

SALT STORIES

*Lewis and Clark
Salt Makers
returns to Seaside*

By KATHERINE LACAZE
For Seaside Signal

While salt is typically a product that’s taken for granted in the 21st century, it was a critically important commodity for members of the Corps of Discovery during their western expedition. Having run out of salt by the time they reached the Pacific north coast, they had no option but to make their own.

“This is a unique occurrence, a unique part of the story of Lewis and Clark,” John Orthmann, treasurer of the Pacific Northwest Living Historians, said. “It only happened in one place, and that was on the beach in Seaside.”

About a half-dozen members of the living historians will be recreating this historical event Saturday and Sunday during the Lewis and Clark Salt Makers program, put on by the Seaside Museum and Historical Society. The program will take place on the beach off Avenue U in Seaside – close to the actual historical site where the salt-making transpired more than 200 years ago.

On Dec. 28, 1805, having exhausted their supply of salt, which was necessary to cure and pack meat, Captains Meriwether Lewis and William Clark sent out a special detachment from their recently completed winter quarters at Fort Clatsop to look for a place to make salt. On Jan. 1, 1806, the expedition members located an ideal location in Seaside, because of its proximity to both the beach and the forest.

The salt makers boiled sea



Katherine Lacaze
Salt heating in cauldrons.

water in large kettles over a fire day and night during the cold, wet months of January and February before returning to Fort Clatsop. Based on a report from Clark’s journal, the group made about three to four quarts of salt on a good day, producing about 28 gallons of salt overall, according to Tom Wilson, a retired park ranger and former member of the living historians group.

Event history

The salt makers event – the name of which has varied slightly over the years – was introduced in 2003 by the Seaside museum and National Park Service at Fort Clatsop as well as the living historians group. The event was typically held in August. At one point, it took place all day and night in an authentic recreation of what the expedition members would have experienced.

In 2015, after hosting a final one-day event, the park service withdrew from the partnership, ushering in a two-year hiatus while uncertainty about the program loomed.

In October 2018, the Oregon chapter of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Founda-



Members of the Pacific Northwest Living Historians in character at the Lewis and Clark Salt Makers event in Seaside.

tion was hosting the group’s annual meeting in Astoria. They arranged funding for the living historians – which was no longer affiliated specifically with Fort Clatsop – to again present the program about the salt making, “which is unique to the west coast portion of the story,” Orthmann said, adding, “It’s not something the explorers did anywhere else.”

This year, the Seaside museum is once again presenting the program, using a grant from the city of Seaside’s Tourism Advisory Committee, in partnership with the living historians, museum president Steve Wright said. The groups are holding the event in September to target the shoulder season for tourism and

in the hopes of having pleasant weather.

A change in perspective

While the program will take place over two days at the beach in Seaside, there will be a slight change in interpretation. In the past, the event was presented in first-person, with the interpreters assuming specific roles to portray the various expedition members and trading historically authentic goods with visitors who stopped by the camp.

Although it won’t detract from the educational value of the program, it will affect the way interpreters interact with the public. Before, they had to stay in character and only provide information the Corps of Discovery members would have possessed

in early 1806, meaning they couldn’t speak on the return journey or other aspects of the expedition.

This led to interesting and sometimes comical interactions. For instance, one year, Wilson was portraying Clark when a young boy asked him, out of the blue, if he wore underwear beneath his pants. Staying true to character, Wilson responded with confusion and described that as a waste of good material, but said he would relay the information to Lewis and then-president Thomas Jefferson.

About 45 minutes later, the young boy returned with his parents bearing what he considered the perfect trade item for the explorer – a three-pack of underwear for

Clark, Lewis and Jefferson to each have a pair.

“That’ll stick with me forever,” Wilson said.

Within a third-person context, the interpreters will no longer portray specific members, although they will still be dressed in period costumes and use only period-appropriate equipment for making salt.

“I don’t think anyone will feel like it’s a lesser event because of the change in interpretation,” Wright said.

Orthmann agreed, adding they can present the event as historians, taking advantage of 200 years of scholarship and research on the Lewis and Clark expedition when interacting with the public.

“It enables us to answer a lot of questions,” he said.

Big Foot’s long gone, but tap room could be on horizon

By R.J. MARX
Seaside Signal

Who can forget the prime rib and smiley-face fries for the kids at Bigfoot’s Steakhouse?

The restaurant closed a year ago, after more than 20 years in the business as a gathering spot for tourists and locals alike.

When the owner of the building at 2427 South Roosevelt Drive presented plans for 20 small storage units, Jimmy Griffin thought he could find a better use for the property.

“We needed space anyway, so we’re using it as a warehouse,” Griffin said Monday, Aug. 26.

Griffin, who owns Seaside Brewing Co. at 851 Broadway, said he will store wood for smokers and kegs for beer at the former Bigfoot’s location.

Griffin leased the building with an option to purchase.

The property owner was going to turn it into 20 small storage units, he said. “It seemed like a waste of that particular location. We needed space anyway, so we’re just using it as a warehouse.”

Griffin plans to store wood for restaurant smokers and kegs in the former Bigfoot’s, which was renowned for its Sasquatch statue and old-timey design.

Griffin said he had no plans for a restaurant at the location, but “if we can find the time and money we may put in a tasting tap room,” he said. “Something simple. We may do something down the road with it, but for now it’s just a warehouse.”

“We’ll know by spring whether we’re going to put something in there or not,” he added.



The former site of Bigfoot’s will be used storage space for Seaside Brewing Co.



Sasquatch welcomed thousands of visitors to Bigfoot’s Steakhouse over its two-decade span.

DINING on the NORTH COAST

Great Restaurants in:
**GEARHART • SEASIDE
CANNON BEACH**

WANT TO KNOW WHERE THE LOCALS GO?

- Breakfast
- Lunch
- Dinner
- Junior Menu
- Lighter appetite menu

BEST BREAKFAST IN TOWN!

Fish 'n Chips • Burgers • Seafood & Steak
Friday & Saturday - Prime Rib
Lounge Open Daily 9-Midnight
All Oregon Lottery products available
1104 S Holladay • 503-738-9701 • Open Daily at 8am

Excellence in family dining found from a family that has been serving the North Coast for the past 52 years

Great Breakfast, but that's not all... ★ Great lunch and dinner menu, too! ★ Great pasta, steaks & seafood! ★ Homemade Clam Chowder, Salads!

Seaside • 323 Broadway • 738-7234 (Open 7 Days)
Cannon Beach • 223 S. Hemlock 436-2851 (7am-3pm Daily)
Astoria • 146 W. Bond • 325-3144

MAZATLAN
Mexican Restaurant

Traditional Mexican, Seafood & Drinks

1445 S. Roosevelt Drive
Seaside • 503-738-9678

Call Sarah Silver
503.325.3211
ext 1222

YOUR RESTAURANT AD HERE.

Find Your Next Regular Customers!