

Portage Chronicle



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

April 2011

Vol 21 Issue 2

Annual Sherman Breakfast

Phil Scriver

Every March the Portage Route Chapter sponsors a breakfast which is a gathering of the Lewis and Clark community during the Art Week activities in Great Falls. The breakfast is a time for sharing event information between the different organizations that keep Lewis and Clark humming in the area.

This year the newly hired Director of the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center was introduced and gave a brief insight of her background and plans for the future of the Center. Elizabeth Casselli, who grew up on a sheep ranch southeast of Great Falls, has been with the Forest Service 20 years. She says her official title just before she got the Center Director job was so long that it took half a page just to write it all. We look forward to working with her to keep the Center a living part of the legacy we cherish.

A variety of activities are planned for this year according to the speakers who represented the local organizations. The River and Plains Society in Fort Benton gave a brief presentation on work in progress to rebuild the old fort.

The Honor Guard is sponsoring a tour there to look over the work on April 9. All interested people are invited to join them. In addition to performing their usual events, the Honor Guard is in the fifth year of planning for the Tricentennial of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.



The highlight of the Breakfast was presenting Sherman Fellow Awards to Larry Epstein (left) and Don

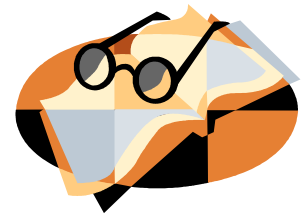
Peterson (right). Both have been leaders in the Lewis and Clark legacy, locally and nationally, for at least the past decade. Before that they were just part of the workforce.

These two recipients epitomize Bill Sherman's philosophy that great things can happen if we don't care who gets the credit.

A New Look

David Pidcock

If you have already received your dues notice you are aware that we have made major changes in the billing and format. Last October we purchased a QuickBooks program for non-profit organizations that provides many functions; one of them is creating and mailing out the dues notices.



Because we had hundreds of entries that had to be made, we unfortunately made a few errors in names and addresses. For that we are sorry. However, we already have made some corrections. If you receive your membership dues notice and find an error, please give me a call, or when mailing back your check, add a note as to the goof up and we'll correct it immediately.

Fortunately our President John Toenyas is a very knowledgeable computer expert, and possesses the patience of Job while instructing me with the ins and outs of the new program.

This new program has our inventory of Lewis & Clark items that we have for sale, as well as budgets and all the other records and reports that an organization like ours relies on.

You will notice a section on the dues invoice where you can increase your membership class if you so desire. The Portage Route Chapter is no different than any other non-profit organization or family, in that we are always looking for additional income to carry out the programs we would like to provide.

You can always call me if you have a question about your invoice at 727-2466. Many thanks

Sherman Lecture Series Continues May 4

Sue Buchel

David L. Nicandri will be the 2011 "Sherman Lecture Series," speaker on Tuesday, May 3rd, 7:00 p.m. at the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center in Great Falls.

His topic, "The Expeditionary Artists of Isaac Stevens: Following in the Footsteps of Lewis and Clark" complements the new exhibit at the Center, "Land on the Brink of Change," and serves as one of the opening activities for the new show.

A reception and book-signing opportunity will be held immediately after the program.

David Nicandri has been director of the Washington State Historical Society since July 1987. He is also the executive editor of *COLUMBIA Magazine*, the journal of the Washington State Historical Society. A graduate of State University of New York (SUNY) at Plattsburgh, and the holder of a Master's Degree in history from the University of Idaho, Nicandri formerly served as the chief curator of the Washington State Capital Museum.

Nicandri is the author of numerous books and articles, including: *Olympia's Forgotten Pioneers: The Oblates of Mary Immaculate* (1972); *Italians in Washington State: Emigration, 1853-1924* (1978); *Northwest Chiefs: Gustav Sohon's Views of the 1855 Stevens Treaty Councils* (1986); and a contributing editor of *Washington: Images of State's Heritage* (1988), the official centennial illustrated history of Washington; and most recently, *River of Promise: Lewis and Clark on the Columbia* (2010).

The Portage Route Chapter thanks the Lewis and Clark Foundation of Great Falls for assistance with the reception and the speaker's lodging in Great Falls, and the US Forest Service for allowing us use of the facility, publicity, and staffing during the program.

By partnering with the Montana Historical Society, Gates of the Mountains Chapter and Traveler's Rest Chapter, the Portage Route Chapter has secured funding to extend Nicandri's Montana visit to include Helena on May 4th, and Lolo on May 5th. At both these venues he will discuss his findings about Lewis and Clark on the Columbia River.



I'm quite sure that some of you, who are members of the Portage Route Chapter, at one time or another throughout your life, had the wonderful experience of being the "Program Chairman". This is in many cases the first step in working your way thru the chairs, and eventually to the presidency.



Trust me, it's a tough job. You ponder what programs will create enough interest so that the membership will be satisfied and feel that their dues are a worthwhile expenditure.

That being said, we need your input. We will continue to bring in nationally recognized speakers throughout the year (See article regarding David Nicandri on May 3rd).

We want to be sure that you are completely satisfied, but if not, what other programs would you like us to provide so that you are happy with your membership. Mail your ideas to PRC - P.O. Box 2424, Great Falls, MT 59404, or send an email to depvissionquest@aol.com and tell us what you would like. Without you, our membership, the Portage Route Chapter is nonexistent. Thanks in advance.

Summer Tours

Phil Scriver

As was reported in the last issue of this newsletter there are several tours being planned for this summer. The first one was to Fort Benton to see the additional work that has been done on the reconstruction of the Old Fort. Although not directly a "Lewis and Clark site" it was originally named Fort Lewis in honor of Captain Lewis. This tour is typical of some of the other tours that will be offered—related to the Expedition.

As details of these tours are finalized information will be sent out via email so we can be more timely than in the past.

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.corpssofdiscovery.org

Board of Directors

President	John Toenyas(11)	tenyes@msn.com
Vice President	Walt Walker(13)	waltwalker88@msn.com
Treasurer	Dave Pidcock(13)	depvissionquest@aol.com
Secretary	Harry Mitchell(13)	hbmitchell@bresnan.net
Director	Mary Urquhart(12)	dmufarms@aol.com
Director	Clay Smith(11)	clayandkim@bresnan.com
Director	Sue Buchell(12)	retireinmt@yahoo.com
Director	Phil Scriver(11)	philscriver@yahoo.com
Director	Ida Johnson(12)	

Mini Book Review

Phil Scriver

“River of Promise; Lewis and Clark on the Columbia” by David Nicandri is definitely not your normal book retelling the adventure story of the Corps of Discovery. Instead, the author puts the Expedition into the context of its time and place in the history of what was going on in the world at the time. He uses the Expedition’s travels in the Columbia River country to reflect upon a number of themes; such as Clark gets insufficient credit for his contributions to the success of the journey. I thought it was a good book, but it is controversial.

Much of what the author has to say is not new, but very seldom do we see all these pieces in one place. He does a good job of showing how we are all a product of our time; or at least we are greatly influenced by it.

Several things he belabors, probably to be certain he has made his point. I also think he tends to overly criticize Lewis in order to bolster Clark. While placing the Expedition into its contemporary history he leaves me with the feeling that he is critical of certain facts of the time. An example is when he talks of Lewis writing like the great explorers of his day did—MacKenzie and Captain Cook are specifically mentioned. He seems overly critical of Lewis referring to the Expedition as “his” expedition, forgetting that throughout history the leaders of campaigns, journeys, countries, etc. are the ones that get the credit.

Nicandri succeeds in giving the reader much to think about on a variety of topics related to the Expedition and does a reasonable job of guiding the start of the reader doing some critical thinking. He also does a good job of illustrating why reading several viewpoints of history gives a better understanding of history. We are very fortunate that there were several journal keepers on the Expedition. Consequently we have a much better understanding of the Expedition.

Although I don’t necessarily agree with everything he has to say—he right much more than he is wrong—I would definitely recommend this book to others to read and contemplate Lewis and Clark beyond the adventure story.

Upcoming Events

- All Women Missouri River Float; this summer (Aug)
- Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center Anniversary, May 1
- Annual Lewis and Clark Festival, June 24-26
- Lecture Series, David Nicandri, May 3
- LCTHF Annual Meeting (Omaha) July 31-Aug 3
- Chapter Annual Meeting September 18

The Landscape Today and Yesterday

By Phil Scriver

One of the more interesting considerations in telling the “Great Falls story” of the Corps of Discovery’s trek is the landscape the Expedition traversed. The

main geographic feature is the Missouri River, but since it was their highway for a large portion of the journey, that river does not help identify a particular region. Additionally, most parts of the river have changed over the last 200 years since the Corps of Discovery trekked across the continent. But there are certain features on the river that can be used for landmarks to identify localities. The first such landmark used to identify the Great Falls Region looks today almost identical to what Lewis described on May 31st 1805 when he wrote, “The hills and river cliffs which we passed today exhibit a most romantic appearance.” The ‘white free-stone’ he described that day are now known as the White Cliffs.

Other landmarks that are used to make the region unique are the five falls of the Missouri, although they are somewhat changed by construction of hydroelectric dams above three and the smallest falls is now covered by the backwaters of one dam.

The Captains described Barn Mountain, Fort Mountain, Tower Rock, Sulphur Springs, Giant Springs; Island Mountains now known as the Sweetgrass Hills, Bear Paws, Snowy Mountains and the Highwood Mountains; a network of smaller rivers, Teton (Tansey), Marias, Sun (Medicine), Smith and Two Medicine along with Belt (Portage) Creek and Box Elder Creek (Willow Run). All of these features remain remarkably like they were 200 years ago. Descriptions from the journals can be used to easily identify each one today. Even the two curious hills Lewis identified just east of the present city of Great Falls on June 13 are readily apparent.

One of the intriguing aspects of living on the Expedition’s route is that although the surface features are different today from what Lewis saw journal entries still identify the landscape. When Lewis made his overland trip from the mouth of the Marias to the great falls of the Missouri he described the geography of area he passed through so well that a person today can take those entries and see the same hills, valleys, small creeks and distant mountains. When walking across the prairies today the route he described can be found and followed. With a little imagination the wheat fields become short prairie grass Lewis trod and cattle become buffalo.

Another aspect of the landscape today is that although we think of the Expedition as traveling by water, most of their travels in the Great Falls region were overland. Lewis’ trip up the Marias in 1805 and in 1806, Clark’s trip up the Missouri in 1805, the 1805 portage, the 1806 portage, Lewis’ trip from Traveler’s Rest to the great falls in 1806 and Lewis’ return from Camp Disappointment and meeting the Blackfeet on the Two Medicine River were all overland journeys.

Clark’s trip with the main party from the Marias to the great falls, Ordway’s trip from the Three Forks to the Upper Portage Camp and the Expedition’s journey after portaging were the only water trips.



The canoe takeout point (left) on Portage Creek is just where the journals say it should be. Because the landscape today is very much like it was 200 years ago, by walking the creek from its mouth on the Missouri a person can readily see this is the only possible location the Corps of Discovery could have used to get their canoes up onto the prairie beyond the river.

A hike to the location on the Two Medicine River (right) where Lewis had his encounter with the Blackfeet is a tour visitors frequently take. No trail leads the hikers to the camp spot but the landscape remains as Lewis described it in his journals.



PORTAGE ROUTE CHAPTER
P.O. Box 2424
GREAT FALLS, MT 59403