

Expedition to another era

The Coalition of Historical Trekkers national gathering offers a chance to travel back in time

by Lacey Storer

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Many people wish for the ability to time travel. And while it won't exactly transport you to another time and place, the Coalition of Historical Trekkers' national gathering at Fort Osage in Sibley, Mo., can take you back.

While the gathering is a chance for the coalition to conduct club business, it's also an opportunity for the public to see and experience a taste of history. Adopting the personas of people living from 1600 to 1860, the coalition members demonstrate what it was like to live in their persona's era, what kind of skills they needed and how they lived.

"We consider ourselves experimental archaeologists," says Brad Pickle, South Central territory governor for the coalition. "... We have folks who do pre-colonial up to Western expansion, the Western fur trade and everything in between."

At the gathering, you'll see everyone from a 1700s farmer's wife to 18th-century hunters to 19th-century soldiers.

Veronica Wiese, communications director for the coalition, says those visiting the gathering will encounter two types of personas.

"You'll run into people that will do first-person interpretation, which means they are that person and they won't drop out (of character)," she says.

Many also do third-person personas, where "they are themselves and they're explaining their lifestyles, the tools they use, the food they eat, things like that."

The coalition members aren't merely re-enacting their roles, though. They're actually performing the various tasks.

"Our biggest thing and what we really try to stress to the members and everyone else, we're not just portraying, we're actually learning it," Mr. Pickle says. "Doing the research and trying to get it right ... and experimenting: does this work, does that work, what do you need to survive?"

The gathering runs Friday through Sunday, April 17 through 19, but Mr. Pickle says Saturday is the main day for demonstrations and seminars. Past seminars have included period-correct surveying, fortifications and defensive measures, primitive fishing, how to make and set primitive snares, period-correct recipes and cooking, sewing, soap-making and spinning.

The national gathering also gives people a chance to explore Fort Osage, which is a stop on the Lewis and Clark Historic Trail. According to Steve Wilson, the Fort Osage site coordinator, the fort's education center features exhibits, development of the fort and surrounding land, topography and geography of the land, prehistoric history, the Osage Indians, the Lewis and Clark expedition and river travel, from canoes to the modern era.

Ms. Wiese encourages the public to come out Saturday and take an expedition to a different era.

"It's only the only place in Sibley that you can time travel," she says. "That's the fun part, when you walk into Fort Osage that weekend, you'll be traveling back in time."

Fort Osage will be open from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. during the Coalition of Historical Trekkers national gathering. Admission to the fort is \$3 to \$7. For more information, visit www.fortosagenhs.com.

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