



Submitted photo courtesy Clatsop County Historical Society

The next In Their Footsteps lecture will focus on railroad logging in Oregon.

Learn about railroad logging in Oregon

Next In Their Footsteps talk explores state historical railroads

ASTORIA — Lewis and Clark National Historical Park at Fort Clatsop announces the next In Their Footsteps free speaker series event. This program will be The Oregon Historical Railroads Project by

Edward J. Kamholz at 1 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 18.

Kamholz's presentation will focus on railroad logging in Oregon with special emphasis on northwest Oregon.

The Oregon Historical Rail-

roads Project is a historical survey of Oregon's private, public and urban/interurban railroads examining their development patterns with an ongoing effort to make this information available to the public in the form of an online map. This resource will track the arrival, establishment and spread of Anglo culture in the state from the 1870s through the mid-20th century. More information is available at www.ohrp.org

Kamholz is a forest historian and co-author of "The Oregonian-American Lumber Company: Ain't No More," published in 2003 by Stanford University Press. Kamholz has a Masters in Business Administration.

The Lewis and Clark National Park Association and the park are sponsors of this monthly Sunday forum. These programs are held in the Netul River Room of Fort Clatsop's Visitor Center and are free of charge.

Fort Clatsop Visitor Center is located at 92343 Fort Clatsop Road. For more information, call the park at 503-861-2471.

Enjoy 'The Haunting of Billop House'

Liberty Theater presents Reader's Theater production

ASTORIA — The Liberty Theater presents "The Haunting of Billop House" by Joe Simonelli, a Reader's Theater production with the Liberty Theater Players. Performance will take place at 7 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday, Oct. 21, 22, 28 and 29 in the theater's McTavish Room.

When a famous thriller novelist and playwright visits his sister-in-law, niece and his niece's boyfriend, he gets a little too close for comfort to his subject matter. His sister-in-law is the new caretaker of one of the oldest — and allegedly most haunted — manor houses in New York state. Through a series of experiments in past life regression they all discover the diabolical secrets of the house.

The Liberty Theater is located at 1203 Commercial St. Tickets are \$15 and on sale at the box office or at www.ticketwest.com. For more information, call 503-325-5922. The box office is open Wednesday to Saturday and two hours before curtain call.

History of the Billop House

Billop House — a.k.a. the Conference House — was built before 1680 and is located near the southernmost tip of New York on Staten Island and became known as "Billop's Point" in the 18th century. The Staten Island Peace Conference was held there on Sept. 11, 1776 as an unsuccessful attempt to end the American Revolutionary War.

In 1776 the war was not going well for the Colonists. The British controlled New York City, Staten and Long islands. By September, the Colonists were near defeat, so it was arranged by Lord Richard Howe to meet with Benjamin Franklin, Edward Rutledge and John Adams at Billop House. Howe, after emphasizing that the British intended to end the Revolution and crush its leaders, offered to end the

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1203 Commercial St., Astoria

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war if the Colonists would swear allegiance to England. Considering this tone, it is not a surprise that Adams and the others refused the offer.

Col. Billop took great delight in the fact that these talks ended the first day. He felt these traitors to England would shortly be destroyed. After this event, Billop's mansion was given the new nickname of "Conference House." Billop was happy his home now symbolized his loyalty to the British and, more importantly, England's power.

Throughout the war, Billop opened his home to British soldiers that needed to rest — his large basement kitchen was converted into a hospital. Often soldiers were smuggled into his home at night through the tunnel. Soldiers who died at the home were hastily buried around the large estate, for there was no time for funerals. It is stated that this is most likely the reason why the ghosts of British soldiers wearing redcoats are still seen on the property.

Billop's vehemence toward patriots during the war made him a target. He was twice kidnapped and held for ransom. The first kidnapping occurred in June 1779. A group of patriots rowed across from Perth Amboy in New Jersey, capturing Billop who was held for two months. The second kidnapping took place in November of the same year. Both

times Billop was held as a prisoner of war in the Burlington County jail in New Jersey where he was chained to the floor and fed only bread and water. He was told this was retaliation for prisoners held by the British.

During the second kidnapping, Billop was released just after Christmas. After his return home, he was convinced that one of his servants had aided in these kidnappings. He had seen a servant girl place a lantern in a second floor window and felt this must have been a signal to the men supposedly hidden at a church steeple in Perth Amboy. When next he saw this servant girl place a lantern in a window he went mad. It is noted that he "bellowed at her and threw her down a flight of stairs killing her." It was also noted that after this tragedy it came to be that the girl was only doing one of her nightly chores. Billop had her body buried in an unmarked grave on the property.

For years neighbors have reported that the home and property appear to be haunted. Reports include soldiers wearing redcoats wandering the gardens, kitchen and the tunnel. A man has been heard singing, and others have reported being tapped on the shoulder by an unseen hand. Many visitors have stated that there is a residual haunting of the murder. A man is heard shouting, a woman screams and the sound of her falling is heard. The servant girl's grave has never been found, and the exact number of ghosts and their names, except Billop, has never been discovered.

The house, a national and New York City landmark, is the only pre-Revolutionary manor house still existing in New York City. It is located at Conference House Park overlooking Raritan Bay. The house is also located within the Ward's Point Conservation Area, separately added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1982.

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