

# Rendezvous re-enactors celebrate history

In an age of high-speed, high-tech and high-volume, the Pacific Primitive Rendezvous recaptures a world gone for a century-and-a-half

By Michael Lane  
Interim Editor

SENECA – The reaches of the valley were dotted with tents and teepees. Horsemen cantered along, kicking up trails of powdery dust, and a wagon clattered and bumped its way into the rendezvous, carrying a load of children and supplies. Women in calico dresses and men in buckskins and unbleached linen trousers gathered around the tents of traders, eyeing moccasins, hatchets, beads and muzzle-loaders. Men with names like Bearpaw can be found chatting with ladies whose nom-de-camp may be Madam Pinchbottom.

If it wasn't for the occasional digital camera appearing out of a hide satchel, you'd think you really were in the nineteenth century. And that's exactly the point.

The Pacific Primitive Rendezvous (PPR) recreates a fur-

trade-era rendezvous in the years before 1840. Such get-togethers served as a way for trappers and traders to meet, sell furs, restock supplies and socialize with other trappers, hunters and frontiersmen and -women, said event co-Bourgeois (camp coordinator) Todd "Rotten" Nichols. The modern re-enactments serve much the same function, socially, for the participants.

The event is open to those who pre-register and those arriving, in proper outfit, on the first few days of the rendezvous. For the last seven days of the event, there is no contact between the camp itself and the outside world, and the re-enactors truly live the life of the early explorers and trappers.

## Frontier style

Clothing, weapons and equipment of the re-enactors is specifically tailored to recreate the historical items of the era. Anachronistic items from later eras, such as jeans, are not allowed, nor such modern indulgences as electricity or propane. David L'Hommedieu, or Bigfoot as he's known at the rendezvous, kept a sharp eye out for any dress or gear violations as participants arrived at his tent to check in. "Dog Soldiers", named after a somewhat similar society among the plains indians, act as the rendezvous' unofficial police force

and watch for any out-of-place items throughout the extensive camp. Reporters aren't exempt from the rules, and this reporter in particular now has a better appreciation of barefoot life in the wilderness, and the excellent warmth provided by burlap.

In addition to socializing and trading, the rendezvous has numerous horse and black-powder shooting events, some afoot and some mounted. There is period cooking, as well, and frontier foods like frybread, salt meat and pemmican provide needed fuel for the rugged ten-day event. Less "woody" fare can be found at many a campsite, but don't expect any Eggo® or Lean Cuisine®.

Matt Denison, a gunsmith and trader in muzzle-loaders and related equipment from Montana, explained why he attended re-enactments. "This is the most fun group of people you can run around with. It's a fun way to go camping," said Denison. There was also peace and quiet, unlike what you often find at a regular campground, he added. It can be an expensive hobby, though, for those really looking to create a frontier persona and collect their own gear and guns. Some of Denison's beautiful black-powder pieces go for as much as \$800. "I'm hooked on the guns," Denison said. "I'm a shooter first."

People travel a long way to participate, said Marvin "Water Moccasin" Simonson, the other Bourgeois for the Bear Valley event. "We've got a fellow from Alabama in the parking lot, and another came in from Florida." To avoid confusion, "parking lot" refers to a large plot of sagebrush, carefully distant, invisible and inaudible from the PPR camp.

The event saw around 1,000 people in attendance this year, said Simonson, and approximately 500 camps. The Southworth Ranch, located near

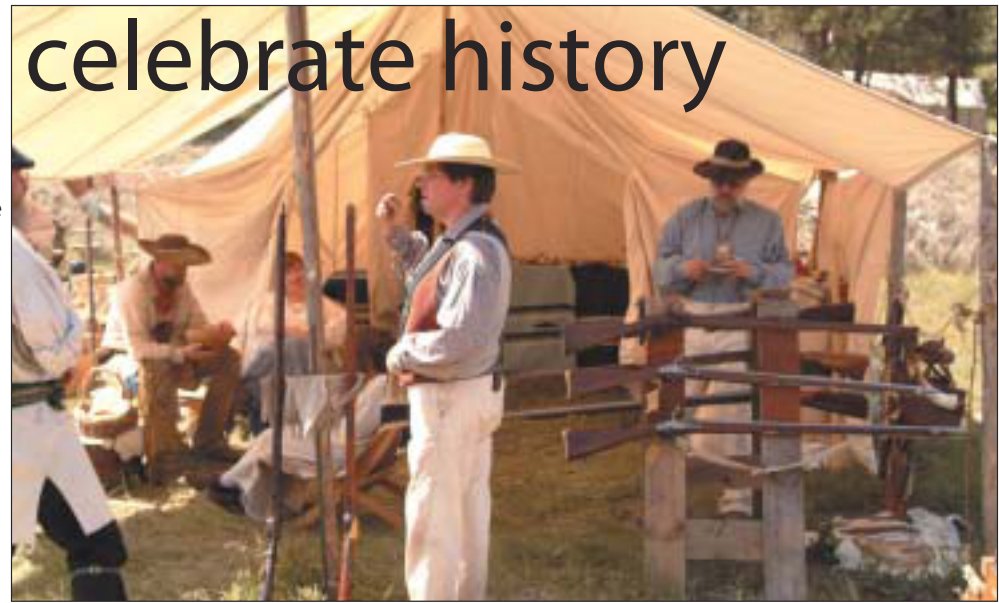


Photo by Michael Lane

Traders of all sorts, like Matt Denison on the extreme right, deal in any imaginable 1840s item, and set up camp throughout the area. Muzzle-loaders, buckskins and period clothing are among the most popular goods on display.



Photo by Michael Lane

This year the PPR has two co-Bourgeois in charge, Marvin Simonson, left, and Todd Nichols.

Seneca, generously provided the expansive area needed for an event of this size.

This PPR event, like all big get-togethers, took two years to plan and depended on the time and efforts of the many volunteers, said Nichols. It is, admits both Bourgeois, a lot of work, but "... we do it for the love of the sport," Simonson said. Individual clubs and organizations, such as the American Mountain Men, the Rocky Mountain Men and the Majority of Scoundrels were present at the PPR event,

and many helped run individual activities and events at the rendezvous. Clubs from Nevada, Oregon, California, Idaho, Montana and Canada were present this year.

The Pacific Primitive Rendezvous Company is a regis-

tered non-profit, and those interested in becoming involved in the recreation of the life of the early days of the westward expansion with the PPR may visit <http://ppr.eddiespicer.com> for more information.

Additional information on historical re-enacting may be found at the following Web sites:

[www.wizzywigweb.com/longshot/links.htm](http://www.wizzywigweb.com/longshot/links.htm)  
[www.lewisandclarkstcharles.com/events.asp](http://www.lewisandclarkstcharles.com/events.asp)  
[www.hpr.org](http://www.hpr.org)  
[www.nrlhf.org](http://www.nrlhf.org)