

STATEMENT ON TRAVELERS REST MADE TO THE APPROPRIATIONS  
COMMITTEE OF THE MONTANA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

By Hazel Pflueger, January 13, 2009

The Lewis and Clark Expedition traveled 8,000 miles from St. Louis to the Pacific Ocean and back. They camped in about 600 different places, but the only scientifically verified campsite is that of Travelers Rest State Park in our state. Yet, in 1960, a National Historic Landmark designation was incorrectly identified and granted to a site down by the confluence of the Bitterroot River and Lolo Creek.

That could have been the end of this story and Travelers Rest would perhaps be an inaccessible piece of land today if it hadn't been for a couple of lines in two of the Lewis and Clark Journals. Members of the Travelers Rest Chapter read in the Journals that the Corps of Discovery came down the Bitterroot River and traveled up Lolo Creek about two miles to camp. They hadn't camped by the River at all. This finding led to a series of events that enabled the discovery of the real Travelers Rest, which, for the first time, changed the designation as a National Historic Landmark. Some of these significant events are as follows:

- The quest to find the real campsite was an aggressive grassroots effort in support of this project. There was support from the community, Native American tribes in the area, scholars from the University of Montana and around the country, the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Montana Congressional Delegation.
- Infra red photographs showed anomalies in the soil and Dr. Robert Bergantino from Montana Tech pinpointed the site and reported that Native Americans had occupied it 11,000 years ago.
- Chapter volunteers produced excitement when they found a Tombac button that was manufactured between 1760 and 1812 and sold to the military
- Historical Archeologist Dan Hall was selected to verify the location of the campsite. He established a unique research design including a historical investigation of the site and it's people as well as the use of scientific techniques such as remote sensing with the magnetometer and geochemical analysis of the soil. This new approach not only preserved Native American cultural resources present on this ancient site, but also discovered the evidence that verified the location of Travelers Rest.
- The military manual of Baron von Steuben made it possible for the researchers to envision the make-up of the campsite, including the placement of fire pits, the tents, the supplies and the latrine, all of which aided in the additional findings of the button, the lead puddle and the mercury.

Traveler's Rest is a unique American treasure. The identification and preservation of this National Historic Landmark is a study in the effectiveness of grassroots efforts. It is proof that the local people can achieve results of national and international importance. We mustn't allow the efforts of dedicated people to fade into the oblivion of forgotten history. I urge you to support HB 167.