

MFT EXPRESS #19

November 2014

A Quarterly Newsletter from the Museum of the Fur Trade for its Members

Museum Benefactor's Legacy Protected

We are relieved to hear that the preservation of the collections of the Detroit Institute of Arts have been insured following the city's bankruptcy. There were some strenuous efforts made to sell off the museum's holdings in order to help pay down the billions of dollars due various creditors and pensioners. As it was explained to us, various organizations pledged money in lieu of selling collection material, and the museum itself contributed cash to the rescue fund. This sensible solution to a dire situation was especially meaningful to us because the DIA director responsible for assembling much of its incomparable collection, E. P. Richardson, was an annual visitor to this little museum, and he (and after his death, his widow), was a regular and substantial donor to this museum. He, too, believed it was a jewel box, and we are ever grateful for his thoughtful generosity.

ASAC Grant

The venerable American Society of Arms Collectors has generously presented the Museum of the Fur Trade with a \$5,000 grant to finance our exhibit on the post-Civil War sale of arms to the Plains Indians. The Indian warriors were certainly better trained in cavalry warfare and often possessed better armaments for such fighting than did the US army. In fact the federal government attempted to ban the sale of cartridge guns and ammunition to the "hostiles." In true government fashion, the ban even included Eskimos in Alaska who had never heard of Custer or Crazy Horse. In any event, this exhibit will include such singular pieces as an Indian-used 1866 Winchester, a Spencer carbine collected from the Oglala Sioux, a Henry Folsom trade rifle made in St. Louis, plus a whole range of hand weapons, saddles, and warrior accoutrements including a genuine coup stick from the Indian wars. Fifty thousand visitors will see this exhibit each year for the next twenty years, at least. Thanks again, ASAC, for your most thoughtful support!

Make Your Opinion Known

Some MFT Board members are questioning the value of the museum's research and publications program and its high investment and inventory costs, even though it has never failed to yield a profit and is of scientific benefit. If you wish to express your opinion on whether the *Quarterly*, the *Encyclopedia of Trade Goods*, or any of our other publications going back to the *Northwest Gun* and the *Plains Rifle*, are useful and important, or a waste of time and resources, please send a note to the board president, Ke Bailey21@yahoo.com.

2015 Fur Trade Symposium

The next Fur Trade Symposium, "Bent's Fort and the Southern Fur Trade," will be held at Bent's Fort near La Junta, Colorado September 23–26, 2015. A full slate of speakers plus excellent field trips are planned, and speakers lined up already include our own Jim Hanson. For further details please go to www.2015fts.org.

Gail's Retirement Party

Well-wishers hosted an evening of festivities last November 1 (The Day of the Dead) for outgoing Museum Director Gail DeBuse Potter, who will end an eighteen-year career here on December 31. Dinner and drinks were followed by short but heartfelt tributes by board president Kerry Bailey, former board member Jim Carlson, volunteer Kit Watson, friend Mary Daugherty, and museum supporter Joe Ricketts. The group raised over \$2,800 as a donation to the museum in Gail's honor.