



# PONY TRACKS

Newsletter of the Northwest Montana Posse of Westerners

Vol. 10, No. 3

Kalispell, Montana

April 11, 2023

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## APRIL MEETING

Monday, April 17, 2023

**Topic:** "Charles Lindbergh in Montana History"

**Presenter:** Dennis Gaub of Billings, MT

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

**Time:** Greet 'n' Gab, book raffle and book signings start at 6:00 p.m.

No dinner offered, but there are downtown restaurants within walking distance.

**Historic Presentation:** Program begins at 7:00 p.m. 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/87323374974?pwd=VyttclJPTm5pYW5EdE84ZGt3d3BZQT09>

Meeting ID: 891 9948 1805

Passcode: 003734

E-mail Tim Christenson at [tim.chris@yahoo.com](mailto:tim.chris@yahoo.com) for more help.

## ABOUT THE PRESENTATION

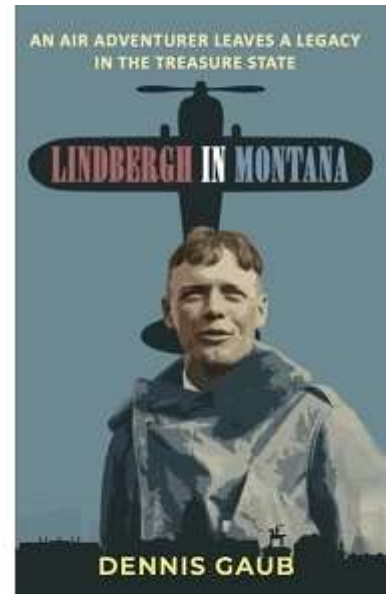
Aviator Charles Lindbergh became world famous after his solo flight across the Atlantic in 1927. But he also made a lasting impact on Montana beyond being immortalized in the name of a Swan Valley lake.

Lindbergh first came to the Treasure State in the summer of 1922 as a wing walker and parachute jumper with a barn-storming outfit that performed at fairs and exhibitions in Billings, Lewistown, and neighboring communities. He returned in 1927

during his nationwide tour promoting commercial flight, and he visited the state several more times before his death in 1974.

Billings author Dennis Gaub became fascinated by Lindbergh's ties to the Treasure State, and decided the story deserved a book of its own. That story is told in his *Lindbergh in Montana* book.

Lindbergh's influence on the state goes beyond airplanes and flight. He is also credited with influencing the state's efforts to conserve its natural beauty, according to Gaub.



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## About the Presenter

**Dennis Gaub**, a Montana native who received his journalism degree from Northwestern University, and spent 25 years as a reporter and editor for newspapers in Colorado, Michigan, Wyoming, and Montana, including 20 years at the *Billings Gazette*. He later worked more than a decade in the software industry, retiring in 2017.



He is author of three previous books: *Win 'em all: Little Laurel wins Montana's biggest basketball trophy*, *Midway Bravery - The Story of the U.S. Army Pilot Whose Famed Flight Helped Win a Decisive World War II Battle*, and *Sky Dreamer*, a historical novel set in Billings.

## HUNGRY HORSE DAM TOUR

M'lissa Morgan, Historian at Hungry Horse Dam, has offered Posse members a guided tour the dam on Friday afternoon, May 19.

The tentative plan is to meet at the dam at 1 p.m. for the two-hour tour. To sign up, email Kyle Stetler at [kmstetler@gmail.com](mailto:kmstetler@gmail.com).

## FUTURE PROGRAMS

- May:** Monday, May 15, 2023  
"1929 Half Moon Fire"  
by Rick Trembath
- June:** Monday, June 19, 2023  
"Larger Than Life Leaders: Lewis and Clark and the Corps of Discovery"  
by Hal Stearns
- **July:** Monday, July 17, 2023  
"A Mansion in the Mountains:  
How Kalispell's Treasured Landmark  
Came to Be " by Brit Clark



## FROM THE SHERIFF'S SADDLEBAG

By Edward "Eddy" Byrne

Finally, Spring has Sprung as we close out the most holly seasons for Christians and Jews in Easter and Passover respectively. Both religions are steeped in faith and history that spans the globe with deep roots embedded here in the Flathead.

With religion being a significant topic at this time of year it's worth taking a quick look at the makeup of the Flathead's religious makeup. Anyone who drives around the valley has surely noticed the myriad houses of worship. The big four types of religion include Christian non-denominational (9%), Lutheran (6%), Catholic (5.5%), and Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (4.5%). Regardless of the numbers, each church, temple, and synagogue bring its own history and perspective to the valley as migrants and various individuals have moved into the valley over the past 140-plus years (not to forget the Native Americans who have been here long before).

Changing gears, we as a Posse have some significant decisions to make at this month's meeting. The good news is our club numbers combined with non-member attendees have grown significantly over the past three months. Unfortunately, we are outgrowing the space at the museum. Our option is to limit non-member attendance and stay at the museum or we move back to the Red Lion.

The March meeting at the Red Lion was well attended and we can accommodate the ongoing growth of the monthly presentations. The Red Lion option comes at a greater financial cost. The monthly rental and set-up fee is \$200 regardless of how many choose to attend and pay for the 6 p.m. pre-presentation dinner. Only 20 people purchased dinner at the March meeting. That said, we raised \$205.00 between

non-members and the book raffle which barely covered the rental fee. If we choose to move back to the Red Lion permanently then we will need to identify a more reliable funding method to ensure our fiscal solvency going forward. This can come in several forms including but not limited to a dedicated fundraiser outside of the book raffle or through donors. All options are on the table for discussion at Monday's presentation.

Once again to volunteer or if you have any questions, recommendations, or concerns, please get in touch with me at (406) 871-6001 or [edwardjbyrne860@gmail.com](mailto:edwardjbyrne860@gmail.com).

## GENERAL MEETING INFORMATION

**NMPW 's** meetings are held on the third Monday of the month, except the months of December and January. This month's meeting returns to the Northwest Montana History Museum in Kalispell. March's meeting was at the Red Lion Hotel because of a scheduling conflict with the museum's 1894 historic classroom event for local school children.

Meetings begin with a Greet 'n' Gab session from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. 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 p.m. and is free for members and youths 16 and under. Non-members pay \$5.

Historic books are 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 attend the meetings.

The Posse is a member of Westerns International, which has over 60 chapters in the U.S. and 20 abroad and more than 4,000 members.

## FROM YE EDITOR'S DESK

By Rick Hull

The Flathead Valley's newest museum is in Columbia Falls. Located just off Highway 2 at 9th Street and Nucleus Avenue, it opened in June.

A project of the Columbia Falls Historical Society, the museum highlights local locations, personalities and events.



One corner of the museum is dedicated to Mel Ruder, *Hungry Horse News* publisher and Pulitzer Prize winner.

A large display tells the story of Mel Ruder, who published the local paper, *Hungry Horse News*, from 1946 to 1978. Known for his quality photographs of Glacier National Park and surrounding areas, he won fame as a Pulitzer Prize winner for his coverage of the devastating 1964 flood. A bound collection of the *Hungry Horse News* for the period is available at the museum for research.



The Aluminum Plant played a major role in Columbia Falls history. Displays include a model of the smelter pot line.

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Another section celebrates the life of Doris Huffine, who was an early Middle Fork pioneer who also spent winters in Glacier National Park. She later ran her own museum.

Nearby is the story of Doug Follet, a well-known Glacier National Park Ranger. A mannequin with his uniform is part of the display.




Craig Blair is a volunteer at the museum.

The Anaconda Aluminum Plant played a major role in the city's history, and there are several displays, including an aluminum pen that flew on an Apollo mission to the moon. There are photos of the explosive 1929 forest fire and a detailed history of the F. H. Stolze Lumber Company Shay engine. The logging locomotive is on display along the railroad tracks north of town.

The museum is in the lower level at 6 Ninth Street East, and is open 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. The website at <https://columbiafallshistoricalsociety.org> has more details.

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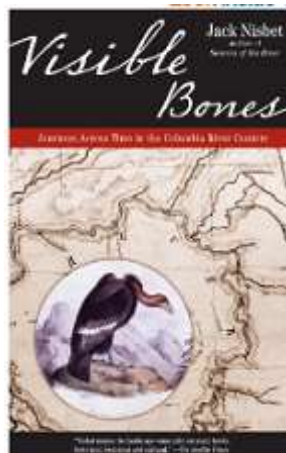
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## FROM THE BOOK SHELF

By Rick Hull



Another book by Jack Nisbet is featured in this month's book review. Unlike the previously reviewed *Ancient Places*, which covered some of the quirky characters of the Northwest, *Visible Bones* looks at some of the areas unusual animals and places. Nisbet is best known for his *Sources of the River*

about Canadian explorer and fur trader David Thompson. *Visible Bones* contains stand-alone stories that can be enjoyed in a single sitting.

The book begins with his experiences with trilobite fossils, salamanders and moths, and relates them to the Pacific Northwest and early naturalists. But then he tackles the California condor, which once was spotted as far north as Browning, Montana, and was described by Lewis and Clark while on the lower Columbia River. He talks about the traveling exhibits of mammoth skulls and tusks dug out of Washington state bogs.

He looks at the lowly muskrat, which continues to be sought by fur trappers and interviews a buyer at what was previously Pacific Hide and Fur. Then he heads into the woods with a matriarch from the Kalispel tribe in foraging for traditional roots.

But Nisbet covers bigger historical issues, including the destructive path of smallpox in the Northwest. And he explores the story of Indians and tobacco, and tells the story of Jaco Finlay, who nearly vanished from history after leaving his literal mark on northwest Montana. Other stories are about Mount Coffin, where Chinooks buried their dead in canoes, and a bend in the Columbia River that became the Hanford nuclear site.

Sasquatch Books, Seattle. Trade paperback, 256 pages. \$10-\$17

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## TRIVA QUESTION OF THE MONTH

March's question asked what was the plant cultivated by local tribes at Spotted Bear. Barbara Boorman and Trish Walsh came up with the answer: tobacco. It was grown by the Kootenai tribe, who were better known for their efforts near Eureka that gave the Tobacco Valley its name.

It is unknown what exactly the tribe cultivated, since it vanished once Virginia tobacco became available from fur traders. Coyote tobacco (*Nicotiana attenuata*) can still be found in the Northwest. Another possibility is Indian tobacco (*Nicotiana quadrivalvis*), which is native to California.

Tobacco (*Nicotiana tabacum*) was a staple commodity among Indians. Fur traders sold it by the foot, and it was used like currency.

Kinnikinnick was often used to dilute the strong taste of Virginia tobacco and to make it go further. (By the way – as what is now Iron Horse in Whitefish discovered – never name your development Kinnikinnick. No one will be able to pronounce or spell it.)

Kinnikinnick is actually a generic name for smoking supplements. Both the holly-like plant and red willow are known by that name.

Smoking was a ritual of tribal gatherings and a prelude to conducting business. It was considered bad manners to take more than four puffs when the pipe was passed around.

### *This Month's Trivia Question*

Lindbergh Lake is not the only local place to receive a name change. Within 10 miles of Lindbergh Lake is a major geographic feature that – until three decades ago – was named after an infamous American. What is its old and new name?

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

## DUES REMINDER

The period for annual membership renewal is coming to an end.

Statements were mailed to all current members. Please support our organization and its goals by responding as soon as possible.

We ask that your dues be made to the address on the dues' statement or brought to the April meeting.

Contact Kathy at [kbrittonrn@gmail.com](mailto:kbrittonrn@gmail.com) with any questions .



## NEW MEMBERS

The following have recently joined the Posse:

Laura Reynolds and  
Walter Rowntree, both of Kalispell




## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Members aware of events not listed here are encouraged to contact Ye Editor with the particulars at [richardahull@charter.net](mailto:richardahull@charter.net)

- Annual Fort Connah Rendezvous Open House June 17 & 18. The restored Hudson's Bay Co. trading post is north of St. Ignatius. Watch for details.

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# Memorialized on Maps, Yet Forgotten

## The Saga of Jacques Finlay

By Rick Hull



Display at Spokane House, the final resting place of Jaco Finlay.

Photo by Rick Hull

Most of us know something about the early explorers and fur traders who left their legacy on our geography. Lewis and Clark, David Thompson, Angus McDonald and John Mullan all have their names scattered across Montana and the Northwest.

But one person who stamped his name on local features is virtually unknown. His gravesite wasn't discovered until 1950 and his bones spent 26 years in a box at a museum.

Jacques Raphael Finlay, also known as Jaco Finlay, gave us the Jocko Valley, the Jocko River and the likely the misspelled Finley Point on Flathead Lake. There is also a Findlay Creek in British Columbia and a Findley Road in Idaho.

Part of the problem is Finlay left no journal, even though he was literate. Most of what we know about him is from references in other's accounts. Another issue is Finlay was of mixed race, with a Chippewa mother. But he was a respected employee of the North West Company, and paid as much as European-born fur traders.

Jaco Finlay was born about 1768 at a trading post established by his father, James Finlay, along the Saskatchewan

River. Born in Scotland, James Finlay already had a wife and family in Montreal, and his relationship with the woman of the Saulteaux tribe was never formalized.

Like many Canadian explorers, Jaco Finlay began his career as clerk in the fur trading business, working for the upstart North West Company. In 1794 he was stationed at the company's Upper Bow House in present Alberta, when the outpost was attacked. Finlay organized the defenders, driving off the attackers. "Our fort was in the charge of one Jaccot Finlay, a man of courage," was a later account of the fight. Jaco was 26 years old at the time.

His knowledge of the country and native languages was put to use in 1806 when he was sent to clear

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trail and prepare canoes for David Thompson's party. He sketched out a map of the area that later surfaced in Hudson Bay's Company archives – another document along the slim paper trail of his life.

By this time he was married with children. And he adopted another four when their mother died.

Thompson wasn't particularly happy with Finlay's trail blazing and canoes, complaining in a letter to his superiors. Thompson may have been jealous, since he and Finlay were being paid the same.

In 1808 Thompson sent Finlay to build some more canoes and again criticized his work.

Relations improved when Finlay and his family found himself on foot when his horses were stolen. He guided Thompson's expedition down the Kootenai River into northern Idaho and western Montana.

It was then that Finlay settled in with the Flatheads for the winter in what would become his namesake territory. He saved the starving Thompson at Saleesh House near Thompson Falls with a gift of beaver tails and other meat.

Thompson put Finlay back on the payroll and sent him to build a new trading post, Spokane House, at the junction of the Spokane and Little Spokane Rivers in Washington. Finlay operated the trading post for six years and a hand-written receipt with his signature indicates that he was literate. He was being paid more than White clerks.

By this time his sons – known for their blue eyes – were spreading out in the fur trading business, while Finlay stuck close to Spokane House. One visitor was famed naturalist David Douglas, who has a tree bearing his name. Douglas's journal account was another piece of Finlay's paper trail.

Finlay died at Spokane House in May 1828. He was about 60 years old.

A later visitor to the trading post noted that the buildings had been burned for firewood, except for one bastion which was said to be the burial site of an early clerk. That was clue for archaeologists, who began excavating Spokane House in 1950. They found a wooden coffin with a few remaining bones. Among the items buried with body was a clay pipe with the marking “JF”.

The bones were stored in a box at the Eastern State Historical Society Museum during discussions about a proper burial.

The former trading post eventually became Spokane House State Park. A reburial at the state park was scheduled for July 25, 1976. But a last minute glitch developed, because it wasn't an official cemetery. It took a judge's quick approval and some paperwork to designate a spot as a cemetery. In a funeral ceremony, the bones of Joco Finlay were returned back exactly where he had originally lain.

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The next issue of Pony Tracks will be issued May 8, 2023 (or thereabouts)

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