

Save America's Treasures
Heritage Inscriptions
First Interim Report, June 1, 2006

Award Number: ST-00-05-0007-05

Awarded Institution Name: Montana State University - Billings

First Interim Report: June 1, 2006

Period Covered by the Report: March 15, 2006 (Date of Award) to May 31, 2006

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Performance Description

a. What is the purpose of the project?

The purpose of this project is to digitally document, organize and archive historic signatures, dates and artwork spanning the time period from the 1800's to the present. The data is being organized into a searchable database and supplemented with physical reproductions obtained from non-contact three-dimensional scanning technology.

While the original focus of the grant to document "locations on federally administered lands" has not been altered, nor will funds be directed toward private property, it should be noted that publicity from the grant has resulted in notifications of heritage inscriptions located on private property. Through volunteer fieldwork these locations will be included in the completed database.

b. What activities or services have been carried out with project funds to support the purpose of the project? If the project schedule has not been met, explain why and describe the steps being taken to return the project to its proposed schedule of completion.

Immediately upon notification of the grant, work began to organize the project. The first step was to organize an advisory committee. Members of this committee include:

Save America's Treasures Grant Steering Committee 2005-2006

Halcyon LaPoint – Custer National Forest Archaeologist

Dr. Glade Hadden – BLM Archaeologist

Dr. Stan Wilmouth – State Historic Preservation Office,

David Wade – BLM Curation Center

Eileen Wright – MSU-Billings Library (Special Collections)

Julie Dial – Western Heritage Center

Tom Rust and Tim Urbaniak – MSU-Billings Faculty

The first step of the grant was to review the records for known sites. This has revealed many inscriptions that, while known, have been largely ignored. Many of these inscriptions are recorded due to their proximity to Native American rock art sites. Many of these locations are being revisited for a more detailed survey of the surrounding areas. Field surveying that occurred between the official notification date and the availability of grant funding was carried out with matching monies from a separate Archaeology Field Team account.

Between the time of our original proposal and the awarding of the grant, we were successful through another grant in obtaining a three-dimensional scanner, a supporting laptop (suitable for some fieldwork but not as rugged as our proposed machine), and a large format printer. This supporting equipment provided us an early start in evaluating the processes of the three-dimensional scanner and further supports our matching funds. When the grant notification arrived we submitted (and received approval for) an equipment substitution (Appendix A - 01).

The funds became officially available to us during the first week of April. Immediately following, equipment was ordered and is now being processed through the University procurement system. While slight variance always occurs during exact pricing, equipment purchase prices are in line with proposal estimates.

At the time of this submittal, mileage is being expended to support fieldwork relevant to the grant. The team this summer includes Tim Urbaniak, Dr. Tom Rust, three students from the MSU-B Honors Program that are receiving credit for their participation and a cohort of volunteers. Fieldwork will continue through the summer – and then into the future.

An accounting of time is being documented to verify donated time for matching funds.

c. What are the outputs of the project activities or services to support the purpose of the project? Explain what documentation is used to report the outputs.

Following the grant notification, a press release was issued from Montana State University – Billings outlining the role and scope of the grant. This generated responses from entities and individuals interested in contributing to the project. Outputs generated from the communications resulted in presentations to the following:

- Presentation to local historians and archaeologists at the BLM Curation Center

- Presentation to the Billings Gem and Mineral Club

- Presentation to the Montana Archaeological Society

- Presentation to the Billings Exchange Club

PowerPoint presentations from these occasions are on file.

A primary output is, of course, the recording of sites. While we are still in the early stages of the grant, over 200 signatures from the 1800's have been recorded along with many post-1900 inscriptions. This number is literally growing daily and is expected to be in the thousands at the conclusion of the grant. The primary recording site form has been developed and is currently in use as the foundation for site documentation. Attached is an example from the first site officially recorded. Chas Hoe is recorded in the 1880 US Census as living in Pennsylvania; however in 1889 he was in a cave overlooking Billings, Montana (Appendix A – 02).

Since the availability of funds (4-1-06) occurs so close to the date of this first report, the primary database software, Past Perfect, is yet to arrive. A more detailed count will be supplied with the next progress report along with database appearance.

d. What are the outcomes of the project activities or services to support the purpose of the project? Explain what documentation is used to report the outcomes.

One outcome of project activities is that we have been notified of many sites worth documenting. Input from the general public is appearing to be quite valuable in not only identifying sites, but in many cases providing anecdotal information about the

significance of the incisions. This is being documented through field notes and digital voice recording.

Another outcome is that we are being invited to participate on other projects of historical significance, for instance, we have been requested to assist in the digital scanning of slate fragments from the Donner Party. The primary documentation for these contacts are email communications.

An outcome that is of great importance to the University is to engage students. Participation of students in the Honors Program indicates the interest of quality student participants. We also have a cohort of graduates that are participating in the project as volunteers. This reflects a continued interest in the project along with support for our institution beyond graduation. Documentation for this outcome is in the form of email communication, documented project hours and student enrollment data (for class content or independent studies specific to the project).

A somewhat delicate outcome is that we may be effecting the perception of these inscriptions. Since many archaeologists consider these inscriptions vandalism or graffiti, many have gone unrecorded. Some of these same archaeologists are now contacting us to direct us to these inscriptions and in doing so are engaging in conversations that indicate that some perceptions may be shifting. Documentation for this outcome is anecdotal at this time.

e. Report other results of the project activities.

A benefit that is obvious at the academic level is the opportunity for students to engage this cutting-edge equipment that we would otherwise not have. This results in graduates better able to serve the workforce through their current technical skills.

During early field tests with the three-dimensional scanner it became obvious that positioning the magnetic tracker module near incisions was a difficult proposition. Drafting and Design students solved the problem by designing a non-metallic tripod constructed from PVC components. This portable break-down tripod facilitates over six feet of vertical movement, over four feet of horizontal mast movement and full 360 degrees of rotation. This creative solution greatly facilitates scanning along irregular cliff lines.

f. Additional comments/anecdotal information.

It is apparent that the general public is greatly supportive of this project. Conversations at presentations, people contacting us with information and the willingness of volunteers looking to help all indicate that this is a timely, relevant project.

This summer is (already) very busy with this work!

3. Certification

In submitting this report, I certify that all of the information is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Name and title of the person submitting the report and date of submission:

Tim Urbaniak Archaeology Field Team Director 5-30-06