

Portage Chronicle



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

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Sherman Breakfast Drawing Near

Phil Scriver

While making plans for the new year, set aside March 17 for the Chapter's annual Sherman Breakfast. This special breakfast has been held every year since the early 1980s. The first few years were informal get togethers with Bill and some of his friends who were mutually interested in Lewis and Clark and CM Russell art when they all came to the CMR Art Auction in mid-March. After the Chapter was created the breakfast became one of its first annual events.

The Sherman Breakfast is a time for the local Lewis and Clark community to gather and hear what everyone else is doing; a mixing of business and pleasure. Several years ago presentation of the Sherman Fellow Award was added to recognize those individuals who have made major contributions to the Lewis and Clark legacy we all cherish.

This year the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation board of directors will hold their quarterly meeting in Great Falls, and will be attending the Sherman Breakfast. So this is a great opportunity to visit with the folks who lead the national organization.

In addition to activity reports and coming plans from each of the Lewis and Clark groups, attendees will see who receives the Sherman Fellow Award. Past recipients have all had remarkable stories of accomplishment as they pursued their passion of history and community.

Space is somewhat limited so if you plan to attend call John England at 452-8794 or John Toenyes at 452-9216 and make your reservations.

The Saga of the Website

For several years now the Portage Route Chapter has owned the website "corps of discovery.org" along with the Lewis and Clark Honor Guard. About a year ago the site developed severe problems; it seems that the software used to maintain the site became obsolete. The result was we lost most of the site content.

John Toenyes and Phil Scriver recently spent several weeks examining the possibility of migrating to a pre-programmed "drag and drop" site. This kind of

website is generally quite inexpensive plus there is no software for the Chapter to purchase.

After wrestling with it for some time we determined this type site really did not fit the Chapter's needs. By the time we upgraded the basic inexpensive site to suit our size requirements and so we could sell our merchandise through it, the site would cost more than the one we already have. The Board of Directors agreed to purchase the new software and re-develop the site. That effort is now underway.

In the coming months visitors to the Chapter's site will be able to watch the progress. Plans are to include past newsletters, some history articles, many photos of activities, and a sales page. We will also be using the website to advertise upcoming events.

Christmas Social

The Chapter has an objective of providing more opportunities for members to be involved in Lewis and Clark activities.

Although we are always looking for help on projects, this objective deals with social events, area tours, speakers, films of interest, etc.; no meetings, work, soliciting for money or anything but entertainment.

Sunday afternoon, December 11 the Portage Route Chapter held a Christmas social for the membership and the Lewis and Clark Honor Guard. Cookies and coffee and conversation were all available before and after the History Channel film, "The Death of Meriwether Lewis: Murder or Suicide," was shown.

By the end of the afternoon the consensus of the group was that this kind of purely social event should be repeated.

Do you have your copy of "**William P. Sherman: Citizen**" yet? Pick one up at the Sherman Breakfast for \$10.

You can also get one by mail. Send a check for \$10 plus \$5 for shipping to the Portage Route Chapter.

Winter Film Festival

This year the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center's Winter Film Festival starts with Ken Burn's "Corps of Discovery." This PBS miniseries brought the story of Lewis and Clark to the attention of the world.

On January 19 the first half of the miniseries will be shown, then on January 26 the second half. Films will be shown at 4 pm and 7 pm both days.

Another presentation of interest will be given at the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center on March 13.

At 2 pm that day there will be a program on the geological observations made by the Captains. This is an area frequently overlooked, so be prepared to learn some new things.

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

Chapter website: www.corpsofdiscovery.org

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Upcoming Events

- Winter Film Festival, January 19, 26
- Sherman Breakfast, March 17
- Chapter annual meeting, September 16
- Chapter Christmas Social, December 2

Books, Books, Books

Phil Scriver

The Chapter seems to have accumulated a sizeable collection of books over the years (not comparable to Bob Doerk's collection, but still quite a few). We have collections from at least three past members—Marshall Johnson, Bill Sherman and Charles Campbell. There may be additional books that a variety of others have given the Chapter. I understand that each collection has an inventory, but have they been compared for duplicates and the list from other donors added?

The Chapter needs to make a comprehensive review of its collection and decide upon a course of action.

Our collection has very few rare or valuable volumes, but those we have should be separated from the rest and secured. Since it appears that most of our collection consists of common Lewis and Clark titles, do we want to preserve the collection or try to sell them for income to the Chapter, providing that would be in keeping with the wishes of the donors? Alternatively, if

we decide to keep them what should we do with them? Do we box them and leave them in storage as they are, which is relatively safe and does little harm to the books environmentally? Or do we display them for public use; if so where?

I think that any rare/valuable books should be considered separately from the more common ones.

Maybe the President could appoint a task force to examine this issue in detail and make some recommendations to the Board. Any volunteers?

The Portage Route Chapter

WANTS YOU !!

To help with routine maintenance
On three interpretive sites
We take care of

- Salem Bridge
- Upper Portage Camp
- Upper Portage Overlook

**Work consists of cleaning litter, mowing weeds, etc.
Pay is fun in the sun, good company.**

To volunteer call:

Harry Mitchell at 453-1910

Membership Programs

As a follow on to the Christmas Social, the Chapter plans to continue developing activities for member participation. We want to include a variety of events such as the Christmas Social, speakers on Lewis and Clark and related topics, tours to places of interest.

Some of these activities will be planned and sponsored by the Chapter, while for others we will join with other groups such as the Honor Guard, Lewis and Clark Foundation, or the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center.

The next event being offered is the Winter Film Festival at the Interpretive Center later this month.

Under development for February is to join the Montana Land Surveyors convention at the Heritage Inn to hear a presentation by Denny DeMier. He has done extensive travel in the Northwest United States and Canada tracing trails of explorations. He will specifically be talking on David Thompson's 1811 travels.

The Chapter would like to provide some member event every month, but it takes considerable time to find good speakers that don't just repeat what we all have heard many times already. Most of us have

been to the area Lewis and Clark sites, but there should be many new locations that are more-well known for other history that would be interesting. These sites probably could be tied to the Lewis and Clark legacy as well.

The Board needs ideas as well as help with the planning from the membership to make this program become a reality.

West Bank Park Back on the Schedule

Phil Scriver

I have written several articles over the last while about updating the interpretive site in West Bank Park, but no work has been done there. This project was one of the victims of the very unusual year just completed. With the new year that will change.

The plans have been finalized and will go to the city Park and Recreation department of their approval within the coming two weeks. With that accomplished we will turn to costs and funding. When the dollars are in hand the new signs can be designed and sent off for production. The graphics and text for each of the three signs has been developed, but they need to be laid out on the computer.



Looking east on River's Edge Trail in West Bank Park. The interpretive signs would be to the viewer's left.

These are lengthy processes, but hopefully the site can be installed by late this year or early the following spring/summer (2013). The new signs will be placed along the River's Edge Trail between the picnic pavilion and the grizzly bear statue.

The basic concept for the upgraded site will be three upright signs that can be read on both sides. Size and style will be much like what are along the levee in Fort Benton.

The new signs will tell the expanded story of West Bank Park and its uses before, during and after the Lewis and Clark Expedition. An archaeological dig

in that area a few years back uncovered an interesting history that will be made available to the visitor.

The original idea was to place a series of signs in a covered kiosk, but that has been dropped in favor of the upright signs primarily because of cost involved and long term maintenance requirements. The upright signs will also be more consistent with other structures along the River's Edge Trail. These type signs require minimal work beyond construction of the sign holder and putting the sign posts into the ground.



The Ordway sign in Fort Benton that tells of Lewis's reunion with Ordway's party in 1806 is the type of sign that will be placed in West Bank Park.

For Your Thought

Phil Scriver

Sometimes when we read an account of some bit of history we may not really digest what we read or maybe not quite understand what the writer is saying, so we just pass on to the next item of interest. Here is a passage I have been guilty of basically ignoring.

On July 15 as the Expedition was making ready to depart the Great Falls area Lewis lamented, "...we find it extremely difficult to keep the baggage of our men within reasonable bounds; they will be adding bulky articles of but little use or value to them."

This comment was just a few days after the iron boat failed and two cottonwood dugouts had been made in its place. Lewis had recorded on July 10 that they had dug a cache at the upper portage camp and deposited the iron framed boat, some papers and a few other articles of but little importance.

On the 15th he also acknowledged that a good part of the extremely large load for the dugouts was the supply of dried meat they had accumulated. Bear in mind they had not met anyone to trade with since leaving Mandan.

The question posed for your thought is, "What were the men collecting that Lewis found so useless?"

The only answer I can come up with is that Lewis was showing some 20-20 hindsight and thinking about activities during the past winter with the Mandans. The men mingled freely with the Mandans so there could well have been a certain amount of "souvenir collecting" done.

Military men have engaged in that activity, probably as long as there have been armies. Certainly during WW II more than one Japanese flag or sword found its way to the United States in some American soldier's duffel bag.

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