

## **Theme 4: Military**

**From Native Warriors and Buffalo Soldiers to Space Age National Defense. The Upper Missouri River Heritage Area (UMRHA) has experienced conflict and played a major role in our nation's defense.**

Subthemes:

1. Native American tribes in the region, Blackfoot, Gros Ventre, Cree, Chippewa, Metis, Crow, and others, conducted self-defense and Intertribal Warfare.
2. The Lewis and Clark Military Expedition Corps of Discovery navigated along the Upper Missouri and tributary rivers following today's Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail and Upper Missouri Breaks National Monument.
3. Other Army exploration expeditions traveled through the Heritage Area including the Pacific Railway Survey (1853-54) and Reynolds Exploration Expedition (1859-60).
4. The Mullan Military Wagon Road Expedition build a road through the region, connecting Fort Benton with Fort Walla Walla; the first military use of the new road was Major George Blake's First Dragoons from Fort Benton to Fort Walla Walla.
5. The 1<sup>st</sup> US Volunteer Infantry (Galvanized Yankees) arrived at Fort Benton in the spring of 1865, becoming the first U.S. Army unit stationed in Montana Territory.
6. Military posts were constructed in the region at Camp Cooke (1866), Fort Shaw (1867), Fort Benton (1869), and nearby Fort Assinniboine (1879).
7. Incidents and wars occurred in the region with the Blackfoot (1865-1870), the Marias Massacre (1870), Sioux (1876), and Nez Perce ending in the nearby Battle of the Bear's Paw (1877). Fort Benton is a contributing site on The Nez Perce National Historic Trail, and the trail crossed the Upper Missouri at Cow Island.
8. African American Buffalo Soldiers were stationed at Fort Shaw and Fort Assinniboine during the 1880s-90s.
9. During World War II, Gore Hill Air Base and Great Falls Air Base played vital military roles. Great Falls Air Base conducted B-17 training for the Second Bomber Group, while at Gore Hill the Seventh Ferrying Command sent over 8,000 aircraft to the Soviet Union under the Lend Lease program.

10. Early in the Cold War Great Falls Air Force Base conducted Operation Vittles, proving C-54 transport training for the Berlin Airlift.
11. From 1947, the Montana Air National Guard, based at Gore Hill, operated Fighter Squadrons; today, the Air Guard operates a C-130 Squadron in support of national defense.
12. Malmstrom Air Force Base operates a Minuteman Missile Wing in support of National Defense. This intercontinental ballistic missile capability became operational just before the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis becoming President John F. Kennedy's "Ace in the Hole" during the crisis.
13. Highland Cemetery's Soldiers Monument was the first in the United States to honor both Union and Confederate Soldiers while the Montana Veteran Memorial honors and recognizes all veterans of all branches of military service, in peace and in war.