



# *We Proceeded On*

The Official Publication of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, Inc. **August 2000** Volume 26, No. 3



Charles M. Russell  
and his painting  
of Lewis & Clark  
at Ross's Hole

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This detail from Charles M. Russell's great mural of Lewis and Clark meeting the Flathead Indians at Ross's Hole, Montana, shows the painting's central figures. For the story behind the mural, see the story starting on page 18; the painting in its entirety appears on pages 20-21. Courtesy Montana Historical Society.



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

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Letters

## Corps of Discovery gravesites



Painter (left) and Helmick at Gass's grave

I enjoyed Bob Moore's article "Corps of Discovery Gravesites" in the May WPO but was disappointed and surprised that it did not include a photograph of the grave of Patrick Gass, my great-great grandfather. I live only seven miles from Wellsburg, West Virginia, where he is buried and enclose a picture of his marker, in Brooke Cemetery. Troy Helmick of the Crimson Bluffs Chapter and I visited the gravesite on April 20.

EUGENE BASS PAINTER  
*Avella, Penn.*

Although the "Toussaint Charbonneau" buried in St. Stephens Catholic Cemetery in Richwoods, Missouri, is not the same person who was Jean Baptiste Charbonneau's father and an interpreter for Lewis and Clark, I believe there is a connection between him and Jean Baptiste.

When Jean Baptiste (Pompey) was a hunter for Bent's Fort in 1844, he became acquainted with a visitor, William Boggs, a son of the governor of Missouri, who wrote about him in his travel notes. Boggs also wrote, "Another half-breed at the Fort was 'Tessou.' His father was French and his mother an Indian. . . . 'Tessou' was in some way related to [Baptiste] Charbenau. Both of them were very high strung, but Tessou was quick and passionate. He fired a rifle across the court of the Fort at the head of the large negro blacksmith, only missing his skull about a quarter of an inch, because the negro had been in a party that chivariated [chivvied: harassed] Tessou the evening be-

fore, and being a dangerous man, Capt. St Vrain gave him an outfit and sent him away from the Fort." (Source: "The W. M. Boggs Manuscript about Bent's Fort," *Colorado Magazine*, No. 7, 1930, pp. 66-67.)

This incident throws light on another mystery regarding Jean Baptiste, a supposition that he had married a Cheyenne woman and abandoned her. Alexander Barclay noted in his journal of December 28, 1847, an encounter at Pueblo with a mountain man who met "Rufine and Charbonneau's child Louise at the Whirlwinds camp going down to Bents fort alone and afoot." (Source: William Marshall Anderson, *The Rocky Mountain Journals*, Dale L. Morgan and Eleanor Towles Harris, eds., 1967, p. 288. Barclay's manuscript is in the Bancroft Library.) Jean Baptiste had left Bent's Fort in September 1846—more than a year before this incident—to guide General Stephen Watts Kearny's army to California. No other mention of his having a wife or child occurs in the literature concerning Jean Baptiste. From what we know of the man, it was not in his character to abandon a family. But it is not difficult to believe that the hot-tempered Tessou [Toussaint] would do so.

Is the man buried in Richwoods another, older son of Lewis and Clark's interpreter?

MARION TINLING  
*Sacramento, Calif.*

EDITOR'S NOTE: the writer has recently finished a biography of Jean Baptiste Charbonneau, which is scheduled for publication next year by Mountain Press.

Another member of the Corps of Discovery with a known gravesite is François Rivet, one of the boatmen who accompanied Lewis and Clark as far as the Mandan villages. He is also the boatman who danced on his hands to Pierre Cruzatte's fiddle. Rivet is buried in the St. Paul Parish Cemetery in the Willamette Valley, Oregon, according to *Men of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, by Charles G. Clarke. Rivet lies in the same cemetery as Phillipe Decre, who appears to have briefly taken up with the expedition during its ascent of the lower Missouri but was never an official member.

RON LAYCOCK  
*Benson, Minn.*



EDITOR'S NOTE: In the map that accompanied Moore's article we left off the gravesite of John Colter and misspelled William Clark's name by adding on "e" to it. (We're in good company: Thomas Jefferson spelled it that way, too.) In the map below we've corrected these errors and added Rivet's gravesite.

## Fiction reviews

I am writing in response to John Stoner's letter in the May WPO taking issue with James Holmberg's review of my novel *The Meriwether Lewis Murder*.

First, I must thank Mr. Holmberg for a conscientious job, in which he caught several errors that slipped past the copyeditor and me. Should there be a second edition, these will certainly be corrected. I appreciate Mr. Holmberg's attention to detail.

Second, and the real purpose of this letter, is to comment on Mr. Stoner's remarks. It is purely a policy matter whether WPO reviews fiction or restricts itself to factual accounts of the Lewis and Clark saga. I find nothing to quarrel with in either case; it is a matter of the objectives of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation and the desires of its members. I am, however, amused at Mr. Stoner's implication that I am among writers making "a fast buck." He is obviously unfamiliar with the economics of fiction writing. Of more concern is his reference to "someone's weird assumptions." From this I gather that he feels a fictional work necessarily represents the writer's opinions about what really happened. I would like to reassure him that some of us can make a distinction between fact and fiction. Had I wished to write the former, then, as the holder of a Ph.D. in anthropology I

would have employed a scholarly format and restricted myself to historical data. Instead, as the author of a series of novels featuring a fictional archaeologist who confronts historical mysteries (*Burial Ground*, *Assassin's Blood*, *Past Dying*, and now *The Meriwether Lewis Murder*), I gather what facts I can from published sources, place them in a fictional format with a "What if?" premise, and clearly represent the result as fiction. When people ask my opinion about the death of Meriwether Lewis, I state that I do not know how it happened but that my understanding of the record leads me to believe suicide to be slightly more likely than murder.

Perhaps Mr. Stoner opposes all historical fiction. In that case, he has a number of authors and a formidable corpus of work to contend with, including Sir Walter Scott, Robert Graves, and Gore Vidal. Of course, Mr. Stoner is at liberty not to read historical novels. I would like to think, however, that I have provided some entertainment to a few strangers, whether at the beach or on the Lolo Trail, and that perhaps there might even be someone out there who picks up the book and decides after reading it to find out more about the captains we all so much admire.

MALCOLM K. SHUMAN  
*Baton Rouge, La.*

John L. Stoner's letter begs a rebuttal.

First, not all historical fiction is "junk." A serious historical novelist (there is such a thing) spends as much time researching facts as a historian does, and he devotes additional effort to recreating the character of the story's principals and the world and time in which they acted.

Second, historians are not automatically more right than fiction authors. In fact, some writers are both novelists and professional historians. Aspects of history that had been left blank or lopsided by scores of historians have been corrected and fleshed out by good novelists. Russell Banks's novel *Cloudsplitter* brought Americans closer to the true soul of John Brown than did any of the works of a dozen historians. And the late Patrick O'Brian lifted naval history several notches with his series of novels about the Napoleonic wars at sea.

A few historians write well enough to capture vast readership—Stephen Ambrose is our current example. But history teachers assign reputable historical novels as supplemental reading because they know that even their most history-impervious students might soak up some knowledge if they get caught up in a good story.

Finally, historical fiction will be written whether Mr. Stoner approves or not, and will become part of Lewis and Clark lore. Some novels will be valid, some far-fetched. Wouldn't he rather see all the lore evaluated publicly by Lewis and Clark scholars in WPO than simply flung out on the market, quality unjudged?

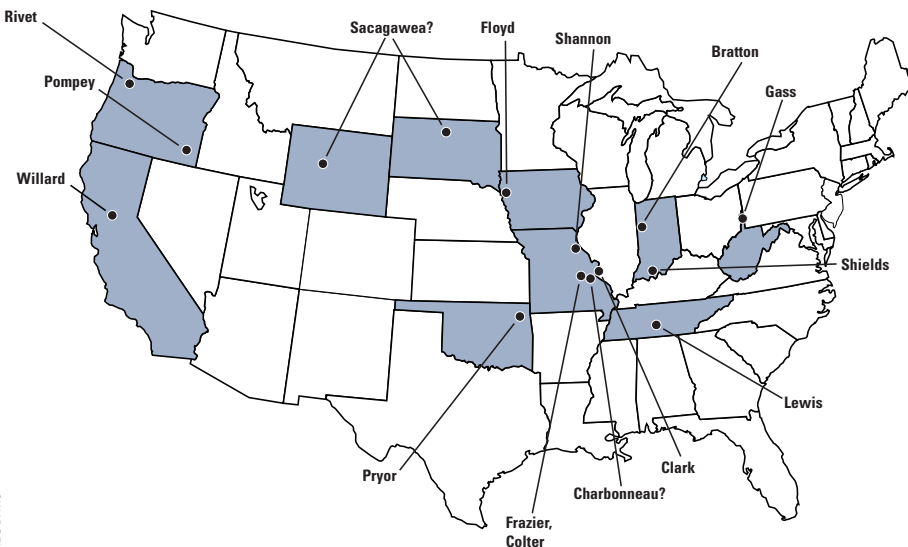
As a historical novelist and sometime historian, I seek to give truths and insights, and welcome any discussion they might provoke. Please keep critiquing it all: fact, fiction, and the indeterminables.

JAMES ALEXANDER THOM  
*Bloomington, Ill.*

EDITOR'S NOTE: A review of Thom's novel *Sign-Talker*, about George Drouillard, appears on page 33.

## Seaman's fate

After reading Dean Norman's response in the May WPO to "Seaman's Fate?," James J. Holmberg's article in the February WPO, I went to the vet's to verify the size of a Newfoundland dog. We seldom see one of them here in the Piney Woods, and I doubt if anyone living on the Natchez Trace in 1809 had ever seen one. As I thought, the chart showed the height as 26-28 inches and weight 110-150 pounds, compared to 25-28 inches and 150-170 pounds for a St. Bernard. Norman is right: a dog of that size and unusual breed tagging along with Lewis would have been the subject of comment by observers at Ft. Pickering, where Lewis landed after his boat ride from St. Louis, and at every point along the Natchez Trace. Also, Mrs. Robert Grinder, who reported on the demise of Lewis, offered several ver-



sions of the death scene without ever mentioning a dog. None of the many “local traditions” in Tennessee—stories with incredible viability—refer to a dog guarding the grave. Finally, because Lewis planned, upon departing St. Louis, to travel by sea to Washington, it is highly unlikely that he would have taken Seaman with him—assuming the pet was in St. Louis.

On the other hand, if the dog did accompany Lewis, Norman is correct in speculating that its presence would support the contention that someone murdered Lewis. It is ironic that Holmberg’s article is opposite the obituary of Lewis and Clark scholar Ruth Colter Frick, who doubted that Lewis killed himself and who uncovered ample evidence that Lewis was not financially insolvent at the time of his death. If Lewis was depressed, according to Frick, it was not over his financial future. At the end of his piece, Holmberg appropriately asserts that the manner of Lewis’s death is “one of history’s controversies.”

JOHN D. W. GUICE  
*Laurel, Miss.*

## New membership campaign

There is a new membership campaign underway, and we want to include you! We are pleased to offer renewing members the same incentives as new members. When you renew your membership this year, please consider joining at a higher club level. When you renew, you are entitled to a premium gift. Each club membership includes all lower-level gifts, plus:

- Heritage Club (\$50): *logo bookmark*
- Explorer Club (\$100): *canvas book bag*
- Jefferson Club (\$250): *R. F. Morgan numbered print*
- Discovery Club (\$500): *Makochie CD*
- Expedition Club (\$1,000): *GF Symphony CD*
- Leadership Club (\$2,500): *Annual Meeting registration.*

Thanks for your continuing support, and pass the word along! If questions, contact me at 406-454-1234; membership@lewisandclark.org.

CARI M. KARNIS  
*Membership Coordinator, LCTHF*  
Great Falls, Mont.

WPO welcomes letters. We may edit them for length, accuracy, and clarity. Send them to us c/o Editor, WPO, 51 N. Main St., Pennington, NJ 08534 (e-mail: wpo@lewisandclark.org).

## From the Bicentennial Council

# Kansas City report: moving ahead

**A**ll Prepared for Action—Realizing the Vision” was the fitting theme of the National Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Council’s fifth national planning workshop. Held in Kansas City, Missouri, in April, it attracted over 300 delegates who heard nearly 40 speakers representing the Council’s federal, state, tribal, education, conservation, national-event, and institutional partners. Their presentations on missions, priorities, and actions were synchronized to digital “powerpoint” pictorials provided by Jana Prewitt of the Department of Interior.

Breakout sessions featured a preview of the History Channel’s forthcoming Lewis and Clark documentary, produced in cooperation with the Council’s partner American Rivers, and a report on the first multi-state awareness survey of visitors to the Lewis and Clark Trail.

We learned there is a high degree of awareness of the Corps of Discovery but little awareness of the bicentennial itself. That should change with documentaries and other planned feature films, coupled with the Council’s national public-education campaign on trail stewardship.

In a luncheon address, speaker Stephen Ambrose delighted us with the news that he will chair the National Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Honorary Council of Advisors—and he rocked the house by offering to contribute \$1 million for every \$1 million raised or donated by the other members of the Council of Advisors, with proceeds to support trail stewardship, education, and tribal and commemorative events. The Council of Advisors is small but growing and includes several notable individuals—watch for a na-

tional announcement soon. Also on the fund-raising front, the Council announced that the Carlson Marketing Group will implement its corporate sponsorship program, with a goal of raising \$10 million.

We were also pleased to hear from Allen Pinkham, a Nez Perce elder who fills the Council’s first Tribal Liaison position, established in cooperation with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. A commitment to a second position based

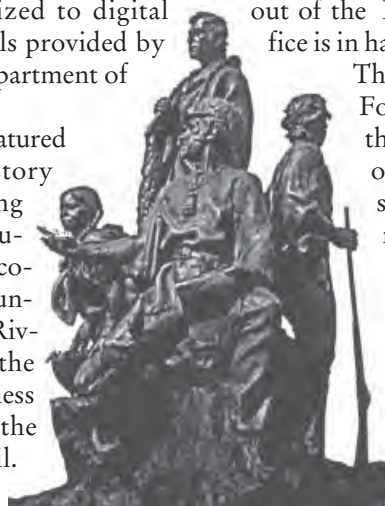
out of the BIA’s South Dakota office is in hand. Amy Mossett of the Three Affiliated Tribes of Fort Berthold spoke about the newly formed Circle of Tribal Advisors, which she chairs. The Circle already has a dozen tribal representatives and held its first meeting while in Kansas City.

The workshop also addressed progress of the Congressional Caucus on the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Representative Ike Skelton of Missouri offered his thoughts on the responsibilities we all share to commemorate the bicentennial.

The Council’s project inventory, presented to Congress on March 1, was reviewed. The Caucus has asked for a second round and further articulation of national project priorities, which we will deliver in January.

Next year’s workshop will be held April 24-27 in Omaha. It’s a not-to-be-missed event. The Council will announce the addition to the calendar of national signature events, a master plan for the bicentennial, congressional funding priorities, and the full scope of our corporate sponsorship, product, and public education programs.

—David Borlaug  
Michelle Bussard



A highlight of the KC meeting was the April 26 dedication of a bronze statue by Eugene Daub on a hill overlooking the Missouri climbed by Lewis and Clark on September 15, 1806. The heroic-size sculpture depicts the captains, Sacagawea and Pompey, York, and Seaman.

PHOTO BY J.I. MERRITT

## Past and future

The year has passed quickly, and what a year it has been! I will remember my presidency and years of board service with gratitude to past presidents Bill Sherman, Don Nell, Strode Hinds, John Montague, Bob Gatten, Jim Peterson, and Sid Huggins. As my own term draws to a close, I look forward to our annual meeting in Dillon and the opportunity to gather with old and new members of the Lewis and Clark family.

Some of the major accomplishments of the last year will light the way to our future. The Trail Stewardship Project, undertaken with the National Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Council, will be at the core of our bicentennial observance, reminding us of our great responsibility to the nation's historic, cultural, and natural resources. I think, too, of the Tribal Council, an outgrowth of the "listening sessions" sponsored by the National Park Service to involve the tribes encountered by the Corps of Discovery. The Tribal Council will develop the Lewis and Clark story from the point of view of Native Americans—a story, in part, of what those tribes have lost in the wake of Lewis and Clark. As Dark Rain Thom, the chairwoman of our Tribal Liaisons Committee, has noted, "at this stage of American development . . . the public citizenry is mature enough and emotionally capable of handling . . . the whole truth of the Expedition."

I also reflect on the Foundation and how it has grown since I joined it years ago. Goals discussed but barely defined are now reality: a strategic plan and organizational visioning process, a full-time staff, a national bicentennial council. Now we are in a new millennium and soon will celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Lewis and Clark adventure. The world is changing, and the Foundation will continue to evolve to meet the challenges of tomorrow. It's been a privilege to share in the journey.

—**Cynthia Orlando**  
*President, LCTHF*

ADVENTURE  
CONNECTIONS  
1/3rd square

L&C TRAIL  
ADVENTURES  
1/3rd square

## Trail stewardship: spreading the “R” word

For those of us who love the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail and all its stories, trail stewardship could be genetic, something that’s a part of who we are today. I can feel what trail stewardship means, but when putting feelings into words I can get caught in a little windy wandering.

So let’s start simply, with one word: respect. I treat the story of the Corps of Discovery with respect because it shows mankind at its best and worst. It is real.

If I respect the story, I respect the people who took part, whether white, black, or red—all of the cultures and races that make up the story. I respect the descendants of those who took part in the greatest adventure of the 19th century because they are my neighbors and friends, and, at the very least, they are fellow human beings and the story is a common thread for us all.

But what about the trail itself, the rivers, the sky, the land? Isn’t trail stewardship about care of the environment and of the physical trail and the few bits of evidence that tell us, “Lewis and Clark Stopped Here”? Absolutely. And with a foundation of respect, it becomes a simple matter, a logical conclusion, and a natural act for me to tread lightly on the fragile landscape.

It’s only natural for me to listen with respect to storytellers along the trail, follow tribal protocols and campground and forest rules, use trash bins, and take only pictures and leave only footprints.

It’s only natural for me to be in awe of the Missouri River while seated in a canoe drifting past the White Cliffs; natural for me to talk with fellow visitors along the trail in Missouri; or to sit around the campfire at Fort Mandan reading the expedition journals.

### Trail Stewardship Project

As the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial approaches, it becomes my responsibility as a trail lover to share with the rest of the world my feelings about respect for the trail. It’s your responsibility, too, and the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation and the National Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Council set up the Trail Stewardship Project so we can spread the

“R” word. At the same time, we’ll help ensure that, during the bicentennial, trail visitors have a rewarding experience and possibly the vacation of a lifetime.

The Trail Stewardship Project includes partnerships with Foundation chapters; the Stephen Ambrose family; the Bureau of Indian Affairs and tribal nations along the trail; the National Geographic Society; the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service, and other federal agencies; trail states; local communities; private landowner associations; and trail visitors.

Gathering information is our immediate priority. Federal agencies meet in Washington, D.C., each month to plan for the bicentennial, and a separate field group of federal agencies meets quarterly out on the trail to share information on agency and department projects. Both the Foundation and the Bicentennial Council are represented at the agency meetings.

People are compiling information about the expedition route, present jurisdiction, land ownership patterns, historic sites, biodiversity, tribal protocols, visitor facilities, and intersections between the trail and private, sacred, and environmentally sensitive areas.

Partners at work on the Trail Stewardship Project are trying to estimate how many people will visit the trail during the Bicentennial years 2003-06. They’re looking for significant trail sites, facilitating protective measures on public and private lands, and developing visitor-management plans.

### Inventorying private lands

LCTHF chapter members will be starting one of the biggest and most important elements of the Trail Stewardship Project late this summer: an inventory of private lands along the 3,700-mile trail.

By initiating the inventory at a grassroots chapter level, we’ll be able to talk to friends, neighbors, and relatives along the trail who own the expedition campsites and other significant sites along the trail. What do those property owners know about the sites—the history—they own? What are they expecting in terms of numbers of bicentennial visitors? Do

they want visitors at all? Do they need assistance preserving trail sites on their land? What can the Foundation and its chapters do to help?

The private lands inventory kicks off at the LCTHF annual meeting in Dillon, Montana, this month. The presidents of local chapters will return home with a “how-to” workbook, a database, and the enthusiasm to tackle this project. By next spring, we’ll have a good idea of who owns what along the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail and a handle on landowner sensitivities.

—Jeffrey Olson  
Trail Coordinator



*You can learn more about trail stewardship and share information about chapter projects by contacting Trail Coordinator Jeffrey Olson at P.O. Box 2376 Bismarck, ND 58502 (trail@lewisandclark.org; telephone 701-258-1960 or 701-258-1809). He asks that chapters put him on their newsletter mailing lists and send him their Web site addresses.*

## Meet me in Pierre

The Foundation will hold its 2001 meeting next August 5-8 in Pierre, South Dakota.

*Meeting facilities:* Ramkota Inn Rivercentre, 920 W. Sioux, Pierre, SD 57501; 1-800-528-1234 (151 rooms).

*Lodging facilities within easy walking distance:* Kelly Inn, 713 W. Sioux, Pierre, SD 57501 (1 block); 605-224-4140, 1-800-635-3559 (47 rooms). • Governor’s Inn, 700 W. Sioux, Pierre, SD 57501 (1+ blocks); 605-224-4200, 1-800-341-8000 (82 rooms). • Days Inn, 520 W. Sioux, Pierre, SD 57501; 605-224-0411, 1-800-329-7466 (79 rooms). • Super 8 Motel, 320 W. Sioux, Pierre, SD 57501 (4 blocks); 605-224-1617, 1-800-800-8000 (78 rooms). • Comfort Inn, 410 W. Sioux, Pierre, SD 57501 (5 blocks); 605-224-0377, 1-800-221-222 (60 rooms). • Hedman’s Iron Horse Inn, 205 W. Pleasant, Pierre, SD 57501 (7+ blocks); 605-224-5981 (54 rooms). • Kings Inn, 220 S. Pierre, Pierre, SD 57501 (9 blocks); 605-224-5951, 1-800-528-1234 (104 rooms—Best Western). ■



## In the tradition of Franklin and Jefferson

The library in America can be traced to Benjamin Franklin and his colleagues, who regularly debated topics such as religion, politics, and medicine. Their scholarly discussions led Franklin in 1731 to form the first subscription library in America. Fifty subscribers invested 40 shillings each and paid 10 shillings a year to purchase books.

In 1800, President John Adams spent \$5,000 to purchase 740 books and three maps for the newly created Library of Congress. The library grew under his successor, Thomas Jefferson. After the collection was destroyed in a fire set by the British during the War of 1812, Jefferson, by then retired to Monticello, sold his personal library—6,487 books—to Congress to replace the 3,000 volumes lost in the fire.

As President, Jefferson—along with Dr. Benjamin Rush, Benjamin Smith Barton, and others—helped Lewis and Clark assemble the traveling library they took to the Pacific and back. Books by Barton, Patrick Kelly, Rush, Richard Kirwan, and Alexander MacKenzie provided the explorers with a working knowledge of botany, mineralogy, navigation, and astronomy. As the late historian Donald Jackson has noted, “Conceivably the expedition could have been conducted without a single book, but it would have been much more difficult and certainly far less informative.”

Like Franklin, Jefferson, and the explorers themselves, members of the Lewis

and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation have the opportunity to build and foster a library of their own. Thanks to generous gifts from Robert Betts, Robert Taylor, Don Nell, and others, the Foundation’s library, located in the William P. Sherman Room of the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center in Great Falls, Montana, has begun to take shape and grow. Foundation members can aid in its next phase of development by joining the Friends of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation Library.

Members of the Friends are able to work directly with the library’s staff in helping to establish its scholarly resources. They are also invited to participate in a variety of activities, including discussions, lectures, and quarterly exhibits which make use of the library’s materials to improve our understanding of the expedition and its history.

If you are interested in learning more about the Friends of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation Library, look for more detailed information at the LCTHF annual meeting in Dillon or contact the library at 406-761-3950 ([library@lewisandclark.org](mailto:library@lewisandclark.org)). Don’t miss this opportunity to help shape this center for discussion, learning, and scholarly enrichment. As Benjamin Franklin stated some 275 years ago, *Communiter Bona profunderere Deum est* (“To pour forth benefits for the common good is divine”).

—Doug Erickson

Archives Committee, LCTHF

## Skinner joins Foundation staff as librarian

Jeremy Skinner, a native of Gold Beach, Oregon, and a 2000 graduate of Lewis and Clark College, is the Foundation’s new librarian.

Skinner’s office is in the William P. Sherman Room of the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center in Great Falls. His duties include assisting researchers, cataloging materials, organizing volunteers and library supporters, and building a database and a Web site that will allow the library’s holdings to be searched online.

Skinner earned a B.A. in history, with a focus on the American West. As a student at Lewis and Clark College he gained a first-hand knowledge of Lewis

and Clark materials working in the archives and special collections of the college’s Aubrey Watzek Library, which holds one of the world’s best collections of books relating to the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Its Lewis and Clark holdings include collections formerly owned by Foundation members Eldon G. Chui-nard, Irving Anderson, and Roger Wendlick. He has also worked in the archives of Portland’s Pioneer Courthouse Square and the Smithsonian Institution.

Skinner’s scholarly interests in Lewis and Clark include the impact of railroads in popularizing the explorers’ story in the late 19th century. ■



### APPRECIATED STOCKS: POTENTIAL GOLD MINE?

If you own appreciated stocks and want to get more income from them than they provide in dividends, avoid a significant income-tax bite, and make a charitable gift to the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, then consider a charitable gift annuity.

A charitable gift annuity provides a series of fixed payments by a charity to an annuitant for the remainder of his or her life in exchange for a lump-sum gift. The amount of payout is determined by the size of the gift, whether the annuity is payable to a single life only or to a second party after the death of the first (to a surviving spouse, for example), the age of the annuitant(s) at the date of the gift, and whether the payout begins immediately or later.

A charitable gift annuity can provide up to three tax benefits. First, there is a charitable gift deduction computed according to IRS rules. Second, during the payout period, part of the donor’s annual income is excluded from taxable income. A third benefit results when a gift annuity is paid for with appreciated stocks, which allows for a partial forgiveness of capital gains and spreads the tax over the donor’s lifetime.

A charitable gift annuity may be purchased for and given to another person—a relative, perhaps, whose income needs supplementing.

I’m happy to tell you more about this tax-advantaged transaction. Inquiries will be treated in strict confidence.

BOB DOERK  
Planned Giving Committee, LCTHF  
P.O. Box 715  
Fort Benton, MT 59442  
1-406-622-5874



# “A MAN OF MUCH MERIT”

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## George Drouillard, the Corps of Discovery's ace hunter and interpreter, went down fighting in the country he loved

BY JAMES J. HOLMBERG

With the exception of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark themselves, perhaps no other member of the Corps of Discovery was more critical to the success of the Lewis and Clark Expedition than George Drouillard. Hired as a civilian interpreter (chiefly for his fluency in Indian sign language) and a hunter, Drouillard established his importance to the expedition early on by traveling to Tennessee from Fort Massac and escorting the Army recruits who had missed the intended rendezvous at the fort to the corps's winter quarters. Drouillard arrived with them at Camp Dubois on December 22 and three days later officially signed on with the expedition—undoubtedly one of the best Christmas presents Lewis and Clark ever received.<sup>1</sup> After the expedition, Lewis gave Drouillard the highest praise. Writing to Secretary of War Henry Dearborn on January 15, 1807, he remarked of him:

A man of much merit; he has been peculiarly usefull from his knowledge of the common language of gesticulation, and his uncommon skill as a hunter and woodsman; those several duties he performed in good faith, and with an ardor which deserves the highest commendation. It was his fate also to have encountered, on various occasions, with either Captain Clark or myself, all the most dangerous and trying scenes of the voyage, in which he uniformly acquitted himself with honor.<sup>2</sup>

After the expedition, Drouillard remained in the West. As it had done with many of the men of the Corps of Discovery, the region's untamed wilderness had cast its spell on him. Over the next four years he participated in fur-trading ventures on the upper Missouri and Yellowstone rivers. It was on one of these, in 1810, that this veteran of many of the “most dangerous and trying scenes” of the Lewis and Clark Expedition met his death.

The deaths of many trappers and traders went unrecorded. Often, surviving records state that someone had been killed by Indians but fail to give the victim's name. Perhaps this was the fate of Joseph Field, Pierre Cruzatte, John Thompson, and a few other members of the Corps of Discovery listed as dead by William Clark in the 1820s. We know much more about the fate of George Drouillard, whose death was reported in the *Louisiana Gazette*, recorded in the memoir of fellow trapper-trader Thomas James, and remembered over 60 years later by Pierre Menard, Jr., the son of one of the men who accompanied Drouillard on his last expedition into the mountains.

### UP THE MISSOURI WITH LISA

In the spring of 1807, six months after the Corps of Discovery's return to civilization, St. Louis entrepreneur Manuel Lisa enlisted Drouillard in his enterprise



CAPTAIN LEWIS, WITH DREWYER AND SHIELDS MEETING THE SHOSHONE INDIANS, 1803 WATERCOLOR BY CHARLES W. RUSSELL, PRIVATE COLLECTION, REPRODUCED FROM RUSSELL'S WEST, VOL. 3, NO. 1.

**George Drouillard (cradling rifle) and John Shields look on as the Shoshones greet Lewis near Lemhi Pass on August 13, 1805.**

to establish a trading post deep in Indian country. Drouillard and two other members of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, John Potts and Peter Wiser, were among the 42 men in the party Lisa led up the Missouri; a fourth member of the corps, John Colter, who was returning to St. Louis after a winter in the mountains, joined them en route. They ascended to the river's junction with the Yellowstone, then went up the Yellowstone and late in the fall built Fort Lisa at its junction with the Bighorn River.

Lisa and most of his party, including Drouillard, returned to St. Louis the following August. In June 1809, Lisa and Drouillard—now a limited partner—again ascended the Missouri with a party of trappers. While some of the party remained at a fort built by Lisa above the Hidatsa village at Knife River, Drouillard and others pushed up the Yellowstone to Fort Lisa to winter there again. In late March 1810, one of Lisa's primary partners, Pierre Menard, led a party of 32 trappers—including Drouillard and Colter—west up the Yellowstone, across Bozeman Pass, and down the Gallatin River to the Three Forks.

#### A POST AT THE THREE FORKS

Ever since Lewis and Clark's return nearly four years before and their reports of the rich beaver grounds in

the region of the Three Forks, Lisa had wanted to establish a permanent post there. Unfortunately, the Three Forks was in country controlled by the Blackfoot Indians. By the time Menard's party arrived at the Three Forks in the spring of 1810, if not before, the Blackfoot had become implacably hostile toward Americans. The reasons for their attitude are debated. In part it may have stemmed from an incident on Two Medicine River in July 1806, when a party led by Lewis and including Drouillard had fought with a party of Blackfeet and killed two warriors. But mainly the Blackfeet's truculence was rooted in intertribal conflict. Lewis and Clark had promised to provide guns to the Shoshones, Flatheads, and other tribes at war with the Blackfeet, and Lisa may have unwittingly exacerbated their distrust of Americans by trading with their enemies the Crows while wintering on the Yellowstone in 1807-08.

John Colter had firsthand knowledge about just how unfriendly the Blackfeet could be. In 1808, Lisa had dispatched him across Bozeman Pass to parlay with them at the Three Forks. While descending the Gallatin, he had fallen in with a band of Crows and Flatheads, who were soon attacked by Blackfeet. Colter fought against the Blackfeet and was wounded in the leg. Later in 1808, Colter and John Potts, while trapping on the lower Jefferson, were surrounded by Blackfeet. They



“THE FORT AT THREE FORKS (FORT PIEGAN).” PEN-AND-INK DRAWING BY CHARLES M. RUSSELL, CA. 1922. COURTESY AMON CARTER MUSEUM, FORT WORTH, TEX.

**Blackfoot warriors assessing Fort Piegan, Manuel Lisa’s post at the Three Forks and George Drouillard’s last home**

killed Potts and captured Colter. The Blackfeet stripped Colter and just for sport told him to run, with the idea of giving him a short head-start before catching and killing him. So Colter ran for his life—and into legend, killing one of his pursuers and escaping the rest by diving into the Jefferson and hiding under a pile of driftwood.<sup>3</sup>

Despite Colter’s troubles with the Blackfeet, Lisa had held fast to his dream of building a trading post at the Three Forks. Menard and his party reached the forks on April 3 without incident and immediately began constructing a fort. As soon as a defensible structure was erected, groups of trappers began going out from it in search of beaver. One group of 18 ventured some 40 miles up the Jefferson while another group of four traveled down the Missouri. Ten men, including Menard, remained behind to work on the fort.<sup>4</sup>

It was not long before the Blackfeet made their presence known. On April 12, they attacked the trappers on the Jefferson. The majority of men had scattered into small groups in order to hunt while six men set about establishing the party’s camp. The Blackfeet swept down upon the men at the camp and killed five of them; the

rest made their way back to the fort. This incident proved the last straw for Colter. Convinced his luck must surely be used up, he vowed to quit the country and never return. He did just that, leaving within 10 days and making his way back to Missouri, where he married and settled on a farm.<sup>5</sup>

Not so Drouillard. He was determined to best the Blackfeet in their own country. Even if a peace could not be negotiated with them, he would continue to trap the plentiful beaver. A few weeks passed and no Indians were seen, so the men again began venturing out of the fort at the Three Forks. In early May, Menard sent a party of 21 men, including Drouillard, up the Jefferson to trap. As was customary, they split into smaller groups during the day to more effectively run their traps, and in the evening they returned to camp. Drouillard apparently was very successful and taunted the others that no Indians were going to intimidate him and keep him from taking all the beaver he could. Emboldened by Drouillard’s success, two Delaware Indians with the party accompanied him one morning. It would be their last.<sup>6</sup>

Contrary to that often nameless and forgotten death



that was the fate of so many trappers, George Drouillard's was recorded in some detail. When some of the party returned to St. Louis that summer, the *Louisiana Gazette* obtained an interview with Pierre Menard. In its edition of July 26, 1810, the paper presented his account of the fur brigade's difficulties with the Blackfeet:

A few days ago, Mr. Menard, with some of the gentlemen attached to the Missouri Fur Company arrived here from their Fort at the head waters of the Missouri, by whom we learn that they had experienced considerable opposition from the Blackfeet Indians; this adverse feeling arose from the jealousy prevalent among all savage (and some civilized) nations of those who trade with their enemies. The Crows and Blackfeet are almost continually at war, the Company detached a party to trade with the latter [former], this gave offence to the Blackfeet, who had not the same opportunity of procuring Arms, &c. the Hudson Bay Factory being several days journey from their hunting grounds and with whom they cannot trade with equal advantage.

A hunting party which had been detached from the Fort to the forks of the Jefferson river, were attacked in the neighborhood of their encampment on the 12th of April, by a strong party of Blackfeet, whom they kept at bay for some time, but we are sorry to say unavailingly, as the Indians were too numerous; the party consisted of 14 or 15, of whom 5 were killed, say Hull, Cheeks, Ayres, Rucker and Freeheart; Messrs. Vallé, Immel and companions escaped, and carried the unpleasant tidings to the Fort, but with the loss of Tents, Arms, Traps, &c.

Early in May, George Drouillard accompanied by some Delawares, who were in the employ of the company, went out to hunt, contrary to the wishes of the rest of the party, who were confident the Indians were in motion round them, and that from a hostile disposition they had already shewn, it would be attended with danger, their presages were too true, he had not proceeded more than two miles from the camp before he was attacked by a party in ambush, by whom himself and two of his men were literally cut to pieces. It appears from circumstances that Drouillard made a most obstinate resistance as he made a kind of breastwork of his horse, whom he made to turn in order to receive the enemy's fire, his bulwark, of course, soon failed and he became the next victim of their fury. It is lamentable that although this happened within a short distance of relief, the firing was not heard so as to afford it, in consequence of a high wind which prevailed at the time.<sup>7</sup>

Sixty-one years later, the memory of Drouillard's death remained with Menard's son Pierre, Jr. On De-

cember 13, 1871, he responded to a query by historian-collector Lyman Draper concerning people associated with the early West, including Drouillard. Menard Jr.'s version both coincides and conflicts with his father's. He recalled that Drouillard was indeed cut to pieces by the Blackfeet but that the other trappers were not; he identified the latter as four Shawnees, in contrast to contemporary accounts describing them as two Delawares. Menard Jr. supposed that the Blackfeet dismembered Drouillard out of special anger toward him—Drouillard had encouraged the others to trap, and in Menard's view, they also wanted to make him a grisly example of what other Americans could expect if they stayed in Blackfeet country.<sup>8</sup> There is also the possibility that they recognized him as one of Lewis's men involved in the killing of two Blackfeet on Two Medicine River four years earlier.

A third version of the story comes from Thomas James. His account of this and other western adventures, entitled *Three Years Among the Indians and Mexicans*, was published in 1846. James's account of the events of April and May of 1810 differs in some respects from Menard Sr.'s in the *Louisiana Gazette* but offers a great deal more detail. Recalling the events 36 years after they occurred, James may have misremembered or embellished some of the facts, but his report is consistent with Menard's, and most likely it is basically reliable. In his biography of Drouillard, M. O. Skarsten depends heavily on James for details of his subject's death. Here is James's account:

The Indians, we thought, kept the game away from the vicinity of the Fort. Thus we passed the time till the month of May, when a party of twenty-one, of whom I was one, determined to go up the Jefferson River to trap. By keeping together we hoped to repel any attack of the savages. We soon found the trapping in such numbers not very profitable, and changed our plan by separating in companies of four, of whom, two men would trap while two watched the camp. In this manner we were engaged until the fear of the Indians began to wear off and we became more venturesome. One of our company, a Shawnee half-breed named Druyer, the principal hunter of Lewis & Clark's party, went up the river one day and set his traps about a mile from the camp. In the morning he returned alone and brought back six beavers. I warned him of his danger. "I am too much of an Indian to be caught by Indians," said he. On the next day he repeated the adventure and returned with the product of his traps, saying, "this is the way to catch beaver." On the third morn-

ing he started again up the river to examine his traps, when we advised him to wait for the whole party, which was about moving further up the stream, and at the same time two other Shawnees left us against our advice, to kill deer.<sup>9</sup>

In due course the party headed up the river. They had not gone very far when they encountered the two hunters, and then a bit further on Drouillard. James described the scene of battle:

We started forward in company, and soon found the dead bodies of the last mentioned hunters, pierced with lances, arrows and bullets and lying near each other. Further on, about one hundred and fifty yards, Druyer and his horse lay dead, the former mangled in a horrible manner; his head was cut off, his entrails torn out and his body hacked to pieces. We saw from the marks on the ground that he must have fought in a circle on horseback, and probably killed some of his enemies, being a brave man, and well armed with a rifle, pistol, knife and tomahawk. We pursued the trail of the Indians till night, without overtaking them, and then returned, having buried our dead, with saddened hearts to Fort.<sup>10</sup>

Thus ended the life of one of the most important members of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. What further role George Drouillard might have played in the opening of the West will never be known. It is possible that he would have assumed a place beside those trappers and traders whom history records as the most famous of the mountain men. Instead, it was his fate to lie in an unknown grave along the Jefferson River, in the country in which he had cast his fate; one of the early casualties in the opening of the American West.<sup>11</sup>

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Gary E. Moulton, ed., *The Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition*, 13 volumes (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983-2000), Vol. 2, pp. 85, 139-42.

<sup>2</sup>Donald Jackson, ed., *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition with Related Documents, 1783-1854*, second edition, 2 volumes (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), Vol. 1, p. 368. In a letter to historian-collector Lyman Draper in 1867, Corps of Discovery member Patrick Gass described Drouillard as being a half Indian, about five feet 10 inches in height, and an excellent hunter. Gass also reported that they left Drouillard in St. Louis in 1806 when he and some other members of the expedition headed east; in an earlier letter to Draper, however, he stated that he left Drouillard at Kaskaskia and knew nothing of him since. Gass to Draper, December 1, 1866, and January 11, 1867, George Rogers Clark Papers, Draper Manuscripts, State Historical So-

ciety of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin (microfilm edition at The Filson Club Historical Society, Louisville, Ky.), 34J61-62.

<sup>3</sup>M. O. Skarsten, *George Drouillard: Hunter and Interpreter for Lewis and Clark and Fur Trader, 1807-1810* (Glendale, Calif.: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1964), pp. 301-04. Colter's own account of his famous run was recounted by him to English traveler and naturalist John Bradbury in 1810. Bradbury's retelling of the story in his book *Travels in the Interior of America in the Years 1809, 1810, and 1811* preserved the details of it for posterity. See Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *Early Western Travels, 1748-1846* (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1904), Vol. 5, pp. 44-47. For more on Colter and his role in Lisa's enterprise see Burton Harris, *John Colter: His Years in the Rocky Mountains* (Casper, Wyo.: Big Horn Book Co., 1983; reprint of original edition of 1952).

<sup>4</sup>Skarsten, pp. 285-87, 297-98.

<sup>5</sup>Skarsten, pp. 298-301; Thomas James, *Three Years Among the Indians and Mexicans*, introduction by A. P. Nasatir (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1962), pp. 40-42; Moulton, Vol. 2, p. 515.

<sup>6</sup>Skarsten, pp. 305-08.

<sup>7</sup>*Louisiana Gazette*, July 26, 1810.

<sup>8</sup>Pierre Menard to Lyman Draper, December 13, 1871, Draper Manuscripts, 4J175. Menard also makes the interesting, but apparently erroneous, statement that Drouillard was one-fourth Delaware (and thus apparently three-fourths French-Canadian). The greater amount of evidence indicates that he was half Shawnee and half French-Canadian. Menard also states that Drouillard was well educated, further adding to the evidence that he was literate.

<sup>9</sup>James, pp. 45-46. General Thomas James's memoir was first published in 1846. It was a popular title and edited and reprinted by different editors and publishers over the years. Menard and James differ as to the tribal affiliation of the two hunters who were killed near Drouillard; Menard identifying them as Delawares and James as Shawnees. They also differ on whether they were mutilated. The immediacy of Menard's account must be balanced with the fact that James apparently actually witnessed the scene, even if it was recalled many years later.

<sup>10</sup>James, p. 46. We can only speculate about where along the Jefferson Drouillard and his companions were killed. James stated that hunting parties had ventured 20 to 30 miles from the fort before the one intending to trap again set off up the Jefferson in early May. Assuming that some of these earlier hunting parties had gone up the Jefferson, it can be guessed that the May trapping party would have gone farther up the river than 20 miles, and perhaps further than 30. The party attacked in April had reportedly gone up the Jefferson some 40 miles. Unfortunately, James does not say how far up the river the May party ventured. A 20-to-50-mile estimate would place the site of Drouillard's death and grave anywhere between approximately present-day Jefferson Island and the confluence of the Jefferson and Beaverhead rivers.

<sup>11</sup>For further reading on George Drouillard, see M. O. Skarsten, *George Drouillard: Hunter and Interpreter for Lewis and Clark and Fur Trader, 1807-1810*; and a historical novel by James Alexander Thom, *Sign-Talker: The Adventure of George Drouillard on the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, published this year by Ballantine Books and reviewed on page 33 in this issue of WPO.

# MATCHES AND MAGIC

*Just how did the Corps of Discovery make fire?*

BY ROBERT R. HUNT

*Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compose yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled.”*

—Isaiah 50:11

When the members of the Lewis and Clark Expedition crossed the continent their lives were ruled by the four ancient elements. Their journal entries tell us much about *earth* (the landscape itself, and the provider of food and shelter), *air* (weather), and *water* (rivers, rain, and snow), but very little about *fire*.

Yet fire was an essential part of the explorers' lives. They were organized into three squads, or messes, so they probably kindled at least six cooking fires during most days of the expedition. The captains and other members of the party were often alone in the wilderness, and on such occasions they surely made fires for cooking, warmth, and security. One can imagine, too, the light from lodge fires dancing on their faces as they parlayed with chiefs over a ceremonial pipe.

The journals mention the occasional scarceness of timber, forcing them to resort to dried fish, sage, or buffalo dung for fuel. Although fueling a fire could be

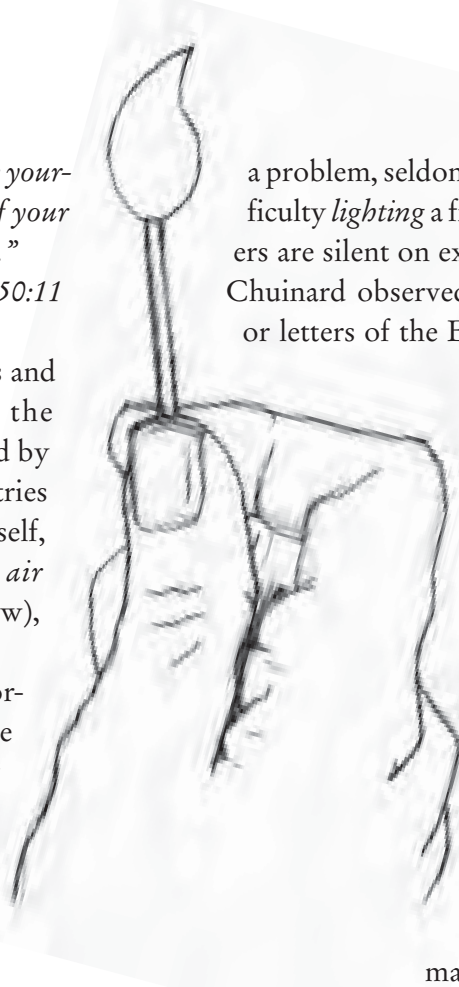
a problem, seldom does the record refer to any difficulty *lighting* a fire, even though the journal keepers are silent on exactly how they did it. Eldon G. Chuinard observed that “nowhere in the journals or letters of the Expedition is there a definite description of making a fire.”<sup>1</sup> This

statement, however, is true only with reference to the corps itself—as Edmond S. Meany has pointed out, “the journals relate . . . instances of Indians obtaining fire by friction” (referring to Lewis’s entry of August 23, 1805, describing the Shoshones’ use of fire sticks, bow-drill, and tinder).<sup>2</sup> Chuinard surmised that the corps’s fire-makers “may have used the old Indian wood-friction method, or a magnifying glass when the sun was

shining,” but probably they preferred “flints and gun powder.”

## FLINT AND STEEL

The friction or strike matches familiar to us today were not generally available to Americans until the late





1830s.<sup>3</sup> Without friction matches, the Corps of Discovery would have relied mainly on flint and steel, a technology

known to the Romans and . . . developed in the Dark Ages along with hand-wrought steel for weapons and armor. The steel, which was curved so as to form a handle, was held in the left hand and struck with the sharp edge of the flint. Good tinder was very important and was made by charring lint, or other easily combustible material, and keeping it dry in a tinder box or pouch. The fire maker blew upon the lighted tinder to spread the fire and added shavings, or perhaps so-called matches, which then meant only splints dipped in sulphur. If everything went right, a fire was kindled in a few minutes, but the flint might have lost its sharp edge, the steel might be blunted and the tinder might be damp from rainy weather or merely from fog; moreover, as the fire was usually built in the dark before sunrise, which was the getting-up time in those days, the knuckles might be hit instead of the steel, and the fumes inhaled in ineffectual puffing.”<sup>4</sup>

The above description, from a history of the Diamond Match Company, applies to a typical American household of 1830, not a wilderness setting in which the fire-starter might have had to cope with damp and wind. One can imagine the expedition’s men cursing as they bent over a pile of dried moss, striking flint against steel and nursing a flame by blowing on the smoking tinder. That the corps typically used flint and steel is indicated by Lewis’s equipage list (below) and reinforced by Patrick Gass’s journal entry of August 29, 1805, describing the “somewhat curious” Shoshone method of making fire by use of a stick-drill, which required “a few minutes” to produce a flame.<sup>5</sup> If Gass found the procedure “curious,” it is doubtful that this method was regularly employed by the corps.

That flint and steel was the method of choice is evident in the records of Lewis’s effort in Philadelphia in 1803 to obtain supplies and equipment for the expedition. Under the heading of “Camp Equipage,” his “List of Requirements” included “30 Steels for striking or making fire, 100 Flints [ditto].” Under the same heading he also listed other fire-making materials: “2 Vials of Phosforus, 1 of Phosforus made of allum & sugar, 12 Bunches of Small cord.” Under the heading “Indian Presents,” his list included “100 Burning Glasses, 4 Vials of Phosforus, 288 Steels for striking fire.”<sup>6</sup> The record further shows that Lewis requisitioned from the Ordnance Department a number of



**Striking flint against steel was the standard way of starting a fire.**

“Packg. Boxes,” including one for “Slow Match,” and “50 lbs. Best rifle powder.”<sup>7</sup>

We can reasonably assume how these fire-making materials were apportioned among the members of the corps. In the case of flint and steel it seems likely that each soldier carried his own in a pouch, enabling him to start a fire for warmth or cooking when separated from the main party (as Lewis, Clark, Drouillard, Shannon, and others were from time to time). The designated mess cooks would have used their flint-and-steel kits in the morning and evening and occasionally at mid-day (though by the Detachment Order of May 26, 1804, “no cooking will be allowed in the day while on the ma[r]ch”). The corps’s three sergeants were specifically exempt from making fires or cooking, but like the captains they must have carried their own flint and steel. The other fire items—the vials of phosphorous, cord, extra flints, and the mysterious “slow” matches—would have been stored for use when needed.

#### “SLOW MATCHES” AND “LUCIFERS”

References in the journals to so-called slow matches are couched in the term “port fire” (usually spelled “portfire”), a type of fuse used to ignite a cannon. In the University of Nebraska Press edition of the journals, editor Gary Moulton describes this item as “a slow-burning fuse, probably a cord impregnated with gunpowder or some other flammable substance.”<sup>8</sup> In



**A Cheyenne fire kit included a pouch, steel, flints, and tinder holder.**

Clark's description of the corps's confrontation with the Teton Sioux on September 28, 1804, he states that he "took the port fire from the gunner" manning the keelboat's swivel cannon. A year and a half later, on April 2, 1806, Clark averted a confrontation with a group of Indians on the Willamette with a bit of magic involving a "Small pece of port fire match." (More on this later.)

Based on some tantalizing if indirect evidence, some historians have asserted that the Corps of Discovery, at least on occasion, used phosphorus-based friction matches, also known in the parlance of the day as "lucifers." Meany refers to Mrs. Eva Emery Dye (writing in 1902), who declared that Lewis and Clark had matches that "were struck on the Columbia a generation before Boston or London made use of the secret." Chuinard notes a reference from Henry M. Brackenridge (writing in 1834) claiming that "while the rest of the world was using flint and steel, Lewis and Clark were able to strike matches far out on the Columbia River."<sup>10</sup>

#### THE ENGAGING DR. SAUGRAIN

Brackenridge bases this assumption on his personal knowledge of Dr. Antoine Saugrain, a peripatetic French expatriate and inventor.

Called the "First Scientist of the Mississippi Valley,"<sup>11</sup> Saugrain was a chemist and naturalist and the only phy-



**A fire drill: Lewis and Clark observed the Shoshones using this method.**

sician in the frontier community of St. Louis when Lewis and Clark arrived there in 1803. Described by a contemporary as "a cheerful, sprightly little Frenchman"—he was just four-feet-six—he had been appointed by President Jefferson, after the cession of Louisiana to the United States, as the resident surgeon at Fort Bellefontaine, a nearby military post.<sup>12</sup>

A member of a distinguished Parisian family, Saugrain was schooled in the natural sciences and as a young man he had taken part in a mineralogical exploration in Mexico. Following the outbreak of the French Revolution, he settled with other French exiles at Gallipolis, Ohio, and later moved to Lexington, Kentucky.

The doctor was something of a showman and seems to have liked nothing better than putting on scientific demonstrations. These included placing "little phosphoric matches" in a glass tube, sucking the air out to create a vacuum, then breaking the glass—at which point the matches ignited spontaneously. He also fabricated *briquets phosphoriques*—phosphorous "lighters"—and experimented with electricity, repeating the famous kite experiment of his friend Benjamin Franklin, whom he had met years before while visiting Philadelphia.<sup>13</sup>

By 1800 Saugrain was settled in St. Louis.<sup>14</sup> Three years later he met Meriwether Lewis. "It is inconceivable," writes Meany, "that Captain Lewis was not familiar with Dr. Saugrain's hobbies and vocation or that



FROM ELDON G. CHUNARD, ONLY ONE MAN DIED.

**Dr. Antoine Saugrain (right) may have given “lucifers”—strike matches—to Lewis, who probably visited him at his home in St Louis (left).**

he was not frequently welcomed in the Doctor’s home and laboratory.”<sup>14</sup> Given Saugrain’s eminence as a naturalist and physician, both Lewis and Clark doubtless consulted with him during their five months at Camp Dubois. The colorful doctor’s bag of tricks included “lucifers,” and it is reasonable to assume that he gave the captains at least a few of them, either for use at Camp Dubois or for later on their journey.

It is a gift that Lewis in particular would have appreciated, for his mentor, Thomas Jefferson, had been using friction matches since at least 1784, when he wrote to his friend Charles Thompson

I should have sent you a specimen of the phosphoric matches . . . They are a beautiful discovery and very useful, especially to heads which, like yours and mine, cannot at all times be got to sleep. The convenience of lighting a candle without getting out of bed, of sealing letters without calling a servant, of kindling a fire without flint, steel, punk, &c., is of value.<sup>15</sup>

Lewis would doubtless have shared the President’s enthusiasm for friction matches while the two men lived together in the White House, and the possibility of making “lucifers” in the field may be one reason he included phosphorus in the provisions he gathered in Philadelphia.

The journals’ single reference to the vials of phosphorus Lewis acquired in Philadelphia comes late in

the expedition, when the explorers were preparing to re-cross the Rockies on the homeward leg of their journey. On June 2, 1806, Lewis gave McNeal and York some items for trading with Indians—buttons, eye water, basilicon, and “some Phials and small tin boxes which I had brought out with phosphorous.” It’s not clear if the vials still contained phosphorus or if Lewis had used it. If so, how? The journals are silent. As suggested, the captains may have made friction matches with it. They may also have used it to make portfire.

#### MAGIC ON THE WILLAMETTE

Clark made clever use of portfire—perhaps impregnated with phosphorus—on April 2, 1806, when he parlayed with a group of Indians over a lodge fire near the banks of the Willamette River. He wanted to trade with them for wappato roots, but noted in exasperation that they “positively refused.” He describes what happened next:

I had a Small pece of port fire match in my pocket, off of which I cut . . . a pece one inch in length & and put it into the fire and took out my pocket Compas and Set myself down on a mat on one Side of the fire.

Clark also took out a magnet in the top of his ink stand. The portfire caught and “burned vehemently,” changing the color of the fire. With his magnet Clark then “turned the needle of the Compas about very briskly;



which astonished and alarmed these natives and they laid several parcels of Wappato at my feet, & begged of me to take out the bad fire.”<sup>16</sup>

The key feature in this incident seems to have been the “bad” color in the fire. Unfortunately, Clark doesn’t specify the exact color. Could it have been the blue light of burning phosphorus? It seems probable, for since its discovery in 1669, phosphorus had long been regarded as a “miraculous chemical” for the “cold light” of its flame.<sup>17</sup>

On the other hand, if the portfire had been impregnated with black powder (made from charcoal, saltpeter, and sulfur, a first cousin to phosphorus in the Table of Elements) the color would have been yellow-orange. That, at least, was the color a friend of mine, Stuart Harris of North Bend, Washington, got when he experimented with portfire in his back yard. With Clark on the Willamette in mind, Harris ignited a thimble full of black powder, resulting in a cloud of gray smoke and a yellowish-orange flash.

Because yellow-orange is closer to the color of a wood fire and would not, therefore, have had the same impact as a cold blue flame, perhaps phosphorus was the magic ingredient in Clark’s portfire. In the minds of the Indians, however, it may have been the association of two acts of magic—the moving compass and the flaming cord—that made the color “bad.”

Alas, the silence of the journals on this and other imponderables of the Lewis and Clark Expedition recalls a remark made by Antoine Saugrain to his daughter during an experiment in the doctor’s laboratory: “We are working in the dark, my child. I only know enough to know that I know nothing.”<sup>18</sup>

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*Robert R. Hunt, a long-time member of the Foundation and a frequent contributor to WPO, lives in Seattle. For their helpful suggestions in his research he is indebted to Hugh Gildea of Cobham, Virginia, Donald Nell of Bozeman, Montana, and Stuart Harris of North Bend, Washington.*

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>E. G. Chuinard, M.D., *The Medical Aspects of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* (Fairfield, Wash.: Ye Galleon Press, Western Frontiersmen Series 19, 1979; Fourth Printing 1989), p. 199.

<sup>2</sup>Edmond S. Meany, “Dr. Saugrain Helped Lewis and Clark,” *The Washington Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 22 (October 1931, p. 298.

<sup>3</sup>Herbert Manchester, *The Diamond Match Company; a Cen-*

*tury of Service, of Progress, and of Growth, 1835-1935* (New York: Diamond Match Co., 1935), pp. 14-15.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>5</sup>Gary E. Moulton, ed., *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986-99, 12 volumes), Vol. 10, p. 134. All quotations or references to journal entries in the ensuing text are from Moulton, Volumes 2-11, by date, unless otherwise indicated, without further citation.

<sup>6</sup>Donald Jackson, ed., *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* (University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1978), Vol. 1, pp. 71-72.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 92-98.

<sup>8</sup>In the parlance of the early 1800s “slow” or portfire matches related to gunnery or artillery accessories. (They were “slow” because they burned slowly; “port” referred to the opening in the cannon in which the fuse was inserted.) The *Oxford English Dictionary* (second edition; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989; Vol. 15, p. 747) citing “James Milit Hist,” 1802, states that the slow match is “made of hemp, or tow, spun on the wheel like cord, but very slack, and . . . composed of three twists.” The OED under its entry for “match” (Vol. 9, p. 458) notes that the slow match is “so prepared that when lighted at the end it is not easily extinguished, and continues to burn at a uniform rate; used for firing cannon or other fire-arms, and for igniting a train of gunpowder . . . burns at the rate of one yard in three hours.”

<sup>9</sup>Meany, pp. 295-96, referring to Eva Emery Dye, *The Conquest* (A.C. McClurg & Co., 1902), Chapter 5.

<sup>10</sup>Chuinaud, pp. 198-99, n. 9, citing William Clark Kennerly, *Persimmon Hill* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1940), p. 141, and other references.

<sup>11</sup>Meany, p. 309, n. 24, citing W.V. Byars, *The First Scientist in the Mississippi Valley*, (pamphlet), pp. 14-15.

<sup>12</sup>Saugrain de Vigni, Antoine Francois, 1783-1821, *L’Odysee Americaine d’une Famille Francaise [par] le docteur Antoine Saugrain*; H. Foure Selter, ed. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1936), p.33.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3-67.

<sup>14</sup>Meany, p. 310.

<sup>15</sup>*The Jeffersonian Cyclopedia*, No. 5138, p. 544.

<sup>16</sup>To James Ronda, such “technological wizardry” had a “grimmer side.” As he notes, Clark’s intimidation of women, children, and an old man suggests a “willingness to bend the rules whenever it suited the expedition’s need.” See James P. Ronda, *Lewis and Clark Among the Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), p. 216. Yet one may reasonably ask whether this situation differs basically from many other occasions throughout the journey when Lewis and Clark exhibited other scientific wonders—the air gun, magnifying glasses, compass, magnet, etc—to Indians to enhance a mood for trade and a sense of primacy in a potentially hostile environment.

<sup>17</sup>Edward Farber, “History of Phosphorous,” *U.S. National Museum Bulletin* 240, Paper 40 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1965), p. 178.

<sup>18</sup>Meany, p. 307; *L’Odysee*, p. 35.

# LEWIS AND CLARK AT ROSS'S HOLE

*The story behind Charles M. Russell's 1912 painting,  
one of the great works of Western American art*

by Patricia M. Burnham

A character in a story by Norman Maclean describes the Bitterroot Mountains in western Montana as a “wall . . . which could have been the end of the world . . . windrows of momentary white. Beyond the wall, it seemed likely, eternity went on in windrows of Bitterroot Mountains and summer snow.”<sup>1</sup>

Similar feelings may have engulfed Lewis and Clark when the Corps of Discovery faced the Bitterroots in early September 1805, after they came to the reluctant conclusion that only an overland route through the mountains, and not a river route, could take them to their westward destination. For this, they would need more horses than they had ever imagined, more information than they had any hope of acquiring, and more courage than they thought they had brought with them. It was a daunting moment. Then occurred a blessed encounter. After leaving their Shoshone friends, Sacagawea's people, they climbed with great difficulty a spur of the Bitterroots and then descended through Lost Trail Pass, eventually entering a beautiful valley which we today call Ross's Hole.<sup>2</sup> There, on September 4, they surprised “a large camp of Indians . . . called



**Detail from Russell's mural shows Old Toby, the Corps of Discovery's Shoshone guide, signing with the Flatheads while Lewis and Clark look on. York holds the horses, and Sacagawea kneels in the grass.**

Ootlashoots. . . . one band of a nation called Tushpaws.”<sup>3</sup> The Salish, or Flatheads as they came to be known, were on their way eastward to kill buffalo before winter came. The explorers visited with them, purchased horses, and obtained directions. Perhaps they even replenished their courage. Whatever they got sufficed for their journey across the mountains. This was their last contact with an Indian community before the comple-

tion of the arduous crossing of the main range which spilled them into the land of the Nez Perce in present-day Idaho. Not a moment of high drama in the Lewis and Clark saga, perhaps, but certainly one of strategic importance. It also had the kind of pictorial potential—the forbidding mountains, the friendly Indians, the rituals governing the meeting—that a good visual narrative called for.

This is the incident immortalized by artist Charles M. Russell in the painting commissioned by the Montana state government for the legislative chamber of the Capitol, in Helena, in 1911, *Lewis and Clark Meeting Indians at Ross' Hole*.<sup>4</sup> It was not, however, his first subject choice, or for that matter, his choice at all. With

how little reflection one can only wonder, Russell had originally suggested an attack by Indians on a wagon train or Lewis's meeting with the Shoshones. On November 11, 1911, Governor Edwin L. Norris acknowledged receipt from Russell of two watercolor sketches on these subjects, neither one of which the Board of Examiners found acceptable. The Governor replied starchy that the Indian attack "does not appeal to us as a suitable decoration for the House of Representatives."<sup>5</sup> The second possibility showed an encounter that had taken place in Idaho, not Montana, the Governor patiently explained. Norris claimed to have immersed himself in the Journals of Lewis and Clark, where he found two episodes that would be suitable—the meeting with the Flatheads or the fight between Lewis's party and Blackfoot Indians on the Upper Marias River during the return trip. Russell, the Governor, and the Board of Examiners eventually agreed that the meeting with the Flatheads would work best.

Correspondence between government officials and Russell and the other two artists selected for this phase of decoration of the Capitol was often similarly contentious in tone. The decoration of the original Capitol, during the administration of Joseph K. Toole, was undertaken by Charles A. Pedretti for F. Pedretti's Sons, a professional firm in Cincinnati primarily devoted to architectural decoration. Relations apparently proceeded relatively smoothly. The later effort, what might be called the Populist phase of Capitol decoration, was given over to three Montana artists—Russell, Edgar Samuel Paxson (1852-1919) and Ralph DeCamp (1858-1936)—by government fiat. Senate joint Resolution No. 4, approved on February 2, 1911, stipulated that the imagery be based on "early Montana scenes and figures, as are of value from a historical standpoint, and that such decorations be executed by Montana Artists of recognized ability and standing." Paxson was asked to do several paintings of mixed sizes for the vestibule of the House principally on the Lewis and Clark theme, and DeCamp, a series of landscapes for the former Law Library. It is evident from their many communications that the Montana artists did not enjoy the full confidence of the Governor and his committee. The fact that Russell and Paxson bungled their subjects at the outset and got the sizes of their respective paintings wrong (which brought down on their heads the wrath



"INDIAN STUDY," COURTESY AMON CARTER MUSEUM, FORT WORTH, TEX., ACC. NO. 1964.195.14B.

**One of many preliminary pencil sketches Russell made of the central figure. The warrior's Michelangesque gesture and turn of head reinforce the painting's dramatic sweep.**

of Attorney General Albert J. Galen) did not help.<sup>6</sup>

Worst of all, the Board of Examiners feared that Russell would fail to finish his painting on time. Governor Norris visited Great Falls in early April 1912 and was appalled to learn that Russell had made little progress on the commission. The ensuing controversy was played out in the daily press at stage-voice decibels. A headline in the *Great Falls Daily Tribune* for Monday, April 8, blared, WANTS RUSSELL TO START ON HIS WORK. The text stated that Norris was insisting on a firm deadline of September 1 and unfavorably compared Russell's delay to the industry and promptness of the other two artists. The next day's edition of the *Tribune* carried an angry response headlined, RUSSELL'S WORK WILL BE DONE ON TIME, SAY FRIENDS. On April 30, Norris sent an official complaint to Russell at his studio, in Great Falls, which occasioned an indignant reply from his wife and business manager, Nancy. On May 2, she wrote that the artist "is devoting his entire time to the mural and it is progressing rapidly, beyond our expectations." The fears of Norris and the committee were not entirely unfounded. Russell had made extensive forays away





Although Russell's commission sought to glorify the Anglo-American conquest, the artist chose to

from home that spring, first to New York and later to Florida, when he might reasonably have been expected to be at work on the Capitol commission. Nancy Russell's determined rejoinder, however, pointed out a salient aspect of the artist's working methods—his astonishing rapidity. The painting was installed in the House of Representatives ahead of schedule on July 11, 1912.

#### “A MONUMENT TO HIS GENIUS”

Any reservations Norris and his committee may have had were buried in an avalanche of praise. An anonymous reviewer writing in the *Great Falls Daily Tribune* in a tone of lofty intellectual authority lauded the painting unstintingly. “If all the works of Russell, save this, were to perish,” he enthused, “this picture would stand alone as a monument to his genius which would give





COURTESY MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

place the Indians at the center of his narrative and relegated Lewis and Clark to the background.

him a leading place among America's great artists." Interestingly, the reviewer did not structure his remarks in terms of the painting's formal properties of technique, facture, or style, but instead emphasized "the subject and its development," thus drawing attention to Russell's narrative gifts.

Certain it is that Russell's first attempt at history painting on a monumental scale for a public place was

a decided triumph, made so especially by his narrativizing strategies. The sweep of horses and Indian riders into the center foreground, the tilted lances, the dramatic cloud patterns, create an action scene of stupendous energy and vitality. The historically significant negotiations between Lewis and Clark and the tribal leaders, on the other hand, are almost lost to view in the quiet of the middle ground at right. Russell's de-



COURTESY THE C.M. RUSSELL MUSEUM, GREAT FALLS, MONT.

**William G. Kriehoff's portrait of Charlie Russell**

cision to privilege the Indians was not just an exercise in picturesqueness but a conscious narrativization of an alternative history. What he understood to be the heroic life of the Indians, whose land this was, would be forever and entirely changed by the visit from the unprepossessing characters. He lavished dramatic treatment on the people who would soon be vanquished, knowing full well the unfathomable power that lay behind the gentle intruders.

There has been considerable commentary about the mountain background that forms the upper horizontal plane of the painting, starting with the obvious fact that spring scenery is depicted in an incident that took place

in early September. It is also noticeable that the higher elevations at the right do not appear to segue properly with the southern part of the range to the left, which may be one of the reasons why Russell allowed the clouds and mist to obscure the elisions as much as they do. Russell made on-site sketches for the mountainscape which unfortunately seem not to have survived, or at least not to have been so identified. In a letter dated May 21, 1912, Nancy Russell reassured Governor Norris that “the picture is progressing beautifully,” adding that Russell “goes to Ross’s Hole this week for the mountain background.” Local newspapers picked up this information, as they did practically every detail of Russell’s life, with estimates of the time spent in the Sula basin ranging wildly from two days to two months.

Tradition holds that Russell made the sketches on the front porch of the log cabin owned by Jake and May Wetzsteon on a western hill overlooking the Sula basin, in the valley of the East Fork of the Bitterroot River, east of the town of Sula.<sup>7</sup> This could only be partly correct, because the front porch looks southeast to the foothills rather than west and north to the main range of the Bitterroots. Reminiscing many years later, however, Nancy Russell recalled that “We stayed at Darby [a town some 25 miles downstream (north), on the main stem of the Bitterroot] and hired a buckboard to take us around through that part of the country so that Charlie could get the lay of the land.”<sup>8</sup>



BOB SAINDON

**The cabin on the ranch of Jake and May Wetzsteon, where Russell stayed in 1911 while studying the landscape of the Sula basin. This photo dates from ca. 1980. The cabin was razed in the 1990s.**



There is indeed a section of road along present-day Route 93 a few miles north of Sula that offers a view somewhat similar to the one in the painting—the motif of high mountains presiding majestically over forested foothills—but the contours do not match exactly. The characteristic cragginess of the Bitterroots is missing from the painting. An early 20th-century photograph of the area by Montana photographer Bertie Lord, although less panoramic in its extent, reveals the same kind of juxtaposition of higher and lower mountains emphasized by Russell. The outlines of Trapper Peak, caught so well by Lord, are distinctly visible in the left portion of Russell’s mural. As for the rest of the mountainscape, it appears to be a more generalized image of Bitterroot scenery. Russell was usually attentive to the specifics of site when the subject demanded it; if he painted what he called a Glacier Park scene, then certainly it resembled Glacier Park scenery. It is somewhat surprising that greater fidelity to the site is not more apparent in the Capitol mural, especially considering the fact that he made a documented visit to the area in order to make visual observations. But perhaps the fault lies with the critics—we simply have not yet found the match between site and scene. Russell did not compromise the larger truth he envisioned, however. The vast expanse of high mountain area, even if not topographically exact, convincingly characterizes the “wall” of “windrows of momentary white” that



BOB SANDOON

**Trapper Peak, which appears in the left background of the painting. The Bitterroots proved a formidable barrier to the Corps of Discovery.**

stood between the Corps of Discovery and the realization of its goal.

Likewise, one could criticize some of the details of costume, etc., of the Indians, as many anthropologists and others have. What can be credited to Russell, however, is that, within the limitations of historical knowledge available to him at the time, his record for accuracy is actually quite good. He had recourse to historical materials in the Great Falls library, he of course had read the Journals of Lewis and Clark (although they would not necessarily have provided complete visual descriptions), and he had amassed his own collection



BOB SANDOON

**The view of Ross’s Hole from the cabin porch. Local tradition says Russell made his preliminary sketches from the porch, although it faces in the opposite direction of the landscape he painted.**



COURTESY MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**In Edgar Samuel Paxson's "Lewis and Clark at Three Forks," a companion mural commissioned at the same time as Russell's, Sacagawea points the way. It hangs in the vestibule of Montana's legislative chamber.**

of Indian artifacts on which he drew regularly.<sup>9</sup> One mystery remains: why he clothed the black slave York (visible in the painting tending the horses to the right of Lewis and Clark) in tight breeches and a tricorner hat rather than more rustic wear. He dressed the figure in breeches again in the watercolor *York*, the often-reproduced painting depicting him stripped to the waist in a Mandan earth lodge. Yet an undated costume study of York by Russell shows him in buckskins, indicating an alternative conception. For the Capitol mural, Russell seemingly made a conscious decision (no doubt based on what he thought were authoritative visual or verbal sources) to render York in what otherwise might seem to be an idiosyncratic choice of costume.<sup>10</sup>

#### VISUAL STORYTELLING

An artistic task of at least as great importance to a history painter as getting his facts straight was the ancient one of "invention." That is, the creation of composition, poses, and gestures in order to signify the meaning of the action—what Russell's reviewer in 1912 had referred to as "the subject and its development." In 1771, the British artist Sir Joshua Reynolds stated: "Whenever a story is related, every man forms a picture in his mind of the action and expression of the persons employed. The power of representing this mental picture on canvas is what we call invention in a painter."<sup>11</sup> In all likelihood, Charlie Russell had never heard of Sir Joshua Reynolds, and in any case, his artistic aims differed radically from those of Reynolds. But he was nev-

ertheless intuitively aware of the importance of "invention" to visual storytelling. In the attention he gave to compositional values as well as to individual expression, we can see the "power" of the original mental picture transferred to canvas. Note how, at the precise center of the canvas, the principal Indian figure looks to the right while extending his right arm laterally in the opposite direction in a bold, Michelangelesque gesture. Russell made numerous pencil sketches of this figure until he arrived at the pose, the physical features, and above all, the telling gesture that would heighten the drama of this encounter. The expression on the face is severe, even fierce; the action is quick, vigorous, commanding. Lewis and Clark, on the other hand, are characterized as patient, thoughtful, and above all cautious as they await the results of the Shoshone guide's translation efforts. Although Russell worked hard on the particulars of individual expression, it is the great sweep of action that gives the picture its epic breadth. The arc of riders that stops its full gallop only at the very last minute, as if within a few feet of the viewer, is one of Russell's most dynamic compositions. Russell not only understood well the demands of narrative for psychology of expression, but also the need to enhance the meaning of the incident by creating a significant action.

Governor Norris and his committee needn't have worried so about the three Montana artists. Paxson's figures, perhaps the weakest of the three, are too big for the limited sight lines of the vestibule in which they hang, and are rather wooden, but the ensemble is nicely colored and "decorative" in the Pedretti sense.

DeCamp's landscapes, surprisingly small in scale, are beautifully painted and confer a lyrical presence on the former Law Library. But it is Russell's *Lewis and Clark Meeting Indians at Ross' Hole* that dominates its space, not only physically, but psychologically, and perhaps one might say, even morally. Russell's ultimate achievement was to tender a highly personal and critical interpretation of a significant event in national history that took place on the soil of his adopted state, one with extremely serious consequences for two nations. Against the grain of the rest of the Capitol imagery, which sought to valorize the Anglo-American conquest, Russell alone made a significant counter-statement. This is not to try to further the impression of Russell as a simple-minded sentimentalist bent on showing the superiority of the Indian. Revisionist historians have sought to change that conception of Russell, showing that Russell's mind-set on these matters was highly complex.<sup>12</sup> In this one painting, however, so strategically placed, he tweaks the noses, pricks the consciences, and moves the hearts of the legislative body. One of the principal tenets of traditional history painting held that the artist's most necessary and noble function was to instruct the viewer. In *Lewis and Clark Meeting Indians at Ross' Hole*, Russell did just that. He seemed to know instinctively that it should be done, what the lesson should be, and how to go about doing it.<sup>13</sup>

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#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Norman Maclean, "U.S. Forest Service 1919: The Ranger, the Cook, and a Hole in the Sky," *A River Runs Through It and Other Stories* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), p. 146.

<sup>2</sup>Possible routes and campsite are discussed in Gary E. Moulton, ed. *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), Vol. 5, pp. 186-88. The Corps of Discovery probably camped with the Flatheads on the east side of Camp Creek, near its junction with the East Fork of the Bitterroot.

<sup>3</sup>Elliott Coues, ed., *The History of the Lewis and Clark Expedition by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1965; reprint of 1893 edition), Vol. 2, pp. 581-83.

<sup>4</sup>This is the official title of the work as listed at the Montana Historical Society. The painting has been known by many different titles over its lifetime, but the preferred one is that chosen by the Historical Society, which is the same title as that listed in *A Bibliography of the Published Works of Charles M. Russell*, compiled by Karl Yost and Frederic G. Renner (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1971), p. 293. Russell himself used this title in his copyright application. See Yost and Renner, p. v.

<sup>5</sup>Montana Historical Society, Montana Board of Examiners Records, Collection No. RS196, Box 2, Folder 37. All correspondence citations are from this source unless otherwise noted. The preliminary sketches have never been found.

<sup>6</sup>In the case of Russell, at least, the government eventually acknowledged some culpability in the misunderstanding. Russell's contract contained a serious misstatement of size—about 12 by 14 feet instead of 12 by 25 feet—which the Board of Examiners felt should have been recognized immediately as an error. Nevertheless, on January 29, 1912, Attorney General Galen promised to reimburse Russell for the canvas he had purchased in the wrong size that was now unuseable. Montana State Archives—Attorney General. A remnant of the canvas remains in the collection of the C. M. Russell Museum.

<sup>7</sup>See notations by Mrs. Jake Wetzsteon (1944) and Peggy Wetzsteon Windsor (1979) in *Bitterroot Trails*, ed. Lena Eversole Bell and Henry Hamilton Grant (The Bitter Root Valley Historical Society, 1982), pp. 65 and 77. The Wetzsteon's log cabin was torn down in the the early 1990s.

<sup>8</sup>Letter from Nancy Russell to R. H. Fletcher, November 14, 1936, in the Homer E. Britzman Collection, Taylor Museum for Southwestern Studies, Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center.

<sup>9</sup>Russell probably would have used the 1893 version edited by Elliott Coues already cited, or possibly Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, 1804-1806*, (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1904-05). In her letter to R. H. Fletcher previously cited, Nancy Russell stated that the Lewis and Clark journals he consulted had "disappeared in some way."

<sup>10</sup>The definitive study of York is by Robert B. Betts, *In Search of York* (Boulder: Colorado Associated University Press, 1985). Although Betts does not discuss visual representations of York's dress in art, he does mention that house slaves, particularly the body servant, often wore the cast-off garments of the master (p. 95).

<sup>11</sup>Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses on Art*, Stephen O. Mitchell, ed. (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1965), p. 40.

<sup>12</sup>For two quite different but serious and responsible analyses of this problem, see Raphael Cristy, "Charlie's Hidden Agenda: Realism and Nostalgia in C. M. Russell's Stories about Indians," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, Summer 1993 (Vol. 43, No. 3), pp. 2-15; and Alexander Nemerov, "Projecting the Future: Film and Race in the Art of Charles Russell," *American Art*, Winter 1994 (Vol. 8, No. 1), pp. 71-89.

<sup>13</sup>Funding for the research for this article was obtained from two grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, a Travel to Collections grant in 1992 and a Summer Stipend in 1994, for both of which I am extremely grateful. I also extend my deepest appreciation to the staff of the Montana Historical Society, Rick Stewart at the Amon Carter Museum, and Ginger Renner.



# WAPITI

The ubiquitous American elk was a staple in both the diet and the journals of Lewis and Clark

By Ken Walcheck



FROM A SELECTED TREASURY OF AUDUBON GAME ANIMALS (VICTOR H. CAHALANE, ED.), HAMMOND, 1968

In his letter of instruction to Meriwether Lewis as he prepared to cross the continent with the Corps of Discovery, Thomas Jefferson told him to observe “the animals of the country generally, and especially those not known in the U.S.”<sup>1</sup> As a result, the Lewis and Clark journals contain the first reliable documentation of wildlife in the drainages of the Missouri and Columbia rivers.

One of the animals recorded by Lewis and Clark—and which became one of the staples of their mostly carnivorous diet—was the wapiti, or American elk (*Cervus elaphus*). Wildlife biologists have estimated that before European settlement the continent may have

supported an elk population of 10 million.<sup>2</sup> In precolonial times this large member of the deer family, although now associated almost exclusively with the Rocky Mountains, was abundant on the plains and ranged as far east as the woodlands of Pennsylvania and New York and south to Georgia.<sup>3</sup> The Corps of Discovery encountered four of the six subspecies—the Eastern, Manitoban (plains), Rocky Mountain, and Roosevelt (Northwest coastal) elk.<sup>4</sup>

An English sea captain, George Waymouth, reported

**Above: John James Audubon's painting of a bull and cow elk was based on field sketches he made on a trip to Fort Union, near the junction of the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers, in 1843.**

sighting “Olkes,” or elk, on his voyage to Virginia in 1605.<sup>5</sup> The American elk’s European counterpart and close relation is the red deer, but the animal Europeans call an elk is in fact what Americans call a moose. There is no evidence, however, that moose in postglacial times ever ranged as far south as Virginia. Waymouth probably applied the name indiscriminately to any big, large-racked member of the deer family. Perhaps to avoid such confusion, in 1806 the naturalist Benjamin Smith Barton gave it the species name wapiti, a term he borrowed from the Shawnees, in whose language it means “light rump.”<sup>6</sup> Barton was one of the scientists who advised Lewis during his pre-expedition visit to Philadelphia in the spring of 1803, but it’s not known whether he urged the explorer to use the term wapiti in his recorded observations. If Barton did, Lewis ignored him—the journals of both Lewis and Clark refer only to elk.

The expedition left Camp Wood, near St. Louis, on May 14, 1804. About a month later, on June 17, when it had reached present-day Carol County, Missouri, Lewis described a country abounding in “Bear Deer & Elk.”<sup>7</sup> Clark mentioned sighting elk on July 12, when the expedition was in Richardson County, Nebraska, and two days later Patrick Gass wrote that they “saw some elk, but could not kill any.” Their luck changed on August 1 in Washington County, Nebraska, a few miles north of present-day Omaha: “3 Deer & an Elk Killed to day,” Clark reported. It was his 34th birthday, and to celebrate he ordered a dinner of venison, beaver tail, and “an Elk fleece,” topped off with a dessert of wild fruits.

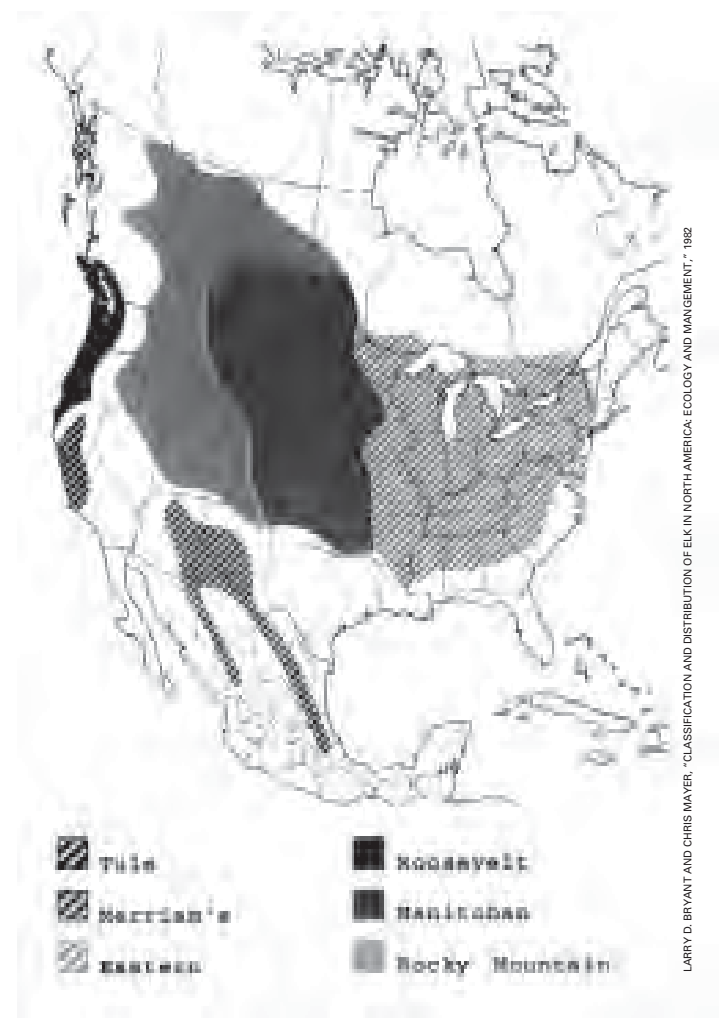
#### MONTANA 1805: AMERICAN SERENGHETI

After wintering at Fort Mandan, in North Dakota, the expedition headed west up the Missouri in the spring of 1805. On April 27 it entered Montana, where Clark observed “great numbers of Goats or antilopes, Elk, Swan Gees & Ducks” although “no buffalow to day.” His gaze took in one of the richest gamelands in the world. Next to the buffalo, or American bison, the largest ungulate in that vast landscape was the wapiti: a mature buck elk can stand over five feet tall and weigh more than 600 pounds.<sup>8</sup>

During the Montana portions of the expedition, the journals mention elk 95 times (65 on the outbound leg and 30 homeward bound). Most of the entries are pass-

ing references to sightings or kills, but they also discuss habitat, grazing patterns, antler development, and the use of elk hides for making clothes, moccasins, and tow ropes. Elk hides were also used to make the skin of Lewis’s iron boat, his ill-conceived experiment at the Great Falls of the Missouri (the hide worked fine, but the boat leaked due to a lack of pitch to seal the seams).

The expedition’s hunters killed at least 117 elk in Montana, some 40 percent of them east of the mountains, in Chouteau and Cascade counties, (See table, page 31, for a summary of the 396 total elk killed over the course of the expedition.)<sup>9</sup> The great majority of Montana kills occurred on the plains. Few elk, in fact, were observed in the mountains west of the Three Forks, which the outbound Corps of Discovery reached on July 25, 1805, and no elk were killed from August 7



**Precolonial distribution of the six subspecies of American elk. Lewis and Clark encountered the Eastern, Manitoban, Rocky Mountain, and Roosevelt subspecies.**

## JOURNAL SELECTIONS ON ELK

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• **May 13, 1805:** “the party killed several deer and some Elk principally for the benefit of their skins which are necessary to them for cloathing.”—*Lewis*

• **May 28, 1805:** “our ropes are but slender, all of them except one being made of Elk’s skins, and much worn, frequently wet and exposed to the heat of the weather are weak and rotten.”—*Lewis*.

(It was by means of a cordelle or “chord”—a heavy tow rope made of elk hides—that allowed the boats to be hauled upstream by the men pulling them along the shore).

• **June 21, 1805** (Great Falls of the Missouri): “Several men employed in Haveing & Graneing Elk hides for the Iron boat as it is called.”—*Clark*

• **February 23, 1806** (Fort Clatsop): “the men have provided themselves verry amply with mockersons & leather clothing.”—*Lewis*.

(Gass reported that they made 338 pairs of moccasins. “This stock,” he emphasized, “was not provided without great labor, as the most of them are made of the skins of elk.”)

• **February 19, 1806** (Fort Clatsop): “Sergt. Gass returned with the flesh of eight elk and seven skins . . . we had the skins divided among the messes in order that they might be prepared for covering our baggage when we set out in the spring.”—*Lewis*

• **April 7, 1806** (Multnomah County, Oregon, above Rooster State Park): “This morning early the flesh of the remaining Elk was brought in . . . we employed the party in drying the meat today which we completed by the evening and we had it secured in dried Elkskins and put on board in readiness for an early departure.”—*Lewis*

Surprisingly, there is no mention in the journals of several unusual sites—towering mounds of elk antlers—discovered by later explorers of the upper Missouri. In 1832, Prince Maximilian of Wied recorded, 17 miles downstream from the mouth of the Judith River, an “Elkhorn Steeple” 18 feet high, with a base of 15 feet. Karl Bodmer, the artist accompanying the prince, sketched the steeple (opposite).<sup>1</sup> In 1854, ethnographer Edwin T. Denig reported “an immense pile of elk horns that . . . must be very ancient” on the south side of the Missouri River, 50 miles above the mouth of the Yellowstone.<sup>2</sup> The so-called Elkhorn Monuments, according to James H. Bradley, “are among the mysteries of the west never to be unraveled. . . . They contained many thousand horns . . . and appeared to have been built [up over] a good many years, as the horns were somewhat decayed and the superincumbent weight had pressed the base of each mound several inches into the prairie soil. . . . There is nothing to indicate the purpose of the monuments which remain wrapped in as deep mystery as their origin.” Bradley states that the elkhorn monuments were “taken down by the American Fur Company in 1850 and the best horns selected and carried to St. Louis in the hope they would find a ready sale.”<sup>3</sup>

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Maximilian of Wied, *Travels in the Interior of North America, 1832-1834* (Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1906; English translation originally published in 1843).

<sup>2</sup>Edwin T. Denig, *Indian Tribes of the Upper Missouri*. From *46th Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, 1928-1929*, J.N.B. Hewitt, ed. (Washington, D.C., 1930), pp. 375-628.

<sup>3</sup>James H. Bradley, *Contributions to the Historical Society of Montana* (Boston: J. S. Canner and Co., 1966) Vol. 9; pp. 349-350.





JOSLYN ART MUSEUM, OMAHA, NEB.; GIFT OF ENRON ART FOUNDATION

**Artist Karl Bodmer painted this elkhorn pyramid he found on the Upper Missouri in the 1830s.**

through September 6, when the expedition ventured deeper into the Rockies. The hunters shot their last elk in Montana on September 7 in the vicinity of Grantsdale, in the Bitterroot Valley, west of the Continental Divide.

The explorers left Montana on September 13 and did not mention elk again until November 13, when Clark noted “Elk Sign,” presumably meaning tracks, which he spotted at Point Ellice, on the north shore of the Columbia estuary. During the Corps’s cold, wet, and thoroughly miserable winter at Fort Clatsop, elk probably made the difference in survival. Between December 1, 1805, and March 20, 1806, according to Gass, hunters brought in 131. The winter meat was lean and tough, but it helped to keep them alive.<sup>10</sup>

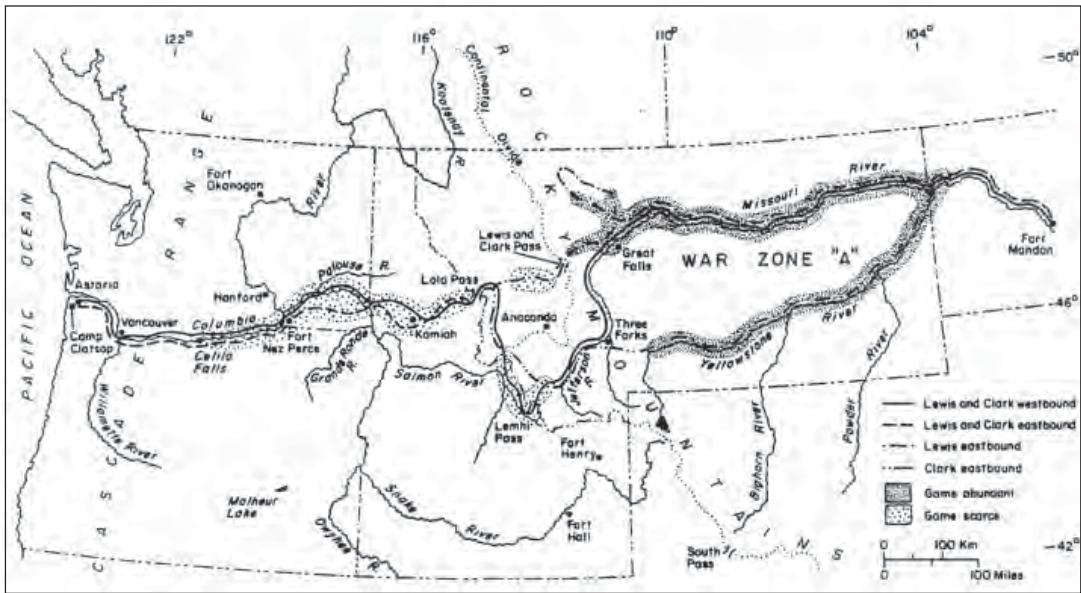
On the return leg of the journey, the expedition’s last reported elk kill before re-entering Montana occurred on the Sandy River, in eastern Oregon, on April 1. No elk were observed in Idaho. At Travelers’ Rest on July 3, Lewis and nine men, accompanied by Nez Perce guides, separated from Clark and the rest of the expedition to head for the Great Falls and an exploration of the Marias River. During the early evening of July 10, on the south side of the Sun River, they killed three elk. While exploring the Marias they sighted elk on July 20, 21, 23, and 28, but killed no elk until July 30, on the Missouri below Cow Island Crossing. They killed 18

more elk before their arrival at the mouth of the Yellowstone on August 7.

Clark and the rest of the expedition, meanwhile, had set out for the Three Forks and the Yellowstone River. Clark’s journal reports 14 elk killed between Shield’s River and Big Porcupine Creek, in Rosebud County. On July 27, Clark noted that “the Buffalo and Elk is astonishingly numerous on the banks of the river on each side, particularly the Elk which lay on almost every point in large gangs, and are so gentle that we frequently pass within 20 or 30 paces of them without their being the least alarmed.”

In a similar vein, Lewis on the outbound journey had observed on April 25, 1805, that “the buffaloe Elk and Antelope are so gentle that we pass near them while feeding, without appearing to excite any alarm among them, and when we attract their attention, they frequently approach us more clearly to discover what we are, and in some instances pursue us a considerable distance apparently with that view.” The lack of fear shown by the elk and other game suggests they had never encountered human hunters (more on this later).

After Clark and Lewis rejoined on August 12, some 30 miles upstream from the mouth of the Little Missouri, the expedition proceeded homeward. Some 26 more elk fell to the hunters’ guns, the last on September 15, just below the mouth of the Kansas River.



FROM PAUL S. MARTIN AND CHRISTINE R. SZUTER, "WAR ZONES AND GAME SINKS IN LEWIS AND CLARK'S WEST," CONSERVATION BIOLOGY, FEBRUARY 1999

**Lewis and Clark's route, 1805-1806, showing regions of abundant and scarce game. War Zone A covers the upper Missouri from the mouth of the Yellowstone to the Great Falls and the Three Forks.**

**ELK DISTRIBUTION THEN AND NOW**

When Lewis and Clark crossed the continent two centuries ago they found elk abundant on the plains and scarce in the mountains—exactly the opposite distribution we find today. Biologists have long debated whether the elk's "natural" habitat is mainly plains or woodland; some have argued that elk were predominantly creatures of the plains which retreated to the protection of higher, timbered lands after European settlers usurped their traditional range.

In fact, elk thrive in both plains and woodland environments and were always at home in the latter. As Lewis observed, "They [elk] are common to every part of this country, as well as the timbered lands as the plains, but they are much more abundant in the former than the latter."<sup>11</sup> According to the naturalist Olaus J. Murie, "There is much evidence to show that in early times the elk were more generally a dweller of woodlands and mountains than has been supposed . . . [I]t may be safely concluded that the elk have always been at home in the mountains as well as on the plains."<sup>12</sup> A survey of early accounts

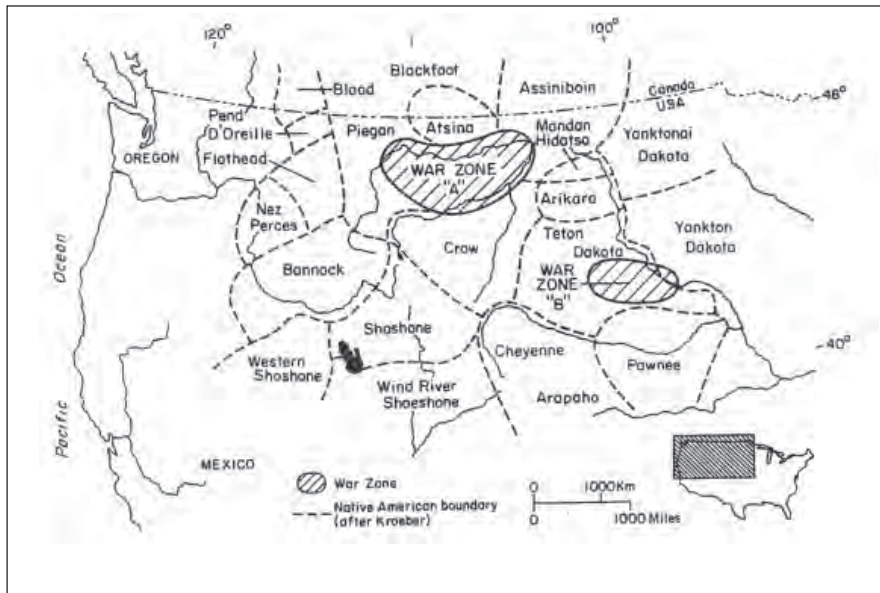


of Montana makes it clear that elk were present throughout the mountains before the region was widely settled.<sup>13</sup>

In the Rocky Mountains, differences in slope, aspect to the sun, and elevation multiply the diversity and abundance of plants, thus providing a wide range of feeding opportunities for elk. Wildlife biologists and experienced hunters know that weather conditions in mountain country play an important role in determining elk concentrations. They also know that temperature and precipitation in one year affect elk forage in the next. All of these factors must be considered when

asking why Lewis and Clark saw so few elk in the mountain valleys of the Jefferson, Beaverhead, Bitterroot, and upper Snake rivers, but fundamentally the reason seems clear enough. Elk would have congregated in the valleys during the late fall, winter, and early spring. But the outbound Corps of Discovery traversed the valleys in late summer, when elk were still on their feeding grounds in the higher alpine meadows.

Another reason has to do with the relationship between warring



FROM PAUL S. MARTIN AND CHRISTINE R. SZUTER, "WAR ZONES AND GAME SINKS IN LEWIS AND CLARK'S WEST," CONSERVATION BIOLOGY, FEBRUARY 1989

**Distribution of Plains Indians and their neighbors around the upper Missouri war zones from the mouth of the Yellowstone to Great Falls (War Zone A) and between the White and Niobrara rivers (War Zone B).**

Indians and the abundance of game. Lewis and Clark found more elk in the headlands above the mouth of the Columbia; still, they were few in number compared to the many they had encountered on the plains of Montana. Why? Hypotheses include differences in habitat and hunting pressures by local tribes. A recent study by ecologists Paul S. Martin and Christine R. Szuter, "War Zones and Game Sinks in Lewis and Clark's West," sheds light on the possible role of Indian hunters in explaining this difference.<sup>14</sup>

In Martin and Szuter's parlance, a "war zone" is a

buffer or neutral area between warring tribes living on its perimeter—war parties might penetrate the zone to skirmish but do not occupy it permanently, and the absence of resident hunters allows game to flourish. By contrast, a "game sink" is an area occupied by numerous resident hunters, resulting in a scarcity of game.

Martin and Szuter argue that the upper Missouri constituted a huge war zone, stretching over 120,000 square kilometers, from the mouth of the Yellowstone west to the Three Forks and encompassing the entire region between the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers. To a great

**Summary of elk killed by  
the Lewis and Clark Expedition, 1804-1806**

DATES	LOCATION	NO. KILLED
• May 14, 1804-April 6, 1805	Camp Wood to Fort Mandan	94
• April 7-26, 1805	Fort Mandan to Yellowstone River	8
• April 27-September 13, 1805	Mont./N.D. border to Mont./Id. border	81
• December 1, 1805-March 20, 1806	Winter at Ft. Clatsop	131
• March 23-June 29, 1806	Ft. Clatsop to Montana border	20
• June 30-August 3, 1806	Mont./Id. border to Mont./N.D. border	36
• August 4-September 21, 1806	Mont./N.D. border to St. Louis	26
<b>Total Elk Killed</b>		<b>396</b>

\*Harvest data from Gary E. Moulton, ed., *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991).



extent this vast area served as a buffer between the tribes living on its eastern, southern, and western fringes and the aggressive Blackeet to the north. As Clark himself astutely noted on August 29, 1806, "I have observed that in the country between the nations which are at war with each other the greatest numbers of wild animals are to be found." The absence of human hunters would account not only for the abundance of game but (as noted earlier) for its tameness.

The Columbia corridor—a game sink—offered a striking contrast; in Lewis's estimate it held a permanent population of 80,000 Indians whose hunting pressure significantly depressed the number of large game animals.<sup>15</sup> In effect, the outbound Corps of Discovery found itself in a game sink during its time in the Columbia watershed and while traversing the mountains east of the Continental Divide.

As an experienced hunter, Lewis knew the importance of different kinds of forage to the health and abundance of game animals. In North Dakota and Montana he noted elk feeding on sagebrush and willow. At Fort Clatsop on February 4, 1806, he observed that elk grazing on still-green grass and rushes in open areas are "in much better order" than those foraging in "woody country" where their food is "huckle berry bushes, fern, and an evergreen shrub which resembles the lorel."

Elk are generalists when it comes to feeding. One study has shown that Rocky Mountain elk graze on at least 142 species of forbs, ferns, and lichens as well as 77 species of grass and grasslike species, and browse on 111 species of shrubs and trees.<sup>15</sup> Elks' ability to subsist on such a variety of plants contributed to their wide range, and their occurrence along most of Lewis and Clark's route was important to the expedition's success. Wapiti (to use Barton's preferred name) provided food and clothing, and as Stephen Ambrose has noted, "the cord that bound body and soul together at Fort Clatsop was made of elk."<sup>16</sup>

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*Foundation member Ken Walcheck, a wildlife biologist and hunter, lives in Bozeman, Montana. Now retired, he spent 21 years with the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks.*

#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *Original Journals of the Lewis and*

*Clark Expedition* (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1904-5), Vol. 7, p. 249.

<sup>2</sup>Jack Lyon and Jack Ward Thomas, "Elk: Rocky Mountain Majesty," *Restoring America's Wildlife* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Interior, 1987), pp. 145-159.

<sup>3</sup>Peter Matthiessen, *Wildlife in America* (New York: Viking Press, 1959), p. 62.

<sup>4</sup>Larry D. Bryant and Chris Maser, "Classification and Distribution of North American Elk: Ecology and Management," *Wildlife Management Institute* (Harrisburg: Stackpole Books, 1982), pp. 1-60. The other two subspecies are Merriam's elk and the Tule elk.

<sup>5</sup>Ernest Thompson Seton, *The Life Histories of Northern Animals* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909), p. 41.

<sup>6</sup>John B. Kirsch and Kenneth R. Greer, *Bibliography: Wapiti and European Red Deer* (Montana Fish and Game Department, Game Management Division, Special Report No. 2, 1968), p. 1; Robert M. McClung, *Lost Wild America: The Story of Our Extinct and Vanishing Wild Life* (Hamden, Conn.: Linnet Books, 1993), pp. 52-53.

<sup>7</sup>Gary E. Moulton, ed., *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), Vol. 2, p. 306. All quotations or references to journal entries in the ensuing text are from Moulton, Vols. 2-11, by date, unless otherwise indicated. Moulton, citing E. Raymond Hall, *The Mammals of North America* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1981), Vol. 2, pp. 1084-86, states the explorers "did not actually see an elk until July 14," referring to an entry in the journal of Patrick Gass. But this arguable, since the region's tall-grass prairies and wooden bottomlands would certainly have supported elk.

<sup>8</sup>Herbert S. Zim and Donald F. Hoffmeister, *Mammals: A Guide to Familiar American Species* (New York: Golden Press, 1955), p. 136.

<sup>9</sup>Harvest numbers should be regarded as minimum, since the various journals differ on dates and numbers of elk killed. Some entries refer to bucks killed, without stating whether the animal was a deer or elk.

<sup>10</sup>Gass's entry of March 20, 1806. Moulton, Vol. 10, p. 199.

<sup>11</sup>Elliott Coues, *History of the Expedition Under the Command of Lewis and Clark* (New York: Dover Publications, 1965; reprint of 1893 edition), Vol. 3, p. 845.

<sup>12</sup>Olaus J. Murie, *The Elk of North America* (Harrisburg, Penn.: Stackpole Co., 1951), pp. 47-48.

<sup>13</sup>Craig S. and Pamela R. Knowles, *A Bibliography of Literature and Papers Pertaining to Presettlement Wildlife and Habitat on Montana and Adjacent Areas* (Missoula, Mont.: U.S. Forest Service, 1993).

<sup>14</sup>Paul S. Martin and Christine R. Szuter, "War Zones and Game Sinks in Lewis and Clark's West," *Conservation Biology*, February 1999 (Vol. 13, No. 1), pp. 36-45.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Stephen E. Ambrose, *Undaunted Courage* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), p. 322.

## George Drouillard: no white man's Indian

### Sign-Talker: The Adventure of George Drouillard on the Lewis and Clark Expedition

James Alexander Thom

Ballantine Books  
466 pages / \$25.95 hardcover

I've long been an admirer of George Drouillard, the civilian interpreter and hunter, as one of the Lewis and Clark Expedition's superstars on whom the captains always relied in a pinch. His fluency in sign language and his awesome shooting skills and coolness under pressure made him, next to Lewis and Clark themselves, arguably the Corps of Discovery's most critical member.

Drouillard was a *métis*, the half-breed offspring of a French-Canadian father and a Shawnee mother. Yet like most devotees of

Lewis and Clark I have always pictured him as white—in part, no doubt, from the way the captains in their journals anglicized his name as “Drewyer.”

Now that I've read James Alexander Thom's historical novel *Sign-Talker*, however, my image of Drouillard is a good deal more complex. Thom has taken what he can from the scant historical record and created a compelling portrait, however imaginary and counter-assumptive, of a man more Indian than white. His abilities as a hunter are grounded in reverence for the animals he must kill to sustain his life. To Drouillard nature is mystical and animate: the bears on the Missouri talk to each other and warn of the invading white men pushing upriver.

But like Meriwether Lewis Moon, the protagonist in Peter Matthiessen's novel *At Play in the Fields of the Lord*, Thom's Drouillard is an Indian trapped between cultures. He is distrusting and

even contemptuous of whites yet does their bidding time and again, signing on with the Corps of Discovery (albeit refusing to enlist as a soldier, thereby retaining a measure of independence) and later with Manuel Lisa's fateful effort to establish a fur-trading empire on the upper Missouri. On the journey to the Pacific, Drouillard comes to respect and ultimately to like William Clark for his level-headedness, fairness, and amiable temperament. His take on Lewis—

“that strange, hard, troubled man,” with his prickly pride and high-handed ways—is altogether different. As Thom tells it, Drouillard on more than one occasion bails out Lewis from disaster during negotiations with the Indians on whose generosity the expedition depends. It is a view of Lewis sure to provoke his partisans.

One of the advantages historical novelists have over historians is a license to get inside their subjects' heads and to create situations that add to their humanity and a reader's capacity to connect with them. Thom, for example, gives Drouillard a sex life. He takes several Indian lovers, but unlike the slam-bam encounters between most of the other men and the women who offer them their favors, his relationships are based on affection and understanding. Clark too has his dalliances, but like Drouillard's they are discreet. Lewis abstains.

I can quibble with parts of this novel. York, for one, comes across as a rather stock character, however sympathetic. But overall, *Sign-Talker* is sure to join *From Sea to Shining Sea*, Thom's saga of the family of William and George Rogers Clark, in the annals of distinguished historical fiction relating to Thomas Jefferson's great enterprise.

—J. I. Merritt



*Riversong* in its 1990 production

## In the works: a new version of *Riversong*

Like the mighty Missouri River, the momentum of the upcoming Lewis and Clark Bicentennial is an unstoppable force. One component of this surging flow is the recently reworked and revised opera *Riversong*. Foundation members may recall experiencing an earlier version of this thoughtful and moving production 10 years ago at the 22nd annual meeting in Lewiston, Idaho. Since then, the creators of *Riversong*, lyricist Tim Rarick and composer Tom Cooper, have continued to explore the Lewis and Clark saga, and in this updated version their increased familiarity comes through—sometimes dramatically but more often subtly, capturing by mood and ambience the zeitgeist of the early 1800s.

When creating the original version of *Riversong*, Rarick and Cooper traveled the Lewis and Clark Trail from St. Louis to the Pacific. In the intervening years, says Rarick, visits to places such as Charlottesville, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., and perhaps most important, the site of Grinder's Stand, where Lewis died on the Natchez Trace, have “made a substantial impact on the new script.” One example is the addition of a critical scene at Grinder's Stand; the artists felt it was “dramatically important to hear the sounds of that place, to get a sense of its isolation, and to hear the uncaring sound of Mrs. Grinder's voice.” Other additions shed light on Lewis's relationship with his men, including a scene in which, after Moses Reed's court martial and his running of the gauntlet, Lewis “attended his

wounds with the touch of a father for his injured son.”

For those unfamiliar with *Riversong*, the story begins with William Clark learning of the death of Meriwether Lewis from newspaper accounts while traveling through Kentucky to Fincastle, Virginia. Using flashbacks from the mind of Clark, the opera over its two-hour, two-act length explores his struggles to understand and ultimately accept his close friend's death. Rarick's beautiful prose is especially moving when sung to Cooper's powerful scores. *Riversong* hones closely to the facts as we know them, but its true strength is in taking the two nearly mythical figures of Lewis and Clark and turning them into real people, with real emotions, and letting the audience share those feelings. In this it excels.

Some people may find the term “opera” daunting, and its definition can be slippery. *Riversong* certainly qualifies as opera—a serious story set to music and verse—but its style is simple and never overbearing. Although no definite productions of *Riversong* are currently scheduled, Rarick and Cooper are exploring a number of promising leads as the bicentennial approaches. I'm hopeful we will all have an opportunity to experience this revised work in its full visual and aural splendor.

The revised *Riversong* is not the only operatic work being developed for the bicentennial. Two others are by the team of Bruce Trinkley, a professor of music at Penn State University, and lyricist Jason Charnesky: *York and the Voyage of Discovery* and *The Last Voyage of Captain Meriwether Lewis*, a dramatic cantata. At the University of Missouri-Columbia, the trio of Eric Dillner (concept and artistic administrator), Michael Ching (composer), and Hugh Moffatt (librettist) is at work on *Lewis and Clark: The Opera*.

—Jay Rasmussen

*An audiocassette (\$12.95) and script (\$9.95) of the 1990 version of Riversong are available from Woodland Enterprises, Inc., 310 N. Main St. Moscow, ID 83843 (208-882-4767;www.woodlandgifts.com).*

## Video trippin' with the Corps of Discovery

### Travelin' on the Lewis & Clark Trail

Clay S. Jenkinson (producer/co-host)

Empire for Liberty

\$19.95

If you're a regular reader of WPO, you most likely have a better-than-average knowledge of the Corps of Discovery. And if you have friends who are puzzled with your obsession with Lewis and Clark, you may want to recommend to them *Travelin' on the Lewis & Clark Trail*, a 50-minute video that offers an engaging and informative introduction to this wonderful story.

Clay S. Jenkinson, well known for his living-history portrayals of Meriwether Lewis and Thomas Jefferson, produced the video and (playing himself) serves as its on-scene narrator and co-host with actor James Whitmore. Scholars Stephen Ambrose, Gary Moulton, and Harry Fritz provide enlightening commentary about the Lewis and Clark Expedition as its steps are retraced by an archetypal American family of four who drive, canoe, and ride horseback

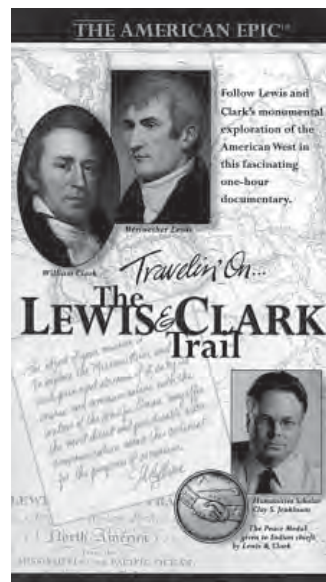
along portions of the Lewis and Clark Trail from St. Louis and Camp Dubois to Fort Clatsop. It's a full itinerary, filled with magnificent scenery and with stops along the way at Council Bluffs, Pierre, Bismarck, and other familiar places. The family takes in several summer festivals, where reenactors convey a sense of the expedition's daily life, and visits archaeologist Ken Karsmizki's dig for artifacts near Great Falls. I liked the comment by the family's teenage girl as she stands at Lemhi Pass and imagines how Lewis felt when he

saw, instead of the hoped-for Columbia River, endless waves of mountains: “He must have been, like, totally bummed.” A bit jarring, perhaps, but on the mark.

*Travelin' on the Lewis & Clark Trail* is a lively shorthand exposure to this epic tale and should lead those just learning about the expedition to explore it in much greater depth through books and the Lewis and Clark journals themselves. The

video is available through Empire for Liberty/Marmarth Press, 6015 S. Virginia St., Suite 458, Reno, NV 89502 (888-828-2853).

—Larry Epstein



## Two new travel guides are “musts”

We recommend two recent travel books for the shelves of Corps of Discovery buffs: the second edition—“completely revised and expanded”—of *Traveling the Lewis & Clark Trail*, by Julie Fanselow (Falcon Press, 321 pages, \$15.95 paperback) and *America's National Historic Trails*, by Kathleen Ann Cordes, with photos by Jane Lammers (University of Oklahoma

Press, 370 pages, \$19.95 paperback,).

Fanselow's book is an update of her 1993 Falcon guide of a slightly different title, and like the original it is a font of information for anyone planning a visit along the L&C Trail. A model of good travel writing, it mixes historical narrative with descriptions of the trail today and notable side trips, tips on travel and itinerary planning, and list-



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ings (with phone numbers, addresses, and in some cases Web sites) of motels, B&Bs, campgrounds, restaurants, Lewis and Clark festivals, and outfitters of river and pack trips and motorized tours. I found it helpful, for example, in sorting out options for a guided trip on the Wild and Scenic Rivers portion of the upper Missouri. Fanselow lays out available options with a listing of every outfitter operating in the region and goes into detail on three (River Odysseys West, Missouri River Outfitters, and Canoe Montana). *Traveling the Lewis & Clark Trail* is comprehensive and current and has garnered endorsements from the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Council and writers Dayton Duncan and Stephen Ambrose.

*America's National Historic Trails* is broader in scope, and its coverage of the 10 other routes constituting the National Historic Trails system is a useful reminder that there are pathways at least as important to our national heritage as the one traced by the Corps of Discovery. The 12 trails currently part of the NHT network are the Juan Bautista de Anza, Overmountain Victory, Lewis and Clark, Santa Fe, Trail of Tears, Oregon, California, Mormon Pioneer, Pony Express, Nez Perce, Iditarod, and Selma to Montgomery. All are covered here. The section for each trail consists of a brief overview, a concise historical narrative, thumbnail sketches of principal historic characters (Sacagawea gets a nod, along with the captains), and a description of the trail today, with points of special interest (82 are listed for the L&C Trail). Photography, cartography, and the book's design and organization are first-rate. Both the author and the photographer traveled the length of each trail—on foot and by car, dogsled, raft, kayak, or bush plane—and the thoroughness shows. Pedants (including this one) may note one minor historical error in the Lewis and Clark text: Thomas Jefferson's aborted scheme to send French botanist André Michaux west was hatched in 1793, not 1801.

—J.I.M.

CHARLES FRITZ  
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MONTANA BY AIR LLC offers sight-seeing tours of northern Montana. This is a time-efficient way to see the remote sites of the Lewis & Clark Trail such as the White Cliffs, Camp Disappointment, and the Fight Site. For more information call Rick Geiger (1-406-873-5709). You can also find us on our Web site ([www.montanabyair.com](http://www.montanabyair.com)).

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1/12 page  
WOODLAND  
ENTERPRISES

## Briefings

### Fort Mandan restoration

The U.S. Bank in Washburn, North Dakota, has contributed \$50,000 to the North Dakota Lewis & Clark Bicentennial Foundation to help in the restoration of the replica of Fort Mandan. The replica was constructed 28 years ago, and it will be refurbished by 2003, in time for the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial.

### HUBBARD AWARD

The Clearwater/Snake Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Committee is this year's recipient of the Harry Hubbard Award, presented by the National Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Council to recognize outstanding efforts by an individual or organization in promoting the bicentennial. The committee was recognized for its Passages 1999 and 2000 gatherings held in Lewiston, Idaho.

### GENEALOGY CERTIFICATE

The Foundation's Genealogy Committee has launched an effort to compile a database of direct descendants of the Corps of Discovery. The committee will send a certificate to those establishing

their relationships to members of the L&C expedition, and any documentation they provide will be kept in the Foundation's archives. The committee's database includes descendants living and deceased. For details, contact Donna Masterson (909-877-3392).

### YANKTON GATHERING

Yankton, South Dakota, will host its third annual Lewis and Clark Festival on August 26-27. Festivities will include living-history encampments, vendors, and traders. For details, see [www.lewisandclarktrail.com/yanktonlfest.htm](http://www.lewisandclarktrail.com/yanktonlfest.htm) or call 402-667-7873, ext. 3248.

### WEB UPDATES

New topics on the Web site Discovering Lewis & Clark ([www.lewis-clark.org](http://www.lewis-clark.org)) include "Mapping Terra Incognitae," by John Logan Allen, plus Mandan-Hidatsa-Arikara cultures, grizzly bears in the Bitterroots, and the latest word on the eulachon. For information about resources available for bicentennial projects, check [www.nps.gov/lecl/grants.htm](http://www.nps.gov/lecl/grants.htm). ■

## Passages

### George Tweney, Maliyah Poog

George H. Tweney, a long-time member of the Foundation and a former member of its board of directors, died of a brain tumor on May 7 at age 84. A resident of Seattle, he served as vice chairman of the Washington State Lewis and Clark Trail Committee.

A noted collector of rare books relating to Lewis and Clark, Tweney in 1970 found and purchased a one-of-a-kind copy of the Lewis and Clark journals transcribed in 1895 by Elliott Coues. He related the story of that find in an article in the February 1993 WPO. He recently sold his book collection to Lewis and Clark College, in Portland, Oregon.

Born in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, Tweney attended college in Ontario and was a member of the Canadian Olympic track team of 1932. He earned degrees in aeronautical engineering at the University of Detroit and the University of Michi-

gan. He was a pilot for Pan American Airways and later worked for Boeing and as an engineering consultant.

Marlene "Maliyah" Tendoy Poog, an 87-year-old Lemhi Shoshone who was a great grandniece of Sacagawea, died on March 26 in Fort Hall, Idaho. Poog was a great granddaughter of Cameahwait, Sacagawea's brother, and a granddaughter of Tendoy, a noted Lemhi Shoshone chief.

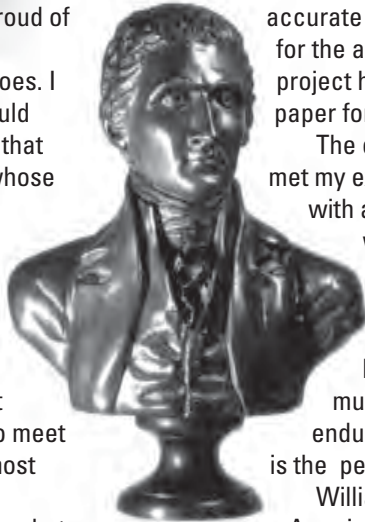
According to the *Idaho State Journal*, Poog, a long-time resident of Fort Hall, was pleased that Sacagawea had been recently honored by her image on the new \$1 coin. A spiritual leader and healer, she maintained her native language and traditions despite a childhood spent partly in a boarding school that suppressed her Indian culture. ■

## Bicentennial bust

**M**y great-great grandmother was Jane Lewis Anderson. Jane was the sister of Captain Meriwether Lewis. I have always admired my great-great-great uncle and I am proud of my kinship with one of America's greatest heroes. I have often wished I could have been with him on that wonderful adventure whose 200th anniversary I am happily anticipating. I wondered, What could I do personally to commemorate the great event?

In the fall of 1999 it was my good fortune to meet Dr. John Lanzalotti, a most remarkable person. He happens to be a surgeon, but more important he is a gifted artist and sculptor who specializes in images of historic figures: William and Mary, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Napoleon, John Marshall, among others.

Lanzalotti's family is originally from Tuscany, and I suspect his chromosomes contain genes from



Michelangelo. After seeing examples of his work I commissioned him to create a bust of Lewis based on a contemporary portrait by Charles de Saint-Mémin; I knew this to be an accurate representation of Lewis, for the artist used a prism to project his subject's image onto paper for tracing.

The completed bust has fully met my expectations. A bronze with a rich mahogany patina, it weighs some 50 pounds and is 20 inches high. It personifies the qualities that enabled Lewis to accomplish so much: determination, endurance, intellect. For me it is the perfect commemorative.

William Clark was also an American hero and he should be remembered in a like manner. Lanzalotti would love to create a bust of Clark—all he needs is an "angel" to commission it. Anyone interested should contact the sculptor at 3510 Mott Lane, Williamsburg, VA 23185 (757-253-1760). Copies of the Lewis bust are available from him, too.

—William M. Anderson

## Chapter News

### Idaho okays L&C license plate

**E**fforts by the the Idaho Chapter (Boise) have led to that state's adoption of a L&C license plate featuring a likeness of Sacagawea, whose Lemhi Shoshones were native to Idaho. The winning design was entered by a prisoner at the Orofino Department of Corrections. The plates go on sale in January; proceeds will support bicentennial projects.

### KEELBOAT ON THE OHIO

The keelboat and crew of the Discovery Expedition (home base: St. Charles, Missouri) will tour the Ohio River September 1-21, from Elizabeth, Pennsylvania, to Louisville, with 19 stops along the way. For details about the trip and plans for next year, check [www.lewisandclark.net](http://www.lewisandclark.net).

### IN PASSING

We have two new Foundation chapters: Camp Creek (Bitterroot Valley, Montana), and the Missouri River Basin (Nebraska). For a copy of the Crimson Bluffs Chapter's new newsletter, write 415 S. Front St., Townsend, MT 59644. The Philadelphia Chapter hosted the Home Front Chapter (Charlottesville, Virginia) for a weekend visit to tour L&C sites ■

### FOR THE RECORD

The May WPO "For the Record" (p. 34), which refers to an article in the August 1999 issue, should have read "Jackson," not "Jackson County," Nebraska. ■

## Healing moment

*Dispatches continued from page 40*

casins, he offered a traditional prayer for Jean Baptiste and talked about Sacagawea's self-sufficiency and respect for the land as epitomizing the values of her people.

Rose Ann Abrahamson and her sister Rozina spoke for the Lemhi Shoshone. Roseann greeted the audience in her native tongue and in several of the languages spoken by Jean Baptiste (he was fluent in at least five). After Rozina read from a plaque placed at the gravesite by her tribe, Rose Ann offered a prayer and invited us to form a compass-circle around the grave for a final ceremony and blessing: Lemhi Shoshone to the west, the Three Affiliated Tribes to the east, the Western Shoshone to the north, and representative whites, including myself, Joni Boyle, and Roger Wendlick, to the south. Rose Ann led her mother to the granite gravestone. They lit some sacred cedar, and Rose Ann's mother blessed the site with a prayer. Rose Ann then initiated a prayer from each of the four assembled groups by passing a sacred feather through the hands of an elder in each group. Capping the ceremony, we lifted our arms to the creator and thanked him for this healing moment.

Jean Baptiste bridged different cultures, and in honoring him on this day we became, at least for a time, four cultures united. Overhead, an eagle soared against the deep blue sky and pierced the desert air with its cry. ■

### WPO DISPLAY ADS

Full page: 7 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub> × 9 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub>	\$500
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1/6th vertical: 2 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub> × 4 <sup>5</sup> / <sub>8</sub>	\$84
1/12th: 2 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub> × 2 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>16</sub>	\$42

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## The Healing Moment

*Rededicating the grave of Jean Baptiste Charbonneau unites four cultures*

BY MICHELLE BUSSARD

Roger Wendlick was at the wheel of his car, and dust roiled behind us as we neared the gravesite, seven miles down a gravel road off the Interstate in this remote part of eastern Oregon. “Better than the 17 miles it used to be before we got a new sign out there on Highway 95,” said Roger, squinting into the flaming red sunset.

He had wanted to check that all was ready for the ceremony scheduled for the next day, and when we arrived at the site everything appeared in order. The attention to last-minute detail was typical of Roger, whose quiet but determined leadership had shepherded this project of the Foundation’s Oregon Chapter to refurbish and rededicate the grave of Jean Baptiste Charbonneau (“Pomp”), the son of Sacagawea.

As an infant Jean Baptiste had gone with Lewis and Clark to the Pacific, and as a 61-year-old prospector on his way to Montana’s gold fields he had died on this high desert plateau near the town of Danner on May 16, 1866. Now, 134 years later, we would be honoring that youngest member of the Corps of Discovery.

The next day, Saturday, June 24, the place came alive with some 300 people who had come to pay their respects to Jean Baptiste in a gathering both solemn and festive. A stage trimmed with bunting and a PA system had been carried in on the back of a pickup truck along with folding chairs and programs. The celebrants included local ranchers (among them Bruce and Joni Boyle, on whose property the grave is located), Foundation leaders and members of the Oregon and Idaho chapters who had invested, time, sweat, and money into this project, and members of the Inskip family whose ancestors had laid Jean Baptiste to rest.

Most poignantly, the rededication brought together representatives of the tribes who claim Jean Baptiste’s mother,



**Gail Parker, Rose Ann Abrahamson, and an Inskip descendant at the new interpretive sign for Pomp’s gravesite**

Sacagawea, as their own: the Lemhi Shoshone, the tribe of her birth; her adopted tribe, the Hidatsa (and their affiliates, the Mandan and Arikara); and the Western Shoshone, who have agreed to take care of the site in perpetuity. These tribes have been quarreling for years over which of them is the rightful heir to Sacagawea’s legacy, and their coming together in this peaceful setting was symbolic of a healing and reconciliation.

The ceremony kicked off with the arrival of a vintage stagecoach hauled by six chestnut horses and driven by local historian Mike Hanley flanked by an escort of cavalry reenactors. Roger Wendlick, resplendent in buckskins, served as master of ceremonies. President Keith Hay spoke for the Oregon Chapter and Director Jerry Garrett for the Founda-

tion. In keynote remarks, Al Furtwangler of Willamette University held up Jean Baptiste and Sacagawea—mother and child—as symbols of peace, whose presence on the Lewis and Clark Expedition was key to the explorers’ ability to make friends with the tribes they encountered. He drew a parallel between the new U.S. dollar coin on which they appear and the Jefferson peace medals presented to the tribes by Lewis and Clark.

This was the first public event endorsed by the National Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Council, and I felt proud to be representing that organization as its executive director. In that capacity I made two offerings in the spirit of “life, death, and healing”: some ground rattle of a rattlesnake to sprinkle on the site and a purple cornflower from the Knife River Indian Villages to be held in trust by the Boyles, whose donation of the gravesite made all this possible.

Mandan Hidatsa Gail Baker represented the Three Affiliated Tribes. Dressed in full headdress and blue-beaded moc-

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