



# PONY TRACKS

Newsletter of the Northwest Montana Westerners

Vol. 11, No. 1

Kalispell, Montana

February 14, 2024

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## FEBRUARY MEETING

Monday, February 19, 2024

### Images of Montana Historic Places "From Banks and Barns to Bridges and Battlefields"

**Presenter:** Michael Ober of Kalispell, MT

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

**Time:** Gab 'n' Greet, 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/81726674204?  
pwd=eDJzUG1wV2NiTzA1YStUbktzSzNmdz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81726674204?pwd=eDJzUG1wV2NiTzA1YStUbktzSzNmdz09)

Meeting ID: 817 2667 4204

Passcode: 483687

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

## ABOUT THE PRESENTATION



Moss Mansion and Museum in Billings

Montana has more than 1,100 places and buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places, including 147 in Flathead County. Michael Ober visited many of those, and narrowed the list down to 50 for his book, *Montana Historic Places*.

This month's presentation will be a photographic tour of those historic sites. Some are the usual mansions. But also included are log cabins, barns, mines, jails, forest fire lookouts, bridges, and prominent landscape features.

Michael also brings the story behind each site. His book starts with Ft. Connah near St. Ignatius, which may or not be the oldest existing building in Montana. And the location of the Two Medicine fight, where Meriwether Lewis, of Lewis and Clark, clashed with a group of Blackfeet, is 24 miles down a gravel road.

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There is Lookout Cave in Phillips County, with its ancient drawings, and Citadel Rock, a prominent landmark on the Missouri River.

Lewistown has a former B-17 airfield, with its concrete structure for locking up the top secret Norden bombsights between training flights.

The Washington Monument could sit inside the Anaconda Smokestack and a small car could drive around the 585-foot top.

Dave's Texaco is a preserved gas station in downtown Chinook, with the original glass-topped pumps that visually measured the fuel.

DeSmet tour boat has carried tourists on Lake McDonald for more than 90 years, and is stored over the winter in a boat house with its own historic designation.

The presentation will give a unique look at the back roads and hidden history of Montana.

### *About the Presenter*

A third generation Montanan, **Michael J. Ober** was born in Havre, Montana. He graduated from the University of Montana with a BA and MA degree American History and, later, a Master's of Library and Information Science from the



University of Denver. His professional career spans forty years as Director of Library Services at *Flathead Valley Community College* where he also taught Montana History and English Composition. He worked seasonally as a wildland fire fighter, backcountry ranger and law

enforcement road patrol ranger in Glacier National Park for forty-four years. He has written numerous articles in state and regional periodicals about Montana's culture and history.



## **FROM THE SHERIFF'S SADDLEBAG**

By Edward "Eddy" Byrne

**W**elcome to the 10th year of the Northwest Montana Westerners. I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday break and are eager to get back to the museum and another 10 presentations we have laid out this year.

I just returned from spending four days in Helena and spending time at our magnificent Capital. The compilation of art and the history that has transpired in the halls never ceases to humble me. I encourage anyone who has not visited the capital recently and/or the state historical society to do so.

We kick off the year on the 19th with our own Michael Ober and his compilation of "Images of Montana Historic Places".

With the new year it is once again time to renew dues. If you have not already mailed your dues yet, please bring them to the meeting. We will be collecting them at the sign in table.

The new webpage looks great and continues to evolve. We should have the 2024 calendar posted shortly – we are confirming a couple of presentations for the year. The address is <https://nwmtwesterners.com>.

We are finalizing our by-laws and have reorganized our organization and Board positions. The new common (short) title is "Northwest Montana Westerners" while our long name remains "Northwest Montana Posse of Westerners". We will use the new title for all local correspondence and marketing. The long name will be reserved for corresponding with our parent organization, Westerner's International, along with legal documents and banking.

The Board meets from 6:00-6:30 p.m. before the 7 p.m. presentation at the museum. All members are welcome to attend to observe the meeting. Also, anyone interested in becoming more

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involved with the group is encouraged to show up early and volunteer your time and services.

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).

## FROM YE EDITOR'S DESK

By Rick Hull

As a volunteer at the Northwest Montana History Museum, my side project has been scanning the museum's many documents. The goal is to keep them from being forgotten in some file cabinet, and, as I was quoted in a museum newsletter, so students can research a term paper at 3 a.m.

But while I was doing that, I discovered volunteers from the local Latter Day Saints were busy in the museum attic scanning family histories, yearbooks and more.

It took a while to track down these documents. It turned out that they are available on the LDS's FamilySearch website. The site boasts it has over "500,000 million genealogy books, family histories, yearbooks and more."

FamilySearch has an excellent search engine that will find records even if the person's name is misspelled. But the reverse, locating the source document, isn't easy.

First you need to log onto [FamilySearch.org](http://FamilySearch.org) (which is free). Click on the three small bars on the upper right and pick "Books" from the drop-down menu. Then you need to search twice for "Owning Institution" and click on other prompts before you get to a list of genealogy sites.

The sites are confusingly sorted by the number of documents that each contributed. Northwest Montana History Museum is about half way down the list at 228 documents.

Some more clicks will bring up all the Museum's documents in alphabetical order. There are options to print or download individual pages or the whole document, either as JPG or PDF. You

can also see the text as converted by an Optical Character Recognition (OCR) program.

The local LDS Kalispell Montana Family History Center's count is 70 documents. It has all the family histories from the Stumptown Historical Society in Whitefish. Unfortunately access is limited, and the histories cannot be downloaded or printed.

Another source of scanned historical documents is the Montana History Portal, operated by the Montana State Library. It was previously known as the Montana Memory Project, and its website, [www.mtmemory.org](http://www.mtmemory.org), still reflects that. It has 88,719 items, including 13,061 documents and 2,602 years. Half the collection is images.

Unfortunately the search engine is almost unusable. A search for "Flathead" with an Item Type of "Yearbook" will bring up every other community's year book. A search for "Kalispell", and multiple paging through the results, will eventually turn up local documents.

So if you are looking for a family history, a school annual, or out-of-print book, these two sites are a place to start.

## GENERAL MEETING INFORMATION

**NMPW 's** meetings are held on the third Monday of the month, except the months of December and January, at the Northwest Montana History Museum at 124 Second Avenue East, Kalispell, Montana.

Meetings begin with a Grab 'n' Greet 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.

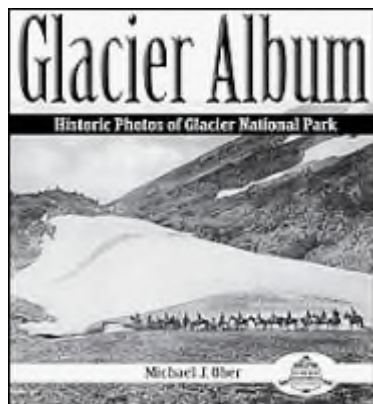
Historic books are raffled off as a fund raiser. All meetings are broadcast on-line via Zoom.

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## FROM THE BOOK SHELF

By Rick Hull

It won't be proper to let Michael Ober's presentation go by without plugging his other book, *Glacier Album – Historic Photos of Glacier National Park*. The



book has earned four and a half stars, out of five, on Amazon.

The book is unique among the National Parks' genre, in that almost all the photos focus on people, not scenery.

There are visitors on horseback, in touring cars, gathered in park lodges, posing in front of tents, boarding park boats, or standing on glaciers. The women wear long skirts and many of the men are dressed in vests and ties.

Other photos show workers constructing the lodges or carving the Going-to-the-Sun highway through solid rock. The Civilian Conservation Corps are seen hauling telephone across Logan Pass. And there are Blackfoot Indians greeting tourists.

The accompanying text is full of tidbits. One photo shows an automobile hopelessly mired in mud. He notes that local homesteaders and Indians would camp along steep hills and boggy hollows, where they would charge to haul the cars out of their predicament by horse.

And a photo of the now-vanished Two Medicine Chalet shows how the roof was weighed down with logs and large rocks. It kept shingles from being blown away by the constant wind.

The book is divided by eras, such as the coming of the railroad, or by topics, like the guided tours on the park's glaciers.

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Paperbound, 112 pages, published 2010  
Available on Amazon for \$17.65.

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS



### ● February 25:

*The Night Before Gettysburg*, is a 30-minute play by actor Chuck Johnson on Abraham Lincoln's thoughts and struggles before his famous speech. Free admission. 4 p.m. at the Northwest Montana History Museum.

### ● March 6:

The History Book Club discusses *American Copper* by Shann Ray. 2 p.m. at the Northwest Montana History Museum.

## TRIVA QUESTION OF THE MONTH

I've been scanning in some old directories and found a number of vanished or renamed communities. So, where was/is Harrisburg? What about Gateway and Hayden? And Richland and Rockhill? And finally, where was/is Rondo?

A hint – these are former stations and whistle stops on the old Great Northern Railway.

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



## DUES REMINDER

It is time for our annual members renewal and new member drive. Statements have been 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 promptly to the address on the dues' statement or brought to the February meeting.

Do not hesitate to contact us with any questions or comments.

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## In Memoriam



**Ellen Baumler**

Ellen Baumler, a historian and author from Helena, passed away in December at age 74 after a long battle with cancer. She had made several presentations to our group. The last, in February 2021, was on the “African Americans in the Military in Montana.”

Born in Kansas City, she was the first Interpretive Historian at the Montana Historical Society. During her 26 years on the job, she made significant contributions to Montana

s.

history, including writing over 1,600 interpretive signs for sites on the National Register of Historic Places. She authored over a dozen best-selling books and received numerous awards for her work.

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#### **Notice to Contributors**

Copy intended for this newsletter should be sent to the Editor at the e-mail address below. Copy must be in the Editor's in-box on or before the first of the month in order to make that month's issue. Copy received after that date will be held over until the subsequent issue.

The next edition of Pony Tracks will be issued March 13, 2024 (or thereabouts)

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