

TOM LAIDLAW, LIVING HISTORY ACTOR

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Tom Laidlaw has developed a versatile series of programs on Northwest History, both in character and straight lecture. The talks are amplified by many audio visual aids, maps, charts and modern Power-Point presentations. Programs of any length can be developed, from 20 minute mini talks to multi day courses. These are the most asked for programs, but Tom can adapt almost any part of the talks listed to your specific needs. **Call Tom at 360-695-4824** to discuss your program requirements. Or e-mail him at tomlaidlaw@uswest.net

Pacific Northwest History

William Cannon (30 - 45 minutes)

William Cannon is Tom's signature character. He was a member of the **Overland Astorians**, who walked across the country in 1811 to help found **Astoria, OR**, at the mouth of the Columbia River. Even when England took over that settlement in 1813, Cannon stayed on to work with the **Hudson's Bay Company** when they built **Fort Vancouver** as the headquarters of their Columbia Department. He is credited with building the first gristmill and sawmill in the Oregon Country. At times he was a free trapper and was the first American to go through Puget Sound with James MacMillan in 1824, the Central Oregon Coast with Alexander MacLeod in 1826, and first American over the Siskiyou into California, with Peter Skene Ogden in 1827. He was one of the voters for Oregon's Provisional Government in 1843.

Cannon's long life and involvement in so much of American history allows Tom to tailor his talks for many types of groups from the Boone Society to DAR to Lewis and Clark to Fur Trade to Oregon History to Washington History. He has legitimate connections to all of these themes.

Peter Skene Ogden (30 - 45 minutes)

“**OF** all that lusty band of mountain men who roamed the forests and streams of the Far West in the early days of the nineteenth century, none trapped more beaver, laughed louder, played wilder practical jokes, fought harder, or left his name on more places he discovered and explored than did Peter Skene Ogden.” (California Historic Quarterly vol XIX) In this sketch Tom becomes Ogden and relates his great adventures as a major force of the **Hudson's Bay Company** working out of **Fort Vancouver**. When adapted for schools the story tells the whole process of the fur trade, with children acting out the parts of trapper, trapper's wife, Fur Trader, ship captain, and even the beaver.

Columbia River Exploration (45 - 90 minutes)

LEARN about the search for the Northwest Passage and the four mariners who had the opportunity to be the first to enter the Columbia River and give it its name. This great River of the West was and still is very important in transporting goods from the interior of the country to the Orient. It is the closest thing to a Northwest Passage within the continent of North America, and its discovery touched off a controversy which several times had England and the United States on the brink of war. The story is full of irony and through it you will understand that the Pacific Northwest might have belonged to Canada. Again, the story can expand and contract to fit your schedule. At its most complete it is 75 - 90 minutes, with maps, charts, and the magic of Powerpoint. For children it is simplified, with kids playing the parts wearing various hats appropriate to their characters.

THESE first three programs are often combined into a full day for **Elderhostel's "Adventures Afloat"** programs: **Columbia River Exploration** in the morning, **Peter S. Ogden** conducting a tour of Fort Vancouver, and **William Cannon** telling his amazing story in the evening. A full day of **Pacific Northwest History**.

Westward Expansion

Lewis and Clark

"THE object of your mission is to explore the Missouri River and such principal stream of it as, by its course and communication with the waters of the Pacific Ocean, whether the Columbia, Oregon, Colorado or any other river may offer the most direct and practicable water communication across this continent for the purposes of commerce." (Thomas Jefferson to Meriwether Lewis, 20 June 1803). In 1803 the Missouri river was charted up to the Knife River near today's Stanton, ND. The Columbia River was charted for about 100 miles from the sea to the Sandy River at Troutdale, OR. Everything in between was unmapped, and it was their job to map it. In addition to the above programs, Tom has spent the last three years studying this great mission and giving talks, classes and programs to Elderhostel, from 18-day bus trips, to one night stands, to five-day Elderhostel programs. Besides the overview, he has developed several theme talks about various aspects of the expedition. What's your question? Tom can probably answer it. Tom has also written short articles about several intriguing aspects of the expedition, such as *The Transportation of Lewis & Clark*, *William Clark, Master Grafittist*, and the *Return Split-up*. These are available for download.

Mountain Man Stories and Tall Tales

IN THE early days of the 19th century a new creature was brought forth on the face of the earth. His name was *Mountain Man*. He spent the winter in the wilderness and the summer in debauchery. He dressed in animal skins and ate buffalo tongue, beaver tail, roots and berries. And sometimes his own moccasins. His job was to trap beaver to make hats and fancy clothing for the fancy ladies and gentleman of Europe. His best friends were his gun and his pack mule. He took an Indian wife and took on native ways. And he usually smelled like beaver bait. He would meet with hundreds of others at a Rendezvous each summer and trade his furs for needed supplies. Needless to say the supplier made all the money.

The Mountain Man is gone now, like the beaver he relentlessly trapped in the Rockies and its streams and valleys. But his memory lives on in city and place names all over the country, for it was his exploration that conquered the wilderness and made possible the westward expansion of the United States by way of the Oregon Trail. Hear the stories of John Colter, Jim Bridger, Hugh Glass and many others. Learn how they lived, trapped, partied and died. (30-45 minutes)

Missionaries

IN 1832, so the story goes, four Flathead Indians traveled to St. Louis, looking for the Red-Haired Chief (William Clark). In their contact with the white fur traders they had heard about the "White Man's Book of Heaven", which would teach them how to live right and please the creator. In this sketch Tom appears as Provisional Governor George Abernethy telling the story of the first Methodist Mission in Oregon, that of Jason Lee. Abernethy, himself, joined that mission in 1840. Learn how Lee became more of a colonizer than a Christianizer, and how his mission school became Willamette University. (30-45 minutes)

In Their Own Words: Voices from the Oregon Trail

THEN came the **Oregon Trail**. In this program, Tom is joined by his daughter, Debra and his granddaughter, Elyse. Dressed in period clothing they read the actual words of many Oregon Trail Pioneers, from their journals and diaries. The program touches on all aspects of the journey: reasons to go, preparations, birth, death, abandonment, despair, and victory. You will experience the great range of emotions which were evoked by the journeys. Hear about the seven children who were orphaned in 1844 from the diary of Catherine Sager Pringle, and the fate of those who followed Stephen Meek on a shortcut in 1845. A great map depicting all the trails and variations serves as a backdrop.