

Ponca

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first.”

“It is funny what America owes to these rich Europeans that didn’t have anything better to do than to explore our West,” added Mark Wetmore, a Vermillion native and original owner of the art piece.

The work is based on a scene Bodmer observed on May 12, 1833, while aboard the steamer “Yellowstone,” bound from St. Louis to Fort Clark.

The day before, May 11, when the boat was stopped near present-day Springfield, three Ponca Indians came aboard and were given a lift up-river to their camp near Bazile Creek on the Nebraska side, not far east of present-day Niobrara.

Bodmer sketched the moment on May 12 when the three Poncas, including their chief Schuh-De-Gá-Che (“He Who Smokes”), were ferried ashore to be greeted by an enthusiastic welcoming party of curious children and adults all wrapped in furs or blankets.

“We currently have a few displays here that feature artwork that was done by Bodmer,” said Ponca State Park Superintendent Jeff Fields.

The Ponca (Panka, or Punka), whose

name denotes “sacred head,” are closely related to the Omaha, Osage and Kansa tribes, all of whom speak the same dialect.

Both the Ponca State Park and the town of Ponca are named for the Native American tribe that once inhabited the area.

Ponca State Park features one of the state’s most comprehensive outdoor/environmental education programs. The park has a large interpretive display/exhibit area, which makes it the perfect place to house this piece of American history.

“When I was at the USD Foundation, we had several retreats up here,” Scribner said. “I was also here for the dedication of the Missouri National Recreational River Resource and Education Center back in 2003.”

Bodmer undertook numerous studies of villages, dances and people, who were often both intrigued and delighted by his work. The portraits are particularly notable for their capturing of individual personalities, as well as forming a primary account of what were to become virtually lost cultures.

“Within a few years after Maximilian’s trip, the smallpox hit all the tribes,” Scribner said. “He documented the Indians about the last time anyone could document them before the incursion of the white race.”

There are two versions of the original artwork; one is at the Joslyn Art Museum in Omaha, Nebraska, and the other is at the

Newberry Institute in Chicago.

Unlike Bodmer’s original painting, this particular piece is a more detailed rendering. Along with a narrative of Maximilian’s trip, a second volume was issued with all the prints done by Bodmer. No more than 1,000 copies of the second volume were made, which makes it particularly valuable.

Although Bodmer did not illustrate this particular piece, he chose the artists, the medium to use and he supervised all the work that went into creating the commercialized copies.

“Bodmer was an accomplished artist before he came to this country, so he already knew the best engravers,” Wetmore said. “He picked out the best ones and directed their work in recreating his originals.”

Wetmore and Scribner also donated two books to the park to accompany the engraving: “Karl Bodmer’s America” by David Hunt and “People of the First Man,” which offers a complete narrative of the Prince Maximilian expedition that extended as far as present-day Montana.

“This is a detailed discussion of what was here 30 years after the expedition of Lewis & Clark,” Wetmore said.

A native of Sioux Falls, Scribner is moving to Olympia, Washington, next month. In preparation for the move, he has been downsizing. His friends refer to him as an

“amateur historian” and he has built up quite a collection of books and artifacts.

He also wrote a history of Spirit Mound Township in the Vermillion area, one of the few remaining Missouri River landmarks visited by Lewis and Clark on their historic journey of 1804-1806.

Wetmore, vice president of the Spirit Mound Trust and a USD graduate, first gave the art piece as a gift to Scribner when he retired from the USD Foundation in 2006.

“My parents and I have been interested in Bodmer prints for a long time,” Wetmore said. “It’s a local area and Scribner is such a talented, amateur historian, I thought it would be a great gift for him.”

“We are going to showcase this as a display in the Missouri River Outdoor Expo we have coming up,” Fields said. “We are going to have some other Lewis and Clark artwork displayed and this will tie in nicely with that.”

The permanent place for the artwork has yet to be determined, but the value that this rendering brings to the park will help illustrate the history of the area.

“The river is right here; they all had to come up here,” Scribner said. “Every time I look at the river, I think about these things.”

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MMC

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of different angles, did not include a recommendation either way. But that’s likely the route Mount Marty would take for any discussion on adding sports, according to Long.

“It would have to be part of a broader discussion with the entire Mount Marty community, and with the Yankton community,” he said. “The support would have to be there from the community.”

While football may not be the fastest-growing sport in collegiate athletics, it’s certainly on the rise.

Between every NCAA and NAIA division, a total of 767 schools played football in 2014, an all-time high. And according to the National Football Foundation, there were 22 NAIA schools that started playing football between 2008-16 — the most among every division.

The most recent example of a regional school adding football would be Presentation College in Aberdeen, which began playing football in 2011. Before that came Dordt College, which announced its decision in 2005 and began playing in 2008.

Among the factors to consider when adding something like football, according to Iverson, would be costs, impact on a school’s culture, facilities and an increase in enrollment.

COSTS

The addition of football, Iverson made clear, isn’t as simple as signing a recruit and supplying them with a helmet and jersey.

“There are a lot of factors involved,” Iverson said.

An additional 80-100 students, for example, would mean more scholarship money, additional staff (coaches and those to work home games) and equipment costs. That can be a lot for a small school like Mount Marty — with an athletic budget of \$1.3 million during its last reporting year — to absorb, Iverson said.

During that internal feasibility study a few years ago, Iverson said he was “aggressive with the expenses and very conservative on the income” — as far as what Mount Marty could expect with the addition of football.

“I didn’t want to bias the report, but wanted to make sure there wouldn’t be any surprises,” Iverson said.

During its most recent report (June 2013-July 2014) to the Department of Education, Mount Marty claimed to have 520 full-time undergraduate students, as compared to Dakota Wesleyan, for example, which had 698 full-time undergrads.

Using that comparison, Dakota Wesleyan (which offers football and wrestling,

which MMC doesn’t) had 94 football players, three full-time coaches and spent \$697,819 on football — as part of an athletic budget of \$3.8 million.

Among other South Dakota examples: Dakota State University in Madison spent \$329,412 on football and Presentation College spent \$860,458 on football.

CULTURE

In January of this year, Clarke University — a small, religious school in Dubuque, Iowa — announced that it will begin playing football in 2018. And in that release, Clarke’s athletic director claimed that football will “help foster a full college experience and further develop the campus atmosphere we are striving to create.”

That is another factor schools like Mount Marty College would eventually have to consider: The impact on the campus culture, for good or bad.

“If you add football, that’s a big team,” Long said. “And at a small college, you have to look at how that impacts the culture that you already have.”

That was something Dordt College officials saw as a benefit when the Sioux Center, Iowa-based school decided in 2005 to add football. Although wins have been hard to come by for the Defenders (they went 1-10 that first season), the impact of football on the campus has been positive, according to athletic director Glenn Bouma.

“We feel like it’s an opportunity to reach into another group of young people that we could hopefully enhance their overall college experience,” he said.

There would understandably be an increase in enrollment if Mount Marty, for example, decided to sponsor football. The number of students at the Yankton campus numbers in the couple hundred range (with 60 percent of those female), and

the addition of 80-100 male students would, however, present a gender equity problem for Mount Marty, according to Iverson.

“That would put our proportions out of whack,” he said. “What would you add for women’s sports? And again, we would run into the facility issue again.”

On the positive side, the opportunity for students to trek across town — to either Williams Field or Crane-Youngworth Field in Yankton — for a football game on a Saturday afternoon would be hard to turn down, Iverson added.

“It’s hard to find a student that wouldn’t like to go watch a football game,” he said.

FACILITIES

During the winter months in Yankton, outdoor teams at Mount Marty such as baseball, softball, track and tennis all have to share practice time at Laddie E. Cimpr Arena with sports such as volleyball and basketball.

The sudden addition of football would undoubtedly strain that lone facility, according to Iverson.

“We want to add sports right now, we really do, but we can’t with the facilities we have,” he said.

Those concerns would be alleviated by some kind of additional facility for not only current Lancer athletes, but prospective recruits — who may be choosing between Mount Marty and another school that has better facilities.

“Those facilities are so important when you’re a young man or woman,” Long said. “You really want to know the people you’re going to be around, and you want to see the sort of facilities you’ll be able to use.”

“It’s only natural.” With that in mind, the pursuit of a second facility — perhaps with space for those outdoor sports — is on the school’s radar.

“It’s time to take care of

that,” Long said.

‘POSITION OF STRENGTH’

As he sat in his office at Bede Hall last week, Long provided a kind of new-to-the-job analysis of his school’s athletics program.

Calling baseball “the shining example,” he expressed his desire to do what he can to ensure every Mount Marty athletic team is a regular contender in the GPAC. Since it joined the league in 2000, the school has finished last in the All-Sports Standings every year — due in large part because, many of those years, it didn’t offer certain sports such as football, wrestling, golf and tennis.

“Personally, I would like to see a lot of our other sports become more competitive,” Long said. “And then from a position of strength, you can figure out if you want to expand, or what the next direction is.”

That exact path is Iverson’s number one goal, he said.

Women’s basketball has been a regular contender in the GPAC — and has twice reached the NAIA National Tournament — under coach Tom Schlimgen, while his women’s golf program is on the rise. Volleyball reached the GPAC Tournament last season for the first time in a

few years, while other sports have had flashes in recent years.

The key, Iverson said, is to raise those sports’ profiles before worrying about the addition of something like football.

“We have to make sure we’re taking care of the sports we do have, before we bring in something else,” Iverson said. “We’ve got to provide the facilities they need to be competitive.”

On the other hand, if Mount Marty did ever add football, it would have to make sure that the program is stable enough to sustain itself for the long term, Iverson said.

“It’s not a sport that you start, and three years down the road realize you made a mistake, and just change your mind,” he said.

Iverson calls that option a ‘sunset clause,’ in which a recently-added sport has a kind of out: If numbers, for example, aren’t where you’d prefer, you can decide to drop the sport.

That’s not the case with football.

“You’re going to have to go in with both feet and take off running,” Iverson said. “It takes a while to get up to the full staffing, but even after four years, we would still be in a situation where we would

be losing a significant amount of money.”

To that first point, Dordt’s Bouma agreed. Football is a sport that requires patience to truly understand where you stand, he said, based on a couple recruiting cycles.

“At the bare minimum, it could be 10-12 years before you really see where you’re at,” Bouma said. “You’re always evaluating, but it’s not something you can dabble in and try it.”

Some schools have, however, found early success.

Grand View University (Des Moines, Iowa), for example, started playing football in 2008 and won the 2013 NAIA national championship.

According to the National Football Foundation (NFF), the 44 schools that added football between 2008-13 have combined for 10 conference titles and 12 playoff appearances.

Even to the idea of considering the addition of football, Mount Marty remains clear: It’s not interested right now, according to Long.

“Certainly some people are choosing to do that,” he said. “I don’t ever want to say never, but it’s not something we’ve talked about yet.”

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