Established as a military post during the Indian Wars period, Fort Missoula found itself enmeshed in a conflict entirely unanticipated and unplanned - the Nez Perce War of 1877. Thanks to assistance from the Nez Perce National Historic Trail, one of Fort Missoula's oldest period buildings will now aid in interpreting this early phase of Fort history.

In June of 1877, Captain Charles C. Rawn led Companies A and I of the U.S. 7th Infantry from Fort Shaw, MT to Missoula, carrying orders to establish a new post. Rawn and his men commenced work along the east bank of the Bitterroot River that summer. To the west in Idaho, tensions between settlers, the Federal government, and the Nez Perce tribe erupted into armed conflict. Seeking sanctuary for his people, Chief Joseph led a substantial segment of the tribe across the Lolo Trail into western Montana, pursued by U.S. General Oliver O. Howard's troops.

In July of 1877, Rawn led his command from Fort Missoula to a point several miles up the Lolo Canyon drainage. Under orders to delay Joseph until Howard could invest Joseph's bands from the west. After some days of confrontation, the Nez Perce peacefully outflanked Rawn during the "Fort Fizzle" incident and moved south at leisure through the Bitterroot Valley. Rawn returned with his companies to Fort Missoula, where he resumed construction.

In early August, a larger contingent from the 7th Infantry under the notable Civil War commander Col. John Gibbon arrived at Fort Missoula from Fort Shaw, where it was reinforced by Rawn's men. This combined command marched through the Bitterroot and across the Continental Divide, then attacked Joseph at the Battle of the Big Hole on August 9, 1877. At first successful in occupying the Nez Perce camp, Gibbon was then forced back by counterattacks into a defensive siege. Gibbon, Rawn, and other 7th Infantry soldiers held out until relieved on August 11 by Howard. The Army incurred 29 KIA during the battle, including Lt. William A. English of Co. I; the Nez Perce suffered 89 KIA, including several noncombatants.

Joseph's people continued their flight toward Canadian asylum until early winter to the Bears Paw mountains of north central Montana, where they were intercepted and besieged by Gen. Nelson Miles and his Fort Keogh troops. On October 5, Joseph surrendered. After the Big Hole battle, Rawn's men returned to Fort Missoula and continued building. At this point foundation work may have commenced on the fort's powder magazine. The U.S. 3rd Infantry (which today guards the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington, Va.) relieved the 7th at Fort Missoula in November 1877 and completed work on the structure.

RMMMH and NPNHT Combine To Reopen 1878 Fort Missoula Powder Magazine

Built at a cost of $485.00, the magazine's walls were constructed of limestone quarried at McCauley's Bluff and reinforced with ceiling and floor sand as additional insurance against explosions. The magazine continued to hold military munitions throughout the fort's military period; during the 1890's championship marksman Sgt. Horace Bivjns of the African-American 25th Infantry inscribed his name and the serial number of his rifle on the door. Concrete paw prints on the steps were left by the 4th Infantry mascot dog "Sgt. Bozo" during the 1930's, and after the building's final use for ammunition storage in the 1960's it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Along with the "New Post" area, the magazine was transferred to the Northern Rockies Heritage Center in the late 1990's, and it is today administered by RMMMH.

Cont’d on pg 2
Thanks to a Cost-Share Grant administered by the NPNHT, RMMMH now has a dedicated space in which to interpret the events of 1877. NPNHT Administrator Sandi McFarland and Public Affairs Officer Roger Peterson were instrumental in obtaining the project funding, which covered the installation of three large exhibit panels within the magazine. Topics covered include the Nez Perce leadership, a map overview of the war’s entirety, and a depiction of the horses used by the combatants of both sides. RMMMH Trustees Bill and Becky O’Donnell constructed a period military crate display to show the magazine’s function, complimented by replica Nez Perce trail gear. Trustees Dennis Gordon and Hayes Otoupalik reinforced and landscaped the building foundation, which is connected to the main RMMMH complex via Eagle Scout (and now U.S. Naval Academy midshipman) Nate Jourdonna’s project trail.

The new Powder Magazine exhibit is scheduled to formally open the weekend of July 20-21; see RMMMH Facebook for upcoming details.

**From the files of the CCC's Green Guidon**

*May 1, 1936*

"District Headquarters Detachment More Attractive...

Under the direction of Harry Good, DHD’s amiable one-man greens committee, the grounds around the (Fort Missoula) barracks, mess hall, and recreation hall are becoming more attractive every day. An extensive grass-planting program has been launched, and truckloads of black dirt have been hauled in to make an area of green around each building. The duck pool is filled, and flowers have been planted, and DHD may well look forward to being the most attractive camp in the district this summer...HQ detachment faculty will be short two valuable teachers with the discharge of Tom Hughes and the absence of Henry Edson on leave...Hughes left to accept employment after four months of intensive shorthand instruction...Edson's radio class came to an end last week...."

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Normandy Invasion 75th Commemorated at Home and Abroad

As world leaders and ceremonial attendees gather at the Normandy beaches to mark the 75-year legacy of the World War II landings, Missoulians will be following the progress of the DC-3 “Miss Montana” into the former conflict zone. As part of a combined “Dakotas over Normandy” air flotilla, the former Mann Gulch fire smokejumper carrier will drop parachutists over the 1944 landing zones on June 5-6. One will be retired Army paratrooper Al Charters, donor of RMMMH’s Vietnam SOG jump display.

At Fort Missoula on the evening of June 6, RMMMH will note the occasion with a Heritage Hall keynote presentation by Jimmy Grant of Historical Research Associates, “777: The Voyage of a D-Day LCT.” 777 was his grandfather’s ship and one of nearly 7,000 vessels that formed the D-Day armada. This illustrated presentation explores the personal experience of the men aboard and some of the lasting impacts of that fateful day. Short film presentations will bookend the evening, and multiple D-Day exhibits will be on hand.
Montana Museums Win Major Victory At Montana Legislature

RMMMH and other Montana historical institutions will, in the future, remember fondly the 2019 legislative session. After an intensive lobbying effort, Sen. Terry Gauthier’s (R-Helena) Senate Bill 338, the MT Museums Act, passed the House and Senate by comfortable margins, and was signed by Governor Steve Bullock on May 10.

The act provides over $35 million for construction of a new and modernized MT Historical Society museum at the Capitol complex, and further uses state hotel bed tax money to fund a perpetual $2-3 million dollar grant program. Grants will be allocated and awarded on a competitive basis to all eligible MT museums and historic sites. RMMMH, the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula, and the Northern Rockies Heritage Center joined the Museums Assn. of MT in endorsing the bill.

UPCOMING PROGRAMS AT RMMMH

(All at Bldg. T-316, Fort Missoula unless otherwise noted)

- **Sunday, May 26, 2:00** - Memorial Day Sunday, "Marines in Vietnam," Will Deschamps. Certificates of Appreciation presented to all applying Vietnam era veterans, also posthumously; to apply email militarymuseu45@hotmail.com.

- **Sunday, June 2, 2:00** - "The Free French Commando Kieffer at the D-Day Landings, June 6, 1944."

- **Thursday, June 6, 7:00** - Heritage Hall, Fort Missoula - “777: The Voyage of a D-Day LCT,” Jimmy Grant.

- **Sunday, June 9, 1:00** - Fort Missoula Post Cemetery - "Stories in Stones" cemetery presentations.

- **Thursday, July 4, 7:00 am - 4:00 pm** - July 4 Celebration at Fort Missoula, 19th Annual RMMMH Collector’s Sale. For item donation pickup call 549-6280 or 549-4817.

- **Sunday, July 14, 2:00** - "Have Fort, Need Mission: Fort Missoula in 1919," guided walk of post grounds.

- **July 20-21** - Opening of 1878 NPNHT exhibit; details TBA.

- **Sunday, July 28 , 2:00** - "Buffalo Bill's Reality Show; The Battle of Summit Springs, Colo., July 1869."

- **Sunday, August 11, 2:00** - "Missoula's Own: Col. Walter Johnson and the Battle of Mortain, France, August 1944."

- **Sunday, September 22, 2:00** - "A Cliche Too Far: The 75th Anniversary of Operation Market Garden, Netherlands, September 1944."

- **Sunday, October 20, 2:00** - "Captivity and Liberation at Los Banos, Philippines, 1942-45," John MacDonald.

See RMMMH Facebook for daily updates and more program information
MEMORIAL PLAQUES AVAILABLE

For only $250.00 you can honor a veteran, relative, friend or Museum supporter, living or deceased, with a memorial plaque, to be installed on the RMMMH's entry hall donor board.

The RMMMH is a private 501(c)3 non-profit Institution. Contributions are tax-deductible to the amount allowed by law. Your continued support for our exhibits and programs are most welcome.

The Museum offers memberships on several levels.

MEMBERSHIP IS RENEWABLE ON AN ANNUAL BASIS, ON VETERAN’S DAY, NOVEMBER 11

___ Youth-under age 18 - $10.00
___ Adult - $25.00
___ Family - $50.00
___ Business - $100.00
___ Lifetime - $500.00

Name: ________________________________
Address: ______________________________
City: ________________________________
State: ______ Zip:___________ Date:___________
E-mail: ________________________________ Amt. Enc. _________

If you are renewing your membership, please check your address for accuracy, and note any corrections on the form.

Please make checks payable to: RMMMH       Mail to: PO Box 7263  Missoula, MT 59807