offers but also reflect on past fair's and what you remember and what is missing. Nostalgia is a wonderful thing that brings back memories and the past something we strive to provide through the Posse.

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.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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

- **Sept. 7:** History Book Club. *One for the Blackbird, One for the Crow*, by Oivia Hawker. Fiction. 2 p.m. at the NW Montana Museum.

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FROM YE EDITOR'S DESK

The historic faces and places of downtown Kalispell on display

Article and photos by Rick Hull



Nearly three years in the making, the Northwest Montana History Museum has opened its *Kalispell: Montana's Eden* exhibit to the public.

The exhibit explores the history of Kalispell in the years after the railroad arrived in 1892. The centerpiece is a large scale model of the railroad depot. But among the displays is a



An original downtown movie projector.

Among the businessmen were John McIntosh, who ran the Opera House. In a time

newspaper press, an old-time movie projector and posters from the opera house on Main Street.

Of particular interest are detailed descriptions of individual buildings and the people connected with them.

before movies and TV, traveling shows were presented almost every evening. A poster is on display.



Samples of items sold at old-time drug stores.

Another is A.H. Hay, shown with the baseball team he sponsored. Hay, who was Chinese, owned restaurants and boarding houses up and down the Great Northern Railway mainline.

C.O. And Emma Ingalls started the Inter Lake in Demersville, before it moved to downtown Kalispell. Later she was elected to the Montana Legislature. A old-time press is among the exhibits.



McIntosh Opera House

The museum is open 10 a.m. To 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.



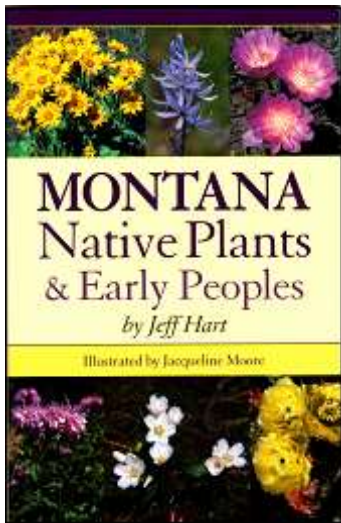
History and photos of the KM Building on 2nd Street.

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FROM THE BOOK SHELF

By Rick Hull



When exploring the woods, knowing the name of a plant is only half the fun. If you really want the rest full story, pick up *Montana Native Plants & Early Peoples* by Jeff Hart. This book is full of interesting details about how local tribes survived off the abundance of the forest and meadows.

Did you know that Indian women were judged as wife candidates based on how much camas they could dig in a day. And the men fled during the cooking of the bulbs, less they jinx the delicate process and ruin the year's supply.

The book was first released in 1976, and is now in its fourth publishing. Dr. Hart was botanist who interviewed elders of local tribes, including the local Flathead (Salish). The illustrations are by Jacqueline Moore.

The mighty hunter played only a minor role in providing for the tribe. The real staples were starchy plants like camas and bitterroot, processed berries, and other seasonal plants. For example, deer moss – the black, stringy vegetation hanging from pine trees – can be converted into an eatable paste and was often cooked with the camas.

These food stocks were easy to transport and store. But as many early explorers and fur traders noted, the diet could produce gastric distress. Other plants were offered as remedies.

The diet was often bland or even bitter. But there were sweet treats at certain times of the year, such as the inner bark of ponderosa pine and cottonwood and the sap of box elder trees.

Many plants provided medicines and dressings for wounds. Willow contains the natural ingredient in aspirin.

Red cedar roots could be woven into water-tight baskets. Cattail stalks made floor mats, while the down was used like talcum powder.

The 168-page book is available for \$15.95 at bookstores and online.

For further details on the uses of individual plants, you might carry John Craigheads's *Field Guide to Rocky Mountain Wildflowers*. Unfortunately it is hard to find.

TRIVIA QUESTION

Last month's question was connected to mountain flying. It asked about the “alien-invoking” clouds that can form over mountain peaks and are a warning to pilots of dangerous higher-altitude winds.

Barbara Boorman once again had the answer. They are lenticular clouds, which resemble flying saucers

This Month's Trivia Question

Here is another effort to sneak past the all-knowing Google.

On Highway 93 at the top of Evaro Hill, across from Gray Wolf Casino, is a side road known as Coriacan Lane. This road is said to be named after an early fur trader killed by Blackfeet.

This unfortunate individual was a nationality frequently recruited by fur trading companies, though the group gets little historic coverage.

Where was Coriacan from?

Clue: This place is preserved in the name of an Idaho county and an Oregon River, but only if you ignore the spelling. Try sounding it out and then enjoy your lunch.

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

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Zoom annual
subscription

Barbara Boorman
Trivia Question

THE CRAZY MAN'S CASTLE

From History of Kalispell

by Kalispell News-Farm Journal 1956

Shortly after the Great Northern had extended its line westward from Kalispell, a man by the name of Pomeroy settled on a heavy stand of timber bordering on the northeast corner of Bitterroot lake, with the railroad running through the claim, a short distance back from the Lake.

A low one-story 12x24 log cabin was built. The windows were narrow and located high up just under the eaves and were of stained glass. The one door was placed two logs high above the ground; to enter the one long room one had to step over the two logs.

Here Pomeroy, wife and one little girl lived for some time. He enclosed the home with a

stockade of logs set in the ground about eight feet high. In the course of time other structures were built, widely scattered over his timber claim, until at one time he had about eleven of these buildings. None very large and many of peculiar design, four had been roofed – the others roofless, unfinished and abandoned.

Various materials were used, one being built out of blocks, all more or less freaks; cupolas on some, and they do say there is one of these still laying out in the woods.

It became apparent to settlers traveling the road past his place that Pomeroy was queer, off in the upper story, or in a more polite way, decidedly eccentric. Living apart from neighbors and not seeking friendships, he was somewhat of a puzzle.

To an adjoining neighbor he became more friendly and talkative about his plans. He had faith in the future development of his holdings into a good-sized town and pleasure resort on the lake and would soon start building a hotel.

Another child was born to the couple.

In due time the Crazy Man's Castle began to take form and develop into a two-story affair of crazy angles, cupolas, turrets, floors at different levels, screwy windows with others on the second floor facing the lake, with large openings and of good design.

Each year saw new additions built at various angles, small rooms for the most part, until the building began to assume such an imposing appearance it became known as the Castle. On entering the building



A photo of the "Crazy Man's Castle" on Bitterroot Lake.

Courtesy of the Northwest Montana History Museum

old timers said it was still a puzzle, as one tried to get from one room to another by various routes other than the sensible, logical way, had the builder permitted them to do so.

The material to build was often condemned Great Northern timber, some of 12-in. thick and of good length, that must have required lots of energy, patience and perseverance to put in place. Condemned ties, scraps of lumber, some of the material from the Kelsey saw mill.

To assist him in his work and moving material, he had a blind, half-starved horse, a four wheeled outfit with some boards as a platform instead of a box; no shaft was on the outfit. To this contraption he tied his tugs made of rope, and in making trips along the winding timber road, it required considerable skill to navigate this rudderless outfit and avoid stumps and trees for the horse would go one way and the wagon another, and then you would hear the everlasting "whoa," when trouble arose, then the "get-up" and this was repeated many times every trip.

A neighbor said he was offered twelve thousand for his place one time and refused to sell. The castle was never completed, and the puzzle was solved by the building being wiped out by fire just before the North Fork fire occurred. The Great Northern having abandoned and pulled up its track long before the fire and its removal was a decided blow to Pomeroy's dreams and plans; he must have lost heart for he disappeared, his wife following. The Kelsey's found the two children had been deserted and left alone at the cabin. They were taken in by the Kelsey's and a home made for them.

Nothing was heard from the couple for several years, and then came a report that Pomeroy was in Butte, and later another report a home had been provided for them in Helena.

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month's issue. Copy received after that date will be held over until the subsequent issue.

The next issue of Pony Tracks will be issued September 12, 2022 (or thereabouts)

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