



Justyna Tomtas / File photo
Brynn Johnson, co-founder of Raise for Rowyn, hands out candy during the Oregon Trail Days parade in Tenino.

Oregon

TRAIL DAYS 2021



Hitch a Wagon Ride to Tenino

BY DANIEL WARN
For the Chronicle and Nisqually Valley News

After a year off, the Oregon Trail Days in Tenino is back with hopes of uniting the community in its rich history and heritage.

The event, which is hosted by the Tenino Area Chamber of Commerce and the Puget Sound Free Trappers, is scheduled for July 23-25.

“It’s a great way for us to celebrate local history and we really do it for kids and fami-

lies, so anybody can come to this and it doesn’t cost anything,” said Tyler Whitworth, the event coordinator.

Last year, COVID-19-related shutdowns hampered the event, but Oregon Trail Days coordinators have been hard at work making it possible this year.

“Oregon Trail Days is trying to bring everything back this year and we know that it may look a little bit different because we had to take a year off last year,” Whitworth said. “That was the first year we ever had to do that. But we are going to have our parade, farmers market, vendors, a concert in the park and other things going on in the community.”

The parade will start at 11 a.m. on Saturday, July 24, and will travel along Sussex Avenue and Main Street with check-in

happening from 8:30 to 10:30 a.m. at Parkside Elementary School. Judging for entrants begins at 9:30 a.m. and the Tenino Motorcycle Drill Team will perform 15 minutes prior to the parade’s start.

There will be black powder shoots along with a pioneer rendezvous put on by the Puget Sound Free Trappers from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday and from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday in Tenino City Park.

The group, according to Whitworth, camps out and cooks like pioneers, recreating scenes from long ago to create a living museum of sorts.

“And a few of them, they’ll whittle things out of wood and they’ll make wood furniture and other things that you could make by hand if you were a pioneer,” Whitworth said. “Some of those folks do have things for sale as you walk through their camp. So you can watch from afar as they do their demonstrations, but there also are some vendors there that sell things as well.”

The Tenino Depot Museum will host its Pioneer Village from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday.

It will feature free activities for families that include stone carving, candle making, blacksmithing, rope-making and wood-working. Whitworth said there will be around 30 different activities where kids can learn what pioneers used to do.

He also said the rest of the museum will be open for public perusal.



File photo
Smoke engulfs Jerry Charlton, of Montesano, as he fires his musket during the black powder shooting contest at Tenino’s Oregon Trail Days.



Jesse Smith / File photo
The Tenino youth football team tosses candy to parade goers at the Oregon Trail Days parade in Tenino.



Justyna Tomtas / File photo
The Tenino Motorcycle Drill Team rides through downtown prior to the Oregon Trail Days parade.



Jesse Smith / File photo
Kids lining the streets in Tenino for the Oregon Trail Days parade, watch as candy is thrown toward them from passing floats.



Pete Caster / File photo
The Tenino cheer squad performs during the Oregon Trail Days parade in downtown Tenino.

“The museum will still be active where people can learn more about the Oregon Trail. It’ll detail one of the Oregon Trail markers ... showing the path that the Oregon Trail took,” Whitworth said. “The path went through Tenino, so at the museum you’ll be able to learn a lot more about the Oregon Trail and also Tenino history about the wooden money and everything else.”

The event’s vendors will run the same hours as the Pioneer Village, while the farmers market and arts market will run from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday on Olympia Street.

The Rock and Gem Show will also be back this year, run-

ning from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Friday, Saturday and Sunday on State Street at Parkside Elementary School.

Whitworth said Oregon Trail Days will showcase all of the things Tenino is known for, but the historical lessons span further than just the Stone City.

“I think it’s a great encapsulation (of history) if you want to learn about not only Tenino, but Washington state history,” Whitworth said. “I think it’s one of the best events in the state.”

The schedule of events is subject to change, but the most up-to-date information can be found online at www.teninoacc.org under the “Oregon Trail Days (OTD)” tab.



File photo
A member of the Tenino Motorcycle Drill Team rides down Sussex Avenue in downtown Tenino prior to the start of the Oregon Trail Days parade.



File photo
Children greet goats from the Tenino Farmers Market during the Oregon Trail Days parade.



Keith Phillips works on a sandstone carving. Pioneer Village will host a booth this year showcasing pioneer crafts like stonecarving.



File Photo

Loren Ackerman, of the Tenino Depot Museum, runs the 1890s-era printing press once used to print Tenino's wooden money during the Great Depression. Today, the press still prints wooden money that can be redeemed for goods at some area businesses. Children will be able to print their own wooden money at Oregon Trail Days.

Oregon Trail Days 'Pioneer Village' is Hands-On History for the Whole Family

**BY ISABEL
VANDER STOEP**
*For the Chronicle and
Nisqually Valley News*

What is a cedar shake?
Bob Hill, organizer of the Tenino Pioneer Village and member of the South Thurston County Historical Society, knew many young folks in Tenino didn't know the answer to that question.
Shakes are shingles used on barn roofs and they were created with a "fro," also called a shake axe, which is a blade designed to split cedar blocks into thin wood pieces. In the 1800s, each individual shake was painstakingly split off until there was enough for an entire roof.
Hill was looking to get more young people involved in history and decided hands-on learning was the way to do it. Twelve years ago during the Tenino Oregon Trail Days, he took a cedar block and a froe, and sat out in the park showing kids how to use it.
"If you get an 8-year-old who

struggles to pull it back and finally, boom, he pops (the shake) off, not all of them, but with some of them you say, 'now, your great-great-grandfather might have done a thousand of those to put on a barn,'" Hill said. "With some of them, it clicks as to how hard they had to work back in 1850."
Though the event has snowballed into a festival in its own right, the idea at its heart is the same over a decade later. Free hands-on activities are modeled after the methods of the pioneers in order to get children involved with and excited about history.
It takes Hill the better part of a year to organize the event. To keep the Pioneer Village free, activity coordinators must volunteer their entire weekend, all the materials and all their energy toward creating a positive learning environment.
"I need a minimum of 40 people to run this thing. If you were running it, you'd be stretching the limits of every friend you could possibly think of and that's the truth," Hill said. "I am careful because if you come, you need to care for people. You need to be willing to work with them."

This year, the Pioneer Village will take place on Friday, July 23 to Sunday, July 25. Activities go from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday and 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Sunday.
The village has booths with every pioneer craft imaginable, including blacksmithing, stone carving, wood working, rope making, dutch oven cooking and more. The village, which is held outside the Tenino Train Depot, will involve the museum building and the Ticknor one-room schoolhouse on Saturday and Sunday. Wooden money printing in the museum will be held Saturday to Sunday from noon to 3 p.m. There will also be a Historic Tour of Tenino on a hay wagon on Saturday at 1 p.m., 2 p.m. and 3 p.m., led by city historian Richard Edwards.

Whatever participants create, they can take home with them. And best of all, they'll take home a new understanding of pioneer history.
"It's our pleasure to try to get kids to connect with old history," Hill said.



Jesse Smith / File photo

Blacksmith Rusty Young, of Lake Stevens, hammers red hot metal into shape to create a flint lock striker at Oregon Trail Days.



File photo

A kid participates in the Pioneer Village event at a previous Oregon Trail Days celebration.

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Motorcycle Drill Team Mainstay to Maneuver Through Trail Days Parade

BY DANIEL WARN
For the Chronicle and Nisqually Valley News

The Tenino Motorcycle Drill Team will show off their coordinated maneuvers about 15 minutes before the Oregon Trail Days parade on July 24.

The team started in Tenino almost four decades ago, after a group of motorcycle enthusiasts decided they wanted to add something extra to the festivities, said long-time member Chad Bowman. They got together, began practicing, and the legacy continues to this day.

“We’ll be leading (the parade which starts at 11 a.m.),” Bowman said. “We usually go out about 15 minutes early. It helps us, and we usually put on a pretty good show if we’ve got nobody pushing us down the parade route. It takes a lot of effort from everybody on the team by the time you’re practiced up.”

He said the group travels back and forth against the parade

flow sometimes, making it a bit of “a cluster” if they were placed in the middle of the lineup. The roadies would also create a large blank spot along the route if they were among the other attractions, with not enough room to maneuver.

“We do stuff like figure eights and we have one that’s called a dosey doe, where we swing around like we’re dancing,” Bowman said. “So we’re doing it all on our Harleys. It’s all big-frame, big-engine Harleys, made in America.”

The group recently conducted its annual fundraiser as well. Proceeds from the event, and the \$200 to \$400 show fee the team sometimes charges local municipalities, go toward youth scholarships.

In a typical year, the group does about two shows a month, ranging from local events in places like Tenino, Rainier, Yelm, Olympia and Tumwater, but they also showcase their skills in extra-regional events like the Port



File Photos

The Tenino Motorcycle Drill Team warms up the crowd prior to the start of a past Oregon Trail Days parade in Tenino.

Townsend Roadies Festival.

It’s fitting that the group’s legacy continues on in its birthplace.

“I’ve been a resident of Tenino for damn near 50 years and we’ve been a part of the Oregon Trail Days every year for about 36 years,” Bowman said. “They want us back this year and we’ve got a bunch of new faces in the drill team and so we’ve been practicing up and we’ll do another show for them.”

Every week on Thursday, the nine team members show up underneath the tower at the Olympia Regional Airport and painstakingly practice their maneuvers.

“It takes quite a lot of effort,” Bowman said, stressing the importance of members attending practice. “A new member will come in and practice for the first year and practice up until they’re ready, until the rest

of the team feels like they’re ready to do a show, and then they’ll start performing after that. We’ll give them our logo patch for the uniform, and after

so we are like a large family,” Slade said.

Bowman agreed.

“It is like a family,” he said. “We trust each other because we’re riding in those parades inches away from each other, so we have kind of a close relationship. Sometimes too close.”

That’s because of the danger any given show could pose.

“When we’ve got those big bikes and you’re only inches away from each other, if one guy in the middle decides he can’t keep it upright or has trouble maneuvering, then it causes a ... chain reaction through the group,” Bowman said. “Knock on wood, we haven’t had any real catastrophes in all the years.”

The group will start its show at around 10:45 a.m. on July 25. The parade, which will travel along Sussex Avenue and Main Street, will follow the drill team’s performance at 11 a.m.



A rider with the Tenino Motorcycle Drill Team performs prior to the start of the Tenino Oregon Trail Days parade.

that it’s pretty much two (shows) a month.”

Ron Slade, the team captain, said the group has enveloped the personal lives of its members.

“Because we spend so much time practicing, and time doing the shows, our wives — or other halves — are all involved, too,



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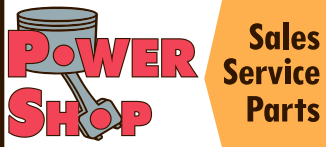
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Jesse Smith / File photo

Joe Akin, of Olympia, loads his custom made 50 caliber flint lock rifle during the black powder shoot at Tenino's Oregon Trail Days.

‘Mountain Man’ History on Full Display With Puget Sound Free Trappers Exhibition

CONTEST: *Gib Isaakson Memorial Black Powder Shoot Enters its 43rd Year*

BY ERIC ROSANE

For the Chronicle and Nisqually Valley News

It’s no secret that folks back in the day led a tenacious, hardier kind of life. Take it this way: There weren’t any highways back in the mid 19th century.

Before the era of Uncle Sam, the “highway” of the time was almost always something geographic: a river stream, brush of trail, valley or plateau. And, perhaps if you were lucky, a mountain man

would serve as your Google Maps.

If you’re looking to learn more about “mountain men” — the various fur trappers, explorers and vagrants that meandered the lonesome West — then you won’t need to go too far. The history of the mountain man will be on full display during Oregon Trail Days as the Puget Sound Free Trappers camp out and host the 43rd annual Gib Isaakson Memorial Black Powder Shootout competition.

The group will set up their camp — a historic, living museum of sorts — at the Tenino City Park from Friday, July 23, to Sunday, July 25.

The Puget Sound Free Trappers (PSFT) are a group of at least a dozen historical reenactors who sport canvas tents and rifles



Pete Caster / File photo

Mike Nesbitt, of Olympia, fires his musket during the black powder shooting contest on Saturday at Tenino's Oregon Trail Days.

faithful to the era. For more than three decades, the Littlerock-based group has hosted the Oregon Trail Days staple competition, which will take place predominantly on Saturday and Sunday.

Tyler Whitworth, Oregon Trail Days organizer and past Tenino Area Chamber of Commerce president, said it’s a great chance for families to examine the ruggedness of life prior to modern conveniences. It’s pioneer history as it would be shown back in those days.

“When you see all of them in action, it really gives you a taste of what it was like to be a pioneer,” he said, adding later: “You get a lot of respect for the pioneers because it took real skill back then. You had to load (rifles) just right, follow a certain process for each round.”

Tom Brown, a member of the Puget Sound Free Trappers, is serving as this year’s booshway. A booshway is the event organizer, or as Brown likes to affectionately describe his work, he’s the event’s “glorified kitten herder.”

But there’s nothing really catty about it. Brown said his favorite part about being associated with the PSFT is the friendships that develop between all the trappers.



Pete Caster / File photo

Nearly two dozen people competed in the black powder shooting contest at a past Oregon Trail Days in Tenino.

“The biggest thing is the comradery that we have. We’ll sit around the fire at night and talk and laugh and pick on each other,” he said. “To me, it’s the people I’ve known. The friends that I’ve made, the friends that I’ve lost over the years. That’s probably the biggest thing for me.”

While the group’s history is rather shrouded in mystery, Brown said the PSFT’s founding goes back to the 1970s. The primary purpose was, and still remains to

this day, to reenact the life of the mountain man during the height of the fur trading era, which involves plenty of “primitive camping.” That means canvas tents, campfire dinners and a whole lot of fresh air.

“We try to be as authentic as we can to the time period, especially when we go into a setting like Oregon Trail Days when the public is allowed to come around camp, visit with us,” Brown said, encouraging everyone who’s interested to approach them and ask questions.

The black powder shooting competition will feature traditional side lock arms, open iron sights, with loose black powder and use of patched round balls. No inline rifles will be permitted.

Traders and mountain men will start showing up at 8 a.m. Thursday. Donation of a \$25 value prize for the competition is required for traders to set up their wares. The row will formally open Friday.

Registration for the black powder shootoff begins at 7 a.m. on Saturday, with first relays starting at 9 a.m.

From noon to 1:45 p.m., the PSFT will host a “public shoot” event for any Oregon Trail Days attendee looking to get their fingers ashy. Shoot a musket loader rifle for \$1 a shot at a gong 25 yards away.

The “pee wee shoot” will run alongside the public shoot and will be free to kids younger than 12. For kids age 12 to 16, an entry fee of \$6 is required. This event will involve prizes, including penny whistles and bandanas.

“There’s all sorts of trinkets that are laid out for the kids,” Brown said. “They’re just happy as little clams to be out there and shoot an actual muzzleloader. ... It’s quite an experience.”

During the public and pee wee shoots, organizers load up a “reduced shot” with less powder. It’s safe fun for pioneers young and old alike.

“Muzzleloaders don’t really kick as hard to begin with. It’s more like a gentle shove to your shoulder. ... The rapport isn’t as sharp and recoil isn’t as sharp as compared to a modern firearm,” he said.

The competition will resume at 2 p.m. Saturday. Brown said the culminating rounds, easily the most interesting part of the showcase, will be held at 9 a.m. Sunday, with a “candy cannon” being fired at noon. Winners and prizes will be announced at 2 p.m.



Justyna Tomtas / File photo

A reenactor plugs his ears after he lights a cannon that shot out candy during the Oregon Trail Days event in Tenino.

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Jesse Smith / File photo

Smoke-trailed embers fly out of the barrel of a flint lock rifle during the black powder shoot hosted by the Puget Sound Free Trappers at Oregon Trail Days.

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Justyna Tomtas / File photo

Kids in a school bus wave to the crowd during the Oregon Trail Days parade in Tenino.

2021 Oregon Trail Days

SCHEDULE FOR JULY 23-25

Oregon Trail Days is an annual event hosted by Puget Sound Free Trappers and the Tenino Area Chamber of Commerce. The event offers a parade, a rock and gem show, black powder shoots, vendors of all kinds and lots of food. The event always takes place on the fourth weekend in July.

**Dates and times below are subject to change. For up to date information, go online to www.teninoacc.org and click on the "Oregon Trail Days (OTD)" tab.*

Oregon Trail Days Parade

Saturday, July 24
8:30 to 10:30 a.m.:
Check-in at Parkside
Elementary School,
301 E. Central Ave.
9:30 a.m.: Judging begins
10:45 a.m.:
**Tenino Motorcycle
Drill Team**
performance starts
11 a.m.: Parade starts

Arts Market

located on the north side
of Olympia Street by the
Stone Carver's Shed
10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on
Saturday

Rock and Gem Show

located on Stage Street
at Parkside Elementary
School
9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on
Saturday and Sunday

41st Annual Gib Isaakson Memorial Black Powder Shoot

located at Tenino City Park
on Park Avenue East
9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on
Saturday
9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Sunday

Farmers Market

located on Olympia Street
10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on
Saturday

Tenino Pioneer Village

located at the Tenino
Depot Museum will feature
free activities for families
where people can try
stone carving, candle
making, blacksmithing,
rope-making and
wood-working.
10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Friday
10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
on Saturday
11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Sunday



File photo

Jerry Rowland leads the Tenino Motorcycle Drill team down Sussex Avenue in Tenino as they warm up the crowd prior to the start of the Oregon Trail Days parade.



Jesse Smith / File photo

Tenino Mayor Wayne Fournier waves to the crowds as he and his family take part in the Oregon Trail Days parade.



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