



NEWS

From the Nez Perce National Historic Trail

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Presentation Offers Insight on Civil War Officers and their Roles in the Western Frontier Indian Campaigns

MISSOULA, MT – On the evening of August 22, 2012, at 7 p.m., visitors are encouraged to join the Nez Perce National Historic Trail, and the Rocky Mountain Museum of Military History (RMMM), for a presentation by RMMM Executive Director Tate Jones entitled Blue Coats Under the Big Sky. The presentation will be held on the front lawn of the RMMM at Fort Missoula in Missoula, MT.

As the nation continues to commemorate the Civil War Sesquicentennial, this program will look at a select group of Union officers who 150 years ago were engaged in combat throughout the Mid-Atlantic States. These same commanders assumed prominent roles during the Indian campaigns of the post-Civil War period, and all were drawn to Montana during the period of 1876-77. Battles throughout the Northern Rockies and Northern Plains within those months were fateful for both United States expansion and the lives of thousands of American Indians.

The evening's discussion will look at Civil War Michigan Brigade commander George Armstrong Custer, Gettysburg veteran and Big Hole battle commander Colonel John Gibbon, Fort Missoula founder Captain Charles Rawn, New England Civil War volunteer and later U.S. Army Commander in Chief General Nelson Miles, and Army of the Potomac field commander General Oliver O. Howard. Howard's life in particular offers a vivid portrait of the Civil War/Reconstruction/Frontier era. His career took him from combat with Confederate General Robert E. Lee to heading the Freedman's Bureau for assistance to freed slaves, and the from the founding of the traditionally African-American Howard University to action against the "non-treaty" Nez Perce in 1877.

Jones is a Missoula native; he has a B.A. in International Studies with a History concentration from Macalester College, a M.A. in American History from George Washington University, and is a Ph.D. candidate, History, at the University of Montana. Jones also serves as the Vice President of the Northern Rockies Heritage Center and has been Executive Director of the Rocky Mountain Museum of Military History since 1998.

In 1986 Congress enacted legislation that established the Nez Perce National Historic Trail which follows the 1,170 mile route of the 1877 war and flight of the Nez Perce.

2012 marks the 135th year since the 1877 war and flight. The staff of the Nez Perce National Historic Trail in conjunction with a number of partners are hosting a website providing information about this and other events happening during the next several months to commemorate the events of 1877. We encourage people to learn more about the culture of the Nez Perce people and the significant historic events associated with the National Historic Trail.

