

**MOUNTAIN MAN PROGRAM  
MIRANDA CAMP PROFILE****Camp Name: Miranda****Year: 1838****Theme: Mountain Man Rendezvous****Historical Significance of Camp Theme to American History:**

The fur trade was the largest industry in the United States for over a decade. It also facilitated the mapping of the American West and the settling of the Rocky Mountains. The rendezvous was a defining feature of the fur trade. The annual rendezvous was a practical necessity and an opportunity for social interaction and economic trade for mountain men, representatives of the fur companies, and Indians.

**Characters:**

**Marcelino.** Based on the life of Marcelino Baca. He was a rare native New Mexican trapper. He was born in Taos in 1808. He learned to trap in the 1820s through the companies that made Taos their headquarters. He also learned to pan for gold, but this talent was not seen as relevant in the face of the importance of fur. In 1832 he began nine years of living in the mountains and eating meat only. He joined Jim Bridger's Brigade in 1835. In January of 1838 he left the camp on Powder River (Wyoming) and headed south to visit family in Taos. On the way he stopped at the Rendezvous in Northern New Mexico. Marcelino would be at least bilingual (Spanish-English) and probably spoke some French as well. He could have a Spanish accent if done well.

**James.** Based on the life of James Kirker. He was born in Scotland in 1793. Due to the threat of Napoleon he was sent to the US. He arrived in New York when he was sixteen. When the US declared war on Great Britain in 1812, he joined a privateer ship to fight. His ship, "The Black Jake" was captured by a British ship off the coast of Brazil. He was taken prisoner and put on a ship to San Salvador. The prisoner ship was saved by "Old Ironsides" (the Constitution). He returned to New York and started a grocery business. He married a woman named Catharine and had a son. In 1817 relatives arrive from overseas. The relatives stayed with him while planning to travel on to St. Louis. Their enthusiasm infected him and he set out with them for the American frontier, leaving his wife to run the business. In St. Louis he opened another grocery store and prospered. James signed up with Ashley's first expedition for the Upper Missouri in 1822 but quit in 1823, contemptuous of Ashley's leadership. He felt that Ashley exploited the young and old. He was experienced and intelligent enough to not risk his life to give Ashley half of his furs. However, after returning home to Missouri, he still longed to go west. He headed west with Pratte and arrived by 1824. He made many trips back and forth from Santa Fe to Missouri in the 1820's. In 1826 he led a group that included Kit Carson on a trip into the mountains to trap. He had a child in 1833 by a woman named Rita Garcia. By now Catharine was referring to herself as a widow. In 1835 he received a license from Governor Perez to trade with the Apaches. He stayed with them the winter of 1835-1836. The Governor suspected him of stealing and fencing horses with the Apaches. The Governor rescinded the license and declared him an outlaw. He laid low until Governor Perez was killed in August 1837. The new governor removed the price on his head. By the next year he reached fame as an "Indian killer." The governor asked him to help fight the Apaches and he traveled around gathering recruits and establishing local militias. James probably spoke English with a Scots accent/brogue.

**John.** Based on the life of John Rowland. His parents were English immigrants. He was born 1791 in Maryland, and grew up in Pennsylvania. He studied surveying in Boston and became a US surveyor and trapper. John joined a company of trappers in Boston. They set out West on the Santa Fe Trail. He was baptized in the parish of Taos in 1823. In 1825 he married Maria Encarnacion Martinez of Taos. He was the first American Trapper to marry a New Mexican in the Mexican period. He illegally trapped in the Gila in 1826. Although he became a Mexican citizen in 1829, his trapping was watched closely. In 1830 he received an official license to trap in New Mexico. By 1832 he had expanded his ventures and owned a flour mill and brandy still. His "Taos Lightning" was often consumed by Mountain Men. He came to the Rendezvous to trade his goods.

**Maurice.** Based on the life of Maurice Leduc. He was born in Canada in 1808. He came West in 1820 with his father, who was also a trapper. Upon leaving St. Louis Maurice vowed to never set foot east of the Mississippi River again. He began trapping near Taos in 1825. Between 1831 and 1838 Maurice was "Free Trapping" between Taos and the Upper Missouri. He planned to set out in the fall of 1838 on one of the longest trapping expeditions in American History. One of his other ideas for success was to capture buffalo calves to sell to zoos on the East Coast. He was a grandiose planner. Maurice probably spoke with a French accent.

**Captain.** Based on the life of John Gantt. He was born the youngest of fifteen children in Maryland in 1790. He moved to Kentucky in 1808 and was appointed a Second Lieutenant in the Army in 1817. He served 12 years, operating primarily under Col. Leavenworth. They protected trapping outfits on the Upper Missouri. He was found guilty by court-martial in 1829 on falsification of pay accounts. He obtained a three year license to "trade for furs". It was taken for granted that he would trap, in addition to trade, for beaver. In 1831 he met Kit Carson at Rendezvous and soon began trapping all across the Rockies, including Mexican territory.

**Richard.** Based on the life of Richard Owens. A major Southwest trapper based out of Taos who trapped mainly between Taos and the Cimarron basin. Evidence indicated that he lived where present day Ute Park is. Spent time with Kit Carson. His complete biography is in *Mountain Men and Fur Traders of the American West* by LeRoy Hafen. This set is located in the Seton library.

**Julián Ochoa.** Julian's father arrived in North America in 1799 as a ship worker in the employ of Russian traders who harvested furs from the Northwest coast. The Kyakhta Treaty set up trade for furs from the Russians to trading centers in Mongolia. At the same time, the Hudson Bay Company was competing with the Russians for the rich source of furbearers along the West Coast from current day Washington State down to mid-California where the Spanish had colonized. Julian's father met his mother, a native tribeswoman, and she gave birth to Julian in 1814. Julian grew up listening to traders and trappers discussing business and learned from them while working around the docks as a boy. He faced a great deal of discrimination, however, which caused him to take up the solitary life of trapping, and moved south along the western slopes of the Rockies where he could trade with the Spanish with less bias. He met American expeditions trapping (illegally) into California and joined them back towards the Taos and Santa Fe trade markets. Through his contacts in Asia, he was able to acquire goods such as silks, tea, spices, and medicines.

## **Historical Dates and Events Relevant to this Camp.**

### **Background Events:**

**1804** -- St. Louis changed from French into US control and opened the gateway for the trappers.

**1807** -- Manuel Lisa explored the Northwest United States.

**1809** -- The St. Louis Missouri Fur Company began.

**1821** -- Travel to Santa Fe began via the Santa Fe Trail from Independence, Missouri.

**1822** -- The Southwestern region of the United States was explored. Ashley and Henry placed an ad for "enterprising young men" in the Missouri Republican and from it formed The Rocky Mountain Fur Company that was incorporated in 1824.

**1825** -- The first rendezvous was held.

**1829-1833** -- Golden era of beaver trapping. Taos trappers dominate the fur trade of the Southern Rocky Mountains.

**1831** -- Jedediah Smith, well-known mountain man, was killed on an expedition to begin a southwestern fur company.

**1833** -- Beaver prices were at an all time high.

**1834** -- The Rocky Mountain Fur Company was dissolved.

**1835** -- First buffalo robes were sold at rendezvous. Samuel Colt invented the revolver.

**1836** -- The American Fur Company broke up.

### **Current Events**

**1837-8** -- This is the start of the decline of the fur trade. The President is Van Buren. In 1837 there was a major smallpox outbreak in Missouri. The Trail of Tears began in 1838. Green River knives first appeared in the 1837 rendezvous.

### **Future Events/Extra Information:**

The last rendezvous was held in 1840. The Fur Trade gave way to the gold rush in 1848. Annual reenactments still occur today.

### **Costumes/Appearance:**

Pants are broadfalls in gray, white, blue, red and brown.

Shirts are simple colors, in a solid, stripe, or plaid.

Buckskin, elk skin, buffalo skin shirts and pants can be mixed with these other clothes.

Shoes are moccasins.

Leather belt with large brass or wrought iron buckles, or sash.

Hat is broad rimmed felt.

Capotes often worn.

Accessories: possibles bag, sheathed knife, "medicine bag", Native American style necklace.

**Hair styles:** Most trappers tried to wear hair short for safety reasons. Long hair might be braided or pulled back in a knot. Beards were probably shaved for rendezvous and along with longer hair were common only because circumstances inhibited shaving and barbering. Moustaches might distinguish certain nationalities, like the French. Beards and facial hair would be a character choice.

**Language:** An extensive and unique vocabulary was used among these men. To use words as are relevant is essential to a good portrayal; however, the list is too long to include here. See the Miranda Staff Research File on reserve at the Seton library and references at the end of this profile. See notes on each character for likely accents. Almost all spoke at least some of several languages...Native American languages, French, Spanish, and their own first languages by nationality and region. "Beverly Hillbillies" accents are not appropriate.

**Program Activities:** Muzzle Loading Rifle shooting, Trade tent talk, tomahawk throwing, tipi and rendezvous site visit, Mountain Ball, Mountain Man Tall Tales

**Props:**

Miranda has a large quantity of props for the trade talk at the "store". A white canvas baker's tent can be used for cooking and to add smells to the program. Buffalo robes, coyote pelts, and tin dishes also add authenticity. The staff can also demonstrate packing a burro with furs and supplies. The black-powder program can use turkey feathers, tin cans, etc for targets. Musical instruments, sewing bags for mending, anything that might be needed to maintain costume, program equipment, tools, etc. can become a "prop".

**Staff Roles and Responsibilities as Historical Interpreters:**

Black Powder: Mountain Man in character, first person interp

Trade Talk: From a Company Trader or Mountain Man "buyer" point of view in character

Tipi Talk: Mountain Man in character

Check-in: Out of character, third person interp

Tomahawk Throwing: Mountain Man in character

**Camper Role:** Greenhorn Mountain "Men" (and women), just arrived to the rendezvous.

**Positive Values:**

\*Entrepreneurship

\*Firearm safety

\*Appreciation of diverse cultures and education

\*Primitive outdoor skills

\*Appreciation of dependence upon natural resources.

\*Camaraderie and teamwork at the rendezvous.

\*Reliance on own skills to survive and prosper.

**Relationship to the Goals of the BSA:**

The Fur Trade Era represents entrepreneurship and the American philosophy of working hard, taking chances, and overcoming obstacles. It also demonstrates how the explorers learned from and appreciated other cultures. Finally, the mountain man theme emphasizes the use of outdoor skills for survival.

**References:**

**Rocky Mountain Rendezvous 1825-1840** -Fred R. Gowans

**A Life Wild and Perilous** -Robert M. Utley

**Jedediah Smith and the Mountain Men of the American West** -John Logan Allen

**Trappers and Mountain Men** -Evan Jones and Dale L. Morgan

**Mountain Men and Fur Trader of the Far West** -LeRoy Hafen

**The Taos Trappers** -David J. Weber

**Shadow on the Tetons** -David E. Jackson

**The Claiming of the American West** -John C. Jackson

**The Explorations of William H. Ashley and Jedediah Smith** -Harrison Clifford Dale

**Etienne Provost: Man of the Mountains** -Jack B. Tykal

**The American Fur Trade of the Far West, Vol I and II** -LeRoy Hafen

**Fur Trapper and Traders of the Far Southwest**-LeRoy Hafen

**French Fur Traders and Voyageurs in the American West** -LeRoy Hafen

**A Newer World: Kit Carson, John C. Fremont and the Coming of the American West** -David Roberts

**Mountain Man Sketchbook** (Available in the Seton)

**Authentic Costumes and Characters of the Wild West -E. Lisle Reedstrom**  
**Music: Bent's Old Fort Fur Trade Music Sheet (719) 384-2596**

**Lots of online information available.**