



PONY TRACKS

Newsletter of the Northwest Montana Westerners

Vol. 13, No. 2

Kalispell, Montana

March 9, 2026

Richard A. Hull, Ye Editor, e-mail: richardahull@charter.net

MARCH MEETING

Monday, March 16, 2026

“Montana Humor”

Presenter: Tim Christenson of Kalispell

Where: Second floor of the Northwest Montana History Museum, 124 2nd Ave. East, Kalispell

Time: Gab 'n' Greet start at 6:00 p.m. Soft drinks, beer and wine are available and raffle tickets for historic books are sold.

Historic Presentation: Program begins at 7:00 p.m. No reservations are required, but seating will be limited; so come early. Call 406-207-0949 with any questions.

ABOUT THE PRESENTATION

Tim Christenson steps up this month with a different aspect of our regional history – Jokes!

The NW Montanans of Westerners International will be trading punchlines instead of punches as Tim explores “Montana Humor in Story, Song, and Rhyme.”

The West has always produced its share of philosophers, troubadours, and poets – though ours tended to wear chaps, swing axes, or shovel ore and they left behind a treasure trove of

Western wit.

From the dry one-liners of open-range cowhands to the tall tales swapped in mining camps, Montanans have long used humor to lighten hard work, long winters, and galoots who can be ornery as a bag of snakes.

He'll dip into the playful rhymes of lumberjacks, the railroader's knack for exaggeration, and the campfire songs that turned everyday mishaps into legends.



Expect a lighthearted romp through the state's comic traditions and maybe a reminder or two that laughter has always been one of Montana's most reliable tools for getting the job done. Better yet, show up armed and ready to reach for a joke, anecdote, or tall-tale of your own to add to the fun.

Thanks to those of you who renewed your membership in time for last month's meeting... and to the volunteers who keep the records and count the cash. I'd ask the rest of y'all to join one or, better yet, both of those groups this month.

Happy trails to you,

Visit our website: nwmtwesterners.com

About the Presenter

Our new sheriff, Tim Christenson, acknowledges that he wasn't born in Montana, "but I got here as soon as I could."

That turned out to be 1973 and 1974, when he spent two summers working in the Park at Many Glacier Hotel.



Tim Christenson

In 1975, he took the Empire Builder to Libby in December to marry his college sweetheart, Glenda Mueller Christenson, and they've come back to NW Montana every year since.

After 43 years on Capitol Hill and in the Defense Department ("I'm a recovering Federal bureaucrat."), Tim and Glenda retired to Whitefish ("A great place to ride-out Covid") in 2019.

He is (in alphabetical order) a colonel, ENTJ, father of six, Harvard man, husband of one, Lutheran, Marine, Norwegian, Ole, pastor, rhymester, septuagenarian, and skipper...as well as the new sheriff in town.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

By Rick Hull

It turned out that the Westerners had not officially scheduled its third Monday of the month meetings for 2026, and our March meeting ran into a conflict with the twice-a-year McClaren 1895 classroom event.

Old-style desks are set up in the classroom to give local students a taste of instruction from more than a century ago. It is a major project to pull the desks out of storage and set them up, and not something that can be reversed for a one-night meeting.

The adjoining room is available, but lacks the

screen and audio-visual equipment. Fortunately Westerners President Tim Christenson was able to pinch hit with a technology free presentation on Montana Humor. This is a second go around for Christenson humor.

The mishap shows the importance of paying attention to the minor stuff. If you want to get involved, please volunteer. It takes only a couple days a month, but being on deck for those days is vital.

The Westerners have been trying to promote a synergy with the Museum, and the Museum also needs volunteers willing to put in a four-hour shift once a week. Check out nwmthistory.org for details.

My wife, Jennifer, and I are attending the annual Montana Museum conference in Helena this week. Included in the conference is an inside tour of the newly renovated state museum. We plan to have photos and details for inclusion in April's Pony Tracks.

TRIVIA QUESTION OF THE MONTH

February's trivia question asked which downtown building had a swimming pool, and which had a shooting range.

Pat Walsh had the answer about the swimming pool. It was in the Elks building, formerly the YMCA, at the corner of Main Street and First Street East. It later became an FVCC classroom building, and eventually was torn down in an urban renewal project.

I have heard from several sources that a small shooting range was in the basement of Norm's News.

This Month's Trivia Question

This question is related. Which downtown building had an unsuccessful roller skating rink, and at one point was a Japanese ballroom known as the "Orientale"?

Submit your answers to the editor at richardahull@charter.net and we will print the names of all those who get it right.

BOOK REVIEW



In 1972, University of Montana professors Dave Alt and Don Hyndman launched a new geology genre when they authored *Roadside Geology of the Northern Rockies*. They followed up with *Roadside Geology of Montana* in 1983.

That triggered a cascade of Roadside books by

Mountain Press in Missoula that now cover 35 states. The Montana book has now been updated with the second edition, authored by Hyndman and UM professor Robert Thomas.

The new edition is chock full of new discoveries since 1982.

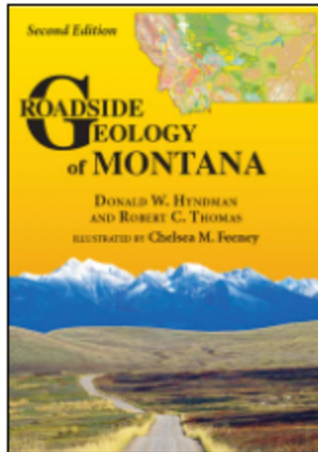
For example,

geologists now know the tectonic process that pushed the Rocky Mountains 80 miles onto the Great Plains. Known as the Lewis Overthrust, it is vividly visible atop Marias Pass on U.S. 2.

We now know that Glacial Lake Missoula filled the five valleys of northwest Montana 36 times. After every filling, it catastrophically overpowered its Ice Age dam and swept across eastern Washington State. The floods created what is now known as the “scab lands”.

And in 1992, a safety study of the irrigation dams in the Mission Valley, south of Flathead Lake, uncovered a 20-foot vertical offset in an Ice Age moraine. It indicated an earthquake of 7.5 magnitude about 7,700 years ago. Northwest Montana now has a seismic hazard rating one step below Yellowstone Park.

The book’s writing is colorful, but often technical. Frequent geologic terminology will have readers checking the glossary in the back.



Along with the highway-oriented descriptions, the authors give detailed instructions on side-road trips to see unique geological features. There are color photographs and illustrations on every page.

465 pages, paperbound, \$30. Mountain Press.

FUTURE PROGRAMS

- **April 20:** “Homesteading on the Edge of Glacier Park” by Zach Block.

- **May 18:** “Land of Beginning: The Archaeology of Montana’s First Peoples” by Douglas McDonald.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS



- **March 24**

The Northwest Montana Lookout Association presents “Fire Lookouts: A Peek into the Past of Structures for Fire Spotters” by Kira Powell on Tuesday at 7 p.m. in the Mountain Brook Community Center, 2353 Foothill Road.

- **April 1**

The History Book Club discusses *Tenting Tonight*, by Mary Roberts Rinehart. Wednesday 2 p.m. at the Northwest Montana History Museum.

- **May 26**

Downtown Kalispell Walking Tours begin. Ticket sold at the Northwest Montana History Museum. Cost is \$20 for adults, \$18 for veterans, senior and students, \$15 for those 10 to 17 years old, and \$10 for kids 4 to 9.



DUES REMINDER

It is time for the annual renewal for members. Please support our organization and its goals by paying at March’s meeting.

Visit our website: nwmtwesterners.com

GENERAL MEETING INFORMATION

NWMTW '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 Gab 'n' Greet session from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. for a chance to get acquainted.

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. Soft drinks, beer and wine will be on sale by museum staff.

The speaker or local authors may be selling and signing their books.

To prevent strangers from wandering in, the Museum front door will be locked once the presentation starts. Those arriving late can call the number posted on the door.

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richardahull@charter.net