

Portage Chronicle



Reporting the events of the Portage Route Chapter, Great Falls, Montana

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Annual Portage Chapter Meeting

The annual meeting of the Portage Route Chapter was held September 18 at the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center as required by the Chapter bylaws. After a pot luck dinner featuring Ida Johnson's baked ham and scalloped potatoes the business meeting got underway.

Reports to the general membership were made by Treasurer Dave Pidcock covering the Quick Books accounting system and on membership. He stated that the computerized accounting system, which also tracks membership, has already resulted in gains to membership renewals. Jay Russell, Executive Director of the Lewis and Clark Foundation and Elizabeth Casselli, Director of the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center, offered comments on partnering with the Portage Route Chapter on projects and events of common interest. Phil Scriver addressed some projects that had been put on hold last year, but will be actively pursued during the coming year. He spoke of updating the West Bank Park interpretive site and the Expedition name plaques at the Explorers at the Portage statue. Day trips to local area sites have been popular and will be continued in co-operation with the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center volunteers and the Lewis and Clark Honor Guard.

After the reports and some other business a spirited election of three Board of Director members was held. For the first time in a very long time—if ever before—it took multiple ballots before John Toenyas and Phil Scriver were re-elected to the Board along with Don Peterson.

After the elections a round table was conducted by Don Peterson, Harry Mitchell, Jay Russell and Bill Bronson to update the membership on the National Foundation.

Chapter Officers

The Board of Directors met on September 19 to elect the officers for the coming year. The Chapter bylaws call for election of the Board members by the general membership. The Board then elects the officers from the Board membership.

Walt Walker was selected as president. Dave Pidcock is the new vice president along with Don Peterson

as secretary and John Toenyas as Treasurer. These terms start on October 1, 2011 and run until September 30 of 2012.

The next Board of Directors meeting will be October 17 when the re-organization of the Board will be completed. The president will make the various committee assignments needed to get the Chapter busy on the activities for the year.

Chapter Board of Director meetings are held at the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center the third Monday of each month. They start at 2:00 pm and all Chapter members are very welcome to attend.

Urquhart Resigns

Board member Mary Urquhart submitted her resignation from the Board of Directors for the Chapter. She said her health simply would not allow her to be an active participant. Mary acknowledged that it was extremely important that the Chapter have all of its Board members actively involved in Chapter operations.

President Walt Walker, with approval of the Board, appointed Clay Smith to replace Mary for the balance of her term.

Bill Sherman Book Reprint Completed

Work has just been completed on reprinting the Bill Sherman biography that was done a few years ago.



The Portage Route Chapter had printed it co-operatively with the Headwaters Chapter. It is based on many hours of taped interview with Bill then written primarily "in his voice."

The original was done in magazine format (8x10), but it was decided to change it over to a book format (6x9) that would allow it to be produced at a much lower cost.

The resulting book, "Bill Sherman: Citizen", is now available through Amazon.com or from the Portage Route Chapter for \$10.

For the Love of History

Phil Scriver

We pride ourselves in the fact that the Lewis and Clark Expedition spent considerable time here in the Great Falls area leaving a legacy we know and love. Many of us can find the locations that are important to the history of Lewis and Clark and tell about their time here. Because of the amount of time they spent here, both in 1805 and 1806, and what they did here, our area is one of the major centers along the trail.

But I think it is well beyond “those historical facts” mindset that makes the Great Falls area special in the arena of Lewis and Clark. There has been robust interest in, and ongoing activities of, finding and preserving that legacy for over a century. Consequently we have a heritage of “knowing Lewis and Clark.”

One of the major hopes, and results, of the Bicentennial was to expand the examination of the Expedition beyond the “they walked here and slept here” mindset. The concept was to consider the “so what” elements of the Expedition; this meant we would explore the Lewis and Clark story from varying views.

Considerable time was devoted nationally to searching for the lessons that history can teach us as we move forward. The Expedition was explored from various perspectives; history, geography, natural science, environmental science, etc. etc. Here in Great Falls we were definitely a part of that scene.

But the people in the Great Falls area have something else to offer that is, I think, very unique. Where else can it be said the Lewis and Clark story has been explored through symphonic music, ballet, opera and poetry—all produced in the local area?

Expedition Name Plaques

Phil Scriver

One of the projects for this year that was outlined in the annual meeting reports was replacing the Expedition member name plaques around the base of the Explorers at the Portage statue in Broadwater Overlook. The plaques have been in place since the early 1990s and are showing their age. These plaques are slate stone so they have worn considerably. They are also given to breaking which several have done. Almost half of the 35 markers are either broken or worn so badly they can't be read. We also have a problem with the foliage growing out over the cement base completely covering the plaques.

A plan is being considered that would replace all the slate name plaques with smaller brass cast plaques. The smaller metal plaques would be much more durable. However, like so many things we do there is quite a cost involved. The problem becomes more of a project to raise the needed money. Replacing the plaques is a very simple

process. Several ideas have been put forth including relocating the plaques and adding more names beyond just the Expedition members.

Once the Board re-organization is completed this project will be examined in detail. There are just too many plaques missing or worn out to let it go much longer.

West Bank Park Upgrade

Phil Scriver

The Portage Route Chapter originally installed an interpretive sign in West Bank Park in July of 1985. The



sign tells the story of Lewis being chased into the Missouri River by a grizzly bear.

Although we can't tell absolutely the exact location, this sign states the encounter was in

the approximate location of the sign.

Since that first sign installation the Chapter has replaced it as it gets worn out from weather, vandalism, etc etc. But it is time to do more. The area of West Bank Park has a much greater story to tell.

The new project is looking to install three signs that have both sides for interpretive information. These signs will give a broader view of what the area of West Bank Park was used for before and after Lewis and Clark and during the Expedition's time in the area.

The plan envisions placing three signs in a line along the River's Edge Trail about 30 feet apart between



the picnic shelter and the grizzly bear. These signs will be much like the ones along the river levee in Fort Benton.

An archaeological dig done in this area several years ago yielded several treasures from past centuries. The rich prehistory of this area will become part of the story told on these interpretive signs. This information presents interesting parallels to the activities of the Corps of Discovery's activities here.

The Portage Chronicle is a quarterly publication of the Portage Route Chapter of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation
Phil Scriver, editor
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Board of Directors

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Upcoming Events

--Lewis and Clark Foundation Trail Mixer, Nov 8
--"Voices in the Shadows", Oct 21-22, Oct 28-29
--Sherman Lecture Series, November 12

Give Us Your Email

Like many other organizations the Portage Chapter is working to reduce as many costs as we can. With that in mind we would ask you to consider receiving this newsletter and other communications from the Chapter through the convenience of your email inbox.

Email is much cheaper and easier for these communications. So if you haven't already done so, please send me your email so I can add it to the growing list. Currently approximately half of our members are receiving email communications. That means substantial savings for the Chapter.

Resignations from National Board

Phil Scriver

I just received via email four letters of resignation from members of the Board of Directors of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation. All resignations were effective October 1.

Stephenie Tubbs resigned her position as president. Bryant Boswell and Richard Prestholdt resigned from their vice president positions while Jim Mallory resigned as immediate past president. These are the four senior most leadership positions of the foundation.

Prestholdt probably best summed up the situation that has existed for some time when he wrote in his letter "...members present made it clear that they did not want to move in the direction the senior leadership wanted to go. When that happens something has to change...since the membership still controls the organization there is, in my opinion, only one solution. The senior leadership must step aside."

The coming months will be trying times for the National Foundation as the departing leadership is replaced and acceptable agendas are developed. Now is certainly not the time to dwell on winners or losers. If

that becomes the situation we will definitely all be big losers along with our national organization that will wither up and die.

What we as a chapter, and individuals as members of the National Foundation, need to do is concentrate on the positives of the major tasks ahead. Who will become the new leaders? What will our plan of direction be?

The Portage Route Chapter must continue the work going on with the Sherman Library. Individuals may have ideas for the Foundation. Don't hesitate to let our National Board know them. Here is one example of what we can do.

I recently sent an idea to the Board suggesting "an avenue the Foundation can take to increase national our presence and the Lewis and Clark legacy.

Basically I think we should develop a new Lewis and Clark magazine, both print and online version, taking general interest approach to Lewis and Clark. Anything that a connection to Lewis and Clark can be made to would be acceptable. It would include advertising and be available nationwide through single copy sales and subscriptions. It would not be a "benefit of membership publication" like the WPO is.

The Foundation also needs to take a look at the WPO. First we absolutely must keep that journal as a "scholarly publication" it is and be available to our members. But its availability could be expanded to be made available to non-members through subscriptions and single copy sales. It could also be available as an online edition.

The eventual result would be four periodicals produced by the National Foundation. They should all become money makers to help stabilize the Foundation's finances. While the Foundation does not have money to pump into this effort, the project may be an opportunity to develop some solid partnerships with current magazine publishers.

Most of our efforts now are to a very great extent marketing to ourselves. These two magazines could be a great source to get our name in front of the general public.

Work in the National Foundation Office

Two very devoted "Lewis and Clark" volunteers recently spent three weeks working in the National Foundation office at the Interpretive Center. Doug and Lynn Davis from Spirit Lake, Iowa put their talents to use to clean and otherwise organize the paper files and computerized files that are essential to the organization. When they were done the office was back to working order—maybe even better.

Thanks very much Doug and Lynn. You were just what the doctor ordered.

Trail Mixer

The Lewis and Clark Foundation Trail Mixer will be held on November 8. This annual event is a fundraiser for the Foundation. According to Jay Russell, executive director of the Foundation, the evening will feature a silent auction and a lively, live auction. There have been some real good items donated for this year that will bring some very competitive bidding. So come and enjoy yourself.

Group tables are again being made available, so get your group together and purchase a table that will seat eight for \$280. In past years businesses have purchased tables for their employees, organizations for their members, etc. etc.

The Chapter has purchased a table, but it is already full. If there is more interest by the membership the Chapter will purchase additional table(s), however those attending will each pay \$35. Contact Harry Mitchell for details.

Sherman Lecture Series Continues

The Portage Route Chapter in co-operation with the Lewis and Clark Foundation will present Jack Gladstone on Saturday, November 12 for a three hour seminar. Jack’s presentation, “Jim Thorpe: American Sunlight and Shadow” will be held at the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center as part of the observations of Native American Heritage Month.

This workshop will be worth 3 renewal credits for teachers. Call the Center at 727-8733 for details. The workshop is free, but reservations must be made in advance at the Center. Time will be 9:00 am until noon.

That evening Jack Gladstone will present a free concert for the general public. Starting time is 7:00 pm. If you have not heard one of his concerts, you won’t want to miss this one. Jack has recently been nominated for several national awards for his music.

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