

Lewis & Clark - Spirit Mound Trust News

February 2000



Edited by Tom Gasque & Mark Wetmore

P.O. Box 603, Vermillion, SD 57069

Finally – A Newsletter!

The Lewis & Clark-Spirit Mound Trust Board of Directors has not been idle, even though the newsletter has not been seen in several years. First we waited for the brochure to be completed; then we waited for news of the land purchase. Finally, we have, some good news to share.

State, Federal Partnership May Save the Mound

After being discussed for the last 15 years, the project to preserve and restore Spirit Mound is now a real possibility.

Late in 1998 both Governor Bill Janklow and U.S. Senator Tim Johnson expressed an interest in helping the project to proceed. Six hundred thousand dollars were added to the National Park Service budget for the federal 1999 fiscal year, designated for acquisition of the mound. The intent now is to reallocate these funds to the State of South Dakota and have the South Dakota Parks and Wildlife Foundation move to acquire the land from the various owners (who have generally expressed a willingness to sell to the state if a viable plan is in place). It is hoped that then a combination of state assistance and local matching funds will become available to complete the entire prairie restoration and historic preservation project. (Legislation to reallocate the funds passed the U.S. Senate late in 1999 and is now pending in the House of Representatives.)

It is envisioned that, when completed, the entire half-section site will be restored as a tallgrass prairie, as close as possible to how it was in 1804. A small parking lot and an open-air interpretive installation in the southeast corner of the site, along Highway 19, will be linked to the summit of the mound by a hiking trail. Signage along the trail and at the top will describe prairie plants and point out what can be seen from the mound.

Subsidiary projects that may also be developed include a bike and hiking path to the mound from Vermillion and the Lewis & Clark learning center at the W.H. Over Museum.

Brochure: Capture the Spirit of Lewis and Clark

A copy of the long-awaited brochure, which most of you have seen already, is enclosed with this newsletter. The brochure explains the background of Spirit Mound, its significance to the Lewis and Clark Expedition, and the important natural history associated with the feature. Design and printing of this colorful handout was made possible in part through a grant from the National Park Service.

Lewis and Clark - Spirit Mound Trust Board of Directors

If you have questions about the Trust, contact Larry Monfore, President of the Board of Directors, or one of the other Board members listed below. All addresses are Vermillion 57069.

Loren Carlson	229 Catalina Ave.	624-9100
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Jim Peterson	503 Poplar Ave.	624-4211
Charles Wetmore	627 Thomas St.	624-4692
Mark Wetmore	1215 Valley View Dr.	624-3748

W. H. Over Museum will have Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center

Thanks to Representative Judy Clark of the 17th South Dakota Legislative District, the W. H. Over Museum in Vermillion will receive a sizable grant from the South Dakota Department of Transportation to develop a Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center. By August 25, 2000, the W. H. Over Museum will complete a display area with a large mural depicting the view from the top of Spirit Mound, a touch-screen computer to answer questions about Lewis and Clark, and artifacts relating to the expedition and to the time that the Corps of Discovery passed through this area.

Museum, Trust, Chamber of Commerce Plan Second Spirit Mound Commemoration

August 25, 2000, a Friday, will be the 196th anniversary of the day that Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, with eleven of their companions and Lewis' dog Seaman, walked the nine miles from the mouth of the Vermillion River to the top of Spirit Mound. Again, the W. H. Over Museum will host a program of demonstrations, hands-on adventures, and talks. Highlighting the occasion will be the formal opening of the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center.

Membership Renewal.

To faithful members, we hope you will renew; to new members we urge you to join us. And tell your friends about our important work to preserve this historic and natural treasure. Dues are \$10.00 per year. Snip off this portion of the newsletter, and fill out the form on the other side. Make your check payable to **Lewis & Clark - Spirit Mound Trust**, and mail it today to:

Lewis & Clark - Spirit Mound Trust
PO Box 603
Vermillion, SD 57069

Spirit Mound Deemed "In Peril"

In 1998 the Historic South Dakota Foundation included Spirit Mound in its first "Places in Peril" list. The list included what the foundation believes were the twelve most important and endangered historic resources in the state. Their newsletter explained the significance of the mound, included a photograph of it, and mentioned the Spirit Mound Trust's efforts to preserve it.

The list was widely reported in state newspapers.

Established in 1978, the Historic South Dakota Foundation is a statewide nonprofit organization that engages in activities to encourage preservation. Its staff can be reached at PO Box 113, Pierre, SD 57501 or through its web site at www.hsdf.org.

How Famous is Spirit Mound?

Local Lewis and Clark supporters were disappointed that Spirit Mound did not make an appearance in *Lewis & Clark: the Journey of the Corps of Discovery* (1998), the widely-watched and highly-acclaimed television documentary by Ken Burns and Dayton Duncan. We were also disturbed that Stephen Ambrose, in *Undaunted Courage* (1996), had the Corps float right by our area without mentioning Spirit Mound. But the feature gets plenty of attention otherwise. Here are a few examples:

Spirit Mound appears on the latest (1999) official South Dakota State Map.

Lewis and Clark: The South Dakota Adventure, a brochure published by the South Dakota Department of Tourism, gives Spirit Mound a prominent spot.

An interpretive sign at the I-29 rest stop near Junction City focuses on the importance of Spirit Mound. This is one of twelve new (1998) Lewis and Clark Trail signs in the state.

The Sgt. Floyd Welcome Center in Sioux City, Iowa, prominently displays a copy of Charles Wetmore's photograph and a print of Ron Backer's painting of Spirit Mound.

A sign in Nebraska, across the river at Ponca State Park explains the role of Spirit Mound in the expedition.

A monument in Illinois, at the site of the 1803-04 winter encampment, has thirteen concrete pillars, one for each state that is part of the Lewis and Clark trail. On each pillar is carved a brief account of one important event; on the South Dakota pillar is the Spirit Mound story.

In St. Louis, Missouri, the Museum of Westward Expansion (at the base of the Gateway Arch) includes a ten-foot high photograph of Spirit Mound.

We Proceeded On, the official publication of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, had a cover story on the mound in February 1996. The article, "Spirit Mound: Hill of Little Devils," was written by Mark Wetmore, L&C-SM Trust Board member.

Lewis and Clark: Voyage of Discovery, text by Stephen Ambrose, photography by Sam Abell, National Geographic photographer, has a color picture (page 87) of Spirit Mound taken from the south.

The National Park Service's official brochure, *Lewis and Clark Trail*, features 83 Lewis and Clark sites of national interest. Spirit Mound is number 22.

Lewis & Clark Trail Heritage Foundation

The Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation is a national group comprising people from all walks of life who are interested in all aspects of the Lewis and Clark expedition. The Foundation publishes a quarterly magazine, *We Proceeded On*, and holds an annual meeting somewhere along the trail. In 2000 the meeting is in Dillon, Montana, and in 2001 in Pierre, South Dakota. For more information, write Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, Inc., PO Box 3434, Great Falls, MT 59401. Website: www.lewisandclark.org. Toll-free telephone: 888-701-3434.

Souvenir and Gift Items

A 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch post card, with Charles Wetmore's beautiful photograph of the west side of the mound, is available at Deb's Hallmark Cards and Gifts, 11 Court Street, and at Davis Pharmacy, 12 W. Main.

Numbered and signed prints of Ron Backer's painting, *Lewis and Clark's Spirit Mound* (the first page of the enclosed brochure shows a detail) are available for \$100 each from USD Book and Supply or from the Trust.

Prairie Restoration

Beyond securing easy public access and providing historical preservation and interpretation, a major goal of the Spirit Mound project is to restore the 320-acre site to an authentic tallgrass prairie.

At the time of the Lewis and Clark Expedition there were thousands and thousands of square miles of this prairie stretching from today's eastern South Dakota east through all of Iowa and Illinois, northern Missouri and in a narrowing band north through eastern North Dakota and western Minnesota on into Canada. It was an area of amazing fertility and biodiversity. Today less than one-tenth of one percent is left.

Among the joys of reading the Expedition's journals are the detailed descriptions of this country, then mostly unknown to citizens of the United States, who were still busy clearing forests to make room for their farms. William Clark's Spirit Mound narrative is especially rich with prairie scenes.

More is being learned every year about the best ways to replant a prairie and there are many knowledgeable people available to help. Game, Fish and Parks staff from Pierre surveyed the site in 1998; and Nature Conservancy botanists, currently working on restoration projects nearby in western Iowa, visited the mound recently. They inventoried the native species still growing in the prairie remnant on the western side of the summit and discussed how the project could be done. Re-creating the tallgrass prairie on Spirit Mound will take several years, but it is eminently doable.

To make a prairie it takes a clover and one bee,
One clover, and a bee,
And revery.
The revery alone will do,
If bees are few.

— Emily Dickinson

Lewis & Clark – Spirit Mound Trust Membership Renewal.

Please add my name to the membership rolls of the **Lewis & Clark - Spirit Mound Trust**. I enclose my check for \$10.00 (tax deductible*).

Name

Address

City

State

Zip

Telephone (optional)

e-mail (optional)

*tax exempt 501(c)(3) organization (No. 93-0921345)