



The Savannah Portage Encampment and Rendezvous offered visitors a glimpse into the 1800's. The Rendezvous was held in conjunction with the Southwest St. Louis County Fair in Floodwood. The event is sponsored by The Four Rivers Heritage Society.

A rendezvous with the past

By Jessica Phoenix

Much of the past few years of my life I've been a bit of a wanderer. I've never really known who I am or where I

came from. I feel like I've spent years roaming somewhat aimlessly as an orphan of sorts, I decided to make my way north to the Great Sea and try to find out

where my roots are. This is a difficult task when you don't have much to base your search on. I knew that at

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Rendezvous

25th Fall Color Festival Sept. 15

The Floodwood Business and Community Partnership has announced the event schedule for the 25th Annual Floodwood Fall Color Festival, which will be held Saturday September 15, 2018.

The cars will start rolling in at 8:00 AM. The car show will be held on Main Street. Judging will take place until 1:00 P.M. and trophies awarded at approximately 2:00 P.M.. The Floodwood Fair Association Pancakes will be available in the Downtown Fair Center from 8 AM to 11 AM. The flea market, craft show, and farmers market will be in the open area between Northview Bank and the water tower. The Pie Baking Contest and bake sale will be in the Downtown Fair Center with

judging beginning at 10:00 AM. Floodwood Farm & Feed will host a farmer's swap meet from 9 AM to 12 P.M.. Free Corn on the Cobb at 11:30 AM will be served on the west side of the Town Square Building by the FST. The third annual Family Fun Day hosted by Floodwood New Life Church will be held at the Savanna Drifters Building from 11:00 AM to 3:00 P.M.. The St. Louis County Catholic Church is hosting a goodwill lunch at 1:00 P.M. at the church and bingo to follow at 2 P.M.. STL 5K Night Glow Festival will be held from 7:45 P.M. to 8:15 P.M..

The Children's Tractor Pedal Pull will not be held this fall.

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Fall fest

St. Louis County Board holds meeting in Meadowlands

Tuesday morning, September 4th, the St. Louis County Board of Commissioners held one of their meetings at the community center in Meadowlands. All the commissioners were in attendance along with several folks from local offices and a handful of local residents.

The meeting started with a moment of silence for those in service and those who have lost their lives serving our country, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Commissioner Nelson. After, he mentioned that was the quietest moment of silence he's heard in all his years of starting a meeting.

Meadowlands City Clerk John Stoessel opened the meeting with a brief welcome, followed by the Customer Service Star Award being presented to Jacob Lassila by Sheriff Litman. Lassila

earned the award for his work on the night of December 26, 2017 when the former Hibbing fire chief Steve Gillitzer's home burned resulting in four deaths, Gillitzer, his wife and two grandchildren. One grandchild survived due to Gillitzer's heroic actions.

Lassila was the ECS (Emergency Communication System) dispatcher the night of the fire. Litman shared a letter from the Hibbing Fire Chief Erik Jankila that explained how Lassila's work made "a hard night more tolerable" and that he exemplified what fire dispatch should be. Commissioner Nelson of Virginia presented the award with great emotion, pausing during his congratulations to reign in the tears before saying "We lost someone we knew well."

The meeting started with Commissioner Jewell mentioning the well-known Sax-Zim Bog Birding Festival that takes place in Meadowlands. He

acknowledged the amazing effort that goes into the event, noting that the bog has even been featured in a movie.

The floor was then opened for those who came to speak to the council. Peter Ringhofer of Elmer was the first to speak. He asked the board for direction on dealing with ditches in his area. Several fields flooded last year causing farmers to lose their crop of hay and oats because the water could not drain through the culverts because the ditches are so overgrown. In research how to clear the ditches, Ringhofer was told to

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SLC



St. Louis County Commissioners pose for a photo following the Customer Service Star Award being presented to Jacob Lassila by Sheriff Litman. Lassila earned the award for his work on the night of December 26, 2017 when the former Hibbing fire chief Steve Gillitzer's home burned resulting in four deaths.

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Rendezvous

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some point in the mid part of the 18th century my dad's family had come from Sweden and settled in the area now considered Grand Marais up the north shore of Gichigami (Ojibwa for "The Great Sea"). My mom's family had come from mostly Wales and Scotland and had settled in the Mississippi River valley south of the Great Sea.

I grew up somewhere in between. When I was 13 years old my family's farm was decimated by the biggest wind storm anyone has ever seen in these parts. A funnel just reached out of the sky and licked up everyone and everything in its path. It was a disaster, the likes of which no one had ever heard, much less seen. We once had a sprawling property. Hundreds of acres filled with horses. My mother was in the horse trade business, she supplied horses to the soldiers, pioneers and cowboys. My father was the dog man. He had half wolf sled dogs which he also supplied to pioneers as well as natives and fur traders.

Not too long before that big storm hit, my mom said she could feel something coming on the horizon, she wasn't sure just what it was but she knew we'd never be able to see it through. Mom dresses 1/2 native and 1/2 pioneer most of the time. She never really talks about where her blood is from, she says it's all in who you feel the most comfortable around, not what's in your blood. Dad on the other hand is a Scandinavian through and through.

So when she felt that storm coming she grabbed our fastest horse and father grabbed his most trusted dog, she put my brother and I with as much food as she could gather, blankets and an extra set of clothes and every penny my parents had saved up on that horse and sent us off into the wilderness. She told us never to look back. She said Vite (she pronounced it vee-tah) will take you where you need to go even if you don't know where that is (Vite is French for fast).

Vite is a tall beautiful mare, a silver color with a black mane, tail and legs and a black stripe down her back. She was a descendant of the original Spanish steeds of the 16th

century but her parents were captured from the wild. They were feral but gentle. Vite is a storm of a horse.

Daddy then took Stark his most beloved dog (Stark is Swedish for strong) and told him never to leave our sides. Stark is almost as big as a timber wolf, solid black except with silver undertones in his face and on his back with eyes as golden as the bright summer moon. He is as strong as a bull and as protective as his wolf ancestors.

The two of us, 13 and 10 years old flew off into the wilderness, not sure what would become of us or our family we left behind. We just knew we couldn't go back and we had to run as fast as we could. We spent years just wandering and roaming, trying to find our way. I managed to find my brother a nice family to watch after him. He was still a little boy and had many things to learn. I left him and Stark with an Ojibwa encampment I met on the southern shore of the Great Sea. I check on him every now and again to make sure he is still ok but I knew I had things to do that were far too dangerous for a little boy.

We became good friends, a family of sorts with the Ojibwa people and I know that they always have our back. Vite and I, shortly after settling my brother and Stark in took off to try and make a life for ourselves and to try and support my little brother and hopefully make our way back one day to reunite with him permanently.

I had heard by way of a friend that there was a Rendezvous encampment up west of Gichigami on a series of rivers. It is about a day's journey, by foot from the lake. I was told that there may be some people there from the Grand Marais region, I figured what did I have to lose. Vite and I could make it there in about a day. We were roaming near the Canadian border, looking for work.

I had started to write with all the free time I had, just my horse and I. Horses make good company but they don't talk back unfortunately so they aren't real good for conversation. The paper and pencil tends to be a good release from the mental isolation of animal companionship.

I had originally intended to go to the Rendezvous encampment to maybe find



For this special feature by Jessica Phoenix, dressed and acted as if she were a journalist in the early 1800's to write this piece during the Rendezvous at the Floodwood Fair.

some of the people that my dad had sold dogs to or maybe write a story about living conditions in fur trade encampments. Little did I know that this journey would become one of the biggest soul searching lessons of my life.

When I arrived at camp I realized that there were a couple of familiar faces. I think they were people I remember from my time with the Ojibwa. There was a baker and her husband. She made the best breads and he walked around with a tall top hat. The other people I recognized were a seamstress and her husband, he was a soldier. My first purchase was actually to get new clothes from her. I'm not sure how these people were familiar to me but I'm sure they must have come to my parents for animals or know my brother's foster family.

From the moment that I entered the encampment, I noticed that everyone was oddly familiar and friendly. I had never known trappers and fur traders to be particularly social but these folks were cut from a different cloth. Even though aside from a pair of draft horses Vite was the only horse in town, they quickly tied her up and proceeded to give her some of the limited provisions they had available. I accepted this knowing that I had enough money in my side pouch to provide for my horse companion and I for a few days. We are used to fending for ourselves and normally eat pretty cheap so we had a little extra reserves on hand

rich proprietor and his family for their biannual order.

I believe though, of all the people I met the most interesting must have been Jackie she is one of the Metis (pronounced May-Tee) which is French for "mixed blood". She is another seamstress, like the lady I remember from my past but the thing that I found so interesting on this particular trip (there were many more to come in the future) was the fact that she was 1/2 native and 1/2 pioneer, just as my mother always acted. Like I said, I'm not sure exactly what mother's bloodlines were but I would imagine them being something like Jackie's.

When I first arrived at the encampment, I couldn't help but being drawn to her brightly colored clothing, feathers in her hats and flashier appearance than most of the other inhabitants in the encampment. She explained to me that Metis are the descendants usually of French fur trade fathers and native mothers and they are married according to the custom of the country because there were no churches for Christian marriages. The women are considered country wives. The children of this marriage according to the custom of the country are very adept at assimilating into different groups of people. They are usually always bilingual if not trilingual and have learned several skills that make them very successful. The women are usually expert seamstresses.

The last night I was in town there was a big dance. There were notes of all different cultures. Different dances, music and styles. Just as before, no one seemed to mind this mixing of cultures. It just seemed to add to the colorful brilliance of this place. I myself am not even a big dancer but I managed to get out a couple of times and really enjoyed myself. I guess I still didn't find out who my brother and I are by blood but finding people like those at this Rendezvous helps me to not really care so much. I've found new family in these people and I think Vite and I may stick around here for awhile. Pamela, the baker told me that they might be in need of a record keeper and my pencil and paper are always ready to work. Maybe Vite and I can be reunited with my brother and Stark soon if we can work for awhile keeping records and doing some odd jobs.

from washing laundry and cooking for an elderly couple we know up in the boundary lake region by the Canadian border. I heard they had old money and came from a wealthy family out east. However they vehemently refused to speak of such things. They just wanted to be left in peace in their private place in the woods.

I think Vite was happy to have some horse companionship and a warm spot by the fire with a pile of hay so I let her be with her new friends and roamed around the encampment a little, trying to acquaint myself with the residents. I was surprised by the atmosphere of this place. Everyone was just happy to be themselves. There was no worry for whether you were native or pioneer. No preconceived notions of an individual's place in things.

A lady named Sledge was one of several blacksmiths and ran the archery range, yes they even had their own archery range. A man named Turtle and his wife Sweet Pea lived in a native style teepee, I'm not sure if they were part native or not but honestly it didn't really matter. Midge, a sweet lady who lived with her young granddaughter raised her own rabbits and sold the furs. Stoney, another lady I met, traded in more exotic furs like coyote, fox and Martin. She was also the local candle maker. Her dogs were so great, I'm sure Stark would have loved them. There was even a shoemaker, whom I was told would not normally be there but I guess she had to take the measurements of a