

THE CROPS OF DISCOVERY

LEWIS AND CLARK EXPEDITION 1803-1806

A BOOK REPORT ON STEPHEN AMBROSE'S BOOK, "*UNDAUNTED COURAGE*"
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I have been interested in the wild, unspoiled and beautiful Western two-thirds of the United States ever since Stephen Ambrose's book, *Undaunted Courage* was published in 1996, followed a year later by Ken Burns wonderful four hour PBS documentary film, on the *Lewis and Clark Expedition, The Journey of the Corps of Discovery*. I only got to see parts of Ken Burn's series but again was spellbound. This fascination became a driving interest in late August and early September 2000 when my wife and I took a leisurely auto trip through the Northwest and saw some of the sites important on the Lewis and Clark Expedition and stayed overnight in the Barrister, a bed and breakfast in Helena, MT, whose owner was a friend and former attorney of Stephen Ambrose who has a home in Twin Falls, Montana, outside Helena.

This is a book report on Mr. Ambrose's interesting and well written book. In this report, largely using excerpts from Mr. Ambrose's book I hope to present pictures, no not pictures and not snapshots but rather portraits of the principle persons and events in the singularly significant achievement this expedition of discovery was and remains. An expedition the promotion of Ken Burns' film calls, "The most important expedition in American history-a voyage of danger and discovery from St. Louis to the headwaters of the Missouri River over the Continental Divide to the Pacific." It was the United States first exploration of the West and one of the nations most exciting adventures. It opened the way a generation later for the flood of emigrants that swept across the nation and into the Oregon Territory along the Oregon Trail.

To set the stage for this let us begin by looking at the United States after it gained independence from Great Britain and at the start of the nineteenth century.

At the time of the United States of America Revolution from Great Britain Kentucky was the West and was reached only by an arduous trek across a formidable barrier, the Appalachian Mountains, which were the concept of mountains in this country at that time.

Thomas Jefferson took oath of office as the Third President of the United States of America on March 4, 1801

The population of the United States in 1801 was 5, 308, 483 persons.

One in five of these persons were Negro slaves. Two-thirds of these persons lived within fifty miles of tidewater.

Fewer than one in ten of these Americans, about half a million people, lived west of the Appalachian Mountains.

In 1801 the boundaries of the United States stretched from the Atlantic to the Mississippi River and from the Great Lakes to nearly the Gulf of Mexico (an area roughly one thousand by one thousand miles).

Only four roads crossed the Appalachian Mountains; the Pennsylvania Road from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh (Fort Pitt); a road from the Potomac River to the Monongahela River; a road from Virginia southwest to Knoxville, TN; and the Wilderness Road that ran through the Cumberland Gap into Kentucky.

In 1801, however, it was not clear that the fledgling United States could hold on to its existing territory between the Appalachians and the Mississippi, much less add more Western land.

In addition it seemed unlikely that one nation could govern an entire continent. The distances were just too great. A critical factor in the world of 1801 was that nothing moved faster than the speed of a horse, no human being, no manufactured item, no bushel of corn or wheat, no whiskey, no side of beef (or beef on the hoof, for that matter), no letter, no information, no idea, order, or instruction of any kind moved faster. Nothing had ever moved any faster and as far as people in 1801 knew and had experienced, nothing ever would.

Roads, the few that existed, ranged from bad to worse. The best highway in the nation at the time, ran from Boston to New York. It took a light stage coach, carrying only passengers and their baggage and the mail, changing horses at every way station, three full days to travel the one hundred seventy five miles trip. The one hundred miles from New York to Philadelphia took two days.

South of the new capitol city, Washington, DC there were no roads suitable for stage coach and everything moved by horseback or river.

In 1801 Jefferson wrote, "Of eight rivers between here (Monticello) and Washington five have neither bridges or boats." It took Mr. Jefferson ten days to travel the two hundred twenty five miles from Monticello to Philadelphia.

In the West, beyond the Appalachian Mountains there were no roads at all only trails. To move men, mail or maize from the Mississippi river to the Atlantic seaboard took six weeks or more. Anything heavier than a letter took two months at least. Bulkier items such as bushels of grain, bales of furs, barrels of whiskey (concentrated corn to go) or kegs of gunpowder could only be moved by horse, mule or ox. Another aside, my

maternal grandfather spent his early teen years using teams of oxen to drag logs from the woods of northern Ohio county, Kentucky, where he lived, fifteen to twenty miles north to the Ohio River, where the logs were either floated across the river to Tell City, IN or floated down river to Evansville, Memphis or New Orleans for manufacture into furniture etc.

This was all people had known or knew and they took it for granted that things would always be this way. The idea of progress based on technological improvements or mechanics, the notion of a power source other than muscle, falling water or wind, was utterly unknown to nearly every American of 1801.

Thomas Jefferson was an exception. He was truly a Renaissance man and had a great and creative mind. If you have visited his Monticello, you know it was filled with his innovations and inventions; he invented the iron moldboard plow which helped bust the Prairie sod. In 1793 he took a hot air balloon ride, then a novel amusement and saw in this the possibility of air travel and commented by air he could travel to Washington, DC in five hours rather than the ten days it then took. He was attracted to the idea of using steam power to move carriages and in 1832 predicted, "the introduction of so powerful an agent as steam (to a carriage on wheels) will make a great change in the situation of man."

With regard to travel by water, Jefferson in 1801, could not imagine any way to overcome or improve the difficulties of this most essential means of transportation of commerce. Rivers dominated his thinking about North America. For the immediate future, he was determined to get control of New Orleans for the United States. Beyond that he sought an all-water route through the unexplored western two-thirds of the continent and was looking for a Northwest Passage to the Pacific Ocean and the Orient.

The Western two-thirds of the Continent was known to be vast, some two thousand miles from the Mississippi River to the mouth of the Columbia river. It was known to contain a wealth of furs an important fact for European cities. It was presumed to have vast quantities of coal, iron, salt, gold and silver at it later proved to have. It was assumed to have good soil and plentiful rainfall for farming much like the recently opened west of Tennessee, Kentucky and Ohio.

But what was not known or assumed but mistaken was more important than what was known. Jefferson in 1801 with the most extensive library in the world on the geography, cartography, natural history and ethnology of the Western two-thirds of North America mistakenly believed that the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia might be the highest mountains on the continent; that a mountain of salt a mile long lay somewhere in the Great Plains; that volcanoes might still be erupting in the Bad Lands of the upper Missouri and most importantly but mistakenly believed there might be a water connection, linked by a low portage across the mountains, that would lead to the Pacific and the Orient.

In 1801 the Louisiana Territory of North America, indeed all the land between the Mississippi and the Rocky Mountains was up for grabs. The contenders were the British coming from the north out of Canada, the Spanish coming from the southwest out of Mexico via Texas and California, the French coming north up the Mississippi-Missouri from New Orleans, the Russians coming from the north east from Alaska and the Americans coming from the east and of course the Native American inhabitants who possessed the land and who were determined to hold on to it.

The Americans east of the Appalachians had already shown in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Kentucky and Ohio that the conquest would be bloody, costly and time consuming but certain because of the Native Americans lack of political organization, their inability to forge alliances their utter dependence on whites for rifles and gunpowder.

The Spanish might have title to Louisiana Territory; the French might have interests in the Louisiana Territory; the British might have designs on the Louisiana Territory; the Spanish and the French, Russians and British might be contemplating exercising vague titles to or otherwise meddling in Oregon but in Jefferson's mind it would all be part of the United States in due course.

Meriwether Lewis was born August 18, 1774 at the family plantation house, Locust Hill. The windows of the bedroom where he was born looked out at Rockfish Gap, in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, an opening to the West that beckoned, inviting exploration.

The Virginia Piedmont of 1774 was no longer the west, the frontier. The frontier then was Kentucky and Tennessee.

At the time of Meriwether's birth plantation life in Virginia was nearly a generation old. Traces of the old buffalo trails still led up the Rockfish River to the Gap. Deer, black bear, turkeys, beaver were plentiful.

Lewis was born in a place where the West beckoned with its promise of land for the taking, inviting exploration but the East could provide education and knowledge. It was a place to learn wilderness survival skills but a place where one could learn surveying, politics, natural history and geography.

In January 1774 Lord Dunsmore, later vilified by the revolutionaries, did Virginia a big favor by organizing an offense by the Virginia militia into the Ohio country. The Virginians goaded the Shawnee and Ottawa and other Indian tribes into war. The war ended with the defeat of the Indians. The treaty ending the war ceded hunting rights in Kentucky to Virginians and also gave unhindered access to and navigation on the Ohio River. Within six months of the end of the war the Transylvania Company sent out Daniel Boone of North Carolina to blaze a trail through the Cumberland Gap to the bluegrass country of Kentucky.

Also in 1774, in an effort to stem the flood of Virginians streaming across the mountains into Kentucky and Tennessee the British government in Quebec enacted the Quebec Act of 1774. In an effort to deny Virginia's claim to the West at that time, the act extended the border of Canada to the Ohio River. This would threaten the innumerable land speculators, including George Washington. The Act further set up a highly centralized government and gave special rights to French Catholic Canadians an act provoking the fears of Protestant Virginia that French Canadian Catholics would rule the Ohio River Valley. This act along with the hated Stamp tax on tea were chief among the Intolerable Acts that led to the American Revolution.

Meriwether Lewis was born on the eve of the American Revolution into a world of conflict between the Americans and the British governments for control of the trans-Appalachian West in a colony where Western ambitions were limitless. A colony that was leading the surge of Americans over the mountains and a colony that was a nursery of explorers.

Meriwether Lewis' family had been a part of the Western movement from the beginning. Thomas Jefferson described Lewis' forebears as, "One of most distinguished families of Virginia and among the earliest." The first Lewis to come to America was Robert Lewis, a Welshman and an officer in the British army. Robert arrived in America in 1673 with a grant of 33,333 acres of land in the Piedmont area of the colony of Virginia from King George III of England.

Lewis' father had a tendency toward what Jefferson termed "hyopchondriasis"- what Jefferson at other times called melancholy what we today call depression. Jefferson said this was a constitutional disposition in all the nearer branches of the family. Meriwether was five years old when in 1779 his father died from pneumonia contracted a few days earlier when he nearly drowned and the horse on which he was riding was swept away in a flood swollen river while he was attempting to return home. Three or four years later Meriwether migrated with his mother and stepfather, Captain Mark along with a number of other Virginians to a colony being developed on the Broad River in northeast Georgia. It was frontier country and it was here he learned frontier skills. A family friend commented, "He acquired in youth good habits and a firm constitution. He possessed in the highest degree self-possession in danger."

The Whiskey Rebellion of 1794 was the greatest threat to national unity between the winning of independence and the outbreak of the Civil War. The precipitate cause of the Whiskey Rebellion was Secretary of the Treasury, Alexander Hamilton's attempt to increase the power and extend the reach of the federal government while adding sorely needed money. Hamilton put an excise tax on whiskey, the principle product of the trans-Appalachian region and the frontier farmers revolted. President Washington called out thirteen thousand militiamen from Virginia, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Maryland. Meriwether Lewis was one of the first to enlist, as a private in the Virginia Volunteer Corps.

A part of Lewis' motivation for joining was his lust for adventure and love of roaming. He roamed the West, up and down the Ohio River---Cincinnati, Ft. Wayne, Limestone, (Maysville), Chillicothe, Wheeling. He learned the crafts of a waterman on the Western rivers. He traveled by horseback to forts South of the Ohio. He kept extensive records. He established a reputation for thoroughness, accuracy and honesty.

It was in the Army that Lewis started drinking and his views along with his drinking got him court marshaled in 1795. He was acquitted of the charges but as a result he was transferred to the Chosen Rifle Company, a company of rifleman-sharpshooters all. The Captain of the Chosen Rifle Company had Ablemarle ties--his family having come from Charlottesville to Kentucky. The Captain was William Clark, the brother of the renowned, General George Rogers Clark. William Clark was four years older than Meriwether Lewis and had been in the Army four years at the time of Lewis' transfer to his company and within six months would resign his commission citing ill health and the press of family business, but during those six months he and Lewis became great friends and admirers one of the other.

William Clark was born in Caroline County, Virginia in 1770 and moved to Kentucky with his family when he was still a small boy. He was Gen. George Rogers Clark's brother and four years older than Meriweather Lewis.

Lewis and Clark complimented each other. Clark was a tough woodsmen, accustomed to command; he had been a company commander and had led a party down the Mississippi to Natchez. He had a way with enlisted men, without ever getting familiar with them. He was a better terrestrial surveyor than Lewis and a better mapmaker. In general in areas which Lewis was shaky, Clark was strong and vice versa.

Most of all Lewis knew that Clark was competent to the task, that his word was bond, that his back was steel. Clark knew the same about Lewis. Their trust in each other was complete, even before they took the first step West together.

Jefferson's interest in exploring the country between the Mississippi River and the Pacific ran back a full half century. in the ten years following independence there were four plans to explore the West. Jefferson was the instigator of three of the four plans.

On February 23, 1801, eleven days before his inauguration as President, Jefferson wrote Captain Meriwether Lewis and asked him to be his personal secretary. Lewis readily accepted the position and for the next year became Jefferson's protege as well as his personal secretary. Jefferson meticulously prepared Lewis for the job of being the first white man to explore the territory of the Louisiana Purchase. A Territory which due to Jefferson's savvy and ability to seize the moment became the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. This purchase set the stage for Jefferson and the United States frontiersman Westward expansion and made it possible for Jefferson to request and get funding from

Congress to create the Corps of Discovery. A Corps to be led by Captain Meriwether Lewis (in reality it was Co-led by Lewis and Clark). Jefferson arranged for Lewis to travel to Philadelphia several times over the next year to meet and study with the leading scientists, physicians, thinkers and learned people of that day. By the time Lewis finished studying with Jefferson and Gallatin, then Secretary of Treasury and a serious map collector, Lewis knew all there was to know about the Missouri and all that lay west of it.

Lewis who had been over a year in preparation started down the Ohio at Pittsburgh, PA on August 31, 1803. He had hoped to be on his way by July 20, at the latest by August 1. By the time the boat was ready, the river had fallen so low that "those who pretend to be acquainted with the navigation of the river declare it impracticable to descend it. Lewis was going anyway. How anxious he was to get going he demonstrated on the morning of August 31. The last nail went into the planking at 7:00 a.m. By 10:00 a.m., Lewis has the boat loaded. To keep it as high in the water as possible, he shipped a considerable quantity of goods by wagon to Wheeling, W. VA.. He purchased a pirogue to carry as much as possible, to further lighten the load. He intended to purchase another at Wheeling to carry the goods coming by land. Then he was on his way.

He met Clark in Clarksville, IN Indian Territory on October 15, 1803 and went across the Ohio to his aunt's home, Locust Grove in Louisville, KY at the Falls of the Ohio where William and his renown brother, General George Rogers Clark, was then living.

Meriwether Lewis and William Clark were each about six feet tall and broad shouldered. Each was rugged in the face, Clark somewhat more than Lewis, who had a certain delicacy to his profile. Their bodies were rawboned and muscled, with no fat. Their hands-sunburned like their face, even this late in the season were big, rough, strong, capable, confident. Each man was long-legged and just a glimpse of their stride across a porch, or how they seated themselves, showed the physical coordination of an athlete.

Over the next two weeks the Captains agreed they would both be Captains and CO-command the Corps although Thomas Jefferson and most particularly Secretary of War, Dearborn, never seemed to agree with this and never gave Clark the Captain's commission that Lewis on several occasions requested for him, rather leaving Clark's rank as Lieutenant.

In addition to Lewis and Clark the Corps of Discovery consisted of York, William Clark's Negro servant and Sergeants Alexander Willard and Nathaniel Pryor, and Privates Alexander Willard, William Benton, Ruben Fields, George Gibson, John Shields, John Colett and George Shannon, at eighteen, the youngest member of the Corp

Captains Lewis and Clark and the expedition's keel boat and pirogues set sail from Clarksville on October 26, 1803 and stopped at Ft. Massac, IL where they hired George Drouillard, a locally renowned woodsman. Drouillard was the son of a French Canadian father and a Shawnee mother. He was a skilled frontiersman, a hunter, trapper and scout.

He was an expert in Indian ways; fluent in a couple of Indian languages as well as French and English. He was a master of sign language. Drouillard was hired as an interpreter.

From Ft. Massac they sailed down the Ohio to its mouth where it empties into the Mississippi and then up the Mississippi to the village of Cahokia, IL almost directly across the Mississippi from St. Louis. it was here at Wood River they set up Winter Camp in 1803-04. They bought more supplies in St. Louis, the gateway to the West.

It was during the winter of 1804 that France finally transferred the Upper Louisiana to the United States in a ceremony that took place in St. Louis on March 9, 1804.

At 7:00 am on May 22, 1804 the keelboat and pirogues turned the bend in the Mississippi and Lewis and Clark and their party cut themselves off from civilization for the next two years. There would be no mail, no incoming letters, no articles, no commissions, no fresh supplies, no reinforcements, nothing reaching them from the United States until they returned. Lewis and Clark ran an independent command, such as the US Army had not previously seen and never would again. Lewis and Clark were now as free as Columbus, Magellan or Cook to make their own judgments and decisions.

Traveling up the Missouri was very slow and treacherous. The Missouri was much more treacherous than the Ohio or the Mississippi. The current was swift and there were numerous obstacles such as floating trees to contend with.

On May 24, 1804 they passed the Boone Settlement, a colony of Kentuckians, established by Daniel Boone a few years earlier in 1779 on a grant of land from the Spanish government.

Slowly moving on up river, on June 1st they reached the Osage River ; on June 26th they passed the mouth of the Kansas River. On July 21st some six hundred miles and sixty-eight days upstream from their Winter Camp at Wood River, IL they reached the mouth of the Platte River. This was a milestone, for going north past the mouth of the Platte was the Missouri riverman's equivalent to crossing the equator. It meant entering into the Great Plains and a new ecosystem and entering into Sioux territory.

On September 23, 1804 the expedition made contact with the Teton Sioux Indians. The Sioux had been the implacable enemies of the Americans and were in possession of the biggest arsenal on the Great Plains. For some time to come they would have the numbers and arms to turn back any expeditions the United States would try and send up the Missouri.

This confrontation with the Sioux nearly turned back the expedition and would have except for the courage and bravado of Captain Lewis and a Sioux chief who relented and let the expedition pass northwest on up the Missouri. For the expedition there was no sense of triumph for one of Jefferson's main instructions to Lewis was to make a favorable impression on the Indians if at all possible.

In late October they arrived at the villages of the Mandan Indians well north of present day Bismark, North Dakota. They made their winter camp here at Camp Mandan.

It was at Camp Mandan they met and hired Toussant Charbonneau, a French Canadian who had worked for the British Northwest Company and who was now living as an independent trader among the Hidatsa Indians. His squaws or "wives" were Shoshone or Snake Indians from a band of Indians that lived in the Rocky Mountains at the head waters of the Missouri River. His squaws had been captured four years earlier by a Hidatsa raiding party and in 1801 Charbonneau won both them in a bet with the warrior who had captured them.

Lewis and Clark readily accepted Charbonneau's offer to sign on as an interpreter and he was signed on immediately. They specified only one on his two "wives" could travel with them and Charbonneau chose Sacagawea to accompany him. Sacagawea was six months pregnant at the time

The Captains accepted Charbonneau's offer not so much for his sake but because Sacagawea could speak the language of the mountain tribes of Indians. Sacagawea, in addition to speaking the Shoshone language could also speak a little of the language of the Hidatsas.

On February 11, 1805 at Ft. Mandan Captain Clark assisted in the birth of Sacagawea's first child Jean Baptiste.

The encounter with the Mandans was all together different from that of the Sioux. The chiefs of the Mandans, the Co-captains of the expedition, the warriors and the enlisted men of the Corps all got along well together as neighbors, regularly visiting one another, talking, hunting, and even enjoying sexual relations with some of the Mandan women.

The Mandan and the Hidatsa knew something of the country to the west and were glad to share their knowledge with the captains; the Americans knew the country to the east of the Mississippi and were eager to induce some Mandan and Hidatsa chiefs to make the journey to Washington, DC and meet their new Great Father, Thomas Jefferson.

The winter of 1804-05 at Fort Mandan consisted of hunting, trading, keeping fit, dealing with the severe cold, doing some repair work to old equipment, building new canoes, visiting with the Indians and much more.

On the eve of April 6, 1805 before they left Ft. Mandan Lewis wrote in a journal entry which deserves to be quoted: "Our vessels consisted of six small canoes, and two large perogues. This little fleet altho' not quite so respectable as those of Columbus or Capt. Cook, were still viewed by us with as much pleasure as those deservedly famed adventurers ever beheld theirs; and I dare say with quite as much anxiety for their safety and preservation. We were now about to penetrate a country at least two thousand miles

in width, on which the foot of civilized man had never trodden; the good or evil it had in store for us was for experiment yet to determine, and these little vessels contained every article by which we were to expect to subsist or defend ourselves. However, as this was the state on mind in which we generally are, generally gives the colouring to events, when the imagination is allowed to wander into futurity, the picture now presented itself to me was a most pleasing one. entertaining as I do, the most confident hope of succeeding in a voyage which had formed a darling project of mine for the last ten years, I could but esteem this moment of my departure as among the most happy of my life."

On April 7, 1805 the keelboat was loaded with specimens, records, journals, scientific observations and letters and sent back down the Missouri to St. Louis. At the same time the two pirogues and six new canoes set out north and west on up the Missouri.

On May 26, 1805 Lewis climbed the bluffs surrounding the breaks in the river and saw for the first time the Rocky Mountains. Clark thought he had seen the distant Rockies the day before. Lewis' confirmation made them the first two Americans to see the Rockies. The sight brought joy to Lewis' heart and he wrote "While I viewed the mountains I felt a secret pleasure in finding myself so near the head of the heretofore conceived boundless Missouri." But the sight also brought dismay. When I reflected on the difficulties which the snowy barriers would most probably throw in our way to the Pacific, and the suffering and hardships of myself and party in them, it in some measure counterbalanced the joy I had felt in the first moment in which I gazed on them."

They had come to the White Cliffs. As for the White Cliffs themselves, Lewis' description is one of the classics of American travel literature. "The hills and river Cliffs which we passed today exhibit a most romantic appearance. They are two to three hundred feet high, nearly perpendicular, shining pure white in the sun. The water in the course of time descending from those hills...has trickled down the soft sand cliffs and worn it into a thousand grotesque figures, which with the help of a little imagination and oblique view...are made to represent elegant ranges of lofty freestone buildings...statuary...long galleries...the remains or ruins of elegant buildings...some columns standing...others lying prostrate and broken...niches and alcoves of various forms and sizes. ...as we passed on it seemed as if those scenes of visionary enchantment would never had an end...vast ranges of walls of tolerable workmanship, so perfect indeed that I should have thought that nature had attempted here to rival the human art of masonry had I not recollected that she had first began her work." The writer, Steven Ambrose says of the White Cliffs, "Of all the historic and/or scenic sights we have visited in the world, this is number one."

On June 3, 1805 the party arrived at the junction of two large rivers and since they were beyond the territory known to and explored and mapped by white men and because the Indians hadn't told them about these rivers they didn't know which river was the Missouri. After several days of exploring, Lewis and Clark decided the south fork must

be the Missouri because of its clearer, colder water with mountain like pebbles in it. In choosing the south fork the Captains had made their most crucial decision yet. It was a decision no one of the Corps agreed with but such was the spirit of the Corps of Discovery that they followed Lewis and Clark's decision implicitly. Fortunately their decision proved to be the correct one.

On June 13th Lewis wrote: "My ears were saluted with the agreeable sound of a fall of water and advancing a little further I saw a spray arise over the plain like a column of smoke [it] soon began to make a roar too tremendous to be mistaken for any cause short of the great falls of the Missouri." He arrived at the river about noon and hurried down the two-hundred-foot bluff to a point on top of some rocks on an island opposite the center of the falls, "To gaze on this sublimely grand spectacle...the grandest sight I ever beheld." He all but tripped over himself in attempting to describe the falls. After seven hundred words, he was "so much disgusted" with his "imperfect" description that he almost tore up the pages, "but then reflected that I could not perhaps succeed better than penning the first impression of the mind." HE wanted to "give to the enlightened world some just idea of this truly magnificent and sublimely grand object, which has from the commencement of time been concealed from the view of civilized man."

Altogether five separate falls made up The Great Falls of the Missouri not the one that the Hidatas had mentioned. The expedition had to portage their canoes and equipment twenty five miles over an arduous route. A portage which took them nearly a month to accomplish.

On July 22, 1805 they came to a place where three rivers came together. One river came from the southeast and in a quarter mile or so upstream two rivers came together, a southwest fork and a middle fork. They named these three rivers the Jefferson, the Gallatin and the Madison. They named the Jefferson after the President and originator of the expedition; the Gallatin, after Secretary of the Treasury, Albert Gallatin and the Madison, after James Madison, Secretary of State.

On August 13, 1805 the expedition met a Shoshone war party led by Chief Cameahwait. They camped in Idaho on the banks of the Lemhi River. The first meeting between the Shoshones went better than Lewis could have hoped it would and in this Lewis was very lucky.

One of the Shoshone women recognized Sacagawea.

Lewis and Cameahwait had started a conference and in the cumbersome process of translation Sacagawea began to stare at Cameahwait. Suddenly recognizing him as her brother, "She jumped up, ran & embraced him, & threw her blanket over him and cried profusely." What a piece of luck that was. When Sacagawea recovered herself, the council resumed---although it was frequently interrupted by tears. Cameahwait declared

his wish to serve the expedition in every respect. The Captains were satisfied-indeed-they could hardly have hoped for more cooperation.

Lewis described the Shoshone as to their demeanor, "Notwithstanding their extreme poverty they are not only cheerful but even gay, fond of gaudy dress and amusements, like most other Indians they are great egotists. They love to gamble. They are frank, communicative, fair in dealing, generous with the little they possess, extremely honest, and by no means beggarly."

The Shoshones and their horses helped the expedition make portage across the Lemhi Pass in Idaho. On the morning of August 12th they hiked on toward the pass, the stream growing smaller as they ascended the gentle slope. "At a distance of 4 miles further the road took us to the most distant fountain of the waters of the mighty Missouri in search of which we have spent so many toilsome and writsless nights."

He, Lewis, assessed the impact on himself, "Thus far I had accomplished one of those great objects on which my mind has been unalterably fixed for many years, judge then of the pleasure I felt in allying my thirst with this pure and ice cold water."

Lewis was not alone in his rejoicing: "Two miles below McNeal had exultantly stood with a foot on each side of this little rivulet and thanked his god that he lived to bestride the mighty & heretofore deemed endless Missouri."

On September 11, 1895 they set out cross-country over high rugged hills following Old Toby an old Shoshone guide that was to guide them over the Bitterroot Mountains. They were entering mountains far more difficult to pass than any American had ever attempted. The country was so remote and rugged that even today it remains basically uninhabited.

The passage over the Bitterroots was exceedingly difficult. There was little or no game for food the passages were steep and very dangerous. Lewis describes it thusly, "But on September 14, it rained, hailed, and snowed. Worse, Old Toby got lost...The road was "much worst than yesterday...excessively bad & Thickly Strowed with falling timber....Steep and Stoney."

By the time the men made camp they and the horses were "much fatigued" and famished. Since the hunters had been unsuccessful, "we were compelled to kill a Colt...to eat.

On the 15th, the party followed the Kooskooskee downstream four miles...the going was incredibly difficult. It was a steep ascent made worse by the immense quantity of falling timber. Several of the horses slipped and crashed down the hills. The horse carrying Clark's field desk rolled down the mountain forty yards until it lodged against a tree; the desk was smashed, but the horse was unhurt. When the party reached the ridge line (at some seven thousand feet elevation), there was no water. Using snow, the men made a soup out of the remains of the colt killed the previous day.

The expedition had made twelve miles, despite "the greatest exertion." Clark wrote, "from this mountain I could observe high rugged mountains in every direction as far as I could see."

September 16 was the worst day the expedition had experienced to date. It began to snow three hours before dawn and continued all day, piling up to from six to eight inches deep. Clark walked in front to find the trail "and found great difficulty in keeping it" because of the snow. The pines were covered with snow that fell on the men as they passed and brushed the limbs. Clark wrote in his journal, "I have been wet and as cold in every part as I ever was in my life." The captains ordered a second colt killed, "which we all supped heartily on and thought it fine meat."

The horses, in a near-starvation situation, strayed during the night, looking for grass. The captains talked. The men's spirits were low. They were approaching the limits of physical endurance. The food supply was all but gone, and there was no hope of finding game. Lewis and Clark realized that the men ---and they themselves---had reached a breaking point. But to retreat was unthinkable---they would rather die than quit. The situation was critical, Lewis wrote, "the only recourse being our guns & packhorses." Killing the packhorses would mean abandoning most of the baggage they were carrying, unthinkable with the Pacific still so far away, not to mention the return trip, and the raffles were "but a poor dependence [in a country] where there is nothing upon the earth except ourselves and a few small pheasants [grouse], small gray squirrels, and a blue bird of the vulture kind [either the pinyon jay or Steller's jay]."

There was nothing for it but to proceed. In the morning Lewis got the party going shortly after sunrise. At six miles, "the ridge terminated and we to our inexpressible joy discovered a large tract of Prairie country lying to the S.W. and widening as it appeared to extend to the W." Their luck was changing and only just in time. Several of the men were sick with dysentery, and nearly all of them suffered from "brakings out, or irruptions of the Skin." probably caused by venereal disease contracted from the Shoshone women.

On September 4, 1805 at Ross Hole, ID the Captains encountered a band of Salish, Nez Perce (pierced nose) Indians who the Captains loosely called Flatheads, a generic term loosely used to signify all Northwestern Indians, whether they deformed or flattened their heads or not.

Old Toby helped lead the way for the Americans, for the Salish were allies of the Shoshones. Private Joseph Whitehouse described the Salish, "The likeliest and honest Savages we have ever yet seen. They are also generous."

It would have been easy for the Nez Perce, who lived on the west side of the Bitterroot Mountains, to kill the whites and take all the expedition's goods. Had the Indians done so, they would have come into possession by far the greatest arsenal west of the

Mississippi along with priceless kettles, axes, hatchets, beads and other trade items in quantities greater than any of them would ever see in their lifetime. According to Nez Perce oral tradition they considered killing the white men for their weapons but were distracted by a Nez Perce woman named, Watkuweis, meaning "Returned from a far country." She had been captured by Blackfeet six or seven years earlier and taken to Canada where she was sold to a white trader. She lived with the trader and other traders for six or seven years before finding her way home. The white traders had treated her far better than the Blackfeet so when Clark arrived she told the warriors "These are the people who helped me, do them no hurt."

First Sacagawea and now Watkuweis, the expedition owed more to Indian women than either Captain ever acknowledged. And the United States owed more to the Nez Perce for their restraint than it ever acknowledged.

In early October 1805 the Corps sped down the Clearwater River to its junction with the Snake River. At this point they began to experience increasingly dangerous whitewater and rapids in the rivers leading to the Pacific. Old Toby was so scared of these waters that one night he took off without his pay and headed east to his home. By October 10th they had reached the mouth of the Snake River and camped near present day Lewiston, ID. The expedition swept on toward the junction of the Snake and the Columbia river they passed through the canyon lined Snake into the present state of Washington. Along the way they passed innumerable Nez Perce villages--the Nez Perce were the largest and by far the most powerful of the Pacific Northwest tribes. They had more horses than any tribe on the continent and were the only North American tribe to practice selective breeding. They scorned eating horse flesh; eating elk, deer and fish instead. The Columbia River system provided more salmon than any other river in the world. The rapids of the Columbia River were terrifying, especially the Dalles which began with the Short Narrows and ended with the Long Narrows. These would be classified today as Class V rapids, meaning they could not be run even with today's craft especially designed for whitewater. The natives, expert canoeists themselves did not believe Lewis and Clark and his men could run the rapids in their big heavy, dugout canoes and they gathered by the hundreds to watch the white man drown themselves and to be ready to help themselves to their equipment afterward. But to the astonishment of the Indians the Americans made the run of the Short Narrows without incident. The same scene was repeated on the Long Narrows.

On the morning of November 5, 1805 after the heavy fog lifted a shout went up and in his field notes, William Clark scribbled these immortal lines. "Ocean in view, O! the joy!" The next day despite rain they sped on to the ocean and Clark wrote "Great joy in the camp, we are in view of the ocean, this great Pacific Ocean, which we have been so long anxious to see." Without comment Clark wrote, "Ocean 4142 miles from the mouth of the Missouri R." It had been two and one-half years since Lewis left Washington, DC in the spring of 1803 but he never recorded this reaction in arriving on the Pacific Ocean...in fact he had written nothing in his journal since September 1805 when they met

the Nez Perce. Steven Ambrose speculates this may have been because Lewis was in a despondent state.

On December 6, 1805 Lewis found his spot or their winter home. It was on a small bluff some thirty feet higher than the high tide mark, some two hundred feet higher back from the river and about three miles up from its mouth. It was near a spring and there were plenty of big trees that could be used to make shelter and to provide firewood. It was but a few miles to the open Pacific Ocean where salt could be made. Best of all, it promised good hunting. The Captain called it Fort Clatsop after the Clatsop Indians who lived in the area. They spent a long, rather boring, rainy dull and dreary winter there.

They busied themselves trading and visiting with the Clatsop and Chinook Indians. The Clatsop were restricted from staying overnight in the fort because Lewis said, "These people are very forward and disagreeable."

The men of the Corp had sex for diversion but paid dearly for this not only in beads and trinkets but also by contracting venereal disease. By all evidence the Captains refrained from having sex with the native women.

To the Captains and the men it was so miserable a place that they couldn't wait to get out of it. The men spent their days at hard labor scraping the elk hides and making moccasins, keeping the fires going in the smokehouse, making salt and hunting. Despite Drouillard's skill as a hunter, not enough game was coming in and occasionally the Captains were able to purchase dogs from the Indians. The men were very fond of the flesh of these dogs.

The plants, animals, relics and momentos Lewis discovered are for the most part still with us but most of the Indians are gone. The Clatsop and Chinook Indians had been decimated by two small pox epidemics in the decades before Lewis and Clark arrived in 1805-06. And in a few decades after the Expedition they have almost ceased to exist. These Indians were unlike the other Indians the Americans encountered. Lewis found them, "a mildly inoffensive people who will pilfer."

On March 23, 1806 the Corps of Discovery bid goodbye to Fort Clatsop.

In April 1805 when they left Fort Mandan for the Pacific they left with canoes still stocked with instruments, goods and supplies. In 1806 they started the return trip with ninety-five percent of their budget spent and their staples depleted. In 1805 they didn't know what lay ahead. In 1806 they did know and had put supply caches from the land of the Nez Perce to the Great Falls so they could replace their supplies as they moved East.

Knowing what lay ahead was a mixed blessing, however, for part of that land was the Bitterroots. From the moment the men left Fort Clatsop the rigors of recrossing these mountains were on their minds.

Going up the Columbia was hard work. The currents were always strong; in the rapids the canoes had to be towed; falls had to be portaged. Food was a constant problem as were crowds of curious Indians.

The Captains decided once they got to the open plain country above the Dalles, they would go overland to the mountains. To do that they needed as many horses as they could purchase.

On April 24th they marched overland for three days, reaching the country of Chief Yellepi and the WallaWallas. Chief Yellepi told them of a overland shortcut to the western end of the Lolo Trail, across the northern bend of the Snake River. This shortcut saved them some eighty miles travel. The WallaWallas also gave the expedition twenty-three horses. The next day they encountered a roving band of Nez Perce. Generally relations with the Nez Perce were excellent. The Nez Perce warned the Captains that it was way too early to cross the BitterrootMountains but the Captains could think of little else.

On June 10, 1806 the expedition resumed the march east. The Indians were to send guides to guide them over the mountains but the guides never arrived and on June 14 Lewis decided to make a forced march without guides and on June 16 Lewis and Clark concluded: "We conceived it madness in this stage to proceed without a guide." As a result they decided to return while the horses were yet strong to an encampment with sufficient grass and game. Drouillard and Private Shannon were to hurry back to the Nez Perce and hire a guide. The expedition would wait for their return. It was the first time since the beginning of the expedition that they had to turn around.

By June 21st Drouillard and Shannon returned with not one but two guides. The expedition was off at last! They resumed their journey at first light the next day.

On June 30 just before sunset they rode into Traveler's Rest. They had covered 156 miles in just three days. The previous fall the same trip took them eleven days. On this crossing the horses had grass every day but one. This was thanks to the skill of the Indian guides. Their sense of distance and timing not to mention their sense of direction and ability to follow a trail buried under ten to twelve feet of snow was a superb feat of woodmanship.

They stayed at Traveler's Rest three days, while here the Captains made final plans for the expedition. In the final plan Lewis was to explore the Marias River to see if any of the land lay north of latitude 50 degrees and Clark was to explore the Yellowstone River. They would reunite on the Missouri. It was a highly ambitious and dangerous plan. On the morn of July 3rd Lewis set out to explore the Marias River.

On July 26th Lewis and three of his men ran into a roving band of young Blackfeet Indian braves. The Indians outnumbered the whites two to one. Near daybreak an Indian attempted to steal a rifle and after chasing and catching the Indian one of Lewis' men

pulled his knife and plunged it into the young warrior's heart. With this the other Indian tried to drive off the expedition's horses. They were chased and shot at. One was hit and badly wounded but escaped and the other Indian fled. One Indian boy killed; another with a presumably fatal wound; four whites in the middle of a land with hundreds of Blackfeet Warriors who would seek revenge the instant they heard the news. It was imperative that Lewis get himself and his men out of there as soon as possible. Lewis and his men rode relentlessly, hardly stopping to sleep until they came to the Missouri River.

Lewis' party joined Sergeant Ordway's and went down the river to the mouth of the Marias. By August 7th they reached the mouth of the Yellowstone. Clark wasn't there but signs of an encampment indicated he'd been there one week earlier.

On August 11th 1806 Lewis and Private Cruzatte set out on a hunt to replenish their meat supply and Captain Lewis got shot in the buttock by a rifle bullet. Cruzatte steadfastly denied shooting Lewis. Lewis felt Cruzatte did shoot him but not intentionally. Lewis had to proceed down river in the pirogue, lying on his stomach.

On August 11th the party set out again and at 1:00 p.m. overtook Captain Clark and his party. The joy of reunion was dampened a bit by Lewis' condition.

Clark directed the passage through today's Bozeman Pass to the Yellowstone where Sacagawea was his guide. A party of braves had stolen twenty-four of his fifty horses. He built two dugout canoes, each twenty eight feet long and lashed them together for stability. His trip down the Yellowstone River was relatively uneventful. It had an important payoff in the form of Clark's maps.

Within two days the expedition arrived at the Mandan Villages. Clark wrote, "These people were extremely pleased to see us." The news from the Chiefs was all bad. The Arikara's and the Mandans had been fighting; the Hidatas had sent a war party into the Rockies and killed some Shoshones; the Sioux had raided the Mandans and the Mandans were divided by intertribal quarreling. The Americans peace policy that Lewis had tried to establish for Jefferson had failed within days of the departure of Lewis and Clark in 1804.

On September 9, 1806 the expedition passed the mouth of the Platte River. It was making seventy to eighty miles a day. As it passed the Platte, it passed out of the Great Plain and was on the home stretch.

On September 20th they viewed some cows in a field, a sight that brought out spontaneous shouts of joy. They put in at La Charette where the citizens thronged upon them. The next day the same thing happened at St. Charles.

On September 22 it was on to Ft. Bellefontaine, established in 1805 as the first fort west of the Mississippi. At Ft. Bellefontaine the Captains took Big White and his family who

was traveling with them on their way to Washington, DC. to the public store at the fort and bought them some clothes.

The next day they swung into the Mississippi and traveled past Wood River where they had spent their first winter in 1803. They had last seen Wood River twenty eight months and eight thousand miles ago.

As the men paddled the last few miles to St. Louis, Lewis had cause to feel deep satisfaction. He had completed the epic voyage, which by itself was enough to place him and his partner-friend, William Clark in the pantheon of explorers.

Lewis had planned and organized and with Clark's help, carried out a voyage of discovery that had been his dream for what seemed like a lifetime. Indeed, it seemed he had been born for it; and had been training himself for it since childhood. His success was due to that training, and to his character, well suited to the challenge. His leadership had been outstanding. He and Clark had taken thirty odd unruly soldiers and molded them into the Corps of Discovery, an elite platoon of tough, hardy, resourceful, well-developed men. They had earned the men's absolute trust.

Jefferson had charged Lewis with numerous nonmilitary goals. He had carried them out faithfully. He was certain he had accomplished the number-one objective of the expedition, to find the most direct and convenient route across the Continental Divide to the Pacific ocean. He had brought back a treasure of scientific information. His discoveries in the field of zoology, botany, ethnology and geography were beyond value. He introduced new approaches to exploration and established a model for future expeditions by systematically recording abundant data on what he had seen.

The early newspaper accounts based on letters sent east by private citizens of St. Louis make the point. A letter printed in Kentucky and picked up across the nation read, "One of the hands, an intelligent man, tells me that Indians are as numerous on [the] Columbia as the whites are in any part of the United States," but they were unarmed and "are represented as being very peaceable. The weather was mild on the Pacific. Another spoke of horses without number among the Indians, but said the Indians were entirely without iron tools."

The first formal celebration in St. Louis, took place on September 25, when the leading men of St. Louis sponsored a dinner and ball. It was a long evening. Lewis and Clark joined in a total of seventeen toasts. The first, at their suggestion, was to Thomas Jefferson, "The friend of science, the polar star of discovery, the philosopher and the patriot." After Lewis and Clark left the dinner and ball there was a final toast, to "captains Lewis and Clark---Their perilous services endear them to every American heart."

In early November 1806, Lewis and Clark set off with their entourage. The party included Big White, his translator, and their families, a delegation of Osages led by Pierre Chouteau, Sargents Gass and Ordway, Privates Laviche and Frazier, plus York. In Louisville on the 9th they had a visit with George Rogers Clark, and the citizens gave them a banquet and ball and lit bonfires in their honor. On the 13th, they arrived in Frankfort (KY), where they split up. Chouteau took his party of Osages on to Washington. Clark went to Fincastle, Virginia, to see his friends-especially Julia Hancock, who had been a child of twelve, when he last saw her. Lewis, with Big White and his group, headed out for his home in Charlottesville (VA). Lewis' progress was slow, in part because at every town and village the residents insisted on some sort of dinner and ball to honor him.

Lewis's reply was taken down verbatim and because it is the closest account available of his speaking style, it deserves to be quoted. Lewis began by expressing his pleasure at being back in Ablemarle County, and at the honor being done him. He took pains to share the credit: "to have conceived is but little; the merit of having added to the world of science, and of liberty, a large portion of the immense unknown wilds of North America, is equally due to my dear and interesting friend, Capt. Clark, and to those who were the joint companions of our labors and difficulties in performing that task."

On December 28 Lewis set off for Washington, DC "never did a similar event excite more joy," a Washington observer declared. The Washington *National Intelligencer* reported "It is said that few expeditions in human history had been "conducted with more patience, perseverance, or success.

In Washington, DC Lewis reported directly to Thomas Jefferson. No account has been found of Lewis' first meeting with Jefferson. Lewis undoubtedly told Jefferson of the grizzly bears and gigantic trees and great storms and the almost paradisaical quality of the Great Plains and the deserts of the upper Missouri, the fierceness of the Indians of the Plains and the numbers of Indians on the lower Columbia, the astonishing bird and animal life, and so much more. Lewis would have plenty to say about the promise of Louisiana and his plan for an American fur-trade empire. Lewis had carried out Jefferson's orders exactly. Indeed, on almost every point Lewis had accomplished his mission.

Lewis was later appointed governor of the Louisiana Territory.

Lewis became increasingly despondent and given to bouts of depression. He drank more and more and used laudanum and opium more and more. He was in severe financial trouble. He ran into problems governing the Louisiana Territory and decided to travel overland to Washington, DC to explain himself and his actions.

On October 11, 1807 while traveling the Natchez Trace on his way to Washington, DC he stayed overnight at Grinders Inn about seventy miles southwest of Nashville, TN. That

evening as he sat on Mrs. Grinder's porch, looking west while the light faded from the sky, what were his thoughts? Were They of the rivers, the Missouri and the Columbia and others? Did he recall the Arikaras, the Sioux, The Mandans? Did he think of the first time he had seen Sacagawea? Did he remember the April say in 1805 when he started out from the Mandan nation on his "darling project," daring to link his name with Columbus and Captain Cook? Did he dwell on the decision at the Marias?

Or were plants, animals, birds scenery of the Garden of Eden he had passed through commanding his imagination? IF so, surely he thought of cottonwoods, prickly pears, the gigantic trees of the Pacific Coast; of grouse and woodpeckers and condors; of the grizzlies and the unbelievable buffalo herds, the pronghorns, sheep, coyotes, prarie dogs, and the other animals he had discovered and described; of those remarkable white cliffs along the Missouri, the Gates of the Rocky mountains, the Columbia gorge.

Did Three Forks, that 'Essential spot' in the geography of the West, spring to his mind? Or was it Cameahwait and the Shosohones? Perhaps it was Old Toby, and that terrible trip across the Bitterroots.

Did he recall the Nez Perce and their fabulous ponies and generosity? Or the journey down the western waters to the sea? Or was it his Christmas and New Year's dinners of water and lean elk at Fort Clatsop?

It may be that thought of the long waiting period with the Nez Perce, and the one time he had been forced to turn back in the first attempt to force the Bitterroots, in the spring of 1806. Or was it the Blackfeet and the only Indian fight of his life? or the time he got shot in the ass?

Did he do a roll call of the men, surely he thought of his co-commander, William Clark, the best friend any man ever had.

Did one of Mrs. Grinder's dogs chase a squirrel and remind him of his dog, Seaman? Could it be that he thought of that moment of triumph when his canoes put in at St. Louis in September 1806?

Or were his thoughts gloomy? Were they about his unlovable problems? Did he agonize over his speculations and the financial ruin they had brought him? Was that awful Secretary Bates foremost in his thoughts? Did he wonder why he had failed in his courtship's and had no wife? Did he curse himself for his drinking? Did his mind dwell on Thomas Jefferson? Was he ashamed of how he had failed the man he adored? Did he think of the journals, over in the corner in his saddlebags?

Or did his mind avoid the past? Was he rehearsing what he would say to Secretary Eustis and President Madison?

Or was he yearning for more pills? Or more whiskey?

We cannot know. We only know that he was tortured, that his pain was unbearable.

Mrs. Grinder began to prepare a bed for him, but he stopped her and said he would sleep on the floor, explaining that since his journeys to the Pacific he could no longer sleep on a feather bed. He had his companion, Pernier, bring in his bear skins and buffalo robes and spread them on the floor while Penier was getting the bedding, Lewis found some powder.

Mrs. Grinder went to the kitchen to sleep, and the servants went to the barn.

Lewis began pacing in his room. This went on for several hours. Mrs. Grinder, who was frightened and could not sleep, heard him talking aloud, "like a Lawyer."

Lewis got his pistols. He loaded them and at some time during the early hours of October 11 shot himself in the head. The ball only grazed his skull.

He fell heavily to the floor. Mrs. Grinder heard him exclaim, "O Lord!" Lewis rose, took up his other pistol, and shot himself in his breast. The ball entered and passed downward through his body, to emerge low down on his backbone.

He survived the second shot, staggered to the door of his room, and called out, "O madam! Give me some water, and heal my wounds."

Lewis staggered outside, fell, crawled for some distance, raised himself by the side of a tree, then staggered back to his room. He scraped the bucket with a gourd for water, but the bucket was empty. He collapsed on his robes.

At first light, the terrified Mrs. Grinder sent her children to fetch the servants. When they got to Lewis's room, they found him "busily engaged in cutting himself from head to foot" with his razor.

Lewis saw Penier and said to him, "I have done the business my good Servant give me some water." Pernier did.

Lewis uncovered his side and showed them the second wound. He said, I am no coward; but I am so strong, [it is]so hard to die." He said he had tried to kill himself to deprive his enemies of the pleasure and honor of doing it.

He begged the servants to take his rifle and blow out his brains, telling them not to be afraid, for he would not hurt them, and they could have all the money in his trunk.

Shortly after sunrise, his great heart stopped. beating.

In his 1813 letter, Jefferson wrote a one-sentence description of Lewis that is as fine a tribute to a subordinate as any president of the United States has ever written. It is impossible to imagine higher praise from a better source.

“Of courage undaunted, possessing a firmness & perseverance of purpose which nothing but impossibilities could divert from its direction, careful as a father of those committed to his charge, yet steady in the maintenance of order & discipline, intimate with the Indian character, customs & principles, habituated to the hunting life, guarded by exact observation of the vegetables & animals of his own country, against losing time in the description of objects already possessed, honest, disinterested, liberal, of sound understanding and a fidelity to truth so scrupulous that whatever he should report would be as certain as if seen by ourselves, with all these qualifications as if selected and implanted by nature in one body, for this express purpose, I could have no hesitation in confiding the enterprise to him.”