

Rustic days of Davy Crockett relived by gun club

By Sue Brown



Photo by Bob Pearson

The fur trade era of the early 1800s is captured by this modern day mountain man adorned with a skunkskin hat and muzzle loading gun.

Imagine camping in the winter wilderness, clothed in the tanned hides and furs of a trapper and armed with a muzzle loading gun.

The re-creation of the Rocky Mountain fur trade era of the 1820s, 30s, and 40s is state archivist Jim Potter's hobby.

Potter, an archivist at the Nebraska State Historical Society, is a member of a club whose primary interest is perpetuating the history of the fur trade era. This is accomplished through camping trips, complete with primitive housing, fur trapper costuming, and muzzle loading guns.

Many of the members, including Potter, have sewn their own costumes; some even going as far as to tan the animal hides used in making them.

Days of Davy Crockett

According to Potter, the guns are comparable to those used in the days of Davy Crockett and are loaded from the front with black gun powder for ammunition and a projectile to pack it in. The black powder is used for safety reasons because it is a low power propellant. In its 10 to 15 years, the club has reported no injuries.

Although the guns may be used for hunting purposes, summer shooting matches are popular among club members. Matches stationed throughout Nebraska provide shooting practice and competition by using paper targets, blue rocks or metal gongs.

According to Potter, the summer matches provide an opportunity to bring the whole family along on a vacation. The winter trips to various state parks, such as the Fort Atkinson State Park, stress the primitive aspect of the era.

Regional group

Although there are similar clubs throughout the state, Potter said his 35-member club is a regional group, drawing from the Lincoln, Omaha and Fremont areas. Its trips are open to spectators as well as anyone interested

in participating. Potter said the club encourages new shooters.

He said he has found his hobby particularly satisfying in that it is one he can "enjoy all year round" through camping or reading material about the era.

After majoring in history at UNL, Potter said he hoped he could get involved in some area of government service. He applied to the Nebraska Historical Society in 1967 and worked for three years as an assistant archivist.

"An archivist gets a lot of on-the-job training," Potter said. Now, as the state archivist for the society, he has three assistants who aid in the preservation of historical records.

Potter said he feels that people may be lured by the romance and history of a particular era, but would probably not want to recreate the hardships of that era.

Police at UNL ask for prompter theft reports

A University Police official says he would like persons reporting crimes to be more prompt in doing so.

Sgt. Joe Wehner, said University police received 16 reports of thefts this month in which the crime actually took place at least three days earlier, and in some cases, several months earlier.

A burglary of photo equipment with a value of \$1,816 from the Former Law Building was reported almost a month after it happened, he said. The theft of a university-owned projector that took place in April was not reported until Sept. 19. Wehner also said the theft of three pieces of photo equipment which took place last December was reported last week.

Eight of the 16 reported thefts involved university-owned property, and with one exception, employees took place at least a month to report them.

"We want them to report the crime the minute they know it happened," Wehner said.

He also said that the most common reason not to report a theft is because the person who reports the theft thought another member of the department may have borrowed it. But Wehner says report the theft anyway.

"We don't mind. It doesn't upset us," he said.

Wehner urged persons to report thefts, regardless of how long they have known about it. Even if the property is not recovered, "we need to know the crime patterns on campus," he said.

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