



by George Day

The commemorative button pictured above is intended to pay tribute to one of Asotin's early citizens, We-au-koomt, who was "of infinite service" to the Lewis and Clark Expedition as it journeyed to and from the Pacific. Considered one of the great Nez Perce chiefs of his time, he headed about 20 camps along Asotin Creek. Lewis and Clark indentified him by the fact that he always wore the horn of a Bighorn sheep "suspended by a cord to his left arm". He met them, probably a short distance up the Clearwater, and on the morning of October 11, 1805, guided them to the Alpowa where they "Purchased 7 dogs & fish roots & to eat". At this point the chief departed and went "by land as we" descended it by water last fall quite to the Columbia, and I believe was very instrumental in precurring us a hospital and friendly reception among the natives". (Clark)

Upon returning in early May, 1806, as the Expedition ascended Pataha Creek near Pomeroy, Lewis and Clark were surprised to be greeted by We-au-koomt and his party.

This meeting is symbolized by the button. Clark, he had now come a considerable distance to meet us...we continued up the creek bottoms...to a place at which the road leaves the creek and assends the hill to the high plains." They made camp there on the night of May 3, 1806. Even now as we ascend Highway 12 to the plateau it is easy to imagine the site of this camp.

Both Lewis and Clark repeatedly expressed their gratitude to We-au-koomt and presented him with a "Necklace which had a disc that reflected images." This originated the name Looking Glass and was passed along to chiefs of the Asotin area.

Proceeds from the button, a well made keepsake of Asotin's Centennial, will be used to restore Asotin's historic structures to their former attractiveness for newcomers and tourists. It may be purchased at places of business throughout the Valley for \$1. It should be worn at Asotin Days Celebration, August 13 and 14 and will entitle the bearer to half the price of a spaghetti feed Saturday noon, August 13, 1983.