



Westward Barriers

Monthly Newsletter of the Travelers' Rest Chapter
of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation

PO Box 447 – Lolo, MT 59847

www.travelersrestchapter.org

Keepers of the Travelers' Rest Story – Stewards of the Lolo Trail

- Meeting Date & Time:** First Thursday, April 5th at 7pm
- Meeting Location:** Lolo Community Center
- Meeting Speaker:** Hal Stearns – Retired History Teacher
- Meeting Program:** Lewis & Clark Tales:
From Grizzly Bears to Prickly Pears
(A PowerPoint Presentation & Talk)

Dr. Hal Stearns, a 34-year educator, taught high school students at Missoula Sentinel and in Wiesbaden, Germany and as a University of Montana Adjunct professor. He was honored as Montana's Teacher of the Year and Outstanding U.S. History Teacher. He was also a Keikei Koho Scholar to Japan and National Endowment of the Humanities Fellow.

In the military Brigadier General Retired Stearns served in the Montana National Guard for 35 years. An artillery officer by training, he commanded units as varied as artillery, public affairs, military scholar and state area commander of over 3000 troops.

Hal has served on many boards, including past service to Humanities Montana, Montana Coal Board, Montana and Nebraska Lewis and Clark Commissions, the Travelers' Rest Preservation and Heritage Association and the National Lewis & Clark Trail Heritage Foundation Board.

Dr. Stearns is a storyteller, lecturer and researcher on Montana and the American West. His parents were weekly newspaper publishers and his grandparents were ranchers and Swedish homesteaders in central Montana. He is married to Dr. Sheila Stearns, Montana's (soon to retire) Commissioner of Higher Education.

Lewisia Rediviva – The Bitterroot Flower

Excerpted with permission from the Lewis & Clark Fort Mandan Foundation: www.lewis-clark.org

An old Flathead Indian woman sat weeping on the bank of the *In-schu-te-schu*, or Red Willow River, in the shadow of the *Chi-quil-quil-kane*, or Red Mountains, singing a death song for her starving sons. The rising sun heard her plaint, and sent a red spirit-bird to comfort her. The bird promised that from each of her falling tears a new flower would grow, tinted with the rose of his feathers and the white of her hair, and springing from a root as bitter as her sorrow but as nourishing as her love. The prophecy came true, and her people called the plant *spetlem*--"bitter."

The Flathead, Kutenai, Shoshoni, and Nez Perce Indians regarded the bitterroot with reverence. No other root could be harvested until the elder women of the tribe had conducted the annual First Roots ceremony, just after the leaves appeared, and before the buds opened for the first time. That was the moment when the dark, bitter skin could easily be peeled away. Each family carefully collected a bushel or two--enough to last for a year--and dried them in the sun.

As soon as the grass begins to turn green in April, the plant puts forth its small, cylindrical, tapered, deep-green leaves from a short, almost invisible stalk. Late in the fifth lunar month of the year, from five to ten two-inch flowerstalks reach up with buds that the morning sun unfolds. By then the leaves have begun to shrivel and die.

Each blossom is unique, for so is each petal. Day by sun-started day the color fades, until the petals dry up and blow away, leaving a tiny parasol-shaped capsule of jet-black seeds, soon to be sown by the wind. By early July all visible traces of the plant have disappeared, like tears, into the gravelly soil, awaiting another spring for its rebirth. Even if the root is pulled up, dried, and kept for months, it can find rebirth--*rediviva*--when replanted.

Thus it may be that the unique life-cycle of the bitterroot is what made it appealing. It beautifully represented the mystery of birth, death and rebirth, and the irrepressible, universal human dream of immortality.

The bitterroot is found throughout the Rocky Mountains, from British Columbia and Alberta south to California and Colorado, but it is especially abundant in western Montana. At Travelers' Rest, the expedition's camp near the mouth of Lolo Creek [Lolo, Montana], Lewis noted on September 9, 1805, that the ground over which they had traveled for the past few days was "a could white gravley soil" of "indifferent" quality, agriculturally speaking.

Although he was often alert to such ecological connections, he did not notice it was precisely that kind of soil which made the valley a prime habitat for the bitterroot. The following spring he might have seen the storied flower and root almost anywhere in this valley, but we know he collected a specimen of it in the vicinity of Travelers' Rest.

When the expedition returned to the mouth of Travelers' Rest Creek in the lower Bitterroot Valley, on its return trip early in July of 1806, Lewis collected some whole plants of the species. Back in Philadelphia, he turned them over to one of the leading botanists of the day, Frederick Pursh (1774-1820), for official classification. In honor of Captain Lewis, Pursh established a new genus in the purslane family, Latinizing it as *Lewisia* (lew-EE-see-uh), and designating this species *rediviva* (red-ih-VEE-vuh).

By 1889 the valley and its river, bordered by the eastern slopes of a great mountain range, had all three gotten their name in common from the bitterroot plant. In 1889 they became a part of western Montana, the forty-first state in the union.

Out of the scientific floral exhibit displayed at the Columbian Exposition of 1893, in Chicago, grew the National Floral Emblem Society of America. State chapters of the society conducted informal balloting, and referred the winners to their respective legislatures for endorsement. In Montana the bitterroot handily won over thirty-one other contenders, and was officially designated the state flower in 1895.

--Joseph Mussulman



Travelers' Rest State Park Update – Loren Flynn, Director – Fish Wildlife & Parks

Expanding Travelers' Rest! Many people don't know, but the visitor center at Travelers' Rest State Park does not belong to the State of Montana. Neither does the land between Highway 12 and the trail to the historic site. But that could all change with a park expansion and acquisition proposed by State Parks.

Starting with a generous offer from the landowners, State Parks has been able to work with other partners to identify and pursue funding to purchase approximately 24 acres, as well as the visitor center, museum and museum collection.

\$300,000 from the Land and Water Conservation Fund have been committed to the project. Using that as a starting point, Five Valleys Land Trust sponsored an application to the Missoula County Open Space Bond on behalf of State Parks for up to an additional \$300,000. Following a unanimous recommendation from the Open Space Lands Committee, the request for funding will be considered by the Missoula Board of County Commissioners on Wednesday, March 28. If they approve the funding, this \$2 million project will be 95% complete.

The Travelers' Rest Preservation and Heritage Association, the non-profit partner at Travelers' Rest State Park, has agreed to spearhead a community fundraising campaign for the final \$100,000 to make this dream a reality.

You'll hear more about this project in the weeks and months ahead – call the park office with questions about this or any other activity at Travelers' Rest!

From the *Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, by Gary Moulton:

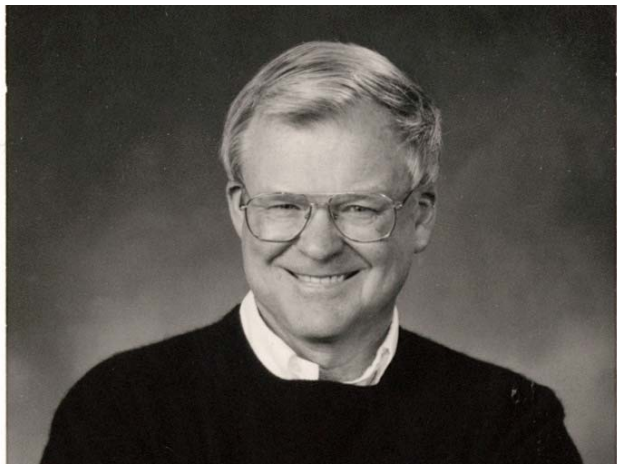
[Return Trip entry below by Captain Meriwether Lewis, at a camp along the Columbia River, east of Portland, Oregon]

"Saturday April 5th 1806 - Saw the Log cock, the hummingbird, gees ducks &c today. the tick has made it's appearance it is the same with those of the Atlantic States. the Musquetoes have also appeared but are not yet troublesome... we saw the martin, small gees, the small speckled woodpecker with a white back, the Blue crested Corvus, ravens, crows, eagles Vultures and hawks. the mellow bug and long leged spider have appeared, as have also the butterfly blowing fly and many other insects. I observe not any among them which appear to differ from those of our country or which deserve particular notice."

The Travelers' Rest Chapter was organized in 1987. We are only one of over 20 Chapters of the LEWIS AND CLARK TRAIL HERITAGE FOUNDATION, which was incorporated in 1969, and is headquartered in Great Falls, Montana. Our Chapter's Members were instrumental in the discovery of the Lewis and Clark Expedition's 1805 & 1806 Travelers' Rest campsite in Lolo, Montana... and the eventual establishment of Travelers' Rest State Park [TRSP]. The TR Chapter Board and Officers enthusiastically encourage our members and the public to support TRSP as often as possible, invite family and friends to attend some of the many unique and high-quality programs offered there, and support or join TRPHA [the Travelers' Rest Preservation and Heritage Association] a mostly Volunteer Interpretive Organization located at TRSP that funds and coordinates many of the fine programs and activities. Go to www.travelersrest.org for all Travelers' Rest State Park and TRPHA related events, activities, information and announcements. You can also follow TRSP & TRPHA on Facebook!

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 From Grizzly Bears to Prickly Pears
With Historian – Hal Stearns
Thursday, April 5th at 7pm
Lolo Community Center

● —————> Westward Barriers <————— ●

Travelers' Rest Chapter – Membership Information

Please provide the requested information listed below and make your check payable to the Travelers' Rest Chapter:

Send Payments To: Travelers' Rest Chapter - PO Box 447 - Lolo, MT - 59847

New Member Renewal Address Change **2012.03**

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____ Email _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

Scout (Student) \$5 Private (Individual) \$10 Platoon (Family) \$15

Interpreter \$25 Corporal \$50 Sergeant \$75

Captain \$100 General \$500 Jefferson (Lifetime) \$1,000

☺ ☺ ☺ ***Please check your mailing label to determine if it is time for you to RENEW your Membership***

Travelers' Rest Chapter Board: Scott Sproull [President]; Jack Puckett [Secretary]; Jean Belangie-Nye [Treasurer]; Scott Cameron, Ritchie Doyle; Jack Fisher; Norm Jacobson; George Knapp; Earl Reinsel; Tom Schenarts; Chuck Sundstrom. Newsletter Coordinator – Scott Sproull [scottsproull@gmail.com]