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August 2002 Volume 28, No. 3

## ALL THEM HORSES AND ONE POOR MULE

*An accounting of the Corps of Discovery's livestock*

THE LEWIS CROSSING, BY JOHN F. CLYMER 1968



July 3, 1806: a homeward-bound Meriwether Lewis and party, including Nez Perce guides, cross the Clark Fork River with 17 horses.

PLUS: TWO MEDICINE FIGHT — BLACKFEET OR GROS VENTRES?

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*The Lewis Crossing*, John F. Clymer’s 1968 painting, shows Meriwether Lewis crossing the Clark Fork on July 3, 1806, after splitting off from Clark’s group at Travelers’ Rest during the explorers’ return from the Pacific. It illustrates Loren Gibbons’s article, beginning on page 26, about the horses and other livestock of the expedition. Courtesy Doris Clymer and The Clymer Museum of Art.



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May 2002 • Volume 28, Number 3

*We Proceeded On* is the official publication of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, Inc. Its name derives from a phrase that appears repeatedly in the collective journals of the expedition. © 2002

E. G. Chuinard, M.D., *Founder*

ISSN 02275-6706

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*We Proceeded On*, the quarterly magazine of the Foundation, is mailed to current members in February, May, August, and November.

#### Annual Membership Categories

Student \$30  
Individual/Library/Nonprofit \$40  
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## Letters

# Lewis's death; portaging the Great Falls; sugaring

"Meriwether Lewis and Malaria," Dr. Ronald Loge's article in the May WPO, is interesting but unfounded as a critique of my article in the February issue, "The 'Ague' Made Him Do It."

First, Loge states that the thesis that "malaria drove Meriwether Lewis to suicide" is mistaken, and adds that we are not to adhere to it because there is no "plausible evidence" to support it. Second, he states that this thesis is *my* thesis.

I agree with Loge that Lewis did not commit suicide due to malaria—though an overwhelming number of historians have argued the following: (1) Lewis did in fact commit suicide and (2) he did so due to alcohol abuse or depression.

I disagree with Loge's second statement. I did not argue the thesis that "malaria drove Meriwether Lewis to suicide." Loge's claim is an interpolation of the thesis stated in my article, which argues that Lewis's untreated malaria caused his death: specifically, "Meriwether Lewis suffered from untreated malaria, a condition that can lead to the erratic behavior he exhibited in the weeks before his death." I argued that the unsystematic courses of action employed by Lewis—and by others with malaria—were desperate efforts to allay his pain. Specifically, "Malaria has been known, literally, to drive its victims crazy, causing them to mutilate and even shoot themselves in a desperate attempt to rid their bodies of pain."

In sum, I argue that Lewis intended to alleviate his suffering by wounding himself—not by killing himself. And I offer in, "The 'Ague' Made Him Do It," documentation for that thesis.

THOMAS C. DANISI  
St. Louis, Mo.

I greatly enjoyed the series of articles in the February WPO on the theories about Meriwether Lewis's death. As a member of the Foundation who has attended 26 national meetings I have always found this a subject of great interest.

I lean to the suicide theory. Lewis was evidently afflicted with problems, and they became very apparent on his trip from St. Louis to Grinder's Stand in 1809.

Those who adhere to the murder theory are short on convincing details.

Who would have wanted to murder Lewis, and why? I remember reading that one of Lewis's relatives recognized his watch on someone months or years after his death. But if the motive was robbery, why wasn't his purse filched? If it was, James Neelly fails to mention this in his letter to Thomas Jefferson. (I have given most of my books to the Lewis and Clark Center in Washburn, North Dakota, so unfortunately I cannot research this.)

What motive would Mr. Grinder have for murdering Lewis? He was not home when Lewis arrived. Nor, apparently, was he there the next morning, when Lewis died. Many travelers on the Natchez Trace paid the Grinders to spend the night at their place, and the killing of a guest would not have been good for business.

Another mystery is where and when Sacagawea died—at Fort Manuel on the Missouri in 1812 or in Wyoming in 1884? Such discussions help keep us interested in the expedition.

SHEILA ROBINSON  
Coleharbor, N.D.

## They weren't stupid

In the life-size display at the Great Falls Interpretive Center we've seen it, and now we've seen it in National Geographic's new IMAX film about the Corps of Discovery, so maybe it's time to say something about it: Lewis and Clark's men are depicted pulling those wheeled dugout canoes, fully loaded with baggage, up steep river bluffs. They weren't stupid enough to do it that way.

A dugout canoe is heavy enough in itself. You wouldn't load it up and then haul it up to the plain above. The journals make it clear that baggage was carried up on the men's backs, the canoes taken up empty, and *then* the loads put in for the long haul over the portage route. (That route was uneven enough to make an ordeal of it.)

It may look dramatic to show them doing things the hard way, but it misrepresents them. They were practical men with load-hauling experience, and knew better than to take maximum loads up the steepest grade.

JAMES ALEXANDER THOM  
Bloomington, Ind.

## Sugar and whiskey

I read with interest Pat Hastings's article in the May WPO, "Sugaring" at Camp Dubois," but would like to point out two discrepancies. The author mentions "50 pounds of sugar recorded by Clark" on April 16, 1804 (Moulton, Vol. 2, p. 203), but the actual listing by Clark of two bags of sugar does not record weight—the "50 w" refers to the bag of coffee in the preceding line. Sometime around May 14 (Moulton, Vol. 2, p. 217), Clark lists two bags of sugar in inventory and gives their total weight as 112 pounds.

The author also states that the whiskey was gone by the time the explorers left Fort Mandan on April 7, 1805. Actually, the captains doled out whiskey to cheer the troops on June 27 following a rainstorm at the Great Falls portage site, and the last wee drams were consumed in festivities on July 4.

LEANDRA HOLLAND  
Emigrant, Mont.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Jerry Garrett of St. Louis also drew our attention to the corps's finishing off the whiskey on July 4, a date "easily remembered," he notes, because it was Independence Day. The error resulted from an insert by the editor.

## Pompey biography

I was mighty pleased to see a long review of my book *Sacagawea's Son* in the May WPO. The first full-length, scholarly biography of Pompey, the L&C Expedition's youngest traveler, should be of special interest to Foundation members.



My pleasure was somewhat dampened, however, when I read the review and found the author identified throughout as Trilling.

My name for over 80 years has been Tinling. Under that name I am known as an author of scholarly studies in American colonial history and women's history. It will be of help to those who order the book through book stores and Amazon.com to use the proper name.

MARION TINLING  
Sacramento, Calif.

EDITOR'S NOTE: We regret the error and hope that at least some readers noted the

correct spelling of the author's name as it appeared on the accompanying illustration of the dust jacket.

## L&C historic trees

Members of the Corps of Discovery traveled through natural areas previously unseen by European eyes. One of their duties was to catalog plant life found on the journey. As they departed St. Louis and headed northwest, they encountered many new types of trees. In some places trees grow so sparsely that small groves must have served as landmarks.

Some trees that "witnessed" the travels of Lewis and Clark still survive, and those of us at the American Forests Historic Tree Nursery ([www.historictrees.org](http://www.historictrees.org)) are seeking information that will help us identify them. We want to collect seeds this fall and grow offspring trees as educational resources for community plantings. We are hoping that people will tell us about individual trees along the Lewis and Clark Trail old enough to have been standing when the explorers passed them 200 years ago. Anyone who would like to help should call Bill or Susan at 800-320-8733 (e-mail [bshad@historictrees.org](mailto:bshad@historictrees.org)).

BILL SHAD  
Jacksonville, Fla.

## Celestial navigation

Apropos the articles on celestial navigation by Robert Bergantino and others in the November 2001 WPO: Last year, Carol Hearne, an archaeological forester with the Salmon-Challis National Forest in Idaho, asked me to find how well Lewis's observations fixed the longitude of Lemhi Pass, where the Corps of Discovery crossed the Continental Divide. Results were so gratifying that, to be sure they were correct, I worked the observations a second time, more carefully, later in the year. I found that Lewis got his longitude right within about three miles.

The record of Lewis's observations—made at Camp Fortunate, a day's walk from Lemhi Pass—are found in Volume 5 of Gary Moulton's *The Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition*.

To find his latitude, Lewis took a noon observation, measuring the sun's angle above its reflection on the surface of the water in his artificial horizon.

To find the error of the chronometer

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The mission of the LCTHF is to stimulate public appreciation of the Lewis and Clark Expedition's contributions to America's heritage and to support education, research, development, and preservation of the Lewis and Clark experience.

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on local time, he observed equal altitudes—noting the chronometer times, morning and afternoon, when the sun was the same angle above its reflection in the artificial horizon. By finding the error on different days he also found the chronometer's rate of gain or loss.

Had the chronometer been able to tell him the time at Greenwich, Lewis could have compared that with local time. The difference, converted to arc, would have been his longitude. But the chronometer had changed rate often and stopped often. Lewis had to get Greenwich time from the moon's position in its monthly circuit of the earth. To do so he measured the moon's distance from the sun or a star along its orbital path.

This is the ultimate test of a navigator's skill with a sextant, and the four sets of sun-moon "lunars" Lewis took at Camp Fortunate are top notch. Averaged, they put him within 3.3 miles of Bergantino's on-the-ground assessment of that camp's longitude. The worst of the four missed by nine miles.

I'd been skeptical of the index correction Lewis used for his sextant observations. I'd also suspected a large "personal error" in the way he saw the moon and other body in the sextant's mirrors. Possibly these errors were canceling. But if they were canceling in these observations, with the sun east of the moon, they would add to each other in sun-west lunars.

So I backtracked to the Three Forks of the Missouri, where Lewis had taken two sun-west lunars. One put him 13.5 miles east of the longitude Bergantino established for that camp, the other 11.5 miles west. These are normal, acceptable errors. Averaged, they get a near-perfect result. That ended my skepticism.

By preference, I did the work as it would have been done in Lewis and Clark's day, using only tables, pencil and paper, and the 1805 *Nautical Almanac*.

Before working the equal altitudes I checked for wild numbers. The captains recorded the times of contact, overlap, and separation of the two images of the sun's disk. In the few minutes this takes, the rate of rise or fall hardly changes. Large interval differences would show blunders in reading the chronometer, recording the reading, or making the copy.

BRUCE STARK  
Eugene Ore.

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Send letters to Editor, WPO, 51 N. Main St., Pennington, NJ 08534 (e-mail: wpo@lewisandclark.org).

## Working together to bridge cultures — for now and the future

It was a normal day in St. Louis on that Tuesday, September 23, 1806, until about noon. The expedition sent by Thomas Jefferson to the Pacific had returned. The town's 1,000 residents lined the river bank to cheer the bedraggled explorers. The uniforms they had worn on their departure more than two years before were long gone. An eye witness reported, "They really have the appearance of Robinson Crusoes—dressed entirely in buckskins."

These men had left the culture of eastern 19th-century America on May 21, 1804, and entered a world with different traditions, beliefs, and ways of doing things. The buckskins were a visible sign of Indian influence. What other ways had their encounters with Indian cultures changed them? And what do we have to learn from the descendants of these tribes who had been such welcoming and helpful hosts?

The National Council for the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial has made tribal involvement its number-one priority. As a result, those who wish to visit tribal lands to learn more about the expedition and its Native American partners will have ample opportunities to do so. All of us should note, however, that the tribes' number-one priority is the preservation of their cultural resources. They want to tell their version of the expedition story and share in the benefits of bicentennial tourism. At the same time, they are concerned about the effects of so many visitors on the land and their sacred places.

### Healing and reconciliation

Sensitive to the tribes' concerns, the Council asked its Circle of Tribal Advisors (COTA) to develop vision and guidance statements that would promote "educational programs that clarify the important role of the tribes, cultural sensitivity and harmony, sustaining stewardship of natural, cultural and historic resources, cultural perpetuation and protection of sacred

sites along the route of the Expedition." These documents were adopted by COTA at the Council's April meeting, in Lewiston, Idaho.

These actions are of utmost importance to the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation. They set the stage for future meaningful dialogue, healing, and reconciliation between our organization and the sovereign nations. When the bicentennial is over, the Foundation must be ready to continue building good will. Until very recently, the tribes had no idea who we were or what we represented, and they saw little reason to pay us much attention. Thanks to the efforts of Dark Rain Thom, leader of our Sovereign Nations Committee, this is beginning to change.

During the Council's workshop in Lewiston, Germaine White, a COTA member representing the Confederated Tribes of the Salish and Kootenai, ended the Saturday session with her reflections on planning for the bicentennial. An adaptation of her talk begins on p. 44. As she noted, "This alliance between the Council and tribes remains in a fledgling state, and it must be nurtured so it can continue to grow. The National Council will 'sunset' when the bicentennial ends, but the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation will be in a position to carry on its work to ensure that the story of Lewis and Clark will continue to be told in a balanced and accurate way."

In spite of progress made to date, a future relationship between the Foundation and tribes is not a certainty. When the bicentennial ends they may sever associations and go their own way. The Foundation must ensure that this does not occur. Now is the time to build personal friendships and trust through initiatives such as the Foundation's scholarship program for Native Americans, introduced this year. (Read the 2002 Annual Report in the November mailing of WPO to learn about other activities of our Sovereign Nations Committee.) We are reaching

out, but we have a great deal to learn. A good bicentennial project for Foundation members would be to read, or reread, *Lewis and Clark among the Indians*, by James Ronda. We need to explore new rivers, make new discoveries, and foster new friendships.

### Shattuck gift

Readers of the May WPO learned of the death of Bob Shattuck, one of our most loyal and enthusiastic members. Bob's spirit, however, will be with us for the Foundation's lifetime, thanks to his generous financial gifts through an annuity and the donation of life insurance and retirement savings. Bob's planned gift to the Foundation could represent the largest single donation it has ever received, and it is a model for others.

To encourage future bequests, the board has created a Captain's Circle for those wishing to name the Foundation in their wills. Bob Shattuck is the charter member, and we ask any other members who have made provisions for the Foundation in their wills to let us know so we can show our appreciation during your lifetime by including you in the Captain's Circle. This program is in its early stages—please look for more news about donors and planned-giving options in future issues of WPO.

### Thanks for the opportunity

I conclude my year as your president with this reminder. This organization has the most interesting and motivated people I've ever met; this Lewis and Clark story has so many facets and interesting challenges that it can fill a lifetime with glorious and rewarding discoveries; this Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation needs your support now and in the future so it can continue offering fabulous experiences and educational opportunities. I count myself fortunate for having had the chance to be the leader of such a group.

—Jane Henley  
President, LCTHF



## The “great cleanup” restores a Nez Perce site along the L&C Trail

Nothing impresses visitors like a clean house and fresh-mowed grass. I stand a little straighter when people inspect my place and find trees and hedges trimmed, weeds pulled, and flowers in bloom. The same thing happens on the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail when we act as “Stewards of the Trail” in something as simple as a cleanup project.

The adage about first impressions reminds us that trail cleanup is a good way to make guests feel comfortable as the bicentennial of the Corps of Discovery approaches. It can also be an opportunity for the Foundation and its many chapters to attract favorable press and new members.

By way of example, let me tell you about a spring cleanup project Foundation members sponsored at Arrow Junction, near Lewiston, Idaho, over the weekend of May 11-12. The idea for cleaning up Arrow Junction belongs to Mike Venso, vice-president of the Foundation’s Idaho chapter. Before volunteers pulled on work gloves donated by Home Depot of Lewiston, Idaho, Mike had pulled together his chapter members, the Nez Perce solid-waste department, area Boy Scouts, and members of Salmon Corps, an Americorps service project that involves Nez Perce volunteers in habitat restoration. When the 20-person crew got busy on Saturday morning, neighbors took notice. Some helped out with elbow grease, said Venso, and a woman named Pepsi Huett brought the group ice-cold Cokes.

Arrow Junction is tribal-trust land about 12 miles northeast of Lewiston, at the confluence of the Potlatch and Clearwater rivers. It was once the site of a Nez Perce village and a stop for members of the Corps of Discovery.

Venso said that about 50 years ago it became a popular dumping ground for old appliances, furniture, and other trash.

The Lewis and Clark Expedition stopped at the site October 8-9, 1805, and again on May 5, 1806, as it headed back to the United States. It was here that the captains presented a Jefferson peace medal to Chief Cut Nose. Venso



Volunteers pitch in at Arrow Junction, Idaho, to remove a half century’s trash.

said the medal was believed to have been uncovered in 1899 when the area was graded for a railroad line. The medal was sent to a New York City museum but later disappeared.

Cleanup crews found no peace medals at Arrow Junction, but they had been briefed about what to do if they turned up any cultural artifacts. Tribal member Josiah Pinkham spoke to the volunteers about the Nez Perce and the importance of this village site.

### Knee-deep in junk

A half-century of trash had volunteers thinking they were on an archaeological dig. “There were layers and layers and layers of broken glass and cans,” Venso said. “I think we went down about three feet just in one area. When we got done you could see the ballast rocks from the old railroad spur line that ran through here years ago from Lewiston up north to Moscow.”

The volunteers filled a giant dump-

ster (20 feet long, 9 feet wide, 6 feet deep) to overflowing. The trash included refrigerators, a chest freezer, an air-conditioning unit, and a set of polio braces still containing a boot heel.

Those taking part in the operation got lots of fresh air and exercise, a deep sense of accomplishment, and more. The event created a sense of bonding for Idaho chapter members more likely

to experience Lewis and Clark by listening to lectures, reading books, studying maps, or touring historic sites. They came away with an understanding of, and appreciation for, the Nez Perce people and the tribal members who pitched in, for the curious neighbors who showed up to see what all the fuss was about, and for the Scouts and members of the Salmon Corps.

“And it didn’t require months of grant writing,”

said Venso—“just some organizational work on our end and some phone calls for local sponsors. The Nez Perce provided the dumpsters and garbage bags, we got the gloves from Home Depot, and Costco (in Clarkston, Washington) donated water and snacks.”

Pinkham said the cleanup area is called Yatooyin (*yah-too-yin*), Nez Perce for the place where the Potlatch enters the Clearwater. “The cleanup project was a pretty good thing,” he said. “It made a lot of people feel better about that area.”

If you’ve heard about any other great cleanup projects or want to plan one yourself, please drop me a line at my e-mail address or call.

—Jeff Olson  
Trail Coordinator

Jeff Olsen can be reached at [trail@lewisandclark.org](mailto:trail@lewisandclark.org) (P.O. Box 2376, Bismarck SD 58502; Tel.: 701-258-1809 or 701-258-1960).

ST. JOSEPH'S VISITORS BUREAU  
Pickup from p. 8, May WPO

1 page B&W



# PAUL ALLEN: “EDITOR” OF THE LEWIS & CLARK JOURNALS

*This unfairly maligned and largely forgotten journalist was a competent and at times courageous practitioner of his craft*

by MARK CHALKLEY

“[T]he part of an editor is necessarily subordinate, nor can his humble pretensions aspire beyond the merit of rigid adherence to facts as they are stated to him. This has been very diligently attempted.”<sup>1</sup>

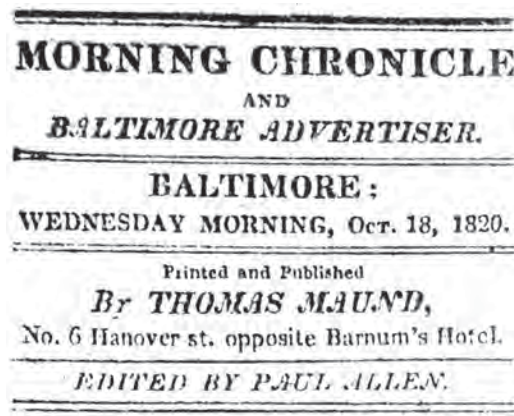
—Paul Allen

When the book some call the “Biddle edition of Lewis and Clark’s journals” was printed in Philadelphia, in February of 1814, Nicholas Biddle’s name did not appear on the title page. Instead, *The History of the Expedition Under the Commands of Captains Lewis and Clark* was described as being “prepared for the press” by Paul Allen. Biddle, who has since been given most of the credit for condensing the vast amount of information in the two explorers’ manuscripts into easily readable form, was not mentioned by name at all but merely alluded to in the preface as “another gentleman” and “the writer.”<sup>2</sup> It was Allen who checked the printer’s galleys, and it was he who asked Thomas Jefferson to supply his “Memoir of Meriwether Lewis” as an introduction to the book.

Who, then, was Paul Allen? Most students of the expedition

know of him only in the briefest detail. In his history of the Lewis and Clark journals, Paul Russell Cutright tells us that he was born in Providence, Rhode Island, in 1775 and died in Baltimore in 1826. A graduate of Brown University, he moved from Providence to Philadelphia about 1800 and like Biddle was a contributor to *Port Folio*, a popular magazine.<sup>3</sup> He wrote a history of the American Revolution and a book-length poem about Noah.<sup>4</sup> He also edited the respected *United States Gazette*<sup>5</sup> and a collection of biographical essays about Czar Alexander I.<sup>6</sup>

A contemporary of Allen’s described him as “rather below the middle size ... an ordinary looking man ... with a character of sluggishness, slovenly inaptitude and moroseness ... yet there is not a better natured fellow on earth.”<sup>7</sup> His friend and literary collaborator John Neal thought him “decidedly a man of genius, and a charming,



though exuberant writer, full of warmth and earnestness, and at times exceedingly eloquent,” but with “a miserable habit of procrastination which kept him always under whip and spur.” Neal remembered Allen as “one of the kindest-hearted men that ever breathed,” albeit “as timid and shy as a woman.”<sup>8</sup>

#### THE BANEFUL INFLUENCE OF ELLIOTT COUES

Whatever his professional and personal qualities, Lewis and Clark enthusiasts have found fault with Allen for his rationale for requesting Jefferson’s memoir. As he put it in his letter to the former President, by then long retired to Monticello, “I wish very much to enliven the dulness of the narrative by something more popular, splendid and attractive.”<sup>9</sup> Elliott Coues, the irascible editor of the 1893 edition of the *History*, called those words “an achievement in impudence that deserves to become historical.”<sup>10</sup> Coues’s remark was quoted by Stephen Ambrose in *Undaunted Courage*, his best-selling biography of Lewis, helping to perpetuate history’s mostly negative image of Allen.<sup>11</sup>

The low opinion Coues held of Allen is expressed elsewhere in the 1893 edition. In the preface he called him a “mere dummy,” and in an introductory biographical essay on William Clark he charged that Allen’s “claim for alleged services of \$500” wiped out any meager profits due Clark. During a law suit over contractual matters relating to the book’s publication, Allen was guilty in Coues’s eyes of “whining in accents of injured innocence.”<sup>12</sup>

No one can say with certainty why Coues held such contempt for Allen. But one should remember that the exacting scholar who re-edited the Biddle history was unsparing in many of his judgments. In his copious commentary on the text Coues gave free rein to his many strong opinions. The Teton Sioux were “famous miscreants,” while Toussaint Charbonneau was dismissed as a “craven French apology for a male,”<sup>13</sup> an “arrant coward,” and a “wife-beating tenderfoot.”<sup>14</sup> In a footnote to an in-

cident along the Missouri, Coues remarked dryly, “A snake story, told by an Indian and confirmed by a Frenchman, may be taken for what it is worth.”<sup>15</sup>

If, thanks largely to Coues, today’s students of Lewis and Clark see Paul Allen as an obscure hack lacking enthusiasm for the captains’ narrative, his contemporaries knew him as an amiable fellow and a successful, high-minded, and courageous journalist. In a letter to William Clark, Biddle praised him as “a very capable person.”<sup>16</sup> And if Jefferson ever thought that Allen was “impudent” in his request for something to “enliven” the narrative, it

is hardly evident from the effort he put into complying. As one would expect, his “Memoir of Meriwether Lewis” is long, thoughtful, and elegantly written.

#### ALLEN’S BALTIMORE YEARS

A look at Allen’s career throws useful light on a nation in transition from Jeffersonian democracy to the increasingly polarized but dynamic, expansionist republic of the Jacksonian era.

After completing his work on the history of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, Allen left Philadelphia for Baltimore, where he took on the editorship of the controversial *Baltimore Telegraph and Federal Republican*, whose previous editor, according to John Neal, “had narrowly escaped with his life” at the hands of “the great Baltimore mob.” (Having criticized President Madison’s conduct of the war against England, Federalists were rather unpopular in the city that had borne the brunt of British at-

tacks during the conflict.) Despite the fact that Allen “wrote fiercely” on the issues of the day and “seemed to invite a renewal of the outrage, day after day and month after month,”<sup>17</sup> he survived to found another newspaper. This was his own short-lived *Journal of the Times*, commenced in September 1818.

By 1820 he was editing another daily paper, the *Morning Chronicle and Baltimore Advertiser*. Besides his journalistic work, Allen found time for other writing while engaging in the city’s lively cultural scene. He was an ac-



PORTRAIT COURTESY MARYLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**The only known portrait of Paul Allen (a.k.a. “Solomon Fitz Quizz”) is in the minutes of Baltimore’s Delphian Club. The artist may have been fellow member Rembrandt Peale.**

tive member of the literary Delphian Club, along with Francis Scott Key and Rembrandt Peale.<sup>18</sup>

Allen continued to work at the *Morning Chronicle*, undoubtedly writing its many unsigned editorials, until May 1824, when he left to take over the management of a new paper, the *Saturday Evening Herald*. According to a 19th-century history of Baltimore, "After Mr. Allen's death the name Herald was changed by Mr. Sands [the publisher] on May 20, 1827 to the North American ... This enterprise had but a short existence."<sup>19</sup> We can only speculate if the loss of Allen's talents contributed to the newspaper's demise. If so, it would be yet another counterpoint to Coues's critique.

#### LEWIS & CLARK'S INFLUENCE

Immersed in his journalistic and literary activities in Baltimore, Allen would seem to have lost all connection with the legacy of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. But what we know of his last years raises interesting questions about the expedition's influence on him. As the editor of Biddle's narrative, Allen was as familiar with the Lewis and Clark experience as anyone except Biddle and the actual participants. It is hard to imagine that this contact had no lasting impact on him, and there are indications it did.

His work on the narrative appears, for example, to have helped shape his views on what later generations would call manifest destiny. A *Morning Chronicle* editorial he presumably wrote, or at least approved, criticized Congress's refusal to fund an expedition to explore the Yellowstone River.<sup>20</sup> During his editorship the paper reprinted a lengthy piece from *American Farmer* magazine on the importance of settling Oregon. The article noted in part, "That the climate is salubrious and healthy is proven by the numerous and robust population of Indians that inhabit the country ... it behooves us therefore to turn our attention in time to some mode of procuring a more speedy and less broken intercourse with the opposite coast of our continent."<sup>21</sup>

Another *Morning Chronicle* editorial applauded the

plans of Robert Southey, then Britain's poet laureate, to write an epic celebrating King Phillip, the Massachusetts Indian who in the 1670s led a doomed revolt against New England settlers: "We rejoice to find the attention of the world turns more and more to the red men of the woods ... We can but hope that the records of the forest, the manners and religion of the Indian will be allowed a historical existence."<sup>22</sup>

In his role as editor of the Lewis and Clark story, Allen himself had contributed much already to the "historical

existence" of Indians of the northern plains, the Rockies, and the Pacific Northwest. His sympathy for "the red men of the woods" extended as well to an even more oppressed minority, African-American slaves. Like other southern newspapers, the *Morning Chronicle* published paid notices about slave sales and runaway slaves, but under Allen's editorship its line, if not abolitionist, was as critical of slavery as that of any Maryland publication at the time. A *Morning Chronicle* editorial criticized Virginia's resistance to a bill to forbid slavery in Missouri as a condition to its admission to the Union, stating in part, "the present members of Congress ... are endeavoring to give a practical form and body to that opinion uttered in the declaration of independence that 'Almighty God had created man free.' " The editorial condemned slavery as a "curse" and praised freesoil

congressmen for their efforts on behalf of "the welfare of millions yet unborn."<sup>23</sup>

Is there a connection between Allen's work with the Lewis and Clark journals and his views on race?

Lewis and Clark were explorers, not political thinkers. Insofar as they espoused any ideology, both captains seemed to subscribe to Thomas Jefferson's contradictory conceptions, wherein all men were created equal, yet a black person counted as three-fifths of a man. Both Lewis and Clark owned slaves for at least part of their adult lives, and they had no desire to change the existing social order.

The facts of the expedition, however, were distinct from the views its two co-captains. Their attitudes toward Native Americans could be condescending and occasionally



Nicholas Biddle in 1810, about the time he began editing the L&C journals. Portrait by Benjamin Trott.

COURTESY NICHOLAS BIDDLE, JR.



contemptuous, but they also praised Indians for their “sagacity,” “integrity,” and “sincerity”—hardly the vocabulary of triumphant or racist colonialists. As reflected in Biddle’s narrative, more often than not the circumstances they faced forced them to treat Native Americans with respect. Biddle’s narrative also gives a good accounting of the contributions of Sacagawea, the Shoshone wife of Charbonneau, and York, Clark’s slave, even if it doesn’t stress their roles in the expedition.

By birth and education Allen was a New Englander, so it would not be too surprising that he harbored antislavery sentiments and relatively liberal views about race in general. Yet it is not unreasonable to assume that the Biddle narrative’s relatively benign attitude toward nonwhites would have reinforced the sympathies expressed in the papers he edited.

Unfortunately, the extant copies of the *Morning Chronicle* cover only a part of the period in which Allen served as editor, and no copies of the *Saturday Evening Herald*, the third and last Baltimore paper he edited, are known to survive. Even from this fragmentary record, however, a picture emerges of Paul Allen, not as a “dummy” or a person noteworthy for his “impudence,” but as a hard-working journalist and an able, progressively minded, and courageous editor who played a small but honorable role in preserving the story of Lewis and Clark—and who understood its social and political implications for future generations.

*Foundation member Mark Chalkley lives in Baltimore.*

## NOTES

1 Paul Allen, ed., *The History of the Expedition Under the Commands of Captains Lewis and Clark* (Philadelphia: Bradford and Inskeep, 1814), p. xiv. The author worked from the 1965 Dover Press facsimile edition of Elliott Coues, ed., *History of the Expedition Under the Commands of Lewis and Clark* (New York: Francis P. Harper, 1893).

2 Coues, pp. xiii, xiv. Biddle, a gentleman author of independent means, presumably insisted on anonymity. See Paul Russell Cutright, *A History of the Lewis and Clark Journals* (Norman:

University of Oklahoma Press, 1976), p. 65.

3 Cutright, p. 63.

4 *History of the American Revolution: Comprehending All the Principal Events Both in the Field and in the Cabinet* (Baltimore, 1819), and *Noah, a Poem* (1821). The history was coauthored with John Neal.

5 John Neal, *Wandering Recollections of a Somewhat Busy Life* (Boston: Robert Brothers, 1869), pp. 201–206. Neal states that *The United States Gazette*, which was published in Philadelphia, “was then reckoned among the ablest journals of the country” and that the reputation gained by Allen as its editor led to “his being employed as the editor” of the Biddle narrative.

6 *Memoirs of the Public Character and Life of Alexander the First, Emperor of All the Russias* (1818).

7 Cutright. The citation is from the *Dictionary of American Biography* (1928), Vol. I, pp. 202–203.

8 Neal, pp. 201–202, 206.

9 Allen, p. xv, footnote 1. Letter from Paul Allen to Thomas Jefferson, August 18, 1813.

10 Ibid.

11 Stephen E. Ambrose, *Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the West* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), pp. 470–471.

12 Coues, note, p. xvi; pp. xci and xciii.

13 Ibid., note 29, p. 311.

14 Ibid., note 17, p. 497; note 30, p. 442.

15 Ibid., note 54, p. 25.

16 Nicholas Biddle to William Clark, March 23, 1814. In Donald Jackson, *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition with Related Documents, 1783–1854*, 2 volumes (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), Vol. 1, p. 597.

17 Neal, pp. 201–206.

18 Thomas Scharf, *History of Baltimore City and County* (Baltimore: Regional Publishing Co., 1971; reprint from Philadelphia: Everts, 1881), pp. 642–643. Scharf remarks, “It would seem that at about 1820 Baltimore was a literary centre to which such men as Jared Sparks, Paul Allen, John Neal, John E. Hall and John Pierpont were drawn, and though their coming was fortuitous, still they began here their literary careers, and gave tone to the culture.”

19 Ibid., pp. 614–615.

20 *Morning Chronicle and Baltimore Advertiser*, July 8, 1820. Microfilm, the Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore, Md.

21 Ibid., July 19, 1820.

22 *Morning Chronicle*, June 19, 1820.

23 Ibid., January 26, 1820.



**The contentious Elliott Coues, who dismissed Paul Allen as impudent, whining, and a “mere dummy.”**

FROM ELLIOTT COUES: NATURALIST AND FRONTIER HISTORIAN (1981)

# THE “UNHAPPY AFFAIR” ON TWO MEDICINE RIVER

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*Were the Indians with whom Lewis tangled Blackfeet or,  
as the author argues, Gros Ventres of the Prairie?*

by ROBERT A. SAINDON

When David McKeehan wrote a caustic letter to Meriwether Lewis in early 1807 and had it printed in the newspapers, he spared Lewis the indignation of mentioning the killing of two Indians during his late journey to the Pacific Ocean. Under the pretense of being charitable, McKeehan wrote, “I must pass over the unhappy affair with the Indians on the plains of Maria’s river.”<sup>1</sup>

McKeehan was a bookseller in the process of paraphrasing Sergeant Patrick Gass’s journal and preparing it for publication. Lewis had publicly demeaned any journal but those of the captains.<sup>2</sup> The “unhappy affair” McKeehan was referring to took place July 27, 1806, while Captain Lewis, privates Reuben and Joseph Field, and hunter and interpreter George Drouillard were making a reconnaissance of the Marias River, east of the Continental Divide in modern northwestern Montana. The purpose of their mission was to determine if that river reached a latitude of 49° 37’.<sup>3</sup> When this elite party of four discovered that the Marias was not going to reach that far north, they christened their northernmost reach “Camp Disappointment.” The next day, Lewis and his party started back to rendezvous with the other members of his homeward detachment, which he expected would be coming down the Missouri from the Great Falls. It was during Lewis’s return that he and his party encountered a band of Indians, and soon thereafter the “unhappy affair” took place.

The literary accounts of that encounter, beginning in 1807 and continuing to the present, may well have altered the true story of the early fur trade in the West. William Clark may have been as guilty as anybody for the lingering misconception of the event.

The Lewis and Clark Expedition was a military enterprise—the first U.S. military expedition dedicated to the purpose of scientific investigation. It was also a diplomatic expedition, and Lewis was charged by President Thomas Jefferson to be diplomatic to all the Native American tribes met on his journey from St. Louis to the Pacific and back. There was to be no bloodshed if at all possible. But after more than 26 months of exploration, and only two months from their return to St. Louis, Lewis’s small reconnaissance party ran into trouble. The captain was the only member of the detachment keeping a journal, and therein he explained the events that threatened to bring him dishonor—an event that may or may not have altered the economic progress of the United States in the West.

On July 3, 1806, on their return from the ocean, captains Lewis and Clark, each with a detachment, parted company at Travelers’ Rest, a few miles south of present Missoula, Montana. Lewis with nine men and five Indian guides headed for the Great Falls of the Missouri by way of the Blackfoot River, a tributary of the modern Clark Fork River. Clark, with 20 men, Sacagawea, and her child,





RICHARD SCHLECHT / NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

**The brothers Reuben and Joseph Field team up against one of the Indians who attempted to steal the explorers' rifles and horses. Reuben delivered the fatal stab wound.**



headed to the headwaters of the Jefferson River, where the expedition had cached canoes the summer before. Sergeant John Ordway took nine men and the canoes and headed downriver to meet Lewis's party at the Great Falls. Clark and the remainder of his detachment headed overland from the Three Forks of the Missouri to the Yellowstone River. The plan was for the two parties to meet at the confluence of the Yellowstone and Missouri rivers.

After Lewis's party reached the Great Falls, Lewis and his three select companions set off to explore the Marias River. The rest of his detachment remained at the falls to dig up items left there the previous summer. They were then to portage the dugouts, supplies, and equipment around the falls and head down the Missouri to the mouth of the Marias, where they would await the return of Lewis's party.

A year earlier, at Fort Mandan in modern central North Dakota—1,600 miles up the Missouri from St. Louis—Lewis, the expedition's principal ethnographer, had learned about the various Indian tribes between the Mandans and the Continental Divide and the country they inhabited. Lewis learned that the Blackfoot Indians<sup>4</sup> "rove near the Rock mountains on the East Side on the waters of the Missouries." The Gros Ventres of the Prairie,<sup>5</sup> he was told, were commonly called Fall Indians (a reference to their frequent association with the Great Falls of the Missouri), that they lived "near Rock M[ountains]; rove between the Missouries and Askaw or Bad river a fork of the Saskashawan, ... they rove as far as the Rock mountains."

Lewis also explained later, when writing about his "unhappy affair," that he "was well apprised that the Country thro' which it became necessary for me to pass was inhabited by several large & roving Bands of the Minnitaes [Gros Ventres of the Prairie] & Black Foot Indians."<sup>6</sup>

In his published letter of 1807 to Lewis, bookseller McKeehan showed the true savvy of a salesman by enticing the public with his equivocal statement about "the unhappy affair with the Indians on the Maria's river." Although he was equivocal in his letter, McKeehan held nothing back about the event in his paraphrased version of Gass's journal published that same year. Gass's account had come from Lewis himself the day after the fateful event took place—and was quite accurate.

In his own account, Lewis described observing through his telescope several mounted Indians and about 30 horses—"a very unpleasant sight." He and his party (less Drouillard, who was off scouting) cautiously advanced for a parlay. There were eight men in the Indian party, and by way of sign language Lewis confirmed that they were "Minnetares of the North" (Gros Ventres of the Prairies). The two parties agreed to camp together for the night.<sup>7</sup>

Lewis went on to say that he and Drouillard talked and smoked the pipe with these people "untill late at night." They talked to them about making peace with neighboring tribes and about getting their chiefs and warriors and the white man who lived among them to come down to council with him at the mouth of the Marias



Lewis fires on Indians in this woodcut from the 1807 edition of Patrick Gass's journal.

River. If the small group of Indians with him would accompany Lewis and his men to the mouth of the Marias, Lewis would give them 10 horses and some tobacco. To this proposition the Indians made no reply.

#### WHICH TRIBE?

The question a modern student of the expedition must ask at this point in the study of the affair is whether Lewis really knew what tribe he was talking to. As already mentioned, he was the principal ethnologist of the expedition. He was knowledgeable of the Indians of the area. He knew he was in the land of both the Blackfeet and the Gros Ventres of the Prairie. He had been negotiating and conversing among the Indians of the West for two years through the use of sign.<sup>8</sup> He asked these eight men in sign what tribe they were and they said they were the Gros Ventres of the Prairie. By this point in the expedition Lewis appears to have been fairly conversant in sign language, and they must have understood him.

Even the most amateur sign speaker could not confuse the sign for Gros Ventres of the Prairie with that for the Blackfeet or any of the three tribes of the Blackfeet.<sup>9</sup> Drouillard, who was Lewis's interpreter, must have been introduced to them. He conversed for several hours with them by sign. It would seem odd that, after all that negotiating and conversing, Drouillard would not have found that he was talking to any other than the Gros Ventres of the Prairie.

For a variety of reasons, the confrontation Lewis and his men had with these Indians has caused students of the expedition to believe that Lewis incorrectly identified eight Piegans as members of the Gros Ventres of the Prairie. History has characterized the Blackfeet nation as vicious and ill disposed. Nearly all the atrocities that took place over a vast area in that part of the West were attributed to the Blackfeet. In many cases those events were identified with that tribe simply because they were atrocious acts. Even if we could justify such a generalization, we would have to say there was no vicious act on the part of the Indians that Lewis and his men encountered, as we shall see presently.

After "counciling" with the Indians that night, Lewis took the first watch, since he anticipated that the Indians would get up in the night and attempt to steal the horses. About half past 11 all the Indians were asleep, so Lewis turned the night watch over to Reuben Field with the instruction that if any of the Indians left the camp, to awake him and the others. Sometime later, Reuben turned the watch over to his brother, Joseph. At daylight, all hell broke loose when the Indians grabbed the rifles of Joseph and Reuben Field, Drouillard, and Lewis. The Field brothers caught up with the Indian who had taken off with their weapons and wrested them back from him. During the struggle Reuben stabbed the man in the heart. Drouillard, meanwhile, recovered his rifle after overcoming the man who had taken it, while Lewis, armed with a pistol, chased after the one who had taken his and in a brief standoff forced him to drop it. When two Indians then started driving off the horses, Lewis shot one of them in the belly. The mortally wounded man returned the fire before crawling behind a rock. The bareheaded Lewis "felt the wind of his bullet very distinctly."<sup>10</sup>

No place in Lewis's account do the Indians appear to be more than horse raiders.<sup>11</sup> Before they were to run off with the horses, they took the guns of Lewis and his men. One can assume they did so not only because they wanted guns (they had only two of their own), but because they did not want to be shot as they made their getaway. The

man Lewis pursued dropped the gun when Lewis asked him to. The other members of his party were able to take their guns away from the Indians. They showed no desire to kill Lewis or any of his men, except the man Lewis had shot, and that Indian shot back only in self defense. This was evidently a party of horse thieves who also had an opportunity to pick up a few guns. It does not appear that they were warriors, or even a threat to the lives of Lewis and his men.

McKeehan was probably not too far afield when he described the event as an "unhappy affair," one that would be an embarrassment to Lewis if it were known by the public. It certainly was an affair that did no honor to Lewis and the expedition for which he was responsible.

After the fight, Lewis and his men beat a hasty retreat to the Missouri, where they made an unbelievable rendezvous near present-day Fort Benton with some of the men who were descending the river in the canoes and a large boat that had been cached below the falls the year before. Lewis and his men turned their horses out and joined the flotilla. Among the members of the party descending the Missouri were Sergeant John Ordway and Private Joseph Whitehouse, both of whom were keeping journals. Although Whitehouse's journal has been lost, Ordway's has survived.<sup>12</sup> In it he wrote that Lewis's party "had met with eight of the Grouse Vauntares."<sup>13</sup>

That afternoon, Sergeant Patrick Gass and Private Alexander Willard, who had set out from the Great Falls on horseback, showed up at the mouth of the Marias, where the others had already arrived. Gass, as we have mentioned, was also a journal-keeper. Lewis and/or one of his three companions must have retold the story to him. In paraphrasing Gass's journal McKeehan didn't spare Lewis any embarrassment in writing the July 28, 1806, entry. In fact he dedicated more space to that day's entry than any other except May 27, 1805 (when he recapped the country from the mouth of the Missouri near St. Louis to the Missouri Breaks, in modern central Montana). What is important about Gass's account is that when the story was told to him the identification of the Indians was again the Gros Ventres of the Prairie: "they had a skirmish with a party of the Prairie Grossventres, or Big Bellied Indians who inhabit the plains up Maria's river."<sup>14</sup>

All of the journalists of record have now been poled except one: William Clark. He was hundreds of miles away on the Yellowstone River and would not be united with Lewis's party for over two weeks. On August 12, 1806, several miles below the mouth of the Yellowstone,

the two captains again joined their parties. Somebody (no doubt Lewis) told Clark the story of his “unhappy affair,” and Clark recorded it in his journal, but not without some license. He said Lewis and the three men with him “Met with 8 Indians of the Blackfoot nation.”<sup>15</sup>

Lewis had identified the Indians in his journal as Gros Ventres of the Prairie, and he told both Ordway and Gass they were Gros Ventres of the Prairie. Did Lewis change his mind when he told the story to Clark? Evidently not, because as soon as Lewis got back to St. Louis he wrote a brief account of the expedition. When he came to his “unhappy affair” he wrote: “met with a party of Minnitaries [i.e., Gros Ventres of the Prairie].”<sup>16</sup>

#### CLARK’S CONFUSION

How and why Clark came up with the Blackfeet identification of the Indians is probably easily explained. Having looked through Clark’s expedition writings, it is this writer’s opinion that Clark never distinguished the Gros Ventres of the Prairie from the Blackfeet. As we said, Lewis was the principal ethnologist of the expedition. Clark never mentions the Gros Ventres of the Prairie in his journals. It is only when Clark copied Lewis’s ethnological information about the Indians east of the Rockies for the Secretary of War that we find the Gros Ventres of the Prairie written in his hand.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, Clark doesn’t note them on his map.<sup>18</sup> Lewis knew the country of these Indians and described it (as quoted above), but when Clark drew his famous map that was to accompany the published literature about the expedition—the map that became the guide for many later westward travelers—he made no mention of the Gros Ventres of the Prairie, only the “Black Foot Nation.” Therefore, it would seem that Clark, being ignorant of the Gros Ventres of the Prairie, helped corrupt history. If that is a correct observation, much of the early history of the fur trade in the West may have to be rewritten.<sup>19</sup>

His September 1806 summary of the expedition seems to be Lewis’s last written account of his unfortunate encounter with the Indians. Shortly after arriving back at civilization, honors were bestowed upon him as a national hero, and he was appointed governor of Louisiana. The Indian problem on Two Medicine River was probably not something he wanted to dwell on. But it could not be totally ignored because Gass’s journal was in the hands of the public in 1807 and published in Great Britain the following year. One can assume that Lewis talked about his Indian encounter in certain circles, but to this writer’s knowledge there is no written record of any such discussion.

## Gros Ventres of the Prairie

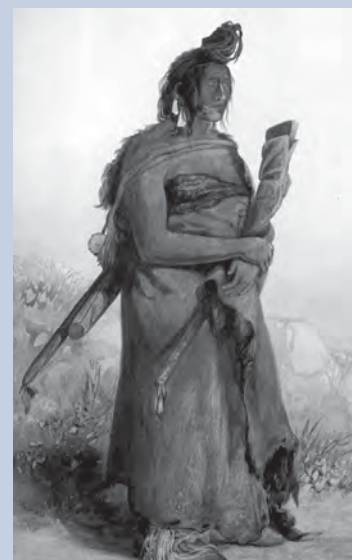
The Gros Ventres of the Prairie (i.e., Atsina) were a technologically and ceremonially independent tribe of Algonkian speaking Indians occupying their own geographical territory, and speaking a dialect much different from their Algonkian speaking neighbors. They were also quite distinct from the Gros Ventres of the Missouri (i.e., Hidatsa or Minnetaree), a Siouan tribe living in settled villages with the neighboring Mandans and Arikaras.

These people were inhabiting the upper Qu’Appelle Valley and the lower South Saskatchewan River in 1690.<sup>1</sup> At this time, the Gros Ventres were known at York Factory as the Ashkee Indians.<sup>2</sup> Sometime after 1763, they moved southwesterly and were located South of Bad River.<sup>3</sup> During the late 1600s and early 1700s, they were associated with the Assiniboiné, Cree, Blackfeet, and others in their travels to, and trade with, the French and British at York Factory on Hudsons Bay.<sup>4</sup>

When the French trappers and Hudson Bay Company representatives began entering into the region of present-day Saskatchewan and Alberta, they found that the natives (having found a great market for their furs), had become protective of their territories. Tribes that associated amicably earlier were becoming defensive of neighboring tribes, while certain tribes allied themselves with others for the purpose of protecting their fur bearing territories.

It was in this sense that the Gros Ventres as well as the Sarsi were allied at times with the Blackfeet Confederacy. Likewise, the Assiniboines, Cree, and later the Chippewa were all allied. As trading posts were erected in the region, tribes became tollmen and/or middlemen in the fur trade while at the same time protecting their interests in the trading posts.

It has been asserted that the Gros Ventres were a fourth member of the Blackfeet Confederacy (a claim also made for Sarsi, the northwestern neighbors of the Blackfeet);<sup>5</sup> however,



**A Gros Ventres chief as painted by Carl Bodmer in the early 1830s.**

JOSLYN ART MUSEUM, OMAHA, NEB. / GIFT OF ENRON ART FDN.

Governor Lewis was killed in October 1809, either by his own hand or by that of another (the jury is still out). Captain—by then General—Clark, the expedition journalist who was farthest in time and distance from the incident on Two Medicine River and the only man of the expedition to declare that Lewis’s encounter was with “8 Indians of the Blackfoot nation,” was now in charge of



## ... allied with, but separate from, the Blackfeet

the Blackfeet Confederacy was a confederation of three cognate tribes,<sup>6</sup> with only slightly varying dialects.<sup>7</sup> At one time they were united under a principal chief;<sup>8</sup> they used a symbol with three prongs in their designs which signified the three tribes of the confederacy—Blackfeet, Bloods, and Piegiens.<sup>9</sup>

The Gros Ventres, on the other hand, (sometimes falsely said to have lived “among the Blackfeet”)<sup>10</sup> were independent. Their relatives were the Arapaho in the far south, and at times the Gros Ventres traveled that great distance to visit their kinsmen. For example, we find records of the Gros Ventres traveling south in 1825 and 1832 for that purpose.<sup>11</sup> Although both the Gros Ventres of the Prairie and the Blackfeet were Algonkian, their languages differed markedly—even after 150 years of living in close proximity to the Blackfeet, Gros Ventres did not speak Blackfeet. In 1833, Maximilian pointed out that he had to get a man from among the Gros Ventres who could speak Blackfeet in order to communicate with the Gros Ventres,<sup>12</sup> and, the Americans who were established among the Blackfeet at that time did not have an interpreter for the Gros Ventres language.<sup>13</sup>

With regard to the Gros Ventres ceremonies, we find that in the 1880s, William P. Clark noted that the Blackfeet Medicine Lodge was quite different from the Gros Ventres Sun Dance; he noted, in fact, that the Gros Ventres were known as sun worshippers.<sup>14</sup> This difference contributes to an anthropological understanding of the independence of the Gros Ventres and Blackfeet. Technologically, we find that the Gros Ventres used a superior, three-pole foundation for their tipi dwellings, whereas the Blackfeet used the four-pole foundation.<sup>15</sup>

The Gros Ventres of the Prairie had a bloodthirsty reputation. Stanley Vestal says mountain men lumped both Gros Ventres and Blackfeet together.<sup>16</sup> That may be true of most mountain men, and certainly many who encountered the Gros Ventres never got the opportunity to report back to civilization regarding the identity of their assassins—in those cases the killings were usually attributed to the Blackfeet. As the accompanying article explains, William Clark of the Lewis and Clark Expedition had blurred the distinction between the Gros Ventres and the Blackfeet. It is possible that many mountain men followed suit.

Today, the Gros Ventres live peacefully on the Fort Belknap Reservation, in Montana, with Assiniboinés, a nation of Siouan-speaking Indians with whom they were associated in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, but with whom they remained an enemy from the mid-18th through most of the 19th

century. The Gros Ventres are and have been for centuries a distinct tribe, independent of, though often allied with, the Blackfeet Confederation.

—ROBERT SAINDON

### NOTES

1 Arthur J. Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade* (Ontario: University of Toronto Press, 1974), p. 12.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 60.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 104.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 79.

5 Prince Maximilian of Wied, *Travels in the Interior of North America*, Reuben G. Thwaites, ed. (New York: AMS Press, 1966), Vol. 23, p. 90. In responding to Captain Bonneville's claim that the Sarsi were usually included under the name Blackfeet, Maximilian states this to be “by no means the case in the part of the country through which I travelled.” In the mid 1700s, we find that the unknown Indians of the Blackfeet area generally were collectively known as the “Archithinue tribes”; some may have mistook this to mean that they were confederated. John Ewers points out that this was not the case, noting that some of the Archithinue tribes were bitter enemies. See John C. Ewers, *The Blackfeet, Raiders of the Northwestern Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958), p. 25. “Archithinue,” Ewers explains, was a Cree word for strangers.

6 Robert H. Lowie, *Indians of the Plains* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1954; Bison Book edition, University of Nebraska Press, 1982), p. 91.

7 William P. Clark, *The Indian Sign Language* (Philadelphia: L.R. Hamersly, 1885; Bison Book edition, University of Nebraska Press, 1982), p. 68.

8 Maximilian, p. 95.

9 Clark, p. 68.

10 Dale L. Morgan, *Jedediah Smith and the Opening of the West* (Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill, 1953; Bison Book edition, University of Nebraska, 1964). The present writer has found nothing to support this contention. In fact, the geographic location of the Gros Ventres over the years seems quite well documented. (For example, see maps and text in Ray.)

11 Stanley Vestal, *Jim Bridger, Mountain Man* (New York: William Morrow, 1946; Bison Book edition, University of Nebraska, 1970), p. 74. Morgan, p. 328.

12 Maximilian, p. 70.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 76.

14 Clark, pp. 71, 199.

15 Reginald and Gladys Laubin, *The Indian Tipi, Its History, Construction, and Use* (New York: Balentine Books, 1973; originally published in 1957 by the University of Oklahoma Press), p. 22.

16 Vestal, p. 73.

preparing the official narrative of the expedition. He hired Nicholas Biddle, a young Philadelphia lawyer, to paraphrase the journals into narrative form. Clark spent several weeks during the spring of 1810 with Biddle going over the manuscript journals.<sup>20</sup> In looking over Biddle's notes as well as his later correspondence with Clark, we find no reference to Lewis's fight with the Indians. Presumably

Clark let Lewis's journal speak for itself on that matter. This further supports the suspicion that Clark did not understand the Gros Ventres of the Prairie to be any other than a branch of Blackfeet.

When Biddle got to the July 26-27, 1806, journal entries of Lewis he made only minor, nonsubstantive changes. From Lewis's “I told the two men with me that I

apprehended that these were the Minnetares of Fort de Prairie and from their known character I expected that we were to have some difficulty with them,” Biddle wrote “captain Lewis now told his two men that he believed these were the Minnetarees of Fort de Prairie, who, from their infamous character, would in all probability attempt to rob them.” Where Lewis wrote “I asked by signs if they were the Minnetares of the North which they answered in the affirmative,” Biddle edited the narrative to read, “Captain Lewis now asked them by signs if they were the Minnetarees of the north, and was sorry to learn by their answer that his suspicion was too true.” Biddle’s narrative of the expedition was published in 1814.<sup>21</sup>

The late John C. Ewers, a senior ethnologist for the Smithsonian Institution, in 1958 stated in no uncertain terms that Lewis was wrong. In *The Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains*, Ewers wrote:

In spite of Lewis’ identification of the Indians in this scrap as Gros Ventres, there need no longer be any doubt that they were Piegans. The knowledgeable contemporary Canadian trader, David Thompson, so identified them, and years later the Piegans recalled both the fight and the name of their tribesman killed in the action, He that looks at the Calf.<sup>22</sup>

In addition to Thompson’s narrative, Ewers identifies an account written many decades after the fact by army officer James H. Bradley as his source for the Piegan legend naming the Indian who was killed.<sup>23</sup>

Ewers’s work over the years has been renowned. The preeminent Lewis and Clark historian Donald Jackson, in his ever cautious way, writes: “Lewis identified the Indians as ‘Minnetares of Fort de Prairie,’ that is, Gros Ventres; but John C. Ewers believes they were Piegans and cites supporting documents.”<sup>24</sup>

#### DAVID THOMPSON’S NARRATIVE

Let’s take a look at the narrative of David Thompson,<sup>25</sup> a man whom Ewers studied for many years and described as a “knowledgeable contemporary Canadian Trader.” True, Thompson was contemporary with Lewis and Clark, and he did identify the Indians Lewis encountered as Blackfeet. It is also true that Thompson was keeping a journal in 1807 while among the Blackfeet, a year after Lewis’s unfortunate encounter. Surprisingly, Ewers’s otherwise careful research does not look deep enough into this matter. Ewers implies that Thompson’s journal identifies Lewis’s victims as Blackfeet, but this is not the case. Rather, the fight and the identification of the Indians as Blackfeet is recorded only in Thompson’s narrative,

which he wrote four decades later. In the narrative he claims that in 1807 the Blackfeet (i. e., the Piegan tribe of the Blackfeet nation) sent out a war party to the Missouri to avenge the two murders by Lewis’s party.<sup>26</sup> Thompson asserts quite specifically that the Indians were out to revenge the deaths caused by Lewis’s party, but almost certainly he did not know that in 1807, or otherwise he would have mentioned it in his journal.

It is also incredulous that it would have taken nearly a year for the Piegans to organize a war party to go after Lewis and his men. If Lewis told his story at the Mandan



**Wolf Calf, a Blackfoot interviewed by George Bird Grinnell in 1895, claimed to have taken part in the Two Medicine fight as a boy of 12 or 13.**

or Arikara villages in August 1806 and the story was relayed to Thompson by July 1807, the story would have said that Lewis killed two Gros Ventres of the Prairie. Furthermore, when Thompson got the story from the Piegans it would have been big news, since there was already a rivalry between the Americans and the British in the West, and it is inconceivable that he would have failed to enter such information in his journal. When it is understood that Thompson’s narrative was not written until between 1846 and 1850, his story loses even more credibility because the incorrect identification of Blackfeet as victims of Lewis’s encounter had been well established and accepted long before.

There is a very slight possibility that Thompson could have heard of Lewis’s party killing Indians from John McClellan, a man coming up the Missouri whom Lewis and Clark met as the expedition was nearing St. Louis on its return.<sup>27</sup> McClellan built a fort on the Flathead River

in July 1807 in what was to become western Montana, and he wrote a couple of letters to Thompson from that place, but there was nothing in those letters about Lewis's fight on Two Medicine River.<sup>28</sup> Regardless of where he learned it, Thompson used the story about Lewis's fight to explain the absence of the Piegans at the time he made his departure from their country to set up a trading post at the headwaters of the Columbia River.<sup>29</sup>

#### ACCOUNTS BY COLTER AND BRADBURY

Private John Colter of the Lewis and Clark Expedition was discharged from the army at the Mandan villages when the explorers returned to that place after visiting the Pacific. Colter asked for the discharge for the purpose of joining two trappers by the names of Dickson and Hancock, who were heading into the Yellowstone area.<sup>30</sup> Colter did not return to St. Louis until 1810. Upon his return, he told some hair-raising stories about his and others' encounters with the Blackfeet. He told of his harrowing escape from them, when he ran for his life until blood spurted from his nostrils, and of the murders of George Drouillard and John Potts, two former Lewis and Clark men turned trappers. He also told of a fight in which he joined the Crow and Flathead Indians against the Blackfeet.

By the time Colter returned to St. Louis, Meriwether Lewis had been dead for nearly a year. It appears that Colter's tales had some effect on the early fur-trade stories of later writers. Furthermore, after Colter's stories were retold by imaginative writers the public began to believe Lewis was mistaken about the identity of the Indians on his Marias River reconnaissance. We can be sure that Colter himself knew the truth of Lewis's story. He was with that party of men coming down the Missouri from the Great Falls and met by Lewis and his three companions near present Fort Benton. Colter, therefore, would have been among the first to hear the story. He would have known the number of Indians Lewis's party had killed as well as Lewis's identity of those Indians.

The English botanist John Bradbury was in St. Louis in 1810 and heard Colter's Blackfeet stories. Bradbury had been commissioned by the Botanical Society of Liverpool to investigate plant life in the United States. Thomas Jefferson had advised him to make St. Louis his base of operations. While there, Bradbury received an invitation from Wilson P. Hunt to accompany his party up the Missouri River as far as he would like to go. The Hunt party, an expedition of John Jacob Astor's American Fur Company, was setting out to retrace the route of Lewis and Clark to the Pacific Ocean, where the company

planned to build a trading post. In a note in his journal, Bradbury recounted Colter's story about his desperate run from the Blackfeet. He writes that Colter and his fellow trappers set their traps at night out of concern for "the hostility of the Blackfeet Indians, *one of whom had been killed by Lewis*."<sup>31</sup> [Italics added.] Bradbury's linking of the Blackfeet and Lewis could have been based on what Colter or Clark told him, or it could have been an assumption on his part.

Bradbury's journal was published in 1817 and achieved considerable popularity in both Europe and America. In the mind of the present writer, the note in Bradbury's journal about Colter's run was the basis of the present belief that Lewis and his party killed Blackfeet Indians. Bradbury's note seems to be the first such published information identifying the Indians with whom Lewis tangled as Blackfeet.

Certain writers have claimed that Hunt's final decision to cross the Rockies by some route other than Lewis and Clark's was based on Blackfeet hostilities resulting from Lewis's "unhappy affair." Washington Irving fell victim to the Blackfeet theory in his 1836 book, *Astoria*. He wrote, "He [Colter] had many particulars to give them [Hunt's party] concerning the Blackfeet Indians, a restless and predatory tribe, who had conceived an implacable hostility to the white men, in consequence to one of their warriors having been killed by Captain Lewis while attempting to steal horses."<sup>32</sup> Because Irving says that there was "one" Indian killed by Lewis, he is probably the source for later stories that mention a single Indian victim. While blaming Lewis for the Blackfeet hostilities, Irving states that it was because of those hostilities that Hunt took a different route to the Pacific. Bradbury, who was there at the time, records Hunt's decision differently:

As we had now in our party five men who had traversed the Rocky Mountains in various directions, the best possible route in which to cross them became a subject of anxious enquiry. They all agreed that the route followed by Lewis and Clark was very far from being the best, and that to the southward, where the head waters of the Platte and Roche Jaune [Yellowstone] rivers rise, they had discovered a route far less difficult. This information induced Mr. Hunt to change his plan, which had originally been to ascend the Missouri to the Roche Jaune river, 1880 miles from the mouth, and at that place he purposed to commence his journey by land. It was now concluded that it would be more advisable to abandon the Missouri at the Aricara Town, 450 miles lower down the river.<sup>33</sup>

The present writer is aware of only one account (which we shall get to later) of the event written after Bradbury's



journal was published in 1817 stating that the Indians Lewis fought were Gros Ventres of the Prairie. All other 19th-century reports invariably seem to say that they were Blackfeet—more specifically, the southern and largest branch of the Blackfeet nation, known as the Piegans. It may have been Colter's stories that convinced even the Piegans (indirectly) that they were the victims of Lewis's "unhappy affair." As mentioned earlier, the confusion may have been caused at least partly by Clark due to his misunderstanding of the identity of the Gros Ventres of the Prairie.

Two years after Bradbury's journal was published, a Major Thomas Biddle wrote a letter to Colonel Henry Atkinson (October 29, 1819) from Council Bluffs in which he placed the origin of the Americans' problems with the Blackfeet on Colter. His letter exonerated Lewis, stating that the Blackfeet "were so convinced of the propriety of his [Lewis's] conduct in the encounter which took place between him and a party of their people, in which two of them were killed, that they did not consider it as a cause of war or hostility on their part."<sup>34</sup> This was almost certainly a hearsay story. In reality, it is unlikely that any Blackfeet would have made such a statement, or, if they did, one would wonder under what circumstances it was made. It would be more in line with Plains Indian custom to seek revenge, or at best to say "we were wronged and now you owe us." Furthermore, if it were true, one must wonder to what advantage there would have been for any American to bring up the subject with the Blackfeet. If there is validity in Major Biddle's comments about the event, we then know that at an early date—prior to 1819—the whites discussed with the Blackfeet the issue of Lewis's party killing two Indians.

This discussion, if it did happen, would have been to the advantage of the Blackfeet. And as we shall see presently, it appears they did take advantage of the story, regardless of how they got it. By the time this rather obscure 1819 account was written, several editions of the official narrative of the Lewis and Clark Expedition were in circulation. Major Biddle's story says there were two Indians killed. Bradbury had stated that only one was killed. We see that even as early as 1819 contradictions in the story were appearing. Thompson's account, though published later, claimed that the Blackfeet were out to revenge the deaths caused by Lewis's party, yet Major Biddle's account claims the Blackfeet felt that Lewis's actions were justified and that no revenge was considered. The two things common in Major Biddle's and David Thompson's stories is that there were two Indians killed.

Washington Irving no doubt followed Bradbury's note, and retold the story of only one dead Indian.<sup>35</sup>

There arose varying Blackfeet stories about some event or events that were believed to be, or pretended to be, the Lewis encounter. One story, told to Major Alexander Culbertson sometime after 1833, states that one of the Blackfeet men named O-nei-strucks-lumy (He that Looks at the Calf) was fired upon by a soldier and killed on the Marias River.<sup>36</sup> Note that the teller says *one* Indian was killed, and by a gun. He says the fight took place on the Marias. It was commonly believed that the fight did take place on the Marias because it happened during Lewis's return from his reconnaissance of it. But the fight actually took place near Two Medicine River, a fork of the Marias River. (The Marias River forms where Cut Bank Creek



**Lewis's return route took a loop up the Marias River, whose south fork is the Two Medicine. The fight took place south of Cut Bank, Montana.**

and Two Medicine River converge.) It would be very strange, indeed, for a local to misidentify the river on which a battle in which he was involved took place.

Here is Culbertson's story as Bradley recorded it:

When Major Culbertson came among the Blackfeet in 1833 he found that the Piegans still had a tradition of the killing of one of their number by Capt. Lewis in 1806. The name of the murdered Piegan was O nie strucks lumy (He that looks at the calf). According to the Indian account, Capt. Lewis had gone into camp on the Marias unfurling his flag according to custom. In the evening a number of Piegans came into the camp and were kindly received, but during the night a part of the Indians ran off with some of Capt. Lewis' horses, when the rest were detained by him as hostages. The next morning one of the hostages, watching an opportunity, seized a horse, mounted him and dashed away, when he was fired upon by a soldier and killed.

The Blackfeet incident recorded here would be very inaccurate if it were meant to be an account of Lewis's encounter with them. If it was invented, it must have come into existence after 1836, as it is consistent with Irving in

that it involves Blackfeet rather than Gros Ventres; it speaks of one Indian being killed rather than two; and the Indian was shot.

In contrast, there is another Blackfeet story collected by George Bird Grinnell in 1895. Grinnell tells of the Blackfeet (Piegiens) being the Indians involved in the Lewis fight—his informant, an old warrior named Wolf Calf [photo, page 18] who claimed to have been in the fight, would have been only 12 or 13 years old at the time.<sup>37</sup> (Lewis mentions no such youngster among those he encountered.) Wolf Calf told Grinnell that the name of the man killed was “Side Hill Calf or Calf Standing on a Side Hill.” That is a different name than the one given in the earlier Blackfeet story told by Culbertson. Grinnell’s story also says that one man was killed, but this time by a “big knife” rather than a gun.

Alexander Culbertson was a clerk of the American Fur Company and later a partner in the company. It cannot be established for certain when Culbertson was told the story about O-nie-strucks-lumy. According to Bradley, Culbertson said the Piegiens still had a tradition about Lewis killing one of their men in 1833. That is a strange statement. If Culbertson got the story in 1833, it was only 27 years after the event. Surely some of the six men involved in the fight were still living. If so, the story could hardly be called a “tradition.” If all were deceased, then the 1895 story related by Grinnell must be false.

Someone at sometime obviously spoke to the Piegiens about Lewis’s Indian fight. Did they then search their repertoire of war stories to find one that seemed to fit?

Bradley did not enter the West until after he was transferred to the 7th Infantry, on November 28, 1871. Therefore, Culbertson could not have told his story to Bradley until sometime after that date. Culbertson was married to a Blackfeet (Blood) woman who was intelligent and helpful in negotiations between the Blackfeet and whites. Culbertson was himself familiar with Indian customs. He was the Indian agent for four bands of Blackfeet in 1852. To take a Piegan war story and associate it with Lewis’s encounter with Indians in the country frequented by the Piegiens would be understandable. Culbertson would have known that it was to the advantage of his wife’s people as well as the American fur companies if such an association with Lewis’s fight and a Piegan war story was brought to the fore. If the Indians had been offended by the whites, they would also expect compensation from the whites for their loss. According to their custom, the debt would be considered forever.<sup>38</sup> Culbertson was familiar with the government’s policy

toward the Indians and its annuities program. He served as official interpreter for the government from 1869 to 1874. If the use of this story was in fact a strategy by Culbertson to get more for the Piegiens and the fur companies, it was ingenious. It would also help keep the Piegiens (and the other Blackfeet tribes) coming to the American trading posts, weaning them away from the British companies in Canada.

Culbertson knew the difference between the various tribes of Indians north of the Missouri. In his 1843 account of Fort McKenzie, which he prepared for John James Audubon, Culbertson stated, “The American Fur Company ... , who are an example of the energy of the American people, had, until 1832, no stations among the Blackfeet, Piegiens, Blood Indians or Gros Ventre of the Prairie, these tribes being so hostile and bloodthirsty as to make the trading, or the erecting of a fort among them too dangerous to be attempted.”<sup>39</sup>

Although it was not considered to be among his chief works, Washington Irving’s *Astoria* was a very popular book that supported the idea that Lewis fought with Blackfeet rather than Gros Ventres of the Prairie. It was most likely the note in Bradbury’s book from which Irving drew his conclusion that Blackfeet hostilities stemmed from Lewis’s killing “one of their warriors.” Irving credits Colter with such information, and since Colter died in 1813, one would be inclined to believe that it was Bradbury’s book and not Colter himself that served as Irving’s source.

David Thompson had several popular sources to draw on for his 1846-50 narrative—Bradbury’s 1811-12 journal, Washington Irving’s 1836 *Astoria*, and Thomas James’s 1846 *Three Years Among the Indians and Mexicans*. Culbertson (in spite of the availability of Gass’s journal and the narrative of the Lewis and Clark Expedition) had Bradbury, and possibly Irving, from which to have gained the idea that it was Blackfeet rather than Gros Ventres whom Lewis encountered. And by the time the old Piegan Wolf Calf told Grinnell his story it was commonly (albeit incorrectly) accepted that Lewis had killed a Piegan.

There is yet another account, published in Paris in 1841, that did what McKeehan had pretended he would do—pass over the “unhappy affair” and spare the Lewis and Clark Expedition the embarrassment of the Gros Ventres of the Prairie ordeal. In that place and that year, Prince Maximilian of Wied, one of the most astute and trustworthy chroniclers of the Missouri River, published his *Travels in the Interior of North America*. Maximilian lived among the Gros Ventres of the Prairie during the

# Lewis's account of the "unhappy affair"

## THE ENCOUNTER

I discovered to my left at a distance of a mile an assemblage of about 30 horses, I halted and used my spy glass by the help of which I discovered several indians on the top of the eminence ... about a half the horses were saddled. this was a very unpleasant sight, however I resolved to make the best of our situation and to approach them in a friendly manner. I directed J. Fields to display the flag with I had brought for that purpose and advanced slowly toward them, about this time they discovered us and appeared to run about in a very confused manner ... [because] they did not discover us untill we had began to advance upon them, some of them descended the hill on which they were and drove their horses within shot of it's summit and again returned to the high as if to wate our arrival or to defend themselves. I calculated on their number being nearly or quite equal to that of their horses, that our runing would invite pursuit as it would convince them that we were their enimies and our horses were so indifferent that we could not hope to make our escape by flight; added to this Drewyer was separated from us and I feared that his not being apprized of the indians in the event of our attempting to escape he would most probably fall a sacrefice. under these considerations I still advanced towards them; ... they all descended the hill and mounted their horses and advanced towards us leaving their horses behind them, we also advanced to meet them ... I told the two men with me that I apprehended that these were the Minnetares of Fort de Prairie and from their known character I expected that we were to have some difficulty with them; ... when we arrived within a hundred yards of each other the indians except one halted I directed the two

men with me to do the same and advanced singly to meet the indian with whom I shook hands and passed on to those in his rear, as he did also to the two men in my rear; ... we know assembled and alighted from our horses; the Indians soon asked to smoke with us, but I told them that the man whom they had seen pass down the river had my pipe and we could not smoke untill he joined us ... a young man set out with R. Fields in surch of Drewyer. I asked by sighns if they were the Minnetares of the North which they answered in the affermative. from no more of them appearing I now concluded they were only eight in number and became much better satisfied with our situation as I was convinced that we could mannage that number should they attempt any hostile measures ... I proposed that we should remove to the nearest part of the river and encamp together, I told them that I was glad to see them and had a great deel to say to them. we were joined by Drewyer Fields and the indian. ... with the assistance of Drewyer I had much conversation with these people in the course of the evening. I learned from them that they were part of a large band which lay encamped at present near the foot of the rocky mountains on the main branch of Maria's river one 1/2 days march from our present encampment; that there was a whiteman with their band; that there was another large band of their nation hunting buffaloe near the broken mountains and were on there way to the mouth of Maria's river where they would probably be in the course of a few days. they also informed us that from hence to the establishment where they trade on the Suskasawan river in only 6 days easy march ... which maybe estimated at about 150 miles.

summer of 1833. Describing these people and their unpredictable nature, the Prince indeed recalls Lewis's "unhappy affair" but, being the gentleman he was, simply refers to it as "a quarrel with Lewis and Clarke."<sup>40</sup> An intent student of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, Maxmillian was among both the Gros Ventres of the Prairie and the Blackfeet and evidently heard no story about the Two Medicine fight other than the one told by Lewis himself.

There seems to be no reliable story that refutes Lewis's own account of the "unhappy affair" that took place on Two Medicine River. He told the story at least five times, and with the exception of Clark (who apparently was under a misconception regarding the identity of the Indians north of the falls of the Missouri and south of the falls of the Saskatchewan) all accounts say Lewis encountered Gros Ventres of the Prairie.

For more than 180 years, writers and historians have

wrongly pointed an accusing finger at Meriwether Lewis's "unhappy affair" as being a significant hinderance to the economic progress of the early 19th-century American fur industry. In reality, Lewis's encounter with the Gros Ventres on Two Medicine River probably had little or no effect on the conduct of any tribe of that area, all of whom had for at least 90 years been trading directly with the whites on Hudson Bay and had come to despise any fur hunters—white or Indian—who entered into their profitable hunting grounds.<sup>41</sup>

Although one would have a hard time justifying the killing of two Gros Ventres of the Prairie by members of the Corps of Discovery, it would be equally difficult to justify blaming the Lewis and Clark Expedition for later Blackfeet hostilities toward Americans.

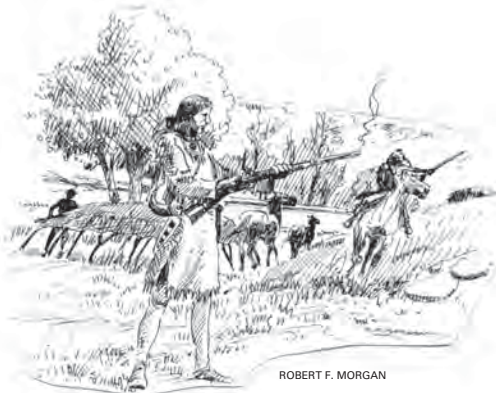
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#### THE FIGHT

... at daylight the indians got up and crowded around the fire, J. Fields who was on post had carelessly laid his gun down behind him near where his brother was sleeping, one of the indians ... slipped behind him and took his gun and that of his brother unperceived by him, at the same instant two others advanced and seized the guns of Drewyer and myself, J. Fields seeing this turned about to look for his gun and saw the fellow just running off with her and his brother's he called to his brother who instantly jumped up and pursued the indian with him whom they overtook at the distance of 50 or 60 paces from the camp seized their guns and rested them from him and R. Fields as he seized his gun stabbed the indian to the heart with his knife. the fellow ran about 15 steps and fell dead ... ; Drewyer who was awake saw the indian take hold of his gun and instantly jumped up and seized her and rested her from him ... I reached to seize my gun but found her gone, I then drew a pistol from my holster and turning myself about saw the indian making off with my



**Indians at Two Medicine encampment  
abscond with guns and horses.**

gun I ran at him with my pistol and bid him lay down my gun which he was in the act of doing when the Fieldses returned and drew up their guns to shoot him which I forbid as he did not appear to be about to make any resistance or commit any offensive act, he dropped the gun and walked slowly off, I picked her up instantly, Drewyer having about this time recovered his gun and pouch asked me if he might not kill the fellow which I also forbid as the indian did not appear to wish to kill us, as soon as they found us all in possession of our arms they ran and endeavored to drive off all the horses I now hollowed to the men and told them to fire on them if they attempted to drive off our horses, they accordingly pursued the main party who were driving the horses up the river and I pursued the man who had taken my gun ... ; at the distance of three hundred paces they entered one of those steep niches in the bluff with the horses before them being nearly out of breath I could pursue no further, I called to them as I had done several times before that I would shoot them if they did not give me my horse and raised my gun, one of them jumped behind a rock and spoke to the other who turned around and stopped at the distance of 30 steps from me and I shot him through the belly, he fell to his knees and on his right elbow from which position he partly raised himself up and fired at me, and turning himself about crawled in behind a rock which was a few feet from him. he overshot me, being bearheaded I felt the wind of his bullet very distinctly.

Source: Reuben G. Thwaites, *Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, 1804-1806* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1904), Vol. 5, pp. 219-225.

#### NOTES

1 Donald Jackson, *Letters of The Lewis and Clark Expedition with Related Documents, 1783-1854* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1962), "David McKeehan to Lewis, April 17, 1807," pp. 399-408. McKeehan's "Maria's River" is today spelled Marias River. Note: "Unhappy Affair" was also the expression used on October 18, 1809, by John Brahan of Nashville, Tennessee, in reporting Lewis's death to Amos Stoddard in Washington, D.C.. Reuben G. Thwaites, *Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, 1804-1806* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1904), Vol. 5, p. 389.

2 Ibid., "Lewis to the Public, March 14, 1807," p. 385.

3 That was the latitude of the northwesternmost point of Lake of the Woods. A line from that point west to a tributary of the Missouri River would, it was believed by Lewis, satisfy the northern boundary of the Louisiana Purchase in accordance with the 1783 Treaty of Paris, which ended the Revolutionary War. A line from that point of Lake of the Woods to the Mississippi River was to establish the northern boundary of old Northwest Territory. (The Mississippi, it was later

discovered, did not reach that far north.) It is an interesting concept that the British would honor a line from the northwesternmost point of Lake of the Woods to some tributary of the Missouri to satisfy the northern boundary of the Louisiana Purchase.

4 With some exceptions, these Indians prefer the name Blackfeet rather than Blackfoot—which is a name of a Sioux tribe. The Blackfeet confederacy comprises three tribes: the Blackfeet, Bloods, and Piegiens. At one time—before Lewis and Clark—they were united under a principal chief. See Prince Maximilian of Wied, *Travels in the Interior of North America*, Reuben G. Thwaites, ed. (New York: AMS Press, 1966), Vol. 23, p. 95. The Blackfeet used a symbol with three prongs in their designs which signified the three tribes. See William Philo Clark, *The Indian Sign Language* (Philadelphia: L. R. Hamersly, 1885; 1982 reprint by Bison Books, University of Nebraska Press), p. 68. There is no indication that Lewis knew of the different tribes that make up the Blackfeet confederacy.

5 These Indians, known today as Gros Ventres or Atsina, live on the Fort Belknap Reservation, in Montana. They were given

several names in Lewis and Clark writings: Fall Indians, Pahkees, Gros Ventre of the Prairie, and Minnetaree of the Prairie; the last two names have often caused them to be confused with the Gros Ventres (Big Bellies) or Minnetaree of the Missouri, known today as the Hidatsa. Interestingly, the name “Fall Indian” was used by the Shoshones (“Pahkees”) because of their association with the Great Falls of the Missouri, and by the early English fur traders because of their association with the falls of the Saskatchewan River. See John Rees, *Madame Charbonneau ...*, (Salmon, Idaho: Lemhi County Historical Society, 1970), p. 8; and Maximilian, p. 75. The Gros Ventres of the Prairie are a branch of the Arapaho, whose language they speak. By one account (date unknown), the Arapaho moved southeastward until they met the Cheyennes near the Red River Valley. The two tribes then moved westward until they reached the Missouri River. The Arapaho split at this point, and those that went northwest became known as the Gros Ventres of the Prairie. See, for example, Clark, *The Indian Sign Language*, p. 197. The Gros Ventres eventually became allied with the Blackfeet, who speak a markedly different dialect of the Algonkian language. They lived in the country described above by Lewis. As late as 1833 the Americans had no interpreter for their language and had to converse with them in the Blackfeet language. See Maximilian, p. 76. Anthropologically, we find the Gros Ventres differ ceremonially—their Sun Dance—and technologically—their tipi—from the Blackfeet tribes. See W. P. Clark, pp. 71, 199; and Reginald and Gladys Laubin, *The Indian Tipi: Its History, Construction, and Use* (New York: Balentine Books, 1973; originally published in 1957 by the University of Oklahoma Press), p. 22.

6 Jackson, p. 341.

7 Thwaites, *Original Journals*, Vol. 5, pp. 219–222.

8 By this time Lewis had collected 23 Indian vocabularies and had used at least seven interpreters. Through it all he was more than likely exposed to a good deal of sign.

9 William Philo Clark, pp. 68, 193. Since there is no indication that Lewis knew the individual tribes of the Blackfeet, we can assume that if he were to ask if they were Blackfeet he would have used the standard sign, a combination of black and moccasin. In contrast, the sign for a Gros Ventre (i.e., Big Belly) is just that—the sign for big belly. It would be difficult to believe the Indians could have misunderstood Lewis’s question.

10 Thwaites, *Original Journals*, Vol. 5, pp. 223–225.

11 These Indians have been identified as “warriors” by some writers. The eminent historian Elliott Coues, who was familiar with running buffalo, figured the Indians were buffalo hunters. The spare horses that were saddled were used as replacements when the horses being ridden got fatigued, according to Coues’s theory. The other horses would then be used to pack meat and hides. To have nearly four times as many horses as riders would seem extreme, but not improbable. However, Lewis noted that the Indians had shields. One would probably be safe in assuming that these were for protection, rather than merely spirit shields. Shields do not fit as accoutrements of buffalo hunters, and the number of horses does not fit a war party. These Indians were probably horse raiders who wore their shields on their backs.

12 Paul Cutright, “The Journal of Private Joseph Whitehouse, a Soldier with Lewis and Clark,” *The Bulletin*, Missouri Historical Society, Vol. 27, No. 3 (April 1972), p. 160.

13 Milo M. Quaife, ed., *The Journals of Captain Meriwether Lewis and Sergeant John Ordway* (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1916), p. 354.

14 Gary E. Moulton, ed., *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 13 volumes, 1983–2001), Vol. 10, p. 259.

15 Thwaites, *Original Journals*, Vol. 5, p. 334.

16 Jackson, p. 341.

17 Thwaites, *Original Journals*, Vol. 6, p. 80. “During the winter at Fort Mandan [in present-day central North Dakota], Lewis and Clark prepared a large table of the Indian nations east of the Rockies, with data respecting their trade, etc.” If the present writer understands Thwaites correctly, the original was made by Lewis. Clark made a copy for the Secretary of War. The copy for the Secretary of War had more information than Lewis’s original. Evidently, Lewis gathered more information after completing the table. Probably from Lewis’s notes, Clark wrote the new information on the back of Lewis’s original table. When Clark made a copy of the table for the Secretary of War he included the information found on the back of the original. The Secretary of War’s copy was probably destroyed in a fire in 1809, or during the War of 1812. Obviously, it is only speculative that the table sent to the Secretary of War was in Clark’s hand. On one occasion, Clark mentions the Gros Ventres of the Prairie without copying Lewis’s journal. That was on May 28, 1806, at which time he was telling about a warning from a Nez Perce chief with regard to the Gros Ventres and Blackfeet. Thwaites, Vol. 7, p. 79.

18 Neither on Clark’s original 1810 map, prepared to accompany the narrative of the expedition, nor on the map that was engraved for publication does any other than “Black Foot Nation 3500 Souls” appear for the Indians who inhabited the country in which there were both Blackfeet and Gros Ventres of the Prairie. This supports the idea that Clark was either unaware of the Gros Ventres of the Prairie or believed them to be a tribe of the Blackfeet nation—as have several modern writers. The same has been said of the Sarsi, but Maximilian pointed out the error. Maximilian, p. 90.

19 Many writers and historians attribute the early Blackfeet atrocities on Americans as revenge for the acts of Lewis’s party. In fact, this has been so much the case for the past 180 years that the Blackfeet have no doubt been blamed—or credited—more than they deserved for hostilities against the whites. For an interesting account of how writers and historians have looked at the Blackfeet problems since the time of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, see Arlen J. Large, “Riled up Blackfeet: Did Meriwether Lewis Do It?” *We Proceeded On*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (November 1996).

20 Jackson, pp. 497–545.

21 Nicholas Biddle, *History of the Expedition Under the Command of Captains Lewis and Clark* (New York: A.S. Barnes, 1904), Vol. 3, pp. 188–189. Edited by John Bach

McMaster, this is a complete reprint of the Biddle Edition of 1814.

22 John C. Ewers, *The Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958), p. 48. We find this absoluteness regarding the identity of the Indians Lewis encountered in many writings. Harry M. Majors in his article "John McClellan in the Montana Rockies 1807: The First Americans after Lewis and Clark," (*Northwest Discovery*, Vol. 2, No. 9, Nov. Dec. 1981, p. 617), states: "The two Indians whom Meriwether Lewis and Reuben Fields [sic] slayed near the Marias River on July 27, 1806, have been irrefutably identified as Piegans." He cites Olin D. Wheeler (see note 36) and John C. Ewers as the irrefutable authorities.

23 James H. Bradley, "Bradley Manuscript—Book II," *Contributions to the Historical Society of Montana*, Vol. 8, 1917. Reprint by J.S. Canner, Boston, 1966, p. 135.

24 Jackson, p. 408.

25 David Thompson, *David Thompson's Narrative of his Explorations in Western America, 1784-1812*. J. B. Tyrrell, ed., Toronto, 1916. The pertinent quote from the narrative (p. 375) is as follows: "the murder of two Peagan Indians by Captain Lewis of the United States, drew the Peagans to the Missouri to revenge their deaths; and thus gave me an opportunity to cross the Mountains by the defiles of the Saskatchewan River, which led to the head waters of the Columbia River."

26 Thompson was 76 years old when he began writing his narrative. He was living in a town near Montreal and had been away from the wilds of the Blackfeet country for 35 years. Interestingly, on a map he drew in 1843 illustrating his route to and from the Mandan and Hidatsa villages from the North West post on Mouse River, he identifies the Gros Ventres of the Missouri as the "Fall Indians," an appellation that should be used for the Gros Ventres of the Prairie. His journal also refers to the wrong tribe as "Fall Indians." He says the Hidatsa are "commonly called the flying Fall Indians." [?] Peter Pond identified the true Fall Indians (i.e., the Gros Ventres of the Prairie) on his 1785 map. See W. Raymond Wood and Thomas D. Thiessen, *Early Fur Trade on the Northern Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), pp. 25, 111-119.

27 Thwaites, *Original Journals*, Vol. 5, pp. 387-388.

28 Harry M. Majors, "John McClellan ... in the Montana Rockies, 1807. The First Americans after Lewis and Clark," *Northwest Discovery*, Vol. 2, No. 9 (Nov.-Dec. 1981). This is an interesting and informative account of John McClellan. However, the writer can produce only circumstantial evidence to identify John McClellan as the man who built the fort on the Flathead River and wrote letters to David Thompson. Majors believes that the letters were written under the pseudonyms "Zachary Perch" and "Jeremy Pinch." Unfortunately, like so many others, he confuses the Gros Ventres of the Prairie with the Gros Ventres of the Missouri.

29 Strangely, the summary of the expedition written by Lewis in September 1806 (mentioned above) was found in Thompson's papers—perhaps a spoil of the War of 1812. Thompson may have received it after writing the narrative, never read it, or

simply ignored the information about the Gros Ventres of the Prairie and incorporated the accepted story of the day in his narrative. Thompson wrote a letter to his partners in Montreal on September 13, 1807, in which he states that two of the men with McClellan had been on the Lewis and Clark Expedition. That was unquestionably hearsay information. In spite of the belief by some that the two men may have been John Thompson and Joseph Field, the present writer finds that quite impossible. The signatures of both appear on a petition dated (by Donald Jackson) March 3, 1807. (Jackson, pp. 378-380).

30 Thwaites, *Original Journals*, Vol. 5, p. 341.

31 John Bradbury, *Travels in the Interior of America in the Years 1809-1810* (Liverpool: Smith and Galway, 1817), Reprint in the March of American Facsimile Series, No. 59, Ann Arbor, 1966, pp. 17-21.

32 Washington Irving, *Astoria* (Philadelphia: Cary, Lea and Blanchard, 1836). Reprint by the University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1976, p. 101.

33 Bradbury, pp. 78-79.

34 Thomas Biddle to Colonel Henry Atkinson, October 29, *American State Papers* (Washington, D.C.: Gales & Seaton, 1834), Indian Affairs, Vol. 2, pp. 201-202.

35 Some writers question whether the Indian shot by Lewis died from his wound. This writer, at least, has little doubt that he did. Certainly, Lewis would have made sure of that, and his post-expedition writings are clear on the matter. (See Jackson, p. 342.) One could assume that Lewis would have hoped the wound was not fatal so that he didn't have to report killing an Indian. But there is neither ambiguity nor supposition in Lewis's report—he killed an Indian.

36 Bradley, p. 135.

37 Olin D. Wheeler, *The Trail of Lewis and Clark 1804-1904* (New York: G.P. Putnam and Sons, 1904), 2 volumes, pp. 311-312.

38 One is reminded of the story of Mike Welsh, as told by Yellowstone Kelly. It seems that Welsh mistook the white rag tied around a friendly Arikara Indian's head for a jackrabbit. As the Arikara was sitting sewing his moccasins, his head swayed, making the rag move like the ears of a rabbit. Welsh shot and nearly killed the Indian, scaring him badly. "You tried to kill me," the Indian shouted. Kelly went on to explain that "Mike never got through paying this Indian; every time they met there was a demand for tobacco, sugar, powder, or some other commodity." See Milo M. Quaife, ed., "*Yellowstone Kelly*"—*The Memoirs of Luther S. Kelly* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926), p. 43.

39 John James Audubon, *Audubon and His Journals* (New York: Scribners, 1897). Reprint by Dover Publications (Elliott Coues, editor), 1986, p. 188.

40 Maximilian, Vol. 23, p. 73.

41 Arthur J. Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974, reprint 1998), pp. 55, 89-90.





# ALL THEM HORSES AND ONE POOR MULE

*A numerical accounting of  
the Corps of Discovery's livestock*

by LOREN M. GIBBONS

A multitude of factors determined the success of the Lewis and Clark Expedition: preparation, leadership, ingenuity, courage, luck, the critical help of tribes along the way, and not least, livestock—mostly horses but also a couple of oxen and a mule.

The Corps of Discovery acquired its livestock just about every conceivable way: animals were found, rented, received as gifts, and stolen. Most, of course, were acquired from Indians through trade—the captains bartered for them with everything from beads to clothing items to firearms. In 1803 monetary terms, the prices they paid for horses probably varied between \$2 and \$20 (\$20–\$120 in today's currency).<sup>1</sup>

The journals include many entries on livestock, but it is seldom clear how many animals accompanied the expedition at any given time. This is especially so during the first half of the expedition but much less the case once the explorers reached the Rocky Mountains, whose crossing depended on horses. The tables on the following pages are an accounting of livestock inventory as best as it can be determined from the journals.

From Meriwether Lewis's departure from Pittsburgh in August 1803 to the Corps of Discovery's arrival at the Mandan villages in October 1804, the expedition journeyed by river. Several times while descending the Ohio

Lewis, rented horses and oxen to free the heavily laden keelboat after it went aground. The Corps of Discovery kept horses during its first winter, at Camp Dubois in Illinois Territory, and an unknown number of horses accompanied the explorers as they made their way up the Missouri by keelboat and pirogue to the Mandan villages. The horses appear to have been mostly used by George Drouillard when hunting.

In August 1805, when the explorers reached the Continental Divide, they rejoiced in finding the Shoshone Indians and their horse herds. It was a seller's market, and Cameahwait, the Shoshone chief, proved the better negotiator—the captains complained that a number of the horses he sold them were indifferently broken, pack-shy, and sore-backed. They did acquire a pretty good mule—the expedition's only one—but at the steep cost of an ax, two knives, two handkerchiefs, a shirt, two pairs of leggings, and some paint. A cross between a horse and a donkey, a mule was a rare item in the Rockies and commanded a price at least double that of a horse.<sup>2</sup>

The two weeks the Corps of Discovery spent with the Shoshones were frantically busy. Parties were often separated and depended on couriers to stay in touch. Horses from one party often ended up with the other. Here again, accurate enumeration is difficult and depends to some



**Horses purchased from the Shoshones and Salish Indians were crucial to the explorers' harrowing traverse of the Bitterroots in September 1805.**

extent on informed assumptions drawn from the journals.

After leaving the Shoshones with a herd that probably numbered 40 animals, Lewis and Clark traveled north, following Lost Trail Pass into the upper Bitterroot Valley. The going was rough, especially for the horses. On September 2, Clark noted, "Several horses fell, Some turned over, and others Sliped down Steep hill Sides, one horse Crippled & 2 gave out."<sup>3</sup> On the next day, September 3, he recorded that the "horses frequently fell" and that the conditions "killed Seven."<sup>4</sup> At what is now Ross's Hole, Montana, they met with a large band of Salish (Flathead) Indians. The captains replenished their stock by purchasing 11 Salish horses and exchanging seven of their poorer mounts for what Clark called the tribe's "ellegant horses."<sup>5</sup> The exchange may well have made the difference, for lesser horses probably could not have survived the extreme weather and hazards that followed.

By now, the captains' mindset toward their remuda was acute—horses, so casually regarded in 1803-04, had become the means of their very survival. During the arduous crossing of the Bitterroot Mountains on the Lolo Trail, the explorers wound up eating five horses, while 12 others were killed, lost, or abandoned due to injury. Exhausted and near starvation, on September 20 they staggered into a Nez Perce village on the upper Clearwater River. They

remained there more than two weeks. The rest of the way to the Pacific would be by water, and they arranged with Twisted Hair, a Nez Perce chief, to tend their 38 animals (all marked with Lewis's branding iron) until the expedition could retrieve them the following spring.

The explorers faced the return trip in 1806 with confidence in their knowledge of the terrain and its peoples. They acquired 23 more horses from Indians on the upper Columbia before reaching the Nez Perce village, where they recovered the horses left in Twisted Hair's care the previous fall. The captains traded coats, leggings, moccasins, knives, tomahawks, kettles, medical care, blacksmithing services, and gifts to build the herd to a total of 65 horses and the single mule.

On June 30, 1806, 20 days after leaving the Nez Perce village, the explorers arrived at Travelers' Rest, on the east side of the Bitterroots. On July 1, the herd reached its maximum size of 67 after a Nez Perce gave Lewis a horse. Here the party split up, with Lewis leading one group to the Missouri via the Blackfoot River, while Clark went to the Three Forks and then crossed overland to strike the Yellowstone River, which he followed down to its junction with the Missouri and a rendezvous with Lewis.

Lewis and nine men departed Travelers' Rest with 17 horses but were soon down to 10. Four of these—two of

the best and two of the worst—Lewis left with a party under Sergeant Patrick Gass’s charge at the Great Falls while he and three other men set out to explore the upper Marias River. Lewis and party gained three horses in a fight with Blackfeet warriors.<sup>6</sup> After Lewis rendezvoused at the mouth of the Marias with Gass’s party (enlarged by the addition of a group led by Sergeant John Ordway), he had a total of 13 horses at his disposal. Fearing pursuit by the Blackfeet, the party abandoned the horses and hastened downriver in a flotilla of canoes cashed the previous summer.

Clark, meanwhile, had taken the remaining 50 animals—49 horses and one mule—to the Yellowstone. There he and his party built canoes and proceeded down the Yellowstone, while Sergeant Nathaniel Pryor and two privates were dispatched overland to the Mandan villages with the herd. Pryor’s party made it to the villages, but by bullboats: Crow Indians stole 24 of the horses on July 21 and absconded with the balance of the herd three nights later.<sup>7</sup> ■

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#### NOTES

1 Estimates based on value of traded goods as listed in Donald Jackson, *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition with Related Documents, 1783-1854*, 2 volumes (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), Vol. 1, pp. 93-99. The average price per horse was probably \$5-6. Inflation estimate from Web site [www.westteff.com/inflation](http://www.westteff.com/inflation).

2 Gary E. Moulton, ed., *The Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition*, 13 volumes (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984-2001), Vol. 5, p. 158.

3 Ibid., p. 183.

4 Ibid., p. 186.

5 Ibid., p. 188.

6 They may have been Gros Ventres. See pp. 12-25.

7 For more on this subject, see Robert R. Hunt, “Hoofbeats & Nightmares: A Horse Chronicle of the Lewis and Clark Expedition,” *WPO*, November 1994 and February 1995—ED.

#### AUGUST 1803 – APRIL 1805: PITTSBURGH TO FORT MANDAN

date	remarks
9/2/03	Lewis rents one horse and one ox to free the keelboat.
9/6/03	Lewis rents at least two horses and two oxen to free the keelboat.
11/20/03	Drouillard and eight men arrive at Camp Dubois with two horses.
12/1/04	Clark rides a borrowed horse.
4/17/04	Clark sends two horses to Lewis in St. Louis.
5/7/04	John Colter arrives with a government horse.
5/11/04	Unknown number of horses sent to St. Louis.
5/26/04	While proceeding up the Missouri, George Drouillard and John Shields hunt with two horses.
6/17/04	Drouillard finds a horse.
7/3/04	Clark: “here we found a verry fat horse, which appears to have been lost a long time.”
7/4/04	Drouillard listed as having four horses.
7/6/04	Two men sent out with horses. (Noted the next day by Clark).
7/31/04	Horses stray (number not stated).
8/23/04	Reuben Fields returns with horses.
8/26/04	Drouillard and George Shannon sent out to hunt horses.
8/27/04	Drouillard reports Shannon and horses lost — Joseph Shields sent to look for them.
8/28/04	Joseph Shields reports that Shannon was ahead of the party. Colter pursues but cannot overtake.
9/11/04	Shannon returns with only one horse.
9/20/04	Drouillard and Shields go hunting with a horse.
9/24/04	One horse stolen.
11/14/04	At Fort Mandan, the captains send out a man on horseback.
12/11/04	Three horses used to haul meat.
12/12/04	Unknown number of horses shod and used to haul meat.
1/31/05	Two horses used for hunting.
2/4/05	Three horses used for hunting.
2/14/05	Four shod horses used to haul meat.
2/15/05	Two horses stolen.
2/28/05	Two horses stolen.
3/4/05	One horse given away.
4/3/05	Captains pay for a lost horse that belonged to a Mr. McKinsey.



# AUGUST - OCTOBER 1805: CAMP FORTUNATE TO NEZ PERCE VILLAGE

date	Lewis gain	Clark gain	inventory	remarks
8/18/05	(+) 3		(+) 3	Purchased for leggings, handkerchief, three knives, and small trade goods.
8/18/05	(+) 1		(+) 1	Purchased for a shirt, leggings, and a knife.
8/18/05	(-) 2	(+) 2		Clark takes two horses with him.
8/20/05	(+) 1		(+) 1	Pierre Cruzatte left to purchase a horse. He apparently succeeds.
8/22/05	(+) 5		(+) 5	Purchased for merchandise—about \$6 each.
8/24/05	(+) 3		(+) 3	Purchased for an ax, handkerchief, and face paint.
8/24/05				Lewis purchases a mule.
8/24/05?	(+) 2 (-) 1	(+) 1	(+) 2	Two rented horses (there is no specific dates of rental or return). Clark must have taken another of Lewis's horses because he states he had three horses.
Subtotals	(+) 12	(+) 3	(+) 15	Lewis states that his inventory now includes nine horses, one mule, and two rented horses.
8/24/05	(+) 1		(+) 1	Charbonneau purchases a horse for Sacagawea with merchandise given to him by Lewis.
8/28/05		(+) 22	(+) 22	Lewis purchases these horses, but leaves them for Clark's inventory.
8/29/05		(+) 1	(+) 1	Clark purchases one horse for a pistol, 100 balls, powder, and a knife.
8/30/05		(+) 1	(+) 1	Purchases one horse for a musket.
?	(-) 2	(+) 2	(+) 1	It is assumed that between 8/24 and 8/30 two of Lewis's horses ended up with Clark. There is no record of any such purchases by Clark.
Subtotals	(+) 11	(+) 29	(+) 40	This balances with Clark's inventory (29) entry of 8/30.
9/2-3/05		(-) 7	(-) 7	Seven horses killed by rough terrain and conditions during the treacherous crossing of Lost Trail Pass.
9/5/05		(+) 11	(+) 11	Clark purchases 11 horses and exchanges seven with the Salish Indians.
9/6/05		(+) 2	(+) 2	Clark purchases two more horses from the Salish.
9/7/05		(-) 1	(-) 1	One horse breaks loose during the night and not recovered.
9/8/05		(+) 1	(+) 1	Two mares and a colt found. Mares are lame and not kept.
9/11/05				Two horses lost and found by mid-day.
9/13/05	(-) 1		(-) 1	Lewis loses a horse.
9/14/05		(-) 1	(-) 1	Colt killed for food.
9/15/05		(-) 2	(-) 2	Two horses give out and left to rear.
9/16/05		(-) 1	(-) 1	Another colt killed for food.
9/17/05		(-) 1	(-) 1	A third colt killed for food.
9/18/05	(-) 1		(-) 1	Willard loses a horse.
9/19/05				Horse found and eaten.
9/20/05	(-) 1		(-) 1	Lewis's pack horse missing.
9/22/05				Clark catches a colt to ride, but doesn't keep it.
9/27/05		(+) 1	(+) 1	Colter finds a lost horse.
10/2/05		(-) 1	(-) 1	One horse eaten.
Subtotals	(-) 3	(+) 1	(-) 2	
Totals	(+) 8	(+) 30	(+) 38	This total matches the 38 branded on October 5.

# RETURN TRIP, APRIL 1806: FORT CLATSOP TO THE FIRST NEZ PERCE VILLAGE

date	Lewis gain	Clark gain	inventory	remarks
4/17/06		(+) 3	(+) 3	Purchased from two unnamed Indian men.
4/17/06				Touissant Charbonneau buys a horse—not counted as part of the herd.
4/18/06		(+) 2	(+) 2	Bought from a Nez Perce chief.
4/18/06	(+) 1		(+) 1	Purchased for a large kettle.
4/19/06		(-) 1	(-) 1	Alexander Willard's horse strays and isn't found.
4/19/06	(+) 1	(+) 4	(+) 5	At least two of these were purchased for two kettles.
4/20/06	(-) 1		(-) 1	Stolen (actually gambled away by the Indian seller). Lewis takes back the trade goods.
4/20/06	(+) 2		(+) 2	Indifferent horses for an extravagant price.
4/21/06				A horse is offered by a Nez Perce man traveling with the party.
4/21/06	(+) 1		(+) 1	Stolen horse replaced by the original seller.
4/21/06				One horse lost and found.
4/21/06		(+) 1	(+) 1	An old horse with a bad back.
4/22/06				Two horses lost and found.
4/22/06	(+) 1		(+) 1	Purchased when halted for lunch.
4/22/06				Charbonneau buys second horse—not counted as part of the herd.
4/22/06				A Clark entry on this day remarks that they had 13 horses. The total was actually 14.
4/23/06				Charbonneau loses both horses—only one found.
4/23/06				Charbonneau buys a third horse for a shirt and two of Sacagawea's dresses.
4/24/06	(+) 3		(+) 3	Three bought from the Wah-how-pums.
4/24/06				McNeal's horse is lost and returned in the evening by an Indian hired to find it.
4/24/06				Three horses are rented from the Wah-how-pums—not counted as part of the herd.
4/25/06				A rented horse is taken from Hall.
4/25/06	(+) 2		(+) 2	The captains intend to ride these two "nags."
4/27/06				Charbonneau loses and then finds one of his horses.
4/28/06		(+) 1	(+) 1	Walla Walla Chief Yelleppit trades a white horse to Clark for a sword, balls, powder, etc.
4/29/06	(+) 1	(+) 2	(+) 3	Two traded for; one given to Clark for medical care.
4/30/06	(+) 2		(+) 2	Two purchased, one exchanged for an Indian mount.
4/30/06				White horse lost and found.
Subtotal	(+) 14 (-) 1	(+) 13 (-) 1	(+) 27 (-) 2	
Totals	(+) 13	(+) 12	[(+) 25] Actual: (+) 23	Both Lewis's and Clark's April 30th journal entries state that their stock had increased to 23 horses. The loss of two horses is inexplicable. They were apparently lost—perhaps on the morning of April 29—and not recovered. Charbonneau's horses and the three rented horses were not counted as part of the government inventory.

## RETURN TRIP, MAY 1806: CAMPED WITH THE NEZ PERCE

date	Lewis gain	Clark gain	inventory	remarks
5/5/06		(+) 1	(+) 1	A Nez Perce gives Clark a gray mare in thanks for treating his eyes.
5/5/06	(+) 1		(+) 1	Lewis's horse, which had wintered with the Nez Perce.
5/6/06	(+) 2		(+) 2	A Nez Perce man gives Lewis two horses in payment for medical treatment for him and his wife.
5/6/06	(-) 1		(-) 1	Eaten.
5/6/06	(-) 1		(-) 1	Lost.
5/6/06				Lewis trades one-for-one with We-ark-koomt (Big Horn), a Nez Perce chief.
5/9/06	(+) 21		(+) 21	Wintered horses.
5/10/06	(+) 2		(+) 2	Given by Nez Perce to be eaten.
5/10/06	(-) 1		(-) 1	Eaten.
5/11/06	(+) 2		(+) 2	Given by a Nez Perce chief's son to be eaten.
5/11/06	(+) 6		(+) 6	Wintered horses.
5/12/06	(+) 1	(+) 1	(+) 2	Given by two young Nez Perce men.
5/12/06			(+) 1	Given to Drouillard by Nez Perce chief Cut Nose.
5/12/06	(+) 1		(+) 1	Given by Nez Perce to be eaten.
5/12/06		(+) 1	(+) 1	Bought by one of Clark's men.
5/12/06	(+) 3		(+) 3	Wintered horses.
5/14/06	(+) 1		(+) 1	A gray gelding given to Lewis by Nez Perce Chief Red Grizzly.
5/15/06	(-) 1		(-) 1	Drouillard's horse lost (mentioned in 5/16/06 journal entry).
5/16/06	(+) 1		(+) 1	Drouillard's horse found.
5/16/06			(-) 1	John Collins's horse strays (mentioned in 5/17/06 journal entry).
5/19/06	(+) 1		(+) 1	Lewis's horse wintered since previous fall.
5/20/06		(+) 1	(+) 1	Given by Nez Perce to be eaten.
5/22/06	(-) 1		(-) 1	Mistakenly driven away by Indians.
5/22/06	(-) 1		(-) 1	Colt eaten.
5/27/06	(-) 1		(-) 1	Eaten.
5/28/06	(+) 1	(+) 1	(+) 2	Given by two Nez Perce men.
5/31/06	(+) 1		(+) 1	Wintered horse.
Subtotals	(+) 45 (-) 8	(+) 5	(+) 50 (-) 8	
Totals	(+) 37	(+) 5	(+) 42	The 42 horses added to the 23 from the April 1806 inventory make a total of 65, the same number stated in the journals on May 31, 1806. Only two horses were missing from the previous fall, and Old Toby, the Corps of Discovery's Shoshone guide, had both. The journals do not indicate whether these two horses were ever retrieved from Old Toby, and they presumably were not.





# RETURN TRIP, JUNE & JULY 1806: TRAVELING THE LOLO TRAIL TO TRAVELERS' REST

date	Lewis gain	Clark gain	inventory	remarks
6/2/06	(-) 1		(-) 1	Lewis's horse shot.
6/8/06		(+) 1	(+) 1	Traded horse for tomahawk.
6/10/06		(-) 1	(-) 1	One of Joseph Whitehouse's horses lost.
6/12/06	(+) 1		(+) 1	Whitehouse's horse found.
6/18/06	(-) 2		(-) 2	Shields's and Drouillard's horses lost.
6/19/06	(-) 3		(-) 3*	Lewis's and Clark's horses and the mule stray.
6/20/06	(-) 1		(-) 1*	William Bratton's horse missing. *On June 19, Lewis wrote that his horse and Clark's horse and mule were missing. On June 20, Bratton's horse was also missing. That makes a total of three horses and one mule. However, on June 20, Clark wrote that four horses were absent. He apparently was counting the mule as a horse.
6/21/06	(+) 4		(+) 4	Three horses and the mule returned by two Indians.
6/25/06	(+) 2		(+) 2	Shields's and Drouillard's horses recovered.
6/29/06	(+) 2 (-) 2		(+) 2 (-) 2	Two horses left behind but recovered the same day.
7/1/06	(+) 1		(+) 1	A Nez Perce gives Lewis a horse.
Subtotals	(+) 10 (-) 9	(+) 1 (-) 1	(+) 11 (-) 10	
Totals	(+) 1	0	(+) 1	The one additional horse added to the inventory of May 31 equals 66 horses and 1 mule. This tallies with the 67 animals inventoried at Travelers' Rest on July 1 (50 in Clark's party, 17 in Lewis's).

## MARIAS HERD: LEWIS FROM TRAVELERS' REST TO MOUTH OF THE MARIAS, JULY 1806

7/1/06	(+) 17		(+) 17	Lewis departs Travelers' Rest with 17 horses.
7/12/06	(-) 10		(+) 7	Ten horses missing.
7/12/06	(+) 3		(+) 10	William Werner finds three of the horses.
7/15/06				Drouillard reports the other seven horses were picked up by Indians.
7/15/06	(-) 4		(+) 6	Two of the best and two of the worst horses left with the portage party at the Great Falls.
7/16/06				Five horses stray but are recovered.
7/27/06	(-) 6		0	Blackfeet Indians drive off all the horses.
7/27/06	(+) 9		(+) 9	Two horses immediately recovered — Field brothers return with four, leave one, take four Indian horses.
7/28/06	(+) 4		(+) 13	Sgt. Patrick Gass and Willard join the party with the four portage horses.
7/28/06	(-) 13		0	Lewis leaves all the horses on the river bank when the boats are loaded for descent of the Missouri.
Totals	(+) 33 (-) 33		0	

## YELLOWSTONE HERD: CLARK FROM TRAVELERS' REST, JULY 1806

7/1/06		(+) 50	(+) 50	Clark leaves Travelers' Rest with 49 horses and one mule (counted as a horse).
7/7/06				Nine horses stray but are recovered by Sgt. Nathaniel Pryor and party on 7/9/06. See also 7/13/06 entry.
7/21/06		(-) 24	(+) 26	Crow Indians steal 24.
7/26/06		(-) 26	0	Crows steal remaining 26 horses the night of July 25-26.
Totals		0	0	

# Explorations: Three poems by W. Dale Nelson

## MR. PEALE AND CAPTAIN LEWIS

*I am very much obliged to Captain Lewis for his endeavors to increase our knowledge of the animals of this new acquired territory.*

—Charles Willson Peale to Thomas Jefferson  
November 3, 1805

Aboard the ship *Comet*  
were a living burrowing squirrel  
and the horns of the unknown ram.  
They had come from the handsome rivers,  
from the country said to be broken,  
from the map with small claim to correctness.  
The museum keeper Peale,  
patriarch and painter,  
reported the squirrel was torpid.  
The magpies, though, were lively  
and filled his museum with chattering.  
Some of the bones were broken  
and bugs had eaten the skins  
but he hoped for a decent antelope.  
(Jefferson kept a few horns  
for the hallway at Monticello.)  
Some bones were lost, feared Peale,  
the painter concerned with correctness.  
He did not paint as much now  
as when young, though his judgment was riper  
and he knew more about color.  
Specimens must be mounted, and drawings  
made of the birds. The artist  
was a keeper of things. The squirrel,  
a prairie dog really, was handsome,  
small and gentle. It slept  
in its warm room. He would wait  
until spring to draw it. He hoped  
to paint Lewis's portrait,  
back from the uncharted rivers.

A collector of expeditions,  
a mounter of advertised mammoths,  
he spent the morning with moss,  
putting the names to birds.  
In the afternoon were the vipers.  
At night the still unknown ram  
troubled his dreams. In a country  
foreign and dark, he would mix  
the colors he knew (for white  
at great heat you use bones,  
for black the rasped oak) to paint,  
in that darkest of skies, a comet.

## THE EXPLORER GOES FOR A WALK, SEPT. 17, 1804

Captain Lewis walked on shore this morning. The plain  
appeared to him like a beautiful bowling green.  
To the west, a high range where antelope were watchful  
and wind drove the insects to the lee of the hill,  
attracting swallows he could approach within a few feet  
and not startle. Plum trees loaded with fruit  
werelike the ones at home, but smaller and more  
thickly  
set. The hills had no rocks. Out on the prairie,  
he drank from small P0013 of rain. The running  
antelope were like birds in flight, like swifts  
flocking  
to the chimneys in Albemarle County. He could not  
abandon  
the proceeding. He could not fail to proceed. Mr.  
Jefferson  
wanted reports on the cuticular membrane of the paper  
birch,  
wanted the continent measured thirty feet at a stretch  
(In Virginia, there were reliable markers, one foot  
deep in the ground). The captain stepped back on the  
keelboat.

## PARTNERS TO AN EXPLORATION

Also of their company: Linnaeus,  
the Swede, classifying, classifying  
genus and species and the frame  
of nature; Peale at Henlopen:  
the 10,000 tongues of the birds  
and the damp, cold air from the sea;  
Observations! Observations!  
Bacon, who took all knowledge  
to be his province, and all  
the hardy and meticulous dead  
who lived to judge the ordinary  
stupid facts of earth, to praise  
the stamen and the root of things,  
to witness the sun's declension  
and the distance of the moon,  
the swallows, daughters of the air,  
or the true curve and twist  
of the mammoth's tusk, making  
their own midsummer night's  
dream of the Great Falls  
of the Missouri, of the world's abundant  
lust, what Most these woods  
were made from, light, and all  
they saw and measured and transformed.

*Foundation member W. Dale Nelson lives in Laramie, Wyoming. These three poems were previously published, respectively, in Piedmont Literary Review, Press, and Tower.*

## The Thwaites edition of the L&C journals is back, and in an economical format

### Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition

Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed.

Digital Scanning, Inc.,  
8 volumes  
\$219.95 paper / \$349.95 hardcover

For any truly serious student of Lewis and Clark the one indispensable source is the 13-volume *Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition*, edited by Gary E. Moulton and published by the University of Nebraska Press between 1984 and 2001. It is the gold standard, not only for Lewis and Clark scholarship but for multivolume scholarly publishing projects in general.

Before Moulton there was Reuben Gold Thwaites, a distinguished scholar of the American frontier who edited the eight-volume *Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, published by Dodd, Mead in 1904-05 and republished in two facsimile editions, now out of print, by Antiquarian Press in 1959 and Arno Press in 1969. Now we have a new facsimile of Thwaites, published by Digital Scanning, Inc. (DSI) of Scituate, Massachusetts.

The DSI facsimile comes as a set in both paperback and hardcover versions. The set comprises seven volumes of text and a one-volume atlas of

Clark's maps with an accompanying CD-ROM that presents the maps in a PDF format viewable with Adobe Acrobat software. Because the original large-scale maps are greatly reduced to fit the atlas's 9-by-6-inch format, the CD-ROM and Acrobat's zoom-in capability are essential for viewing details.

Not surprisingly given its publication nearly a century ago, the Thwaites edition lacks materials discovered after 1905 and included by Moulton—Sergeant John Ordway's journal, Lewis's Ohio River journal, 67 sheets of Clark's field notes, and parts of Private Joseph Whitehouse's journal. Unlike Moulton, Thwaites left out the paraphrased journal of Sergeant Patrick Gass because it had been published in 1807 so was already available to scholars. The Moulton edition also contains Lewis's notes on plants and accompanying photographs of specimens collected on the expedition. Finally, Moulton is more thoroughly annotated, with many more explanatory, up-to-date footnotes.

Thwaites, however, has many non-journal materials related to the expedition that are absent in Moulton, including newspaper articles, official documents, and letters by Lewis, Clark, and Thomas Jefferson, many of which can be found in Donald Jackson's two-volume *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Ex-*

*pedition with Related Documents, 1783-1854*, published in 1978.

Comparing the texts of Moulton and Thwaites, a careful reader will note minor differences in transcription—an "s" added or dropped at the end of a word, for example, or slight changes in spelling, such as "difculty" versus "difculty"—that do not materially affect meaning.

From the point of view of readers with modest budgets, one of the biggest contrasts between Moulton and the DSI version of Thwaites is cost. The Moulton edition retails for \$1,100 (\$200 for the large-format atlas and \$75 for each of the other 12 volumes), while out-of-print copies of earlier Thwaites editions can be found on the used-book market at prices ranging from \$600 to \$10,000 (see [abebooks.com](http://abebooks.com)). At roughly \$220, DSI's Thwaites is an economical alternative for anyone with an acute appetite for Lewis and Clark and limited means for satisfying it. As Moulton observed in the introduction to his edition of the journals, "Thwaites made available to the world for the first time the bulk of the captains' and their subordinates' journals, more or less as the authors had prepared them."

(Order from the publisher at 888-349-4443 or from [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com).)

—J.I. Merritt

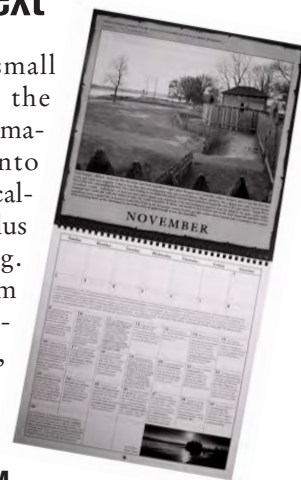
## Following the Corps of Discovery in 1803, from one day to the next

You probably didn't know that on March 9, 1803, Lord Hawkesbury, the British foreign secretary, was notified that the U.S. Congress had approved the expedition proposed by Thomas Jefferson to send his secretary, Meriwether Lewis, to the Pacific. Or that on May 23, Lewis, in Philadelphia preparing for the expedition, paid a bill of \$17.70 for tinware manufactured by Thomas Passmore.

These and scores of other factoids about the Lewis and Clark Expedition's first year can be found in a 2003 bicen-

tennial wall calendar published by Prestholdt Images. This is the first of three calendars that Prestholdt expects to publish during the bicentennial. In text and pictures it conveys a running history of the expedition. Events are briefly described on the date they occurred 200 years before, while vintage artwork and contemporary photos show some of the locations visited by the explorers during the month displayed. The many short text blocks take up most of the space you might otherwise use for jotting down engagements,

but that is a small trade-off for the wealth of information packed into this handsome calendar. (\$14.95 plus \$3.50 shipping. Available from Prestholdt Images, POB 6291, Bridgewater, NJ 08807; [www.prestholdtimages.com](http://www.prestholdtimages.com).)—J.I.M.





# Clark's letters to his brother reveal a man in transition

## Dear Brother: Letters of William Clark to Jonathan Clark

Edited and with an introduction by  
James J. Holmberg / Foreword by  
James P. Ronda

Yale University Press  
322 pages/\$35 hardcover

About midway through James J. Holmberg's collection of newly discovered William Clark letters, we seem to be in familiar territory. "We have proceeded on this far verry well indeed, all well and in high Spirits," Clark writes his eldest brother, Jonathan. "The misquitors is excessively troublesome near Shore."

Clark is not on the Missouri River with the Corps of Discovery, however, but on the Ohio, bringing his 16-year-old bride Julia Hancock to his new post in the then-remote settlement of St. Louis. It is June 1808, not yet two years after the expedition, and Clark is beginning his job as principal Indian agent for the Louisiana Territory and brigadier general of militia.

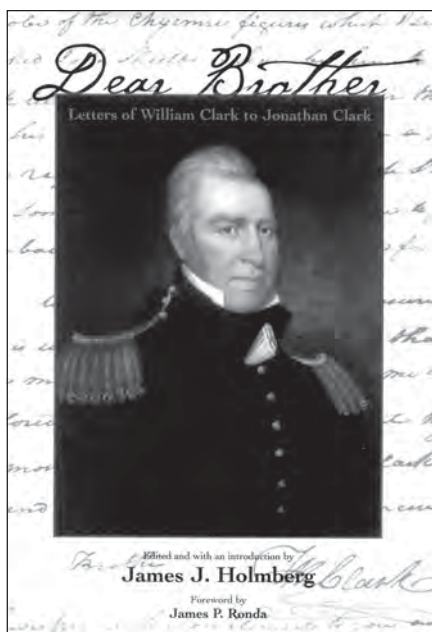
As the 55 letters in this remarkable collection make abundantly clear, Clark was then in transition between the two worlds that would become the twin poles of his life: Louisville, where he had grown up and where his family remained, and St. Louis, where he would live for the following three decades, until his death, in 1838. During this transition—most of the letters published here are from the decade 1801–1811—Clark is struggling to deal with the slaves he owns, the Indians he supervises, and the riches he wants to acquire—or, as he puts it, "to accoumilate a little for a future day."

A few weeks after he arrives in St. Louis, Clark again writes Jonathan to update him on some financial matters, noting that "I am much pestered with Indians." He asks Jonathan's wife to send Julia "some Garden herbs dried, particularly time & Sage." Then, in a chillingly matter-of-fact postscript, he

gives the following update on his slaves:

"I have hired out Sillo, nancy, Aleck, Tenar, & Juba, \_ Ben is making hay, York employd in prunnng[?] wood, attending the garden, Horses &c. &c. Venos the Cook and a very good wench Since she had about fifty, indeed I have been obliged [to] whip almost all my people. And they are now beginning to think that it is best to do better and not Cry hard when I am compelled to use the whip."

Is this the compassionate William Clark of the expedition, attending to



sick Indians and defending Sacagawea from her abusive husband? Throughout these revealing letters to Jonathan, Clark is "vexed & perplexed" by Indians—and quick to use his whip on the African Americans he owns. He gives his expedition companion York "a Severe touncing the other day"—and calmly goes on to thank Jonathan for the presents he has sent Julia. Irritated by the attitude of one of his father's former slaves, Easter, Clark administers what he calls "a verry genteel whipping"—and then complains that he will have to pay \$6 to a nurse to attend her.

That Clark was a typical slave-owning Kentuckian of his time is not news.

Holmberg has previewed these letters, especially those dealing with York, in WPO (November 1992, November 1998, February 1999), *The Filson Club Historical Quarterly* (July 1991), and in his excellent epilogue in the new edition of Robert Betts's *In Search of York*. But in *Dear Brother*, Holmberg has gathered and carefully edited all 47 of the extraordinary William Clark letters discovered in 1989 in a cache in a Louisville attic. They are supplemented with four other letters also from the collection of the Filson Historical Society.

Holmberg's skillful and detailed annotations fill in a more rounded portrait of William Clark than we have ever had before and make this volume invaluable to scholars and to anyone else interested in the story of Lewis and Clark. The first letter printed here, written in 1792 by the 22-year-old Billy Clark to Jonathan, runs about 500 words—and is buttressed by 22 footnotes covering eight pages. And that's just for starters. William's famous letter of September 23, 1806, to Jonathan announcing the return of the expedition generates 26 footnotes over nine pages.

In addition to carefully identifying "all persons, places and events" mentioned in the letter, Holmberg expands many footnotes into mini-essays and mini-biographies. Here you will find definitions of a "perch" of land (a rod measured in either linear or square feet), "the long Lawn" (a plain-woven cotton or linen fabric used for clothing), and sketches of dozens of individuals who populated Clark's world, ranging from Nicholas Biddle and Manuel Lisa to Lewis's nemesis Frederick Bates, the Mandan chief Sheheke, and Martha Christy, the beer-swilling wife of the owner of St. Louis's Eagle Tavern.

Holmberg rightly points out that these letters open a unique window into Clark's world, offering microcosmic insights into American society on the borderlands and addressing exploration, territorial government, western

migration, slavery, economics, family, and travel. We find William reporting on children “skeeting” and “slaying” (skating and sleighing) in a frosty January day in St. Louis and describes the miseries of tooth-rattling travel in carriages that break down on roads that “are verry bad thro’ the wilderness.”

“I write to you without reserve,” says William to his older brother by 20 years, whom he treats almost as a father figure. William asks for Jonathan’s advice, reports fully to him about the major events in his life (including the death of his closest friend and partner, Meriwether Lewis), and frequently pleads for him to write or “to ride over” and visit him in St. Louis. (Curiously, Jonathan appears never to have done so.)

As befits his expertise as curator of special collections at the Filson Historical Society, Holmberg is particularly scrupulous in untangling the web of Clark relatives in Kentucky and Virginia—there are plentiful Hancocks, Prestons, Radfords, Kennerlys, Thrustons, and Fitzhughs—as well as the parallel but difficult-to-document African-American families who shared their world. Holmberg does primary research in tracking down many slave families, not only York’s but dozens of others. The entry under “African Americans, enslaved” in his index includes 28 names, from “Aleck” to “Venos.”

Only a few slaves remain unaccounted for. One named Ben, “freed” by Clark in 1802 in a legal charade in order to move him across the river to the nonslave state of Indiana as an indentured servant, leaves this narrative after 1817. But there is evidence of Ben as late as 1832 in Clark’s letters at the Missouri Historical Society.

More disturbing is the fate of Scippio, another family slave who disappears around 1818. A year later, though, he committed suicide in St. Louis, apparently distraught over Clark’s intent to sell him. Clark’s political enemies attempted to turn the tragedy against him before his unsuccessful gubernatorial campaign in 1820.



FROM DEAR BROTHER MISSOURI HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The general's wife, Julia Hancock Clark

“Clark was about sending him to Orleans, on board the steam boat which sailed today, in order to convert *his old companion into cash*,” wrote a former friend, newspaper editor Joseph Charles, “but the generous Negro preferred death to parting with an *ungrateful master*. This hopeful governor lost a female servant some time ago under circumstances much more atrocious.”

In his letters Clark returns again and again to the subject of his slaves, as if seeking reassurance from Jonathan for his practices. He worries that Jonathan will find him “a Severe master” but defends his need “to have business done.” After one outburst at slaves who “Steel a little take a little, lie a little, Scolw a little pout a little, deceive a little, quarrel a little and attempt to Smile,” Clark confesses, “I wish I wais near enough to Council with you a little on this Subject ... about this inclination of mine, to turn negrows into goods &c.”

Clark frequently expresses the desire to be rid of slave-owning altogether (“I almost wish my old stock of negrows were with good masters and I had the money to put into trade”), and he finally did free York sometime after 1816. He makes a point of asking Jonathan to take care of the “old negrows at the point [where William once lived with his older brother George Rogers Clark], they must not Suffer

when they have become infirm” and offers to cover the costs himself. Still, he could not let go completely, even after death, willing the slaves he owned to his children.

Unfortunately, Jonathan’s replies to William have not survived (or been discovered)—much to Holmberg’s regret. And what we know of Jonathan through his laconic diary entries is not enlightening. “Oh, that he had been a devotee of lengthy descriptive diary entries!” exclaims Holmberg in frustration after Jonathan briefly escorts William and Julia down the Ohio in 1808.

### Clark and Indians

At the time he wrote these letters, Clark was just starting out in what would become his 30-year career as the dominant U.S. official in the lives of Native Americans on the Mississippi and Missouri rivers. Discussing an early treaty he negotiated for the government with the Little and Great Osage of Missouri, by which they yielded title to their lands in half of Missouri and some of Arkansas, Clark admits some regrets to Jonathan: “I am not glad that I have caused those things to be done without any Sort of instructions, it is too much for one man like me to do and the pie must have a new crust and more plumbs put in by partcular fingers to be engraved to make it palaleable.”

Holmberg generously credits Clark with seeking “to achieve the maximum he could for the government and to worry about any consequences of exceeding his authority later.” But as historian J. Frederick Fausz has pointed out, the 1808 Treaty of Fort Osage “was unprecedented in its punitive and lasting impact on Osage lifeways that had evolved over a century of fur trading.” It marked the beginning of Clark’s role in an enormous tragedy: the removal of tribes from their homelands in the East and Mississippi Valley to the West.

The William Clark we meet in these letters is a man presenting one side of himself to a certain individual: a trusted older brother residing in the

slaveholding state of Kentucky. William turns to Jonathan to answer the problems they shared. These included managing African-American slaves and trying to establish a successful retail business (which William attempted with Jonathan's son John Hite Clark).

But the man we see through Jonathan's eyes is not the only William Clark. There are glimpses here, often parenthetically, of other William Clarks. One is a family man who worries about his homesick young wife "in the wild country" and who talks proudly of his young son who "walks about & Beats his drum thro' the Streets" of St. Louis. Another is a blunt-spoken government official who speaks of a despised secretary of war as "the god of War" and calls the conniving Frederick Bates a "little animal."

#### Clark and Lewis

But the Clark who we know best is the friend and companion of Meriwether Lewis. Clark's letters to Jonathan about Lewis's death are among the most important and the most affecting in this book. In a remarkable letter to Jonathan written a month after receiving the terrible news, William reports that Lewis's servant John Pernier has told him that in Lewis's final delirium "on his way to nashvill, he would frequently "Conceipt [conceive] that he herd me Comeing on, and Said that he was certain [I would] over take him, that I had herd of his Situation and would Come to his releaf."

William Clark's greatest attribute was his dependability. He was the rock of reliability who kept the Corps of Discovery together in its worst moments. He was the one man the American government could trust to deal with the tens of thousands of Native Americans who lived on the Mississippi and Missouri rivers. In return, Clark was the only white man that the Indians themselves felt they could trust. The achievement of this book is that we now understand for the first time how complex this man could be.

—Landon Y. Jones

## In Brief: new video; tracking L&C; Oregon forests

• *The Lewis & Clark Expedition*, with Clay S. Jenkinson. "Perhaps you have not spent much time among naked men, or stood snout-to-snout with the grizzled bear, or dined on horseflesh, or dogs, or indeed felt the scraping pain of near starvation in the Bitterroot Mountains of the West, or carried the torch of Mr. Jefferson's Enlightenment to the Great Falls of the Missouri River."



Jenkinson

So begins Clay Jenkinson, outfitted in a buckskin shirt for his portrayal of Meriwether Lewis in this video of an unscripted stand-up monologue presented October 10, 2001, to an audience in Tukwila, Washington. The date is of some significance, coming just a month after the attack on the World Trade Center and Pentagon by Islamic extremists. During the question-and-answer period, Jenkinson draws some fleeting but tantalizing parallels between the clash of first- and third-world cultures represented by America's struggle with Muslim fundamentalism and Lewis and Clark's efforts to bring the tribes they encountered into the orbit of the United States.

But the performance is mainly about Lewis and the expedition he commanded for Jefferson and the latter's vision of a "two-ocean continent for an empire of liberty." Jenkinson covers lots of familiar territory. He talks about the objectives of the expedition and many of the principal events and offers short but illuminating sketches of Clark, Drouillard, York, Colter, Shannon, and other members of the expedition who stand out for one reason or another. Jenkinson's Lewis comes across pretty much as he must have been—serious to the point of moodiness at times but capable of a light touch, as when describing Charbonneau's cooking of *boudin blanc*.

"What I like about him is that he's so honest," says Jenkinson, who believes that Lewis's downfall was due in part to an inability to deal with his descent from the "peak experience" of leading an exploring party into the heart of the American wilderness.

For anyone new to Lewis and Clark this is an engaging introduction. For veteran devotees it is a useful and inspiring reminder of what first drew them to the subject. (\$19.95. Available from Empire from Liberty, 888-828-2853, [www.empirecatalog.com](http://www.empirecatalog.com).)

• *Following Lewis and Clark's Tracks: The Story of the Corps of Discovery*, by William E. Hill. This "educational activity book" is a guide for middle- and high-school students. Prepared by the Oregon-California Trails Association, it offers a succinct overview of the expedition and summaries about transportation, campsites and forts, key personnel, tribes encountered, and animals and plants. When biographical facts are disputed, the author leads with the mainstream view while noting alternatives (for example, Sacagawea probably died in 1812 at Fort Manuel but may have lived until 1884 and died in western Wyoming). One glaring error: Lewis's co-commander, William "Rogers" Clark, is given a middle name he did not possess. (\$6.95, paperback. Available from the OCTA, 816-252-2276; [www.octa-trails.org](http://www.octa-trails.org).)

• *Lewis and Clark Meet Oregon's Forests: Lessons from Dynamic Nature*, by Gail Wells and Dawn Anzinger. This is an informative book for anyone interested in the resource history of Oregon's forests, but Lewis and Clark enthusiasts should be advised that it is only peripherally about the Corps of Discovery's sojourn on the lower Columbia in 1805-6. It is mostly a platform for its publisher, the Oregon Forest Resources Institute, to discuss management issues relating to Oregon's forests—not only those of



## Reviews (cont.)

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the lower Columbia and western Cascades, which Lewis and Clark knew, but also the forests of the Alsea Basin/central Coast Range, which they did not. It does place Lewis and Clark in the larger context of European exploration and settlement and does a good job describing the region's geography, geology, and ecology. The maps, illustrations, and typography are excellent. (\$14.95, paperback. Order by phone at 800-426-3797 or at <http://osu.orst.edu/dept/press.>)

—Glen Lindeman

• *On the Trail of Sacagawea*, by Peter Lourie. With his wife and pre-teenage son and daughter, Lourie follows the Lewis and Clark Trail up the Missouri, across the Continental Divide to the Columbia and down to the Pacific. Their mode of transportation is a



rental van. Their goal is to compare the land today with the description of it left by the Corps of Discovery and to learn whatever they can about “the Indian point of view both on Sacagawea herself and the Lewis and Clark Expedition.” At the Fort Peck Reservation in North Dakota, an Assinboin named Ken Ryan tells Lourie how “the Assiniboin chief Rosebud gave orders to his people not to speak to the intruders. Lewis, walking along the shore of the river, saw the chief camped nearby and wanted to meet with him. But Rosebud quickly grabbed a long tepee pole and kept Lewis at pole’s length as the captain tried to approach. Ken said, ‘You don’t find that information in the journals, do you?’ ”

Aside from this, there are few revelations here. But Lourie’s tale is accurate, well illustrated (mostly with the author’s photographs), and with a straightforward text aimed at grade-school kids. (\$18.95. Boyd Mills Press, [www.boydmillpress.com.](http://www.boydmillpress.com.)) ■

DIGITAL SCANNING, INC.  
Pickup from p. 41, May WPO  
1/2 page.

SOUTHERN INDIANA CVB  
Pickup from p. 41, May WPO  
1/2 page

## Shattuck, Muhly, York, Bratton honored

The California Chapter of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, in honor and memory of its first president, Bob Shattuck, has established an annual prize of \$250 for the best Lewis and Clark-related article published in each calendar year, beginning this year and continuing through 2006.

The Robert R. Shattuck Bicentennial Prize for Lewis and Clark Writing is meant to encourage and recognize writing of the quality that Bob Shattuck appreciated. The prize committee will judge articles based upon the principles of excellence in historically supported research and clarity in writing. Works can be historical articles or essays. Any images or graphics they may contain will be considered in context, but the judges' emphasis will be on the text. Books and works in nonprint media will generally not be eligible.

Articles in WPO or in chapter newsletters received by the California Chapter will be considered automatically. Nominations from any source will be considered upon timely submission of the original publication to the prize committee or the California Chapter. Multipart articles or series are eligible for the year in which they complete publication.

Nominations or submissions must be received before the end of January for consideration. The award will be announced in the May 2003 WPO. For more information or to submit nominations, please contact Ludd A. Trozpek, 4141 Via Padova, Claremont, CA 91711 (909-624-3679; fax 909-624-5632; ludd.trozpek@verizon.net).

### HUBBARD AWARD TO MUHLY

The National Council of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial has honored Frank Muhly, a member of the Foundation board and founder of the Philadelphia Chapter, with the 2002 Harry Hubbard Award for leading the effort to create the brochure "The Eastern Legacy of Lewis and Clark." The award, named

for the first president of the Council, was presented to Muhly at an April workshop in Lewiston, Idaho. In presenting it, Council member Ron Laycock called Muhly the initiator and "driving force" behind the brochure, which was copublished by the Philadelphia and Ohio River chapters and includes a map and text outlining the expedition's progress from Washington, D.C., to Camp DuBois, in Illinois. Copies are available by contacting either chapter ([www.lewisandclarkphila.org](http://www.lewisandclarkphila.org) or [www.lewisandclarkontheohio.org](http://www.lewisandclarkontheohio.org)). An article on Muhly appeared on page B1 of the April 28 *Philadelphia Inquirer* ([www.philly.com/mld/inquirer/3155034.htm](http://www.philly.com/mld/inquirer/3155034.htm)).



Beth Rochefort (left) and Marcia Bratton-Brown, descendants of L&C Expedition member William Bratton, unveiled their ancestor's historical marker in Waynetown, Indiana.

### BRATTON RECOGNIZED

On April 13, the Ohio River Chapter took part in the dedication of a historical marker noting the grave of expedition member William Bratton at the Old Pioneer Cemetery in Waynetown, Indiana. Chapter member Esther Duncan led the effort to secure the marker and organize the dedication, which drew more than 200 people and featured a 15-gun honor-guard salute and remarks by historical novelist James Alexander Thom.

### STREET NAMED FOR YORK

On May 22, the city council in Port-

land, Oregon, adopted a resolution to affirm that the "Y" street in Northwest Portland honors York, the sole African-American member of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. The street, already named "York," now has an official connection to the Corps of Discovery. The local bicentennial organizing group, Lewis & Clark 2005, proposed the resolution. It makes N.W. York Street the first street in the country named for York, who visited the future city's site in 1806.

Northwest Portland, one of the oldest Portland neighborhoods, has avenues in numerical order and streets in alphabetical order. The streets originally carried only letter names—"A," "B," "C," and so on—and the area was known as the Alphabet District. In 1891, most of these streets were given names honoring important figures in Portland's history. It isn't certain for whom or what York Street was named—perhaps a shopkeeper named Milton York or the city of York, England—but there is universal agreement that it was not in honor of Clark's slave.

N.W. York Street is four blocks long, running between N.W. 20th and N.W. 24th avenues in an industrial area and is lined with businesses and warehouses. While no signage has changed as a result of the resolution, York enthusiasts are considering erecting an interpretive marker.

### UNHEARD VOICES

"Lewis and Clark: The Unheard Voices," an academic conference exploring the impact of the opening of the American West on Native Americans, African-Americans, and others who in the words of its organizers "have not always been a part of the traditional heroic narrative," will be held November 14-16 at Penn State University, in State College, Pennsylvania. Participants in the multidisciplinary event will include a range of scholars and artists, including historians Patricia Nelson Limerick, Donald L. Fixico, and Nell Irvin



Painter; ecologist Daniel B. Botkin; environmental writer Barry Lopez; and painter Jaune Quick-to-See Smith. Sessions focused on the presentation and discussion of papers are closed, but the public and press are invited to the opening and closing ceremonies (3:30 P.M. Thursday, November 14, and 5 P.M. Saturday, November 16). Elementary and secondary school students and teachers and the community at large are invited to take part in a series of exhibitions and discussions at campus museums and libraries. The conference will be archived on videotape that will be made available to teachers and other interested parties. More details can be found on the Web site <http://lewisandclark.outreach.psu.edu>.

#### ELK POINT REENACTMENT

The city of Elk Point, South Dakota, is seeking descendants of members of the Lewis and Clark Expedition who might wish to participate in its annual reenactment of the election of Patrick Gass as a sergeant in the Corps of Discovery. Since 1999 participants in the reenactment have included Gass's great-great grandson Eugene Gass Painter, and last year two other Gass descendants took part as well. This year's reenactment will take place August 17, 18, and 22. For more information, call Alice Murphy at 605-356-2164 or Barb Wurtz at 605-356-3336. Photos of previous reenactments can be viewed at [www.elkpoint.org](http://www.elkpoint.org).

#### L&C ELDERHOSTEL

Montana State University–Bozeman is sponsoring an Elderhostel program August 20-26 along the White Cliffs–Missouri Breaks part of the Lewis and Clark Trail. More information is available at the Web site [www.elderhostel.org](http://www.elderhostel.org) or by contacting Marilyn Jarvis (406-994-4820; [mjarvis@montana.edu](mailto:mjarvis@montana.edu)).

#### FALLS OF THE OHIO GUIDE

"Lewis and Clark at the Falls of the

Ohio," a new brochure produced by the Falls of the Ohio Bicentennial Committee and other organizations involved in the L&C celebration, was published in June. It is a guide to 27 sites in the greater Louisville area and beyond associated with the explorers. They include Churchill Downs, the Filson Historical Society, and Locust Grove, the home of one of William Clark's brothers. For copies, call 502-292-0059 ([www.fallsoftheohio.org](http://www.fallsoftheohio.org)).

#### CURRICULUM GUIDE

The Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, in St. Louis, has completed the first section (pre-kindergarten through seventh grade) of a curriculum guide on the L&C Expedition and the Louisiana Purchase. The guide outlines activities that teachers can introduce in the classroom. All activities are based on the national standards for social studies and history. The guide can be accessed on the Web at [www.nps.gov/jeff/lewisclark2/education/curriculumguidemain.htm](http://www.nps.gov/jeff/lewisclark2/education/curriculumguidemain.htm).

#### L&C IN OTHER PUBLICATIONS

*Time* magazine's July 8th issue has a 34-page cover section on Lewis and Clark. The articles in the section, along with related pieces, can be seen at [www.time.com/time/2002/lewis\\_clark](http://www.time.com/time/2002/lewis_clark).



The January *Field & Stream*, in a series on Great American Hunters, profiles Corps of Discovery member John Colter, "the toughest of the mountain men." The article is by John Barsness.

The May-June *Sierra* includes "Lewis and Clark's America," by Todd Wilkinson and Paul Rauber, and "Undaunted Botany," by Colin Chisholm. The first piece discusses environmental changes along the L&C Trail and the second deals with plants collected by

Lewis and Clark. On the Web at [www.sierraclub.org/sierra](http://www.sierraclub.org/sierra).

*Paddler* magazine's May-June issue ranks Lewis and Clark's adventure among "The World's Top Canoe Expeditions." The article also describes the white-water explorations of Lewis and Clark-era fur traders Alexander Mackenzie, Simon Frazer, and David Thompson. On the Web at [www.paddlermagazine.com](http://www.paddlermagazine.com).

An article by Robert Beeman and Ulrich Eichstädt about the air rifle carried by Meriwether Lewis on the expedition appears in the April 2002 issue of *Visier*, a German firearms magazine. An English translation of the article is available on Beeman's Web site ([www.beemans.net/visier-lewis&clarkairgun.htm](http://www.beemans.net/visier-lewis&clarkairgun.htm)). Beeman's exhaustive study of the Lewis air gun (on display at the Virginia Military Institute and valued at \$1 million) is included in the recently published *Second Edition of the Blue Book of Airguns* (\$14.95, plus

\$1.95 shipping; [www.bluebookinc.com](http://www.bluebookinc.com), 800-877-4867).

The Spring 2002 *Washington Park Arboretum Bulletin* includes the article "Lewis & Clark's Discoveries Rediscovered," by Joan Hockaday. It discusses the Oregon grape, salal, and other plants collected along the Columbia River. (\$5; 2300 Arboretum Drive East, Seattle, WA 98112.)

[Our thanks to Jim Hensley of Marion, Indiana, for alerting us to several of these items.—ED.]

### L&C ON THE WEB

The National Geographic Society has a Web page devoted to its new large-format film *Lewis and Clark: Great Journey West* ([www.nationalgeographic.com/lewisandclark](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/lewisandclark)), including a listing of where it is showing.

*The Ventura County Star* of Ventura, California, has established a Web site ([www.voyageofrediscovery.com](http://www.voyageofrediscovery.com)) featuring its ongoing series of Lewis

and Clark-related stories.

The Web site Discovering Lewis & Clark ([www.lewis-clark.org](http://www.lewis-clark.org)) has added episodes on the bearberry plant and Charles B.J.F. de Saint-Memin's profile portraits of Lewis and Clark.

The Web site of Richard S. Wacha, a professor at Iowa's Drake University, describes his on-line course on the frontier biology of the L&C Expedition. ([www.voyageur.drake.edu/FYS/Lewis%20and%20Clark.html](http://www.voyageur.drake.edu/FYS/Lewis%20and%20Clark.html).)

### FOR THE RECORD

M. David Luneau, of Little Rock Arkansas, elaborates on a statement in Kenneth Walcheck's "Naming the Animals," in the February WPO. The article states that the pileated woodpecker "is about the size of a crow, with a large crest (red in the males)." Actually, says Luneau, the crests of both the male and female pileated are red. In the ivory-billed woodpecker the male has a red crest and the female has a black crest. ■

# Sharing

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site on the Lolo Trail sacred to the Nez Perce, recalls that we can never relax our guard when it comes to protecting such places and educating people about their central place in tribal cultures.

As a Salish woman, mother, and educator I am also reminded how dramatically our place on the land has changed over the last 200 years. The land and way of life our elders knew at the time of the Lewis and Clark Expedition are very different from what our children know. Our elders knew the curves of the hillsides and the lines of the trails as intimately as they knew the curves and lines of their mother's faces. Today, our grandparents lament that children born on the reservation are like buffalo born behind a fence. Along with our many rights and privileges we bear responsibilities for teaching our children about their birthright.

We should see this effort as merely a beginning, the start of a second, more respectful 200 years. As part of that beginning, the Council is reaching out to communities to foster understanding of tribal needs and the resources the Council has to offer. Through such dialogue, the Council has come to realize the deep cultural, linguistic, and historic legacy of tribes—a legacy the tribes are determined to preserve, not only for themselves but for the enrichment of all Americans. This alliance between the Council and tribes remains in a fledgling state and must be nurtured so it can continue to grow. The National Council will “sunset” when the bicentennial ends, but the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation will be in a position to carry on its work to ensure that the Lewis and Clark story continues to be told in a balanced and accurate way.

As we draw from the past and reflect on what we've accomplished to date, it's clear that the Council has traveled far. To borrow from the title of this meeting, we must continue “sharing the vision” so that future generations will know and appreciate the beauty and cultural diversity recorded by Lewis and Clark when they passed this way two centuries ago. ■



## Sharing the Vision

*How the L&C Bicentennial can build trust between tribal and nontribal cultures*

by GERMAINE WHITE

The following is adapted from a talk by Germaine White delivered at the Lewis and Clark bicentennial planning workshop held in late March in Lewiston, Idaho. White, an educator, sits on the Circle of Tribal Advisors (COTA) as the representative of the Confederated Tribes of the Salish and Kootenai.—ED.

**D**est Skrekrest pesya. I'm honored to be here, and I'd like to thank the National Council of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial for this opportunity to offer my reflections on planning for the bicentennial and beyond.

I will focus my comments on one crucial area of the Council's work—its role in fostering and supporting an inclusive tribal vision. This effort has done much to build greater understanding, and ultimately greater trust, between tribal and nontribal communities and organizations. Almost from its inception, the Council has shown a deep interest and commitment to this work, which is making an enormous difference in the planning of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial. In the long run, I think these efforts will be of far greater importance and have a positive effect beyond anything we can now realize.

To fully appreciate the importance of this aspect of the Council's work, it may help to put it in a historical context by talking about the typical portrayal of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. From the start there have been competing visions of the nation's history and cultural identity and the expedition's role in shaping both. Early accounts of the Lewis and Clark story largely excluded or dismissed the native peoples encountered by the explorers—people who had been here for millennia. Such accounts marginalized Indian people and cultures and presented them as relics of the "past." By definition, the future was a non-Indian one. In a million unseen ways, the profound arrogance of this attitude trickled down to Indian communities and was communicated to Indian children in ways that taught them to be ashamed of who they were, and who their people had been and how they lived.

But from the start, there has also been a countervailing force in the formation of the Lewis and Clark story. The people behind it have been far more inclusionist and concerned with telling a story that is balanced and accurate—a story based not on fear and hatred of Indian peoples but one,



C.M. Russell's painting of Lewis and Clark meeting the Salish

rather values the diversity and uniqueness of the tribes encountered by Lewis and Clark. This tradition has found its expression in bridge builders from both tribal and nontribal communities. The Montana artist Charles M. Russell was one such person. His paintings, particularly his stunning mural in the capitol

building in Helena of Lewis and Clark meeting the Salish at Ross's Hole, show respect and understanding of tribal people. He took the trouble to get the details right—the Indians in the mural look like Salish, are dressed like Salish, and are riding Salish horses.

Russell respected and understood native peoples and their relationship with the land. Today, we have the cross-cultural engagement of individuals like Gerard Baker, a native Hidatsa and a National Park Service official who heads the Corps II project and works closely with members of the Foundation on trail stewardship. I should also mention the sensitive and courageous leadership of Michelle Boussard and others of the National Council. Through their efforts the Council has become a powerful force for communication between communities too often divided by a history of misunderstanding and miscommunication.

That history is a lot to overcome, and some may be frustrated by how slow the progress can be at times. We need great patience and perseverance if the work is to succeed. We can't expect 200 years of often destructive interactions to be remedied in just seven years. We should think of recent efforts—the decision to make tribal involvement the Council's top priority, the forming of COTA, the frank exchange between tribal and nontribal historians and planners—as signs of real progress. We have challenged the national mythology, and in so doing have encouraged Americans to accept another view: an epilogue, if you will, to the Lewis and Clark journals. The recent vandalization of the Smoking Place, a

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