

Salt makers create living history in Seaside



Reenactors at the Cove prepare a fire for boiling salt.

Photos by R.J. Marx

SEEN FROM SEASIDE

R.J. MARX



The beach off U Street was turned into a Disney setting last Saturday and Sunday, as reenactors brought back the spirit of the Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery.

The corps, made up of 33 volunteers, left St. Louis in May 1804 with the goal of exploring the unknown frontier West. Just after Christmas in 1805, Capt. William Clark sent members of his team to the ocean with the mission to make salt from sea water. It took five days for the men to find a suitable site to build a rock cairn and settle down to make salt, 15 miles south of Fort Clatsop in what is today's Seaside.

Men in leather jackets and moccasins, wearing leather waist belts and hunting vests, linen overalls and matching frocks performed their tasks in the annual Seaside Museum & Historical Society reenactment.

With dry conditions, the fire marshal asked organizers to clear 50 feet around the fire pit, the area where seawater is boiled down to salt.

Seaside Public Works arrived last Friday and carved out this year's encampment.

Fifty visitors turned out in the first hour of the event, said museum board president and City Councilor Steve Wright. It was the first time in years, he said, that he could remember sunny skies on the annual event, a reenactment of the 1805-1806 years of the expedition.

In keeping with the spirit of modern times,

reenactors wore black head scarves, both as an homage to the original voyage but also as a protective measure in the modern age of the coronavirus. They carried water buckets carrying ocean water balanced on wooden yokes. The corps members split wood, built the fire and boiled the water for salt. Three women sewed leather crafts and clothing. Seven men participated in the reenactment, heating the fire, splitting wood and boiling water for salt.

The first Seaside salt emerged for tasting early Sunday morning.

The salt was primarily used to season pork and elk, to be used on the journey back, said reenactor Pvt. George Gibson. Fish was eaten only in "desperation," and while they did trade with the Native Americans for salmon, there is no record of them eating shellfish.

Along with salt making, Gibson and another corpsman entertained the corpsmen with the fiddle. Pierre Cruzatte, a one-eyed French-Indian, was renowned for his musicianship around the campfire.

"He was the primary fiddler," Gibson said. "I was, well, like a second fiddle."

Capt. Meriwether Lewis never made it down to Seaside, but Clark did, after a blue whale washed ashore. By the time Clark and his men arrived, the Indians had already picked the whale clean. The explorers ended up buying blubber from the Indians after local elk proved too lean.

What did the Indians think of the small group of salt makers?

"They thought we were crazy," reenactor Pvt. John Frazer said.

The Indians didn't understand the use of salt for preserving meat or fish, he said. With abundant fish and wildlife, "They had all the food they wanted."



Reenactors returned to Seaside, providing a history lesson to visitors.



ABOVE: A member of the Lewis and Clark expedition provides a taste of freshly-boiled sea salt to visitors.



LEFT: Salt makers at work near Avenue U in Seaside last Sunday morning.

GUEST COLUMN

Easing into peace and harmony

By LIANNE THOMPSON
For Seaside Signal

Friends, neighbors, colleagues and community members: Let's celebrate successes and achievements to nourish and sustain ourselves in a time of renewed challenges.

Consider the Arch Cape Forest, the Rain Forest reserves, and the Cape Falcon Marine Reserves. All these present evidence of vigorous commitment to environmental well-being in our neighborhood. Thanks to the staunch environmental community and all who support their efforts to heal and protect our natural world.

Consider Seaside City Council's focused attention on issues related to housing, both affordable housing and homelessness. The fine work of Councilors Steve Wright and Tita Montero shines brightly as they engage with this issue plaguing so many communities. The elected leadership has reached out and made common cause with local activists who are committed to making a difference. Kudos to all of them!

Look at the Jewell School Superintendent, Steve Phillips, who's providing leadership in developing broadband capacity in the heart of Clatsop County. He's working with Clatsop County staff and reaching out to his whole school and geographic community to improve broadband capacity. The territory included (if all goes according to plan) will stretch from Fishhawk Lake to the Elsie Vinemapple Fire hall and beyond. Awesome!

I don't know about you, but I needed some good news. The resurgence of COVID gobsmacked me. I had thought we were coming out the other side of the pandemic, but it turned out to be the eye of the hurricane, not the end of our problems.

After a year and a half, I'd had enough of dealing with health and life-threatening disease. I'd had enough of interrupted supply chains. I'd had enough of the heartbreak of local people and local businesses stretched and smacked around.

Or so I thought. But I was wrong. The nature of the pandemic mocked my naiveté. So I needed

to consider how to look at what inspired more positive emotions. I saw that many around me had shown what to do and how to do it: look at evidence of peace and harmony, used in service of significant and positive solutions to community challenges. Three examples came immediately to mind. Many others could have.

These are only three examples of causes for hope. People have seen a community need, found ways to engage others in positive efforts, and they've produced positive process and results. More work is needed, but we're well begun.

We can always find ways to disagree and argue, but some peace and harmony work better to keep us fortified and motivated. And, just for the record? Clatsop County Board of Commissioners and staff are actively engaged in all these positive examples and many more, all aimed at making this a better place to live, work, and enjoy.

Bottom line? Let's be kind to each other; let's ease into peace and harmony.

Lianne Thompson is Clatsop County District 5 commissioner.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Contact local agencies for latest meeting information and attendance guidelines.

TUESDAY, SEPT. 21

Seaside Planning Commission, 6 p.m., work session, 989 Broadway, cityofseaside.us.

Seaside School District, 6 p.m., seaside.k12.or.us/meetings.

MONDAY, SEPT. 27

Seaside City Council, 7 p.m., 989 Broadway, cityofseaside.us.

TUESDAY, SEPT. 28

Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District, 5:15 p.m., Bob Chisholm Community Center.

Seaside Airport Advisory Committee, 6 p.m., 989 Broadway.

TUESDAY, OCT. 5

Seaside Community Center Commission, 10 a.m., 1225 Avenue A.

Seaside Library Board of Directors, 4:30 p.m., 1131 Broadway St.

Seaside Planning Commission, 6 p.m., 989 Broadway.

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 6

Seaside Improvement Commission, 6 p.m., 989 Broadway.

Gearhart City Council, 7 p.m., cityofgearhart.com.

THURSDAY, OCT. 7

Seaside Parks Advisory Commit-

tee, 6 p.m., 989 Broadway.

MONDAY, OCT. 11

Seaside City Council, 7 p.m., cityofseaside.us.

THURSDAY, OCT. 14

Seaside Civic and Convention Center Commission, 5 p.m., 415 First Ave.

TUESDAY, OCT. 19

Seaside Planning Commission, 6 p.m., work session, 989 Broadway.

Seaside School District, 6 p.m., seaside.k12.or.us/meetings.

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 20

Seaside Tourism Advisory Committee, 3 p.m., 989 Broadway.

MONDAY, OCT. 25

Seaside City Council, 7 p.m., cityofseaside.us.

TUESDAY, OCT. 26

Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District, 5:15 p.m., Bob Chisholm Community Center.

TUESDAY, NOV. 2

Seaside Community Center Commission, 10 a.m., 1225 Avenue A.

Seaside Library Board of Directors, 4:30 p.m., 1131 Broadway St.

Seaside Planning Commission, 6 p.m., 989 Broadway.



PUBLISHER
Kari Borgen

EDITOR
R.J. Marx

CIRCULATION MANAGER
Shannon Arlnt
ADVERTISING SALES MANAGER
Sarah Silver-Tecza

PRODUCTION MANAGER
John D. Bruijn
SYSTEMS MANAGER
Carl Earl

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Skyler Archibald
Joshua Heineman
Katherine Lacaze
Esther Moberg
CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER
Jeff TerHar

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