

Endowment Fund

Sergeant Floyd

Robert Patterson

Benjamin Smith Barton



Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation / www.lewisandclark.org

February 2006 Volume 32, No. 1



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CLARK ON THE YELLOWSTONE LEWIS ON THE MARIAS

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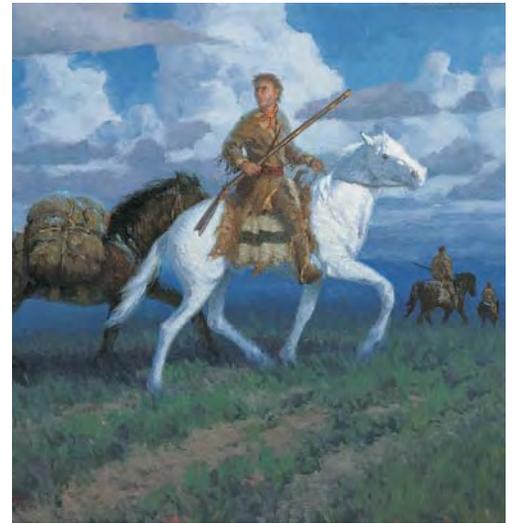
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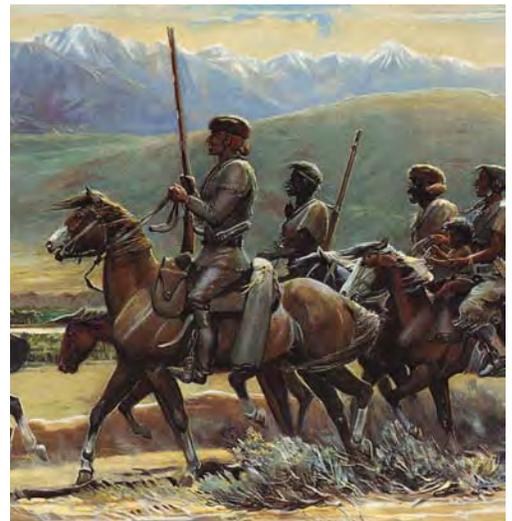
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On the cover

John F. Clymer’s painting *Arrival of Sergeant Pryor* depicts the reunion of Pryor’s party with William Clark’s on August 8, 1806, on the Missouri River below its junction with the Yellowstone. Nathaniel Pryor and Privates George Shannon and Richard Windsor had descended the Yellowstone in bullboats from Pompey’s Pillar after Crow Indians stole their horses. Clark’s main party suffered a similar loss at the hands of the Crows during its exploration of the Yellowstone on the return journey. For more on Clark on the Yellowstone, see Landon Y. Jones’s article beginning on page 24. Painting reproduced courtesy of Mrs. John F. Clymer and the Clymer Museum of Art.



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Letters

Gunshots at Grinder's Stand

In "The Gunshots at Grinder's Stand" (Soundings, November 2005), Ann Rogers reminds us that the often-presumed sequence of shots that killed Meriwether Lewis—the first to head, the second to the chest—is conjecture, not fact.

I was intrigued to learn that Captain John Brahan, a close friend of Lewis's, wrote three letters concerning his death (to Thomas Jefferson, Secretary of War William Eustis, and Captain Amos Stoddard) on the same day that James Neely wrote his letter to Jefferson. This means that Jefferson simultaneously received two reports on Lewis's death, one from Brahan and the other from Neely. Brahan's report, unlike Neely's, mentions a presumed sequence and alludes to the possibility of an eye witness. Why didn't Jefferson investigate further to resolve the shot sequence and track down the possible witness?

The only thing we can say for certain is that Lewis died of gunshot wounds at Grinder's Stand, along the Natchez Trace, on October 11, 1809. Both sides of the "suicide or murder" debate rely on circumstantial evidence to support their respective views. If a trial were held today to determine Lewis's "guilt" or "innocence" of the "crime" of self-destruction, I believe that the lack of solid evidence would probably result in acquittal. Our system of justice requires that a person be proved guilty beyond a reasonable doubt, and by that standard Lewis would have to be judged innocent.

It is also possible, as Thomas Danisi pointed out in the February 2002 WPO, that malaria may have affected Lewis's sanity and that he shot himself while mentally deranged. This theory needs further exploration. We also need to probe deeper to resolve, if possible, other questions. Why, for example, was there no federal inquiry at the time of Lewis's death? Why was Lewis, a high government official, apparently abandoned by other high government officials (Jefferson, by then retired at Monticello, and Secretary of War Eustis)?

Lewis's death is a matter of ongoing interest. We can thank Ann Rogers for giving us additional food for thought.

EVELYN L. ORR
Omaha, Neb.

The caption on the drawing of a Model 1799 Army pistol used to illustrate Ann Rogers's "The Gunshots at Grinder's Stand" says this may have been the type of pistol carried by Meriwether Lewis on his last journey. I doubt this was so.

While outfitting for the expedition in Philadelphia, Lewis bought a pair of pocket pistols with government funds, and he also checked out a pair of large military "horse" pistols from the Schuylkill Arsenal. Lewis seems to have been careful about keeping his personal possessions separate from government gear, and I suspect that, following the expedition, he either traded or auctioned off all these pistols.

There is evidence that while on the expedition Lewis also carried a set of pistols purchased with his own funds. On April 29, 1806, while camped with the Nez Perce Indians during the return journey, he traded "one of my case pistols" for a horse; on August 5, 1807, about a year after the expedition's return, he requested reimbursement from the government for (among other items) one pistol. I believe this pistol was the one traded to the Nez Percés. Among the items listed as Lewis's personal property to be sent home after his death (Donald Jackson's *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, page 472) is "a Pistol case—containing a Pocket Pistol." A pistol case would usually hold a pair of pistols. I suspect this pocket pistol was the match for the pistol traded to the Nez Percés, for which he later sought reimbursement.

The pocket pistol listed among Lewis's effects almost certainly was not used in his killing. Lewis was shot twice. Because virtually all pistols of his era were single-shot weapons, whoever fired the shots must have used two pistols. On his last journey Lewis probably carried a pair of "traveler's pistols," also known as gentlemen's pistols and great-coat pistols, among other names. Such pistols, which were usually sold in pairs, were bigger than pocket pistols, with large bores and barrel lengths of four to seven inches. They normally were carried loaded for use in an emergency.

Lewis is exactly the sort of person to have traveled with a set of such pistols, and if he did shoot himself, these were

the weapons he undoubtedly used. There is evidence that James Neelly, Lewis's traveling companion at the time of his death, wound up with these pistols and several other of Lewis's belongings, including a horse, a rifle, and a dirk. Neelly mentions these items in a letter to Thomas Jefferson on page 468 of Jackson. On page 136 of his book *Suicide or Murder? The Strange Death of Governor Meriwether Lewis*, Vardis Fisher quotes a letter written by Lewis's executor, John Marks, to the explorer's brother, Reuben Lewis, reporting that he had gone looking for Neelly to recover Lewis's property. Marks failed to find Neelly but did meet with his wife, who surrendered the horse and rifle. As related by Marks, she said that her husband "carries the dirk and pistols constantly with him." There is no evidence to suggest they were ever returned to the family.

MICHAEL F. CARRICK
Salem, Ore.

Fort Clatsop's design



I enjoyed the letter from David Ellington, a teacher at Woodburn High School, in Oregon, about his students' interpretation of the design of Fort Clatsop (Letters, November 2005). Looking at the Lewis and Clark journals with a fresh and unbiased point of view can be illuminating. Ellington's students, however, are not the first to come up with this alternate vision of Fort Clatsop. Martin Plamondon presents a persuasive argument for the same layout on page 73 of the third volume of his *Lewis and Clark Trail Maps: A Cartographic Reconstruction*. After careful examination of the journals, I believe that Plamondon and Ellington's students are correct; it is likely, in other words, that Fort Clatsop had three lines of huts, with a picket barricade at the open end of the fort and gates at the two corners. I hope the National Park Service

officials will take this into consideration when they construct a new fort to replace the replica that burned in October.

GLEN KIRKPATRICK
Molalla, Ore.

Error in Lewis's octant calibration

Readers comparing the recorded and sidebar-noted latitudes for June 10 and 20, July 28, and August 21, 1805, in Gary Moulton's *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* will note the very large difference between the two entries in each case (roughly 30 to 35 statute miles). Examination of the complete journals shows a similar systematic offset of Lewis's deduced meridian latitudes for the entire summer of 1805 (octant data). This is in sharp contrast to his fairly accurate data for the summer of 1804. What was the source of this systematic error?

In a letter published in the February 2004 WPO I suggested that the poor latitude results for the summer of 1805 may have been due to a transcription error of the octant's standing error of 2° 40' from a June 9, 1805, recorded value that appeared to be 2° 4'. Although the use of the postulated June 9th value in the letter's preliminary assessment yields better latitude results, Lewis's summer 1805 deduced latitude entries indicate he consistently used the April 12th value of 2° 40' in his calculations.

I've since looked into this matter further and now believe that Lewis erred in calibrating the octant. Measuring the altitude of the meridian, or noon sun, with both sextant and octant should allow computation of octant error after allowance of the error of the sextant. I believe that, without realizing it, Lewis became confused about which limb of the sun (upper or lower) he was measuring with the two instruments. The confusion arose because Lewis typically used an image-inverting telescope on the sextant but not on the octant. The images would appear the same when one was an upper limb and the other was a lower limb. Confusion over limbs is evident in some 1803 journal entries. Failure to use the same limb would lead to results that are off by the diameter of the sun. Taking this, as well as half the sextant error discussed in the cited letter, into account, the effective octant-error value used by Lewis would be 2° 12' 22.5". With this revised value,

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Letters (cont.)

one calculates the average latitude error, relative to modern estimates, for 22 meridian measurements as only minus-0.9 minutes (deduced latitude approximately 1 statute mile south of modern estimate), compared to an average of approximately 27.5 minutes using Lewis's recorded error value.

In another extension of the octant-calibration assessment, Lewis's June 9, 1806, journal entry of $2^{\circ} 30' 4.5''$ for octant calibration appears to be flawed due to his technique of using what he called "the *distant fragment* of the broken limb." Unless the limb was extremely far away, different parallax errors for the two instruments would result in a significant error for the octant-calibration value. Error for the three meridian latitudes made in the summer of 1806 average to minus-20.1 minutes, whereas simply continuing to use the revised summer 1805 octant value of $2^{\circ} 12' 22.5''$ results in an average error of minus-2.4 minutes. This indicates that the true octant error was essentially constant throughout the trip—a tribute to the care taken with the instruments under adverse field conditions.

HANS A. HEYNAU
Tequesta, Fla.

That's Patit Creek, Washington



I enjoyed Gary Lentz's article about the "Iron men" of Patit Creek (Dispatches, November 2005) and hope an error in the headline doesn't confuse readers about where Lewis and Clark camped on May 2, 1806. As stated in the article, the location of the Patit Creek campsite is eastern Washington, not Oregon.

GEORGE TOUCHETTE
Dayton, Wash.

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

Billings Signature Event

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President's Message

Announcing our Third Century Endowment Fund

Happy 2006 to all. This would normally be the president's column, but the foundation has such significant work to accomplish in the Third Century that I have asked Dr. David Peck, chair of our Development Committee, to address you regarding our vision for the future of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation.

—Patti Thomsen

With the L&C Bicentennial ending later this year, we, as

members of the national foundation that continues to bring the story of the expedition to the world, must pause to ask ourselves some serious questions and ponder some equally important issues regarding the organization's future.

The Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation is responsible for much of the scholarship, understanding, and enjoyment of the Lewis and Clark story and trail. If not for the foundation, there likely would not have been a bicentennial or a widespread awareness of and excitement about this epic American event. Inherent in our commemoration has been a dedication to treat all people involved in the story with respect and consideration. In short, the Lewis and Clark experience is much like a multifaceted diamond, with numerous stories and lessons for people of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. I have often commented on the fact that there seems to be something for everyone in the story of the Corps of Discovery. The magical story that has captured our hearts deserves to continue into its third century.

With the close of this bicentennial era, the foundation finds itself in a challenging situation. We have earned a position of great respect and responsibility among federal and state agencies and Indian nations in preserving the trail for future generations. The foundation will continue to act as a catalyst in educating America's youth about "all

things Lewis and Clark." We are embracing a greater responsibility for trail stewardship and site identification. But federal funding and support for trail projects and programs has already been reduced significantly, and much of it will soon be eliminated. To put it bluntly, much of the "financial well" that has flowed throughout the bicentennial will run dry.

To make the most of the foundation's highly respected status, we must have the financial resources to continue our work. Our organization is funded chiefly through membership dues and generous gifts provided throughout the year and during our annual appeal. Much of our future success depends on your support.

A fund for the future

It is for this reason that the president and the Board of Directors have created the Third Century Endowment Fund to ensure the long-term health and effectiveness of our foundation. As chair of the Development Committee, I ask you to seriously consider what the Lewis and Clark story has added to the quality of your life. With this in mind, I ask you to then consider if the foundation might have a place in your financial and estate planning. No matter what your ability to contribute, we welcome and value your gifts to this special fund that will perpetuate for future generations the timeless story of our friends of 200 years ago. I know you agree that it is a story worthy of our efforts.

The expedition's success was the result of every member's dedication and hard work and the assistance of Native Americans along the L&C Trail. Let us "proceed on" with the same approach. For more information, please contact Lacey Gallagher at our national headquarters in Great Falls. Thank you.

—David J. Peck

Chair, Development Committee



LCTHF HOUSE AD I
“The Trail belongs
to us all”
Pickup 11.05,
inside back cover

The waters of life connect us all

Last November, I had the opportunity to participate in a “Joining of the Waters” ceremony along the Columbia River in Oregon in commemoration of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial during the *Destination: The Pacific* Signature Event. The ceremony symbolized a joining of the waters over which the Lewis and Clark Expedition traveled. Waters from the Mississippi, Missouri, Clearwater, and Snake rivers were poured into the Columbia to symbolize the end of Lewis and Clark’s journey to the Pacific and the commencement of the growth of the nation from coast to coast.

The waters were here before Lewis and Clark arrived and even before the first people. The waters were here in the beginning, long before humans could write about them. The journals of Lewis and Clark contain word pictures of the waters; thus we can measure against their descriptions what we have done in the 200 years since they passed this way. This river is not what it was 200 years ago. It has been manipulated, dammed up, and maimed. My parts of the Missouri and Mississippi rivers are really now just channeled, dammed, and levied canals. It is harder to find beauty in them than it used to be. The rivers are artifacts now, the products of human hands. It’s of course not just the waters that have changed. Every living thing depends on water. So the life around the waters has changed too. There is less of it, and its hold is more precarious.

We came from water, we are water. We need water just to live. It is not outside of us. Our attachments to it link us to all life and to the way the whole planet works. All of my rivers were symbolically there that day along the Columbia River. The Little Blackfoot River comes down from the mountains and flows to the Columbia. The rain that falls in those mountains also waters the Missouri, just over the divide from the Little Blackfoot, and flows to the Mississippi.

Old Route 66 once crossed the Mississippi on the Chain of Rocks Bridge at St. Louis. On a sunny warm day in April, I walked to the center of the bridge. It provides a spectacular view of the river and of the 19th-century water intake tower. This river bears no comparison to the Little Blackfoot. It is huge and wide and deep and brown. Entire trees float by, swirling in giant eddies. I cannot imagine members of the Lewis and Clark Expedition moving that huge keelboat upriver. This river is raw power, frightening but strangely soothing. This river is the perfect antidote for human hubris, a reminder of my small place in the universe. This river robs time of its meaning. It divides. It unites. It has always been here. I stare down on the brown waters. I am overpowered, and my life cares are diminished. The river calms me. The poet T.S. Eliot called this river “a strong brown god.”

For Lewis and Clark, the lands and waters they traversed on their epic trek were raw materials to be made into something else. Animals were to be harvested, trees cut, land farmed, minerals mined, water floated and diverted as necessary. Indian people did not count in the long run, even though the expedition depended entirely upon the kindness of these strangers.

Lewis and Clark and their contemporaries had a particular view of progress that depended on ever-increasing consumption and a definition of this earth and these waters as commodities. These concepts are the very ones that we have lived by for these 200 years. It is becoming clearer that if what we do is not good for the water or the animals or the earth, it will not be good for our children and our grandchildren.

Before we can act differently, we must learn to think differently. This commemoration is not really about the past. Lewis and Clark and all the people

who ever saw or knew them are long since dead. It is really an opportunity for us to reflect. The commingling of waters is symbolic of the magical, mystical, and sacred. It is an opportunity to begin again and to tell the old story anew so that we can act on behalf of those unknown generations who will need this earth and these waters too. On that day I understood what T.S. Eliot also said, that “the river is within us, the sea is all about us.”



Upcoming signature events

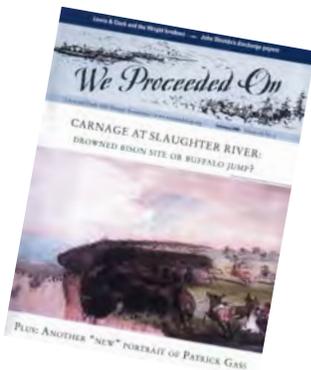
Mark your calendars for June 14-17, when the national signature event *Among the Nimipuu* will be held in Lewiston, Idaho. In September 1805, Lewis and Clark entered the Nez Perce homeland. As the expedition made its way back east, the explorers once again camped with the Nez Percés. Two hundred years later, this signature event commemorates that repeat encounter. It will take place at the Clearwater River Resort and Casino and at other locations near the Nez Perce reservation. For more information, please visit www.nezperce.org.

The next signature event, *Clark on the Yellowstone*, will take place July 22-25. It commemorates the 200th anniversary of William Clark’s inscribing his name on Pompey’s Pillar. A National Day of Honor will recognize the historic use of Pompey’s Pillar by Native Americans. A new interpretive center will greet visitors at the recently created Pompey’s Pillar National Monument. Canoe landings, trail rides, wildlife displays, and exhibits at local museums in nearby Billings, Montana, will engage people of all ages. Details can be found at www.clarkontheyellowstone.org. For more information on all remaining signature events, visit www.lewisandclark200.org.

—Robert R. Archibald
President, Bicentennial Council

NEZ PERCE SIGNATURE EVENT

JOHN FISHER 1/6 V



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Trail Notes

Creating linkages through trail stewardship

The Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation's responsibility as stewards of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail sounds immense, but really, it isn't.

We have dozens of partners committed to various aspects of trail stewardship. They can provide information, funding, assistance, and support. The foundation is not in this effort alone.

Perhaps there has been some misunderstanding and miscommunication about the foundation's role as stewards of the trail.

As stewards, we are the official watchdogs of the trail, and that includes a variety of responsibilities. Our preventive efforts are designed to ensure the preservation and protection of the trail and its resources.

We keep our eyes on cultural, heritage, and natural resources on the trail. We participate in a variety of trail monitoring projects, and report vandalism, theft, and abuse of resources to appropriate land-management agencies. We alert those same agencies to natural threats such as invasive weeds and the elimination of native species. We assist in restoration projects that return trail resources to their natural state. We develop and install interpretive signs to educate people about the trail and its history. We work in a variety of ways to make the trail more beautiful, accessible, and enjoyable for all visitors, Lewis and Clark enthusiasts or not.

If the foundation did not assume these responsibilities, it is likely some would be taken care of anyway. State and federal land-management agencies attend to as many stewardship responsibilities as time, staffing, and funding allow. However, considerable staffing and budget cuts already have been announced at the federal level for next year. In addition to government agencies, watchdog groups are involved when activities on the trail coincide with their own causes and concerns.

But no other group would care for this precious resource, the Lewis and

Clark National Historic Trail, in the same manner we would. They would not reflect on 200 years of history, on the relationships between Lewis and Clark and the Native Americans they encountered, or the resource's relationship to our heritage. This is why stewardship of the trail is a major responsibility of the foundation.

Stewardship, of course, is not our only mission, but it can allow us to address multiple goals simultaneously. It ties closely with scholarship, education, cultural awareness, and partnerships.

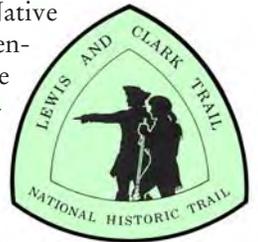
Our members and chapters are stretched thin. They expend significant time, energy, and resources on a myriad of projects, and each chapter and every individual has a slightly different set of priorities. We can all accomplish more if we find ways to cooperate and partner. We can leverage our resources to achieve more. For example, a chapter could partner with a land-management agency on a natural-grass restoration project and invite a classroom or a Girl Scout troop to assist. The children would be engaged in volunteerism, learn the history of Lewis and Clark in their area, and better appreciate the delicate balance of nature.

The foundation's responsibility is to reach out to other interested parties, to embrace invitations to partner on trail initiatives, and to be creative in designing programs and projects that can appeal to a variety of potential partners.

Understanding, communication, and cooperation are key ingredients to the preservation and protection of the trail. If we work with others, we will increase awareness of and interest in the Lewis and Clark Expedition, and we will accomplish much in preserving and protecting the trail for the enjoyment and education of future generations.

—Wendy Raney

Director, Field Operations



LCTHF HOUSE AD II

**SOUTHERN INDIANA
VISITORS' CENTER
PICKUP
P. 32, 11.05**

L&C Roundup

Lewis & Clark plant specimen found in London

A plant specimen collected by Meriwether Lewis in Montana during the expedition's return journey has been found in the herbarium of the Royal Botanic Gardens, in Kew, England. The specimen represents a species known today as Sandberg's bluegrass (*Poa secunda*).

According to a label on the sheet to which the specimen is pressed, Lewis collected it on July 28, 1806, on "the Missouri plains" at "Doubtfull River," a name not found in either the journals or on William Clark's map of the West. On that date Lewis was near today's Fort Benton, fleeing toward the Missouri River after his run-in with Black-foot Indians on Two Medicine River. (See related article, pages 14-23.)

The discovery was made in September by Canadian botanist Jacques Cayouette while he was searching the Kew herbarium for North American historical plant specimens in the grass family. The plant was named *Aira brevifolia* by Frederick Pursh, a German botanist entrusted with most of the plant specimens collected on the expedition. (See related article, pages 35-40.) Cayouette thinks that botanists and historians may have overlooked the bluegrass specimen because it was misfiled in a folder for hairgrass (genus *Deschampsia*). The label on the sheet containing information about the time and place it was collected is in Pursh's handwriting and was probably copied from Lewis's original note, which is now missing.

This is one of two and possibly three specimens of *Aira brevifolia*/*Poa secunda* that Lewis is known to have collected. The second and possibly third specimens are contained on a single sheet in the Lewis and Clark Herbarium at the Academy of Natural Sciences, in Philadelphia; a photograph of the sheet appears as plate 133 in Volume 12 of Gary E. Moulton's *Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition*. Pursh described the plant on page 76 of his 1813 work *Flora Americae Septen-*

trionalis. The Philadelphia sheet indicates that at least one of the two specimens was collected on June 10, 1806, at the start of the expedition's ascent into the Bitterroot Mountains of northern Idaho. According to Cayouette, the second specimen may be a "counterpart of the Kew specimen" collected in Montana on July 28.

Although the location of "Doubtfull River" remains a mystery, Moulton and botanist James L. Reveal believe that Lewis may have been referring to an area near the mouth of Crow Coulee, in Chouteau County, Montana.

Grant awards

The LCTHF recently awarded \$6,000 in grants to nine projects:

The L&C Honor Guard of Great Falls, Montana, \$1,350 for preparation of historically authentic meals at their LC Bicentennial encampments.

Pacific County Friends of L&C and the *Destination: The Pacific* signature event, \$700 for educational programs.

The Fort Walla (Washington) Museum, \$600 for a translation exhibit.

Artist Sue Spanke of Missoula, Montana, \$600 to help fund her exhibit "Drawing the Journey."

The LCTHF's Manitou Bluffs Chapter, \$500 for an interpretive sign near Brunswick, Missouri.

The Wahkiakum Community Foundation, \$500 for lectures.

Missouri Western State College, \$400 for a planetarium program on L&C's use of celestial navigation.

LuAnn Sewell Waters, a professor at Oklahoma State University, \$300 to supplement her L&C curriculum.

For the Record

The August 17-21 L&C Bicentennial Signature Event, entitled *Home of Sakakawea*, will take place in New Town, North Dakota, not in Bismarck as reported in the November 2005 WPO. New Town is on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation, home of the Three Affiliated Tribes. ■

LCTHF HOUSE AD III

THE FIGHT ON TWO MEDICINE RIVER: WHO WERE THOSE INDIANS, AND HOW MANY DIED?

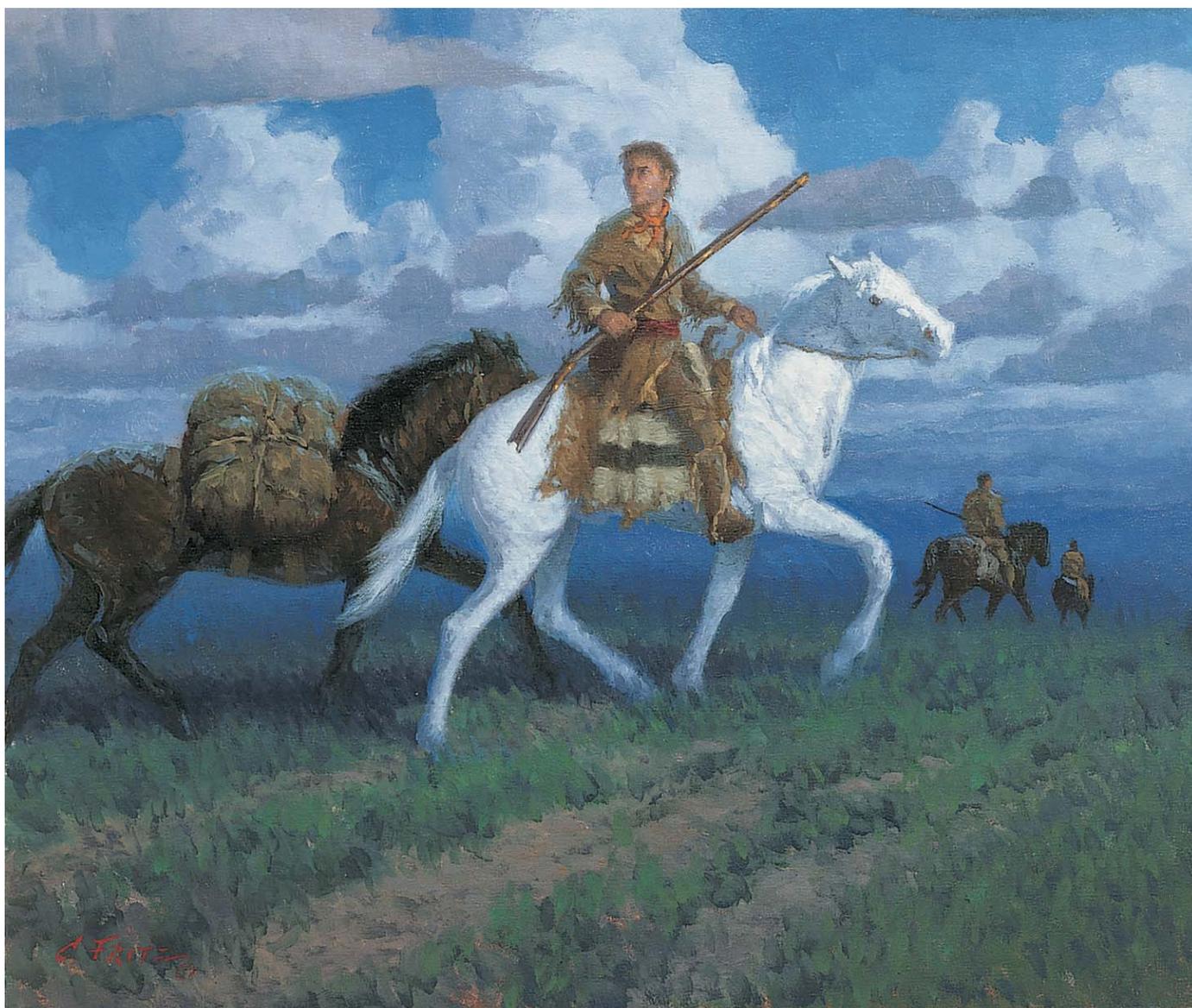
*Canadian fur-trade documents cast new light
on Lewis's deadly encounter with the dreaded "Pahkee"*

BY JOHN C. JACKSON

In July of 1806, when the Corps of Discovery was returning from its winter on the Pacific Coast, Meriwether Lewis led a small exploring party up the Marias River, a northern tributary of the Missouri, in what is today northwestern Montana. Lewis wanted to know if the Marias originated in British Canada, but after following the river to within sight of the Rocky Mountains he realized it did not. The captain and his three men—the hunter/interpreter George Drouillard and privates Joseph and Reuben Field—were headed back across the plains toward the Missouri when, on July 26, they encountered eight Blackfeet Indians on Two Medicine River. The two parties camped together that night. The next morning, when the Indians attempted to steal the explorers' horses and guns, a scuffle broke out. Reuben Field stabbed and killed one of the Blackfeet, and Lewis shot one of them in

the gut. Lewis and his party fled, riding all day and through the following night, until they reached the Missouri and rendezvoused with two other corps contingents led by Sergeants John Ordway and Patrick Gass.¹

What we know about the fight on Two Medicine River comes mainly from Lewis's lengthy journal entry about the incident and shorter secondhand accounts in the journals of Ordway, Gass, and William Clark. Lewis also discussed his exploration of the Marias and encounter with the eight Indians in a letter he wrote from Cahokia, Illinois, on October 14, 1806, three weeks after the expedition's return to St. Louis.² In addition to these sources, historians of the fight have drawn on at least four other hearsay accounts or references to the incident published between 1817 and 1917 and from an 1895 account by an elderly Indian who claimed to have been a member of the



Lewis and his three companions rode hard through the day and night following their deadly skirmish on Two Medicine River.

party encountered by Lewis.³ But historians have largely ignored records of the Canadian fur trade found in the archives of the Hudson's Bay Company.⁴ These unpublished documents, along with published primary sources about the Canadian fur trade also overlooked by Lewis and Clark scholars, shed new light on the Two Medicine fight and help clear up lingering questions: How many Indians were actually killed? And were the Indians really Blackfeet or, as Lewis stated at the time, Minetares of the North, known today as the Atsinas?⁵

CONFUSION ABOUT THE PAHKEES

Lewis's exploration of the upper Marias began on July 16, 1806, when he, Drouillard, and the Field brothers rode north from White Bear Island, above the Great Falls of the Missouri, into unknown country. Lewis knew from

talks the previous summer with the Shoshones that they were entering the territory of a tribe known as the Pahkees. The Shoshones told Lewis that in a recent raid the Pahkees had killed or captured more than 20 of their people.⁶

By "Pahkee" the Shoshones probably meant the *Pikanis*, or Piegans, the largest and most southerly of the three tribes later generalized as "Blackfeet." The other two Blackfeet tribes were the *Kainahs*, or Bloods, and the *Siksikas*, or "Blackfooted People," also known in historical texts as the Northern Blackfeet or Blackfeet Proper.⁷ This article will use the terms *Pikanis*, *Kainahs*, and *Siksikas*.

Lewis appears to have misunderstood "Pahkees" to mean Atsinas. He called the Atsinas the Minetares (variously spelled, and pronounced "min-ne-TA-rees")—or, more specifically, either the Minetares of the North or the

Minetares of Fort des Prairies. These terms were used to distinguish them from the unrelated “Minetares of the Missouri,” correctly known as the Hidatsas, who with the Mandans hosted the Corps of Discovery during its winter on the upper Missouri, in 1804-05. Canadian traders called the Atsinas the Fall, Falls, or Rapid Indians, for their prior association with rapids on the Saskatchewan River.⁸ Adding to the confusion, both the Atsinas and the Hidatsas were also known as the Gros Ventres—French for “Big Bellies,” a name derived from the gesture used to describe them in Plains Indian sign language.⁹ [See sidebar, page 21, for more on this confusion of names.]

When the Corps of Discovery camped with the Nez Percés in the spring of 1806, they told dire stories about the “Minnetares” (Atsinas) and the “black foot Indians,” but didn’t mention the Pahkees by name.¹⁰ These two tribes of the northern plains, Lewis concluded, were “a vicious lawless and ... abandoned set of wretches,” and he wished “to avoid ... them if possible.”¹¹

It is probable, as noted, that Lewis lumped the “Pahkees” and “Minnetares” together. On his reconnoiter of the upper Marias the Minetares/Atsinas seem to have loomed much larger in his mind than the Blackfeet, who throughout the journals he mentions just four times.¹²

On July 23, 1806, three days before the encounter with the Indians on Two Medicine River, Lewis’s party came upon a recently abandoned campsite that the captain assumed had been occupied by “Minnetares of fort de prarie” perhaps ten days before.¹³ On July 26, when the explorers and the Indians stumbled upon each other, Lewis instantly “apprehended that they were the Minnetares of Fort de Prairie.” Trying to make the best of a bad situation, he took the initiative by approaching the Indians and asking in sign language “if they were the Minnetares of the North.” To this leading question they responded “in the affirmative.”¹⁴

Nowhere in Lewis’s account does he mention Blackfeet. His relative lack of awareness of the Blackfeet and his concern about the “Minnetares of fort de prarie” probably contributed to his misunderstanding about the identity of the Indians he met on Two Medicine River. It is also possible that in responding to Lewis’s question the Indians either misunderstood his signing or took advantage of his assumption to conceal their true identity. Lewis’s party included the sign-language interpreter George Drouillard, but Drouillard was absent during the captain’s initial encounter with the Indians. By the time he rejoined the party, their identity as Minetares was fixed in Lewis’s mind.¹⁵



This lone cottonwood tree on the south bank of Two Medicine River marks the probable site of the fight between Lewis’s party and the Pikanis. More photos of the site appear on page 19.

The Indians were traveling with a herd of thirty horses, about half of them saddled.¹⁶ They might have been buffalo hunters or, as some writers have speculated, horse raiders returning north with mounts stolen from another tribe.¹⁷

Whatever their purpose, these Indians were definitely Pikani, a tribe Canadian traders knew as the Muddy or Missouri River Indians.¹⁸ The Pikanis trapped beaver along the front range of the Rockies in southern Canada and northern Montana and traded their pelts at either Rocky Mountain House, operated by the North West Company, or Acton House, operated by the rival Hudson’s Bay Company. Both posts were located within a hundred yards of each other on the upper North Saskatchewan River. Sometimes the Pikanis ventured farther east or north to trade at other N.W.C. or H.B.C. posts such as Fort Augustus or Edmonton House, although doing so risked crossing the territories of the Kainahs and Siksikas. (The three Blackfeet branches were not always on good terms, and the oft-cited “Blackfoot confederacy” is mostly a myth.)

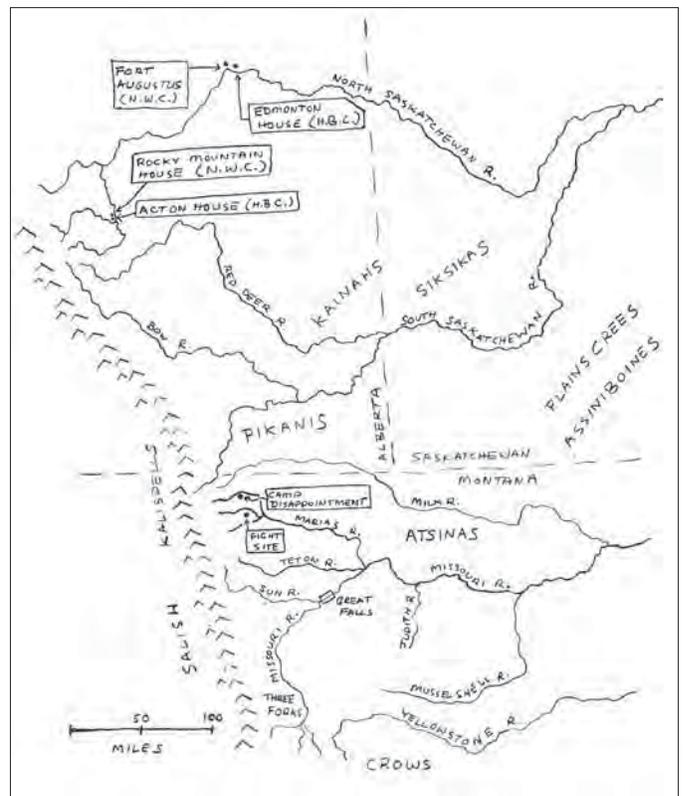
In conversation over the evening campfire, Lewis learned that the eight “Minetares”—in reality Pikanis—were part of a much larger group camped a half day’s ride away. The Indians told him that a French-speaking white trader resided in the camp and that the nearest trading post was six days away.¹⁹ For his part, Lewis explained

how he had “come a great way from the East” and was now returning from “the great waters where the sun sets.” He had “seen a great many nations all of whom I had invited to come and trade with me on the rivers on this side of the mountains.” He urged them to make peace with their enemies, “particularly those on the West side of the mountains”—i.e., the Shoshones, Nez Percés, and Salish, all of whom had befriended the explorers—and to trade with the Americans at the post he envisioned would soon be built at the junction of the Marias and Missouri.²⁰

Lewis was trying to lure these Indians from the British traders who supplied the guns that made the Blackfeet and Atsinas the scourge of the northern plains. More important, as he told them, he expected to open up trade with the mountain tribes west of the Continental Divide, whose isolation limited their access to firearms.

Those tribes were sworn enemies of the Pikanis and Atsinas, and some writers (most notably James Ronda) have argued that the new trading relations outlined by Lewis threatened to shift the intertribal balance of power and undercut the hegemony of the plains tribes.²¹ While that may be so, it’s not clear how much of Lewis’s message the young Pikanis understood, either in its specific detail or larger geopolitical import. Lewis records that they “readily gave their assent” to his entreaties to make peace, but their promise was surely more expedient than sincere. Moreover, these eight Pikanis, who appear to have been quite young (at least one may have been in his early teens), lacked the authority to guarantee such a promise.

The Pikanis had stumbled into a perplexing situation. We can imagine them in hushed conversation during the night and around the morning campfire. Perhaps they decided to disarm the strangers until responsible men could be summoned from the main camp. Or maybe they just wanted to count some coup. Whatever they were thinking, their attempt to steal the white men’s firearms and horses went horribly wrong. After Reuben Field fatally stabbed the Indian who tried to steal his rifle, the explorers quickly had the upper hand. Awakened by the scuffling, Lewis saw one of the young men running off with his rifle and took chase, threatening him with a pistol. The man dropped the rifle and Lewis recovered it. Several of the Indians, including the one who had taken Lewis’s rifle, drove part of the horse herd into a narrow draw. Lewis, in pursuit, “called to them as I had done several times before that I would shoot them if they did not give me [back] my horse.” He raised his rifle and from a distance of thirty yards shot one of them “through the belly.”²² The wounded man fell to his knees and one el-



Northern Great Plains ca. 1806. Tribal locations are approximate. A related map appears on page 29 and a timeline on pages 30-31.

bow but managed to get off a shot in Lewis’s direction before crawling behind a rock. His aim was high, Lewis recalled, but “being bearheaded I felt the wind of his bullet very distinctly.”

The Indians scattered. Lewis and his men took eight horses (four of their own and four of the best Pikani ponies) and rode off as fast as their mounts could carry them, convinced that the Indians would return to their camp and rally a war party. Before leaving the scene, Lewis reclaimed a flag he had given the Indians but left a Jefferson peace medal worn by the man killed by Reuben Field so “they might be informed who we were.”²³

Lewis and his men covered more than a hundred miles in 24 hours, stopping just twice to eat and rest. On the morning of July 28 they struck the Missouri and to their “unspeakable satisfaction” saw Ordway and his detachment, which totaled 14 men, streaking downstream in five canoes. Abandoning their exhausted horses, they hopped aboard and raced downriver to the mouth of the Marias, where they were joined by Gass and Private Alexander Willard traveling on horseback from the Great Falls. The reunited explorers continued another fifteen river miles before stopping to camp. A violent storm rolled in, and the lashing rain and pounding hail made for a miserable night. But in his mind, at least, Lewis was at last secure

from the phantom war party that had propelled his marathon flight across the plains.²⁴

CANADIAN TRADERS LEARN OF THE FIGHT

Five months after the Two Medicine fight and four hundred miles to the north, James Bird, the Hudson's Bay Company factor at Edmonton House, on the North Saskatchewan River, wrote a letter to another H.B.C. officer detailing recent intertribal conflicts in the region. Bird's letter, dated December 23, 1806, can be found today in the Hudson's Bay Company archives. It includes, almost as an afterthought, the following item:

A party of Americans were seen last Summer where the Missouri enters the rocky Mountains & tis reported by the Muddy or Missouri River Indians that four of them set off with an intention to come here but that they kiled one and the rest returned.²⁵

Bird's statement, although in some respects ambiguous, clearly refers to the Two Medicine fight—there were no other Americans on the upper Missouri (which in this context would include the Marias, one of its main northern tributaries) other than members of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. By "Muddy or Missouri Indians" Bird means the Pikanis. The phrase "four of them" must refer to Lewis's party, notwithstanding the mistaken assertion about the party's "intention to come here" (that is, to the Saskatchewan). The phrase "they kiled one" can only refer to the killing of one of the Pikanis by the Americans.

It is doubtful that Bird heard about the Two Medicine fight directly from the Pikanis. Instead he probably learned of it in conversation with fellow H.B.C. man John Peter Pruden when the latter visited Edmonton House in late November of 1806. Pruden was a trader at Acton House, a Hudson's Bay Company post on the North Saskatchewan 120 miles upstream from Edmonton House. Pruden, in turn, probably learned of the fight from Pikanis who visited Acton House that fall.

Acton House's North West Company counterpart on the upper Saskatchewan was Rocky Mountain House (the two posts were literally in hailing distance of each other). In residence at Rocky Mountain House was N.W.C. partner and explorer David Thompson, who was preparing an expedition to descend the Columbia River from its source in the Canadian Rockies to its mouth. Thompson tells us that while Pruden was visiting Edmonton House a group of Pikanis arrived at Rocky Mountain House accompanied by a North West Company *engagé* named Prince Vallade. Vallade had spent the season of 1806 living with a band of Pikanis and may have been

the French-speaking trader mentioned by Lewis in the journal account of his encounter with the Pikanis.²⁶

If Vallade or the Pikanis told Thompson about the Two Medicine fight, he failed to record it in the journal he was keeping at the time. Thompson's only reference to the fight appears in his memoirs, written four decades later, in which he states that two Pikanis died—a notion shared by Lewis, who was certain that the wound he had inflicted was fatal.²⁷ In his letter of October 14, 1806, from Cahokia, Lewis wrote that "we ... killed 2 of them," a point corroborated by the journal account of Patrick Gass, which states that in addition to the man killed by Reuben Field, "Captain Lewis shot one of them and gave him a mortal wound."²⁸

There is no evidence to suggest that Lewis felt any regret about killing the Pikani—only embarrassment, perhaps, that the incident occurred in the first place. (Thomas Jefferson had counseled him on the importance of good relations with the Indians, and Lewis's post-expedition report to Jefferson omitted any reference to the hostile encounter.)²⁹ At any rate, Bird's account adds credence to the view that only one Indian—the man stabbed by Reuben Field—died, while the Pikani youth shot by Lewis recovered.³⁰

PIKANIS OR ATSINAS?

Other records of the Canadian trade provide clues that the Indians on Two Medicine River were Pikanis and not Atsinas. The records suggest that the Atsinas had left their home territory along the upper Missouri for an extended visit with their relatives, the Arapahos, along the Yellowstone—a visit that would have placed them several hundred miles south of Two Medicine River at the time of the encounter.

Although the Atsinas and Arapahos had separated in the 18th century, they periodically reunited in mass encampments.³¹ One such visit may have occurred in 1805 and lasted two years. Writing in his Edmonton House journal in May of 1807, James Bird mentions the arrival of sixty "Fall Indians" (Atsinas) who had spent the last two years in the vicinity of the "Spanish settlements."³² The phrase "Spanish settlements" suggests that the Atsinas may have traveled as far south as New Mexico for trade or horse raiding. Such a trip, across hundreds of miles of unfamiliar territory, would not have been undertaken without the Arapahos, who knew the country.

The North West Company clerk François-Antoine Larocque was in the Yellowstone country during the summer of 1805 with a band of Crow Indians. In his journal

Touring the Fight Site and Camp Disappointment (some walking required)

Larry Epstein was a 12-year-old Boy Scout in Cut Bank, Montana, in 1962 when his scout master, Bob Anderson, located the site on Two Medicine River where Meriwether Lewis had tangled with Blackfeet Indians 156 years before.

Anderson, who had been looking for a local-history project for his scouts, had gone searching for the site after learning from Helen West, a curator at the Plains Indian Museum in Browning, Montana, that no one knew its exact location. First he studied Lewis's journal entry for July 26, 1806, which gives a detailed description of camping on a bottom near steep bluffs in a solitary grove of three cottonwood trees. Then he flew Lewis's route in a small plane until he found the one place that appeared to match the terrain described.

Epstein recalls how, over the next year and a half, he and his fellow scouts (there were just eight in the troop) made countless treks into the bottom as they helped Anderson confirm it as the probable site of the Lewis-Blackfeet encounter. "The Two Med is a short river and nowhere else do you find the same topography along with three cottonwoods," he says. "The project absolutely obsessed us—everyone in my family got sick of hearing me talk about it. It was my introduction to Lewis and Clark."

Another Cut Bank scout troop became involved in the site and erected a historical marker and a fence around the cottonwoods. Its leader was Wilbur Werner, a lawyer who went on to become one of the founders of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation.

In 1978, after earning a law degree from the University of Montana, Epstein returned to Cut Bank and joined Werner's firm. By then Werner was leading tours of the Fight Site and Camp Disappointment for anyone interested, including writers doing field research on the expedition. Recalls Epstein, "I remember once in the 1980s Wilbur poking his head into my office and saying, 'Steve Ambrose and Dayton Duncan are here and we're going to the Fight Site. Want to come along?' At the time I didn't even know who these guys were."

Epstein (a former president of the LCTHF) took over the tours after Werner retired and moved to Arizona. A tour is scheduled this year for June 10 (for details, e-mail him at larrye@theglobal.net). Both tour sites are in remote parts of the sprawling Blackfeet Indian Reservation and are inaccessible by car. The Fight Site has changed since its discovery: fire destroyed one of the cottonwoods in the 1970s and wind decapitated another in the 1990s.

Anderson, who left Montana years ago and now lives in Iowa, will return to Cut Bank next July to attend a reunion of his old troop. Epstein will host the gathering of now middle-aged scouts. It will include a visit to the lonely spot on Two Medicine River where, 44 years ago, they too made history.

—J.I. Merritt



Above: The Fight Site as photographed in July 2004. Below: Hiking into the site. Foreground rocks may have sheltered the wounded Indian.



PHOTOS BY J.I. MERRITT



Left: Larry Epstein, on a bluff overlooking Cut Bank Creek and the site of Camp Disappointment, describes Lewis's exploration of the upper Marias. Below: A fence encloses the campsite. Both the Fight Site and Camp Disappointment are on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation.



he notes that a large band of Atsinas, comprising 275 to 300 lodges, was camped nearby on the Big Horn River.³³ This may have been either a large contingent of Atsinas or more likely the entire tribe. Larocque's journal doesn't say how long the Atsinas remained in the Yellowstone country, but Bird's journal indicates that at least some of them were there throughout 1806. This documented absence of the Atsinas north of the Missouri makes it unlikely that Lewis's horse raiders were, as he believed, "Minnetaries of the North."

IMPACT ON THE FUR TRADE

A final issue concerns the repercussions, if any, of the Two Medicine encounter on efforts by American fur traders to establish a presence on the upper Missouri in the years immediately following the Lewis and Clark Expedition, when northern tribesmen repulsed attempts by St. Louis fur merchants to trade or trap in the beaver-rich country of the Three Forks, killing trappers and absconding with their pelts. Among the victims were John Potts and George Drouillard, two members of the Corps of Discovery who returned to the mountains to seek their fortunes but instead met violent ends. A third explorer-turned-trapper, John Colter, barely escaped with his life.

Writers have attributed these and later depredations to the Blackfeet in general and the Pikanis in particular. According to the conventional view, this hostility toward American trappers resulted from one or the other of two possible scenarios, both stemming from the encounter on Two Medicine River. In the first, the Pikanis were simply avenging the death, or deaths, of one or two of their own. In the second, the Pikanis were reacting to Lewis's geopolitically naive statements about opening trade with their west-slope enemies the Shoshones, Salish, and Nez Perces.

Both these interpretations are doubtful. The Pikanis must have regretted the death of one of their sons in the Two Medicine fight, but revenge in the tribal world was a private, not a community, responsibility. Furthermore, the incautious young adventurers who returned to camp probably had lots to explain to their elders for tangling with whites in the first place. Although the northern tribes habitually fought among themselves, they discouraged their young men from attacking whites, which could alienate the traders on whom they depended (even when the victims worked for a rival firm).

Conflict was the rule rather than the exception on the northern plains as tribes jockeyed for control of access to traders. In the summer of 1806, the Kainahs, Siksikas, Assiniboines, and Plains Crees joined in a temporary alli-

ance to attack the Atsinas—"their common enemy," as the North West Company trader Daniel Williams Harmon recorded at the time.³⁴ According to Harmon, as this combined force of 160 lodges was heading south, some of the warriors "fell out" in a quarrel over a horse. The dispute escalated into a pitched battle that left 28 dead and the Crees fleeing the field. This messy denouement aborted the campaign against the Atsinas but gave the Siksikas and Kainahs control of most of the territory between the South and North Saskatchewan rivers. The new reality on the ground prompted the Pikanis to seek peace with tribes west of the Continental Divide so they could devote their full attention to matters on the plains. Pikani envoys met with the Salish near today's Missoula, Montana, to strike a deal, but nothing came of it.³⁵

Among those present at the Pikani-Salish parley, which took place in September 1807, was an American named John McClallen, the leader of a brigade of trappers who had penetrated the mountains via the Yellowstone River. The enigmatic McClallen was a former U.S. Army officer and colleague of Meriwether Lewis. While with the Salish he wrote a letter to Canadian traders complaining that Indians he called the "pilchenees" had invaded the territory of "the Polito Paltron, our friends." He demanded that the traders cease supplying "these Marauders" with guns and ammunition.³⁶

By "Polito Paltron" McClallen meant the Kalispells, the northern branch of the Salish. The identity of the "pilchenees" remains an open question. David Thompson interpreted "pilchenees" to mean the Fall Indians (i.e., Atsinas), but at least one recent writer, Jack Nisbet, has suggested that the "pilchenees" were actually the Pikanis; Nisbet further states that McClallen complained that the Pikanis were harassing his American trappers.³⁷ Notwithstanding the reference to "Marauders," the text of McClallen's letter does really support these assertions. The first record of Indians of the northern plains making trouble for St. Louis-based trappers dates from the fall of 1808, when Canadian traders noted that Kainahs and Atsinas had arrived at the Saskatchewan posts with pelts pilfered from Americans. (The giveaway of the trappers' nationality was the inferior way they had prepared the pelts.)³⁸

Moving about in parties too small to put up much resistance, American trappers made easy marks. This—not intertribal politics or the desire to revenge the killing of a Pikani warrior on Two Medicine River—was probably the main reason for the inability of St. Louis fur traders to establish a permanent presence in the Rockies in the years immediately following the Lewis and Clark Expedition.³⁹

Pikanis or Piegans? A confusion of names



Proper name*	Also known as	Comments
“Blackfeet”	Pikanis	These three closely related tribes, which speak the same Algonkian language, have been lumped together as the Blackfeet. In most historical accounts they are called the Piegans, Bloods, and Northern Blackfeet.
	Kainahs	
	Siksikas	

Atsinas



Gros Ventres of the Prairies; Minetares of the Prairies; Minetares of the North; Minetares of Forts des Prairies; Fall, Falls, Waterfalls, or Flying Falls Indians

This tribe also speaks an Algonkian language, but one markedly different from that of the Blackfeet. The Atsinas, who live today on a reservation in north-central Montana, are closely related to the Arapahos, who live on a reservation with the Southern Cheyennes in Oklahoma. They are unrelated to (Siouian) Indians that Lewis and Clark called the Minetares of the Missouri, known today as the Hidatsas.

*i.e., The name these tribes generally go by today.

PIKANI ACCOUNTS

In one form or another the story of the encounter on Two Medicine River persisted in Pikani tribal memories throughout the 19th century. Alexander Culbertson, a white trader at Fort Benton, on the upper Missouri, told an interviewer that when he first “came among the Blackfeet in 1833 he found that the Piegans had a tradition of the killing of one of their number by Capt. Lewis.” Later in this account Culbertson says the Indian “was fired upon by a soldier and killed,” without specific reference to Lewis.⁴⁰ Culbertson presumably heard this story from the Pikanis themselves, although it could also have come from James Bird, Jr. (a.k.a. Jemmy Jock Bird), a trader in buffalo robes active in the area and the son of the Edmonton House factor who noted the Two Medicine fight in December of 1806.⁴¹

In 1895, naturalist George Bird Grinnell interviewed Wolf Calf, a Pikani elder reputed to have been at the scene of the Two Medicine fight. Wolf Calf claimed to be 102

years old. He said that as a boy—he would have been 12 or 13 at the time—he was a member of the “war party” that “met the first white men that had ever come into the lower country.” Wolf Calf told of a companion felled by the whites’ “big knives.”⁴² Grinnell’s account comes to us second hand via Olin D. Wheeler, a journalist on the trail of Lewis and Clark in the early 1900s. Both Grinnell and Wheeler took it as a given that two men died, although a careful reading of Wheeler shows that Wolf Calf talks about one death, not two.⁴³

The Culbertson and Grinnell/Wheeler accounts differ in a number of details besides the manner of the victim’s demise. Culbertson, for example, says the dead man’s name was “He that looks at the calf,” while Grinnell says it was “Side Hill Calf” or “Calf Standing on a Side Hill.” (The fact that “calf” appears in the names recorded by both Culbertson and Grinnell adds credence to Pikani oral history about the fight.)

One key point, at least, the accounts of both Cul-

bertson and Grinnell appear to agree: only one Indian died. And that had to be the person knifed by Reuben Field. The nameless young man who took Lewis's bullet in the gut survived.

John C. Jackson lives in Olympia, Washington. He is the author of The Piikani Blackfeet: A Culture under Siege (Mountain Press, 2000) and Jemmy Jock Bird: A Marginal Man on the Blackfoot Frontier (University of Calgary Press, 2005).

NOTES

¹ Gary E. Moulton, ed., *The Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition*, 13 volumes (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983-2001), Vol. 8, pp. 127-136 (Lewis); Vol. 9, pp. 341-342 (Ordway); and Vol. 10, p. 259 (Gass). All quotations or references to journal entries in the ensuing text are from Moulton, by date, unless otherwise indicated.

² Donald Jackson, ed., *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition with Related Documents, 1783-1854*, 2 volumes (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2nd ed., 1978), Vol. 1, p. 342.

³ Robert A. Saindon, "The 'Unhappy Affair' on Two Medicine River," WPO, August 2002, pp. 12-25. The four hearsay accounts or references appear in John Bradbury, *Travels in the Interior of America in the Years 1809-1810*, published in 1817 (Saindon note 31); a letter written in 1819 by Major Thomas Biddle and published in 1834 (note 34); Washington Irving's *Astoria*, published in 1836 (note 32); *David Thompson's Narrative of His Explorations in Western North America, 1784-1812*, written in the 1840s and published in 1917 (note 25); and a manuscript by James H. Bradley written in the 1870s and published in 1917 (note 23). The elderly Blackfeet man's account appears in Olin D. Wheeler, *The Trail of Lewis and Clark 1804-1904* (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1904).

⁴ The Hudson's Bay Company Archives are part of the Archives of Manitoba, in Winnipeg. Information about them can be found on the Web site www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca.

⁵ Saindon's article "The 'Unhappy Affair' on Two Medicine River" (cited above) argues that the Indians were indeed Atsinas. His case is tightly reasoned and draws on a wealth of sources, but I believe his conclusion is flawed because he lacked some of the sources cited in this article.

⁶ Moulton, Vol. 5, p. 83. Lewis's entry for August 13, 1805. Moulton, Vol. 5, p. 86, note 11, states that "Pahkee" refers to the Atsinas, but it goes on to discuss possible interpretations that would link the term either to the Shoshones' northern enemies generally or to the Piegiens (Pikanis) specifically.

⁷ Moulton, Vol. 5, p. 86n; Vol. 8, p. 132n. See also Arlen J. Large, "Riled-up Blackfeet: Did Meriwether Lewis Do It?," WPO, November 1996, pp. 4-11; reprinted in Robert A. Saindon, ed., *Explorations into the World of Lewis and Clark*, 3 volumes (Great Falls, Mont.: Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, 2003), Vol. 2, pp. 614-623.

⁸ Canadian traders also called the Atsinas the Waterfalls Indians and Flying Falls Indians. As noted in the text, the reference is to falls on the Saskatchewan River, not (as sometimes assumed) to the Great Falls of the Missouri.

⁹ In the journals Lewis refers to the Atsinas as the Minetares of

Fort de Prairie (Moulton, Vol. 5, pp. 80 and 81; Vol. 8, pp. 91 and 129) and as the Minetares of the North (Moulton, Vol. 8, p. 130). "Fort des Prairies" (sometimes spelled Fort de Prairie or Fort du Prairie) was a Canadian fur-trade post frequented by the Atsinas and the three branches of the Blackfeet, as well as by the Assiniboines and Plains Crees; it was on the North Saskatchewan River near its junction with the South Saskatchewan, although its exact location is unknown. "Fort des Prairies" also refers more broadly to the string of trading posts maintained by the North West Company on the North Saskatchewan. The Atsinas are also called Gros Ventres or Minetares "of the Prairies" (dropping "Fort des"). In the Fort Mandan Miscellany, William Clark refers to the Atsinas as the Fall Indians, a name he probably picked up from Canadian traders at the Mandan and Hidatsa villages. (Moulton, Vol. 3, p. 448.) Another theory about the origins of the name Gros Ventres/Big Bellies is that it derives from the Atsinas' tendency as guests to overstay their welcome, which put pressure on the host to keep them well fed; their Arapaho relatives referred to them as *hitoune'nan* ("spongers").

¹⁰ Moulton, Vol. 7, p. 248 (Lewis) and p. 250 (Clark). Entries for May 12, 1806.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 8, p. 113. Entry for July 17, 1806.

¹² Moulton, Vol. 4, pp. 159-160 and 222; Vol. 6, pp. 247-248; and Vol. 8, pp. 113. Clark's references to Blackfeet are found in Moulton, Vol. 2, pp. 161 and 222; Vol. 6, pp. 250, 301, and 333; and Vol. 8, p. 293. The last citation is Clark's August 12, 1806, entry recapitulating Lewis's confrontation on Two Medicine River, even though Lewis undoubtedly told him they were Minetares of the North (i.e., Atsinas). For an explanation of this inconsistency, see Saindon, "The 'Unhappy Affair' on Two Medicine River," pp. 15-16.

¹³ *Ibid.*, Vol. 8, p. 125.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

¹⁵ It is questionable how useful Drouillard would have been in clarifying the Indians' identity. Sign language was not nearly as standardized as Lewis assumed, and the signs for individual tribes could be subject to misinterpretation. Although Lewis and Clark held Drouillard's signing abilities in high regard, whenever possible they relied on oral translation, even if it involved cumbersome and time-consuming translation chains. Sally Thompson, "Misnomers along the Lewis and Clark Trail," Symposium Proceedings, *A Confluence of Cultures: Native Americans and the Expedition of Lewis and Clark* (Missoula: University of Montana, 2003), pp. 151-154.

¹⁶ Moulton, Vol. 8, p. 128.

¹⁷ Saindon argues that these Pikanis were horse raiders in an editor's note on page 617 of the anthologized version of Large's "Riled-up Blackfeet" found in the previously cited *Explorations into the World of Lewis and Clark*. I am skeptical of this interpretation; if the horses had been stolen from a grazing herd it is doubtful so many would have been saddled.

¹⁸ *Pikani* may derive from *pa'ksikahko*, a Blackfeet word meaning muddy place, which the Cree Indians repeated as *pikan* or *pikakamiw*, meaning muddy or turbid water. Both tribes are part of the Algonkian language group. South and north of the U.S.-Canadian border the name became alliterated, respectively, to Piegan and Peigan (both pronounced like "pagan"). *Siksika* derives from *siksikauwa*, or Black-footed People. The Bloods,



known to French-speaking traders as *Gens du Sang* ("People of Blood" or Bloody Indians), called themselves the *Kainab* (also spelled *Kainaa*). Donald G. Frantz and Norma Jean Russell, *Blackfoot Dictionary of Stems, Roots, and Affixes* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2nd ed., 1995).

¹⁹ Lewis's journal refers to a "white man" (Moulton, Vol. 8, p. 131) encamped with the main party, but Clark's journal identifies him more specifically as "a french trader" (Vol. 8, p. 294). As noted, Clark wasn't present at the fight but would have gotten his information directly from Lewis.

²⁰ Moulton, Vol. 8, p. 131.

²¹ James P. Ronda, *Lewis and Clark among the Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), p. 241.

²² Did Lewis shoot the Indian with his pistol or his recovered rifle? Almost certainly he shot him with the rifle. In his account of the incident Lewis appears to consistently refer to his handgun as a pistol and his rifle as a gun. The entry states, "I ... raised my gun ... and shot him through the belly."

²³ Moulton, Vol. 8, pp. 133-135.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 137-140.

²⁵ James Bird to John McNab, December 23, 1806; Edmonton House Journal, Hudson's Bay Company Archives (hereafter H.B.C.A.), B60/a/6, folio 6d. McNab was the governor of York Factory, the H.B.C.'s principal fur-trade post, located on Hudson Bay.

²⁶ *Ibid.* Entries for November 16 and 17, 1806. Vallade shows up in other fur-trade documents under different names and spellings. A Pierre Valarde was an *engagé* with the XY Company in 1803, and a Prince Valarde was working for the N.W.C. at Fort des Prairies in 1804 and 1805. A René or Rehene Vallade was at Spokane House in 1814.

²⁷ Saindon, "The 'Unhappy Affair' on Two Medicine River," p. 25, note 25, citing J.B. Tyrrel, ed., *David Thompson's Narrative of his Explorations in Western America, 1784-1812* (Toronto: 1916), p. 375. Because Thompson's memoirs were written so long after the fact, many of his recollections are subject to doubt.

²⁸ Jackson, Vol. 1, p. 342; Moulton, Vol. 10, p. 259. Gass's information was second-hand.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 319-324. Lewis's letter to Jefferson, September 23, 1806. In his instructions to Lewis, Jefferson wrote, "In all your intercourse with the natives, treat them in the most friendly & conciliatory manner which their own conduct will admit." Jackson, Vol. 1, p. 64.

³⁰ Nineteenth-century accounts of the fight are in conflict on the number who died. For a full review of these accounts, see Saindon, "The 'Unhappy Affair' on Two Medicine River."

³¹ Saindon, "The 'Unhappy Affair' on Two Medicine River," p. 17. Saindon mentions Atsina visits to the Arapahos in 1825 and 1832; his source is Stanley Vestal, *Jim Bridger: Mountain Man* (New York: William Morrow, 1946), p. 74. Other (better) sources corroborate continuing Atsina-Arapaho ties.

³² Edmonton House Journal, H.B.C.A., B60/a/6, folio 10d, entry for May 8, 1807.

³³ "François-Antoine Larocque's Yellowstone Journal," W. Raymond Wood and Thomas D. Thiessen, eds., *Early Fur Trade on the Northern Plains: Canadian Traders among the Mandan and Hidatsa Indians, 1738-1818* (Norman: University of Okla-

homa Press, 1985), p. 191. Larocque had been at the Mandan and Hidatsa villages in the winter of 1804-05 at the same time as Lewis and Clark. He accompanied the Crows back to their home range on the upper Yellowstone following a visit with the Hidatsas, their close kin.

³⁴ W. Kaye Lamb, ed., *Sixteen Years in the Indian Country: The Journal of David Williams Harmon, 1800-1816* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1977), p. 100.

³⁵ Henry M. Majors, "John McClallen in the Montana Rockies, 1807," *Northwest Discovery: the Journal of Northwest History and Natural History*, November-December, 1981, p. 9. A book-length study of the career of John McClallen has been completed by the author.

³⁶ T.C. Elliott, "The Strange Case of Thompson and Pinch," *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, June 1939, p. 191.

³⁷ Jack Nisbet, *Sources of the River: Tracking David Thompson across North America* (Seattle: Sasquatch Books, 1994), p. 107.

³⁸ Elliott Coues, ed., *The Manuscript Journals of Alexander Henry and of David Thompson, 1799-1814* (Minneapolis: Ross & Haines, 1897 reprinted 1965), pp. 539-541 and 735-736. James Bird comments on the condition of American skins in the Edmonton House Journal 1808/09, H.B.C.A., B60/a/8, folio 4d.

³⁹ Some writers have argued that northern tribesmen preferred stealing pelts to trapping and that plunder was also more in keeping with a mounted warrior's self-image. As Lewis and Clark historian Arlen J. Large (Saindon, *Explorations*, Vol. 2, p. 623) observed, "Those proud horse Indians were buffalo hunters, not cut out for squishing through the cold mud of a beaver pond. Only a few Piegan bands ever became trappers for white trade goods; the rest disdained such work." This may have been true for some Pikanis, but those living closest to the beaver-rich mountains were dedicated trappers. Large's source is Oscar Lewis, *The Effects of White Contact upon Blackfoot Culture with Special Reference to the Role of the Fur Trade* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942), p. 21. The so-called Blackfeet barrier to the fur trade is discussed more fully in John C. Jackson, *The Pikani Blackfeet: A Culture Under Siege* (Missoula: Mountain Press, 2000) and in John C. Jackson, *Jemmy Jock Bird: A Marginal Man on the Blackfoot Frontier* (University of Calgary Press, 2003).

⁴⁰ James H. Bradley, "Bradley Manuscript—Book 2," *Contributions to the Historical Society of Montana*, Vol. 8 (Boston: J.S. Canner, 1966), p. 135.

⁴¹ The younger Bird (whose name is also rendered Jimmy Jock) was handsomely paid for introducing the Pikani beaver hunters to the Upper Missouri Outfit of the American Fur Company in 1831. He served as interpreter at the 1855 Blackfoot Peace Treaty and knew Culbertson at this time.

⁴² Wheeler, pp. 311-312.

⁴³ Grinnell and Wheeler had probably read Gass's journal, which states that two Indians were killed, as well as Elliott Coues's heavily annotated 1893 edition of Nicholas Biddle's 1814 paraphrase of Lewis and Clark's journals; Coues also says that two Indians were killed. Elliott Coues, ed., *The History of the Lewis and Clark Expedition by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark*, 3 volumes (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1965; reprint of 1893 edition), Vol. 2, p. 1105.

CLARK ON THE YELLOW



July 15, 1806: With the snow-capped Absaroka Mountains as a backdrop, Clark leads his party into the valley of the Yellowstone River.

“Right over there,” Jim Sims says, waving his hand at a spot across the street. “Clark would have crossed North Seventh right about there, within a hundred yards of the Sacagawea statue.”

I have met Sims for breakfast at the County Market on Bozeman’s North Seventh Street, a stretch of pawn shops, fast-food restaurants, motels, and big-box stores that links the city’s downtown to southwestern Montana’s principal east-west artery, Interstate 90. Sims, a retired professor of agriculture at Montana State University, has agreed to help me with a nagging question: Where exactly did William Clark and his party cross the Bozeman plain on their fifty-mile ride from Three Forks to the Yellowstone River in July 1806?

My friend Stu Knapp, a former vice-president for academic affairs at Montana State and a past president of the LCTHF, had tipped me off that Sims may be the only person who has figured out where Clark actually traveled. A large man with a patient bearing, Sims grew up on a 75,000-acre ranch in New Mexico. Over the past few summers, he armed himself with a compass, a handheld G.P.S. device, and contour maps from a local engineering-supply firm and set about plotting Clark’s likely

course based upon the compass readings and distance tables the explorer entered in his journals.

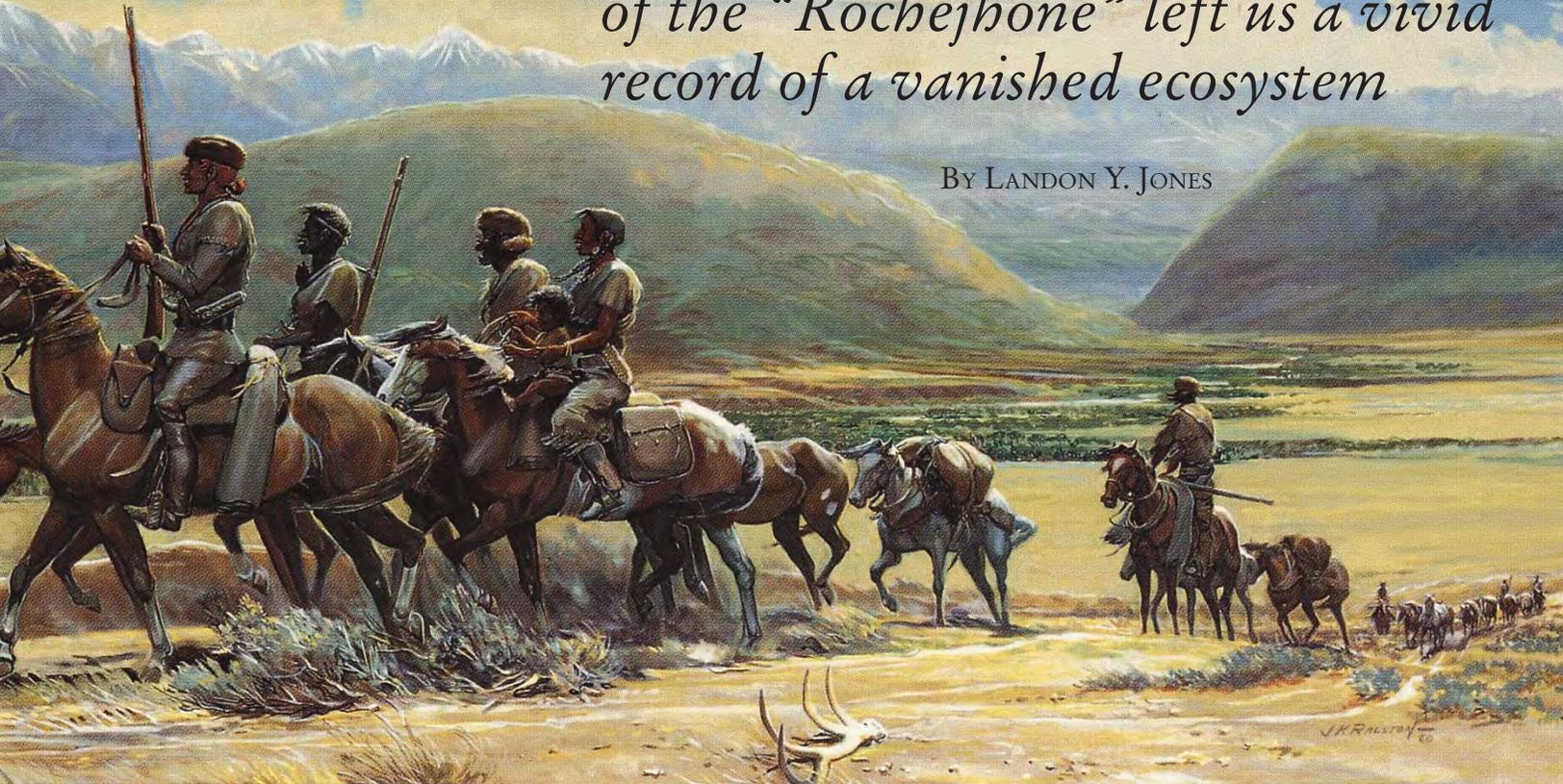
Sims and I have not yet turned out of the County Market’s parking lot before he gives me a jolt. He points out that Clark and his band did not ride directly along the picturesque Gallatin River, as I had always supposed. Instead they kept their horses on the high ground, well clear of the marshy bottomlands flooded by “innumerable quantities of beaver dams,” as Clark noted in his journal.¹ Their route in fact took them overland, away from the river through what is today the urbanized penumbra of Bozeman—across North 19th Street by the Home Depot and the Mackenzie River Pizza offices, then across North Seventh near Darigold Farms and the County Market. Which is to say that, if Sims is right, the real Sacagawea would have crossed within a few yards of the tidy little mini-park where a statue of her by sculptor Pat Mathiesen stands two hundred years later. Bird Woman, meet Bronze Woman.

My flimsy grasp of Clark’s journey is not unusual. Of the nine thousand or so miles traveled by Lewis and Clark, few are so little understood as those Clark and his band took after they left Lewis at Travelers’ Rest in July 1806

YELLOWSTONE

His often neglected reconnaissance of the “Rochejhone” left us a vivid record of a vanished ecosystem

BY LANDON Y. JONES



J.K. RALSTON, 1960, CAPTAIN CLARK REACHES THE ROCHE JAUNE. COURTESY FIRST INTERSTATE BANK, LIVINGSTON, MONT., AND HEADWATERS CHAPTER, LCTHF. PHOTO BY J.E. TAYLOR, HELENA, MONT.

and traveled to the Three Forks of the Missouri, across the Bozeman plain to the Yellowstone, and then down the river to its confluence with the Missouri. If they think of it at all, most Americans today think of Clark's side trip in terms of two well-publicized incidents: Sacagawea's pointing out of Bozeman Pass and Clark's carving of his signature into Pompey's Pillar.

Yet scholars themselves have not given Clark's journey much more attention. In his edition of *The Journals of Lewis and Clark*, Bernard DeVoto left out Clark's Yellowstone journal "since it contains nothing of outstanding importance" and instead substituted a five-page summary from his previously published *The Course of Empire*.² Another editor of the journals, Frank Bergon, deleted Clark's trip altogether. Other narratives of the expedition are similarly parsimonious. Richard Dillon's *Meriwether Lewis* gives Clark's trip half a sentence. James Ronda's *Lewis and Clark among the Indians* devotes six pages to Lewis's trip on the upper Missouri and just a single sentence to Clark's parallel expedition. Stephen Ambrose's *Undaunted Courage* lavishes 17 pages on Lewis's adventures but one short paragraph on Clark's trip.³

Why do we not know more about Clark's expedition

down the Yellowstone? One reason, of course, is that it has been overshadowed by the melodrama of Lewis's fight with a band of Blackfeet on the Two Medicine River. But Clark was moving just as deeply—and potentially more disastrously—through country controlled by another powerful Indian nation, the Crows, who were intensely aware of the presence of the American strangers.

When we read today Clark's account of his journey down the Yellowstone, however, we do not see violent confrontations. Instead, we see Clark's steady leadership style, evolving in the absence of Lewis's mercurial influence. Moreover, we see in Clark's detailed journals a vivid record of the extraordinary bison-centered ecosystem that had evolved for thousands of years along the Yellowstone and Missouri rivers but would soon be extinguished.

Clark's journey into lands he had never seen before began at the Three Forks on July 13, 1806. Ten days earlier he had left an uncharacteristically apprehensive Lewis at Travelers' Rest. "I could not avoid feeling much concern on this occasion although I hoped this separation was only momentary," Lewis had worried.⁴ With 19 men, the Charbonneau family, and 50 horses, Clark retraced his 1805 route back up the Bitterroot and then crossed the

Continental Divide to the Big Hole and Jefferson rivers. Reaching the previous year's campsite at the Three Forks, he stopped at midday to further divide his group. Sergeant John Ordway departed with a party of ten men to continue in canoes down the Missouri to their anticipated rendezvous with Lewis, who planned to cross the mountains farther north.

Clark now remained with a small group of 13 he would take overland to the Yellowstone. In his journal he wrote down their names in a sequence that was revealing. He first listed Sergeant Nathaniel Pryor and then Privates John Shields, George Shannon, and William Bratton. All four had been among the "Nine Young Men from Kentucky," Clark's original recruits in 1803, with whom he clearly still felt a close bond. Next came François Labiche, Richard Windsor, Hugh Hall, and George Gibson (the fifth of the Nine Young Men). All told, Clark had with him five of his eight surviving original recruits. (Sergeant Charles Floyd had died two years before.) Rounding out the group were "Interpreter Shabono his wife & Child and my man York."⁵ The child, Jean Baptiste Charbonneau, age 17 months, was old enough to toddle and probably say a few words.

At 5 P.M., his usual late-afternoon "Hudson's Bay" departure time, Clark led his group not up the Gallatin River but on a shortcut across today's Horseshoe Hills. He was instantly astonished by the profusion of animal species. "Saw a large Gange of Elk in the plains . . . I saw several Antelope Common Deer, wolves, beaver, Otter, Eagles, hawks, Crows, wild gees both old and young, does &c. &c."⁶ Most significantly, he saw enormous buffalo roads, or traces, beaten into the grass by migrating herds for thousands of years. Clark had been using buffalo traces since his youth in Kentucky and apparently proposed following these toward today's Flathead Pass in the Bridger Mountains. But Sacagawea, who knew the area from her childhood with her native Shoshones, had another idea for Clark. "The indian woman who has been of great Service to me as a pilot through this Country recommends a gap in the mountain more South which I shall cross."⁷

The party rode six miles across the arid Horseshoe Hills, with the horse herd raising huge clouds of dust, before camping on the north side of the Gallatin, across from present-day Logan, Montana. The next morning the men drove their horses across the river but soon found themselves floundering helplessly through a marshy bottom braided by countless rivulets and beaver ponds. To escape what Clark wryly called this "bottom of beaver," they headed south into the prairie to yet another buffalo road recommended by Sacagawea.⁸

On July 14, back in unfamiliar territory, Clark resumed keeping his tables of compass directions and the number of miles traveled. Jim Sims has retraced them in the field and took me to each spot he has identified. Clark first stopped near the site of the now-vanished town of Hamilton, Montana, a half-mile east of the present Mountain View Cemetery on Churchill Road in Gallatin County.⁹ Clark took his next reading south of present Belgrade, near the intersection of Amsterdam Road and Highway 85 (Jackrabbit Lane), a short distance from Interstate 90. The group then rode 12 miles to what is now Bozeman, crossing the future sites of the county fairgrounds and senior center. Clark took a third reading on the plowed benchland east of Bozeman Deaconess Hospital. [See "Sergeant Floyd and me," page 48.] There Clark "marked my name & day & year" with gunpowder on a cottonwood tree—the first of several such "tomahawk claims" he would emblazon in the coming weeks.¹⁰ That night the band camped on today's Kelly Creek, surrounded by mountains where "great quantities of Snow yet remains."¹¹

The next morning, the party ascended the north side of Bozeman Pass, reaching the route followed by today's Interstate 90 at the top. As he descended into the watershed of the Yellowstone River, Clark anticipated that in front of him could lie the answers to several of the expedition's remaining questions. In his instructions to Lewis, Thomas Jefferson had written, "Altho' your route will be along the channel of the Missouri, yet you will endeavor to inform yourself, by enquiry, of the character & extent of the country watered by it's branches, & especially on it's Southern side."¹² Jefferson was especially interested in learning if there could be a short passage between the Missouri's tributaries and the great rivers, the Rio Grande and Colorado, leading to the lucrative Spanish trade to the south.

Americans knew relatively little about the *Rochejhone* (as Clark generally spelled its French name). In the 1790s, a Spanish trader, Jacques D'Église, had given an Indian description of the Yellowstone country to Jean Baptiste Truteau. A Canadian trader named Ménard may have ventured into the Yellowstone Valley sometime before 1795 and returned to give more information to James Mackay and John Evans, who located the mouth of the "Yellow Stone River (Rivière des Roches Jaunes)" on their 1797 map used by Lewis and Clark. In 1802, a party led by two Canadian traders named Pardo and Le Raye ascended the Yellowstone and Powder rivers and crossed the divide to the Bighorn.



1. Jim Sims, standing at the Three Forks of the Missouri, indicates Clark's overland shortcut across the Horseshoe Hills.



5. The view east toward Flathead Pass. Clark intended to go this way, but on Sacagawea's advice he instead took Bozeman Pass.



2. Leaving the Horseshoe Hills, Clark's party descended this gentle slope to its first campsite on the Gallatin River, seen in the distance.



6. Sims checks compass at the intersection of Amsterdam Road and Jackrabbit Lane, near Belgrade, where Clark took his second reading.



3. A view of the Gallatin River downstream of present Logan, Montana, not far from the site of Clark's camp of July 13, 1806.



7. A view from east Bozeman, where Clark took his third reading, toward Kelly Canyon, where the party camped the night of July 14-15.



4. A Gallatin tributary meanders through bottomland southeast of Manhattan, Montana. Here Clark took his first compass reading of July 14.



8. The Kelly Canyon campsite and an interpretive sign (inset) placed there by the Headwaters Chapter of the LCTHF.

PHOTOS BY LANDON Y. JONES

Lewis & Clark Expedition Campsite
Heading Home
 While on their return to St. Louis, Captain William Clark and a party of five men, Sacagawea and her infant son, Thomas, stopped at the existing tables you see here on July 14, 1806. They had traveled that day approximately 28 miles from a camp near Logan and continued the following day along an old buffalo trail across the divide to the mouth of the Shields River, 29 miles to the east.
 Erected by the
 Headwaters Chapter, Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation
 July 4, 2009

At their winter quarters in 1804-05, Clark had carefully interviewed the Mandan chief Sheheke about this mysterious river. He “gave me a Scetch of the Countrey as far as the high mountains, & on the South Side of the River Rejone,” Clark reported.¹³ Before he left Fort Mandan, Clark sent Jefferson a map, based on Sheheke’s descriptions, which accurately showed the Yellowstone’s major tributaries with its Indian names translated into those we still use today for the Tongue, Powder, and Bighorn rivers. In his interim report to Jefferson, sent down from Fort Mandan on the keelboat, Lewis anticipated that the “Meé,-ah’-zah, or *Yellowstone river*,” would be an earthly paradise, flowing through fertile, thickly timbered lands, “one of the fairest portions of Louisiana, a country not yet hunted, and abounding in animals of the fur kind.”¹⁴

The captains were not disappointed with their first glimpse of the Yellowstone. On April 25, 1805, arriving at its confluence with the Missouri on their westbound journey, Lewis described “the whol face of the country as covered with herds of Buffaloe, Elk & Antelopes; deer are also abundant [T]he buffaloe Elk and Antelope are so gentle that we pass near them while feeding, without appearing to excite any alarm among them.”¹⁵ The next day, Lewis dispatched Joseph Field to explore eight miles up the Yellowstone, and the entire party celebrated with “much hilarity, singing & dancing” at “this long wished for spot.”¹⁶

A year later, as he rode into the Yellowstone Valley surrounded by the magnificent parapets of the Crazy, Absaroka, and Beartooth ranges, William Clark was just beginning to grasp the astounding scope of the natural world arrayed in front of him. Along the banks of the Yellowstone and spreading across the shortgrass prairie between it and the Missouri River roamed the largest and most diverse concentration of big mammals in North America. Over the following seven weeks, as they descended to the Missouri, Clark and his band would encounter vast numbers of ungulates—bison, elk, deer, antelope, and bighorn sheep—and the predators and scavengers who pursued them—grizzly bears, wolves, and eagles. The bottomlands themselves were incredibly rich, filled with “tall Cotton wood, and willow rose bushes & rushes Honey suckle &c.”¹⁷ Wild berries and currants were everywhere.

Clark reached the Yellowstone—“120 yds wide bold, rapid and deep”—just upstream from the present city of Livingston, Montana.¹⁸ He hoped to find cottonwood trees large enough to build canoes to carry most of his party while the horse herd followed on the shore. But finding

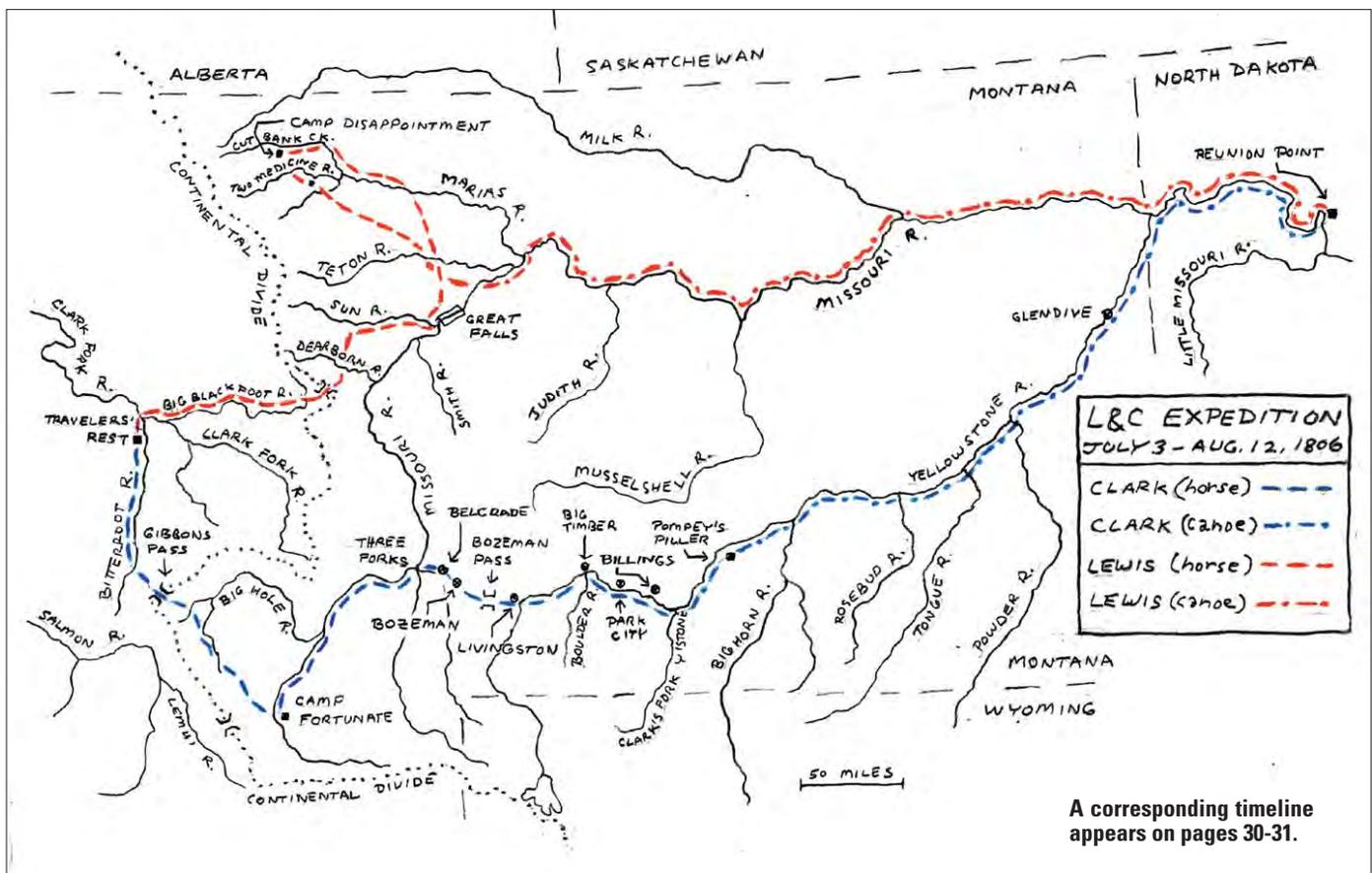
little old-growth timber in the flourishing and frequently flooded bottomlands, he was forced to move farther downstream on horseback. It is to our benefit that he did so. In the absence of Lewis, normally the expedition’s scientist-naturalist, Clark observed far more of the riparian environment on the shore than he might have done otherwise.

On July 16, he reported, one of the men “brought me a fish of a species I am unacquainted; . . . it’s mouth was placed like that of the Sturgeon[.] a red streak passed down each Side from the gills to the tail.”¹⁹ Gary Moulton, the most recent editor of the Lewis and Clark journals, believes this was the first written description of a mountain sucker. In the bottoms, Clark reported on “great quantities of the Purple, yellow & black currents ripe,” wild roses, Indian lodges, sunflowers, and geese.²⁰

The next day, the group passed the spot near today’s Big Timber, Montana, where tributaries flowed into the Yellowstone on both sides, one from the north and another from the south. He called the area “*Rivers across*.”²¹ Above the Yellowstone Clark noticed its high banks—terraces of sand, gravel, and cobble that he judged “well Calculated for grindstones &c.”²² Later, those same high banks constrained seasonal flooding of agricultural lands so effectively that they contributed to the Army Corps of Engineers’s decision not to build huge flood-control dams on the Yellowstone. One such proposed dam at Allenspur, just above Livingston, would have flooded all of today’s Paradise Valley. Although the attempts to create slack-water reservoirs on the river all failed, today there are six “diversion” dams arrayed below Billings. Built for irrigation, diversion dams do not halt the river’s flow but cause it to back up and pour over the top. Today the Yellowstone is often described as the longest free-flowing river in the Lower 48—technically true, but the river is severely confined by rip-rapped banks and is hardly undammed.²³

Clark and his men saw more wild game than they had ever seen before. One typical day, Clark “Killd the fatest Buck I every Saw, Shields killed a deer and my man York killed a Buffalow Bull, as he informed me for his tongue and marrow bones. for me to mention or give an estimate of the different Spcies of wild animals on this river particularly Buffalow, Elk Antelopes & Wolves would be increditable,” he continued, so “I shall therefore be silent on the Subject further.”²⁴ His silence would not last. The very next day he marveled at the “delightfull prospect of the extensive Country around,” especially “the emence herds of Buffalow, Elk and wolves in which it abounded.”²⁵

As a result, the hunters were amazingly productive. During their 20 days on the Yellowstone, Clark and his



A corresponding timeline appears on pages 30-31.

J.L. MERRITT

men killed more than 25 bison, 22 deer, 17 elk, five grizzly bears, five bighorn sheep, and four antelopes. Some writers have criticized Clark for an apparent excess, hunting for “sport” in the fashion made notorious by later parties of Euro-Americans. But in addition to providing food, the animals also contributed an essential supply of clothes, tools, and trading goods for men and even moccasins for foot-sore horses.

Most of the game was concentrated in sanctuaries in the bottoms created by the entries of the Yellowstone’s major tributaries. The author Robert Kelley Schneiders has pointed out that Clark was moving downstream at the outset of the annual bison rut in late July and August, when many thousands of the animals migrated from the high grasslands into river bottoms in order to mate. “[As] it is now running time with [the bison],” Clark wrote, “the bulls keep such a grunting noise which is very loud and disagreeable sound that we are compelled to scare them away before we can sleep.”²⁶ Schneiders notes that if Clark had entered the Yellowstone Valley just a few weeks earlier, before the bison moved to the river, he would have seen far fewer of them.²⁷

Another hypothesis holds that Clark encountered such a super-abundance of wild game because the animals in

the lands along the upper Missouri and Yellowstone rivers occupied a safe “buffer zone” between contending Indian tribes. That is, for hundreds of years hunting parties from dominant tribes had depopulated the megafauna in regions they controlled in western Montana and Idaho and along the Columbia River corridor. But in contested areas not dominated by any single tribe, the animals flourished.²⁸ Clark himself commented as he moved downriver, “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.”²⁹

Clark believed that at some point he would surely encounter one of the native tribes on the Yellowstone River. On July 18, he saw a column of smoke rising in the distance. “I think it most probable that [the Crow] have discovered our trail,” he wrote.³⁰ The next day, Charbonneau spotted an Indian high on a hill to the south. The confirmation that they were being watched came on the morning of July 21, when Clark awoke to the distressing news that “Half of our horses were absent.”³¹ Further investigation confirmed his initial suspicion; the horses had been driven off by Indians.

The men had already gone to work to build canoes at a campsite on the north side of the Yellowstone in Stillwater

Timeline, July 3 - August 12, 1806

The 41-day stretch from July 3 to August 12, 1806, was the longest Lewis and Clark were separated during their 28-month-long expedition. The plan for Lewis to explore the upper Marias while Clark reconnoitered the Yellowstone called for further subdividing the group, with the three sergeants (Gass, Ordway, and Pryor) leading separate contingents ranging in size from 3 to 10 men. As Stephen Ambrose argues in *Undaunted Courage*, the plan was ambitious, complex, and dangerous, and the captains took “chances they should have avoided” by dividing into five small parties traveling in Indian country. However risky, the plan was a measure of the confidence the captains felt in themselves and in their men to survive in a hostile wilderness. And while arguably counterproductive in advancing U.S.-tribal relations, the effort added vital information to the expedition’s map of the West.

—J.I.M.

	July 3	July 7	July 8	July 9	July 12	July 13	July 15	July 16
Lewis	Departs Travelers’ Rest.	Crosses Continental Divide at L&C Pass.	Strikes Sun River.		Arrives at Great Falls.			Departs Great Falls with 3 men for upper Marias.
Gass	With Lewis.							Remains at Great Falls to build canoes.
Clark	Departs Travelers’ Rest. Crosses Continental Divide at Gibbons Pass.		Arrives at Camp Fortunate.	Departs Camp Fortunate with canoes and 50 horses.	Arrives at Three Forks and splits party.	Departs Three Forks.	Crosses Bozeman Pass to Yellowstone, continues down the valley.	
Ordway	With Clark.				Separates from Clark with 9 men in canoes.			
Pryor	With Clark.							

CHARLES FRITZ, CAPTAIN CLARK DESCENDING ELK RIVER



County, a few miles south of present Park City, Montana. They had found a few cottonwoods large enough to fashion a makeshift pontoon boat out of two 28-foot log canoes lashed together. The explorers would stay five nights at this location, the last of the Corps of Discovery’s three “canoe camps.”³² (The two previous canoe camps were both on the outbound journey, one above Great Falls and the other on the Clearwater River.)

Clark needed to keep his horses not for transportation but as essential bargaining chips in the trade and diplomatic negotiations he hoped to carry on with tribes for the rest of the return trip. The most crucial of those missions would be launched on July 24. In a long letter drafted by Lewis, Clark instructed Sergeant Pryor and several privates to take the remaining horses directly across the prairie to the Mandan-Hidatsa



“Canoe Camp” on the Yellowstone

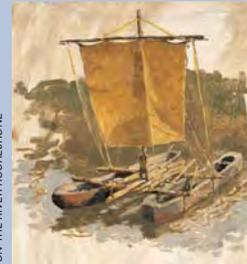
PHOTO BY LONDON V. JONES

Villages. They were then to locate the Canadian trader Hugh Heney at his North West Company post on the Assiniboine River and induce Heney’s help in persuading the uncooperative Teton [Lakota] Sioux chiefs to join the captains on their return trip to Washington, D.C. Pryor was to use the horses to trade for food and provisions and for gifts to the chiefs.

On the morning of July 24, Pryor and Privates George Shannon and Richard Windsor rode up the north side of the river with the horses. Clark floated downstream with his group, including little Jean Baptiste Charbonneau, all perched precariously aboard the pontoon boat that would eventually serve the expedition almost as far as St. Louis. After passing the mouth of the large tributary they later named the Clarks Fork, both groups rejoined to drive the horse herd to the south bank of the Yellowstone at a point five miles east of present Laurel, Montana.

Pryor was ready to strike out overland but asked for an additional soldier. The horses had been trained by their previous owners to chase bison and had proven to be too

July 19	July 21	July 24	July 25	July 26	July 27	July 28	Aug. 3	Aug. 7	Aug. 8	Aug. 11	Aug. 12
	Reaches Camp Disappointment.			Departs Camp Disappointment, encounters Blackfeet.	Fights Blackfeet, flees.	Strikes Missouri, encounters Gass and Ordway, proceeds downriver.		Arrives at mouth of Yellowstone, finds Clark's note, continues downriver.		Accidentally shot by Pierre Cruzatte.	Rejoins Clark at Union Point.
Joined by Ordway.					Departs Great Falls with Ordway.	Rendezvous with Lewis.					
Stops near today's Park City, Montana, to build canoes.	Discovers that Crow Indians have stolen half of horse herd.	Splits group again. In party of 8 descends Yellowstone in canoes.	Stops at Pompey's Pillar.	Arrives at mouth of Bighorn River.			Arrives at mouth of Yellowstone, leaves note for Lewis, continues downriver.		Reunites with Pryor.		Rejoins Lewis.
Arrives at Great Falls, rendezvous with Gass.					Departs Great Falls with Gass.	Rendezvous with Lewis.					
July 15: Clark reaches the Yellowstone upstream of today's Livingston, Montana.		Separates from Clark, proceeds overland with 3 men & rest of horses.		After Crows steal horses, returns to Yellowstone to build bullboats.		Begins descent of Yellowstone in bullboats. [Exact date unknown.]			Reunites with Clark.		



CHARLES FRITZ, OUR CANOES ON THE RIVER (1846)

July 20: Clark's men lash together two dugout canoes to make a pontoon boat.

A corresponding map appears on page 29.

unruly for only three men to handle. Hugh Hall, a non-swimmer, promptly volunteered. Observing that Hall was practically “necked” in his tattered deerskins, Clark “gave him one of my two remaining Shirts a par of Leather Legins and 3 pr. of mockersons which equipt him Completely.”³³ Pryor’s four-man group set out across the homeland of the Crow Nation—and ran into disaster. On their second morning, the men awoke to find that all of their horses had disappeared. The Crows had seen them, too. Defeated, the four men packed their baggage on their backs and hiked back to the Yellowstone. There, they shot one or more bison and built two Indian-style hide-and-stick “bullboats.” They clambered into them and bobbed down the river. The mission to the Mandans had been an utter failure.

Meanwhile, Clark was moving downriver in a party of nine, past the tawny bluffs around present-day Billings, with the small group of eight who would travel together for the next two weeks. There were four privates—William Bratton, George Gibson, François Labiche, and John Shields—along with York, Toussaint Charbonneau, Saca-

gawea, and Jean Baptiste. It was a well-chosen group. Shields, Bratton, and Gibson were among Clark’s original recruits. Shields was the oldest soldier in the permanent party, and Bratton and Gibson had been the runners-up to Patrick Gass in the Corps of Discovery’s vote to replace Sergeant Floyd.

It may have been in these intimate quarters aboard the pontoon boat when little Jean Baptiste Charbonneau won the enduring affection of the captain. When they reached a “remarkable rock” on the river on July 25, Clark carved his own name and date into the sandstone massif but called it Pompy’s Tower in honor of this “butiful promising Child.”³⁴ (Today this landmark is called Pompey’s Pillar.) A nearby stream became Baptiests Creek. A few weeks later the bachelor captain promised Charbonneau that, if he brought Jean Baptiste to St. Louis, he would willingly raise “my boy *Pomp* ... as my own child.”³⁵ (Charbonneau and Sacagawea did in fact bring young Jean Baptiste to St. Louis three years later, when Clark used federal funds to pay for his education but never took the boy under his roof.)

At this time, Clark had not yet given up hope of encountering one of the bands of Crows who roamed the Yellowstone Valley. He needed to impress upon the Indians the power of the United States, to acquire their trade, and to ask them about the headwaters of the Yellowstone. Moreover, he wanted to protest the loss of his horses. Sometime after July 21, he drafted a speech to present should he come upon the natives. It followed the ritualized rhetoric of Indian diplomacy he had first witnessed as a young soldier at the Treaty of Greenville, in 1795.

“Children,” he began. “The Great Spirit has given a fair and bright day for us to meet together in his View that he may inspect in this all that we say and do.” The assigning of symbolic import to the weather typically opened all Indian talks. Then came the figurative language that would be familiar to the chiefs: “The people in my country is like the grass in your plains numerous. they are also rich and bountifull.” (A little later in the speech Clark would balance this implied threat with an olive branch: “the Great Chief of all the white people [wishes] that all his read children should be happy.”)

Then Clark got down to business: “Children I heard from some of your people [*blank*] nights past by my horses who complained to me of your people haveing taken 4 [24] of their cummerads. . . . I have been out from my country two winters, I am pore necked and nothing to keep of the rain. when I set out from my country I had a plenty but have given it all to my read children whome I have seen on my way to the Great Lake of the West. and have now nothing.” After nearly a thousand words, Clark concluded with an invitation for the chiefs to visit the great father’s “great city,” where “You will then see with your own eyes and here with your own [ears] what the white people can do for you. they do not speak with two tongues nor promis what they can’t perform.”³⁶

In his journal, Clark was more blunt about his motives. He wanted “to let them See our population and resources &c. which I believe is the Surest garentee of Savage fidelity to any nation that of a Governmt. possessing the power of punishing promptly every aggression.”³⁷ Clark never gave this speech. He was unable to find the Indians of the Yellowstone and tell them about their new place in the world as children dealing with an omnipotent white father.

A day after leaving Pompey’s Pillar, Clark’s group arrived at the mouth of the Bighorn River, one of the three largest tributaries of the Yellowstone. Clark walked seven miles up the Bighorn with Labiche, exploring its extensive bottoms, before he returned to camp and fell asleep with-

out eating dinner. As he passed the Bighorn, Clark noted that he could no longer see the great mountain peaks to the west. “I take my leave of the view of the tremendous chain of Rocky Mountains white with Snow in view of which I have been Since the 1st of May last,” he wrote.³⁸ The only member of Clark’s Yellowstone party who would ever see the Rockies again was Jean Baptiste Charbonneau.

On what had now become the lower Yellowstone, Clark noticed that the river was losing its tumbling free-stone character and had become more of a sandy plains river like the Missouri. There were still rapids, though. On July 30, the men lowered the pontoon boat by hand through “by far the wost place which I have Seen on this river from the Rocky mountains.”³⁹ He gave it the name of “Buffalow Sholes from the Circumstance of one of those animals being in them.”⁴⁰ Robert Kelley Schneiders points out that this exact spot (which still bears the name Clark gave it) had been used by millions of buffalo for at least ten thousand years. “Clark did not know it at the time,” Schneiders writes, “but the shoals he so aptly named represented the most significant ford across the Yellowstone River and a vital choke point along the greatest of all north-south [bison] roads in the Upper Missouri territory. That bison bull Clark found standing in the middle of the Yellowstone had been a traveler on a grand mammalian highway.”⁴¹

August 1, 1806, was Clark’s 36th birthday, but it had rained intermittently all day, and he was in no mood to celebrate. “My Situation a very disagreeable one,” he wrote, “in an open Canoe wet and without a possibility of keeping my Self dry.”⁴² At the site of today’s Intake Dam, near present Glendive, Montana, the party was forced to pull ashore for an hour as a huge herd of buffalo forded the river. Grizzly bears were everywhere. One day the men fired four shots into the largest grizzly Clark had ever seen but failed to kill it. Another morning a grizzly attacked their boat and was driven off only after taking three balls. That evening, Clark dispatched yet another grizzly, a sow, “Much the largest feemale bear I ever Saw.”⁴³

On the morning of August 3, the explorers reached the Yellowstone’s confluence with the Missouri. They spread out their gear to dry on the site of their encampment of April 26, 1805. Clark estimated he had traveled 837 river miles, 636 of them on the pontoon boat, since striking the Yellowstone. (The present full length of the Yellowstone River from its headwaters to its mouth is 670 miles.) The next day the party continued on down the Missouri, riding their crude boat through a thickening haze of midsummer “musquetors.”

Five days later, Pryor and his three men finally caught

up with Clark, having floated in their bullboats from the vicinity of Pompey's Pillar. Lewis and his men did not meet up with Clark until August 12, nearly six weeks after the cocaptains had last been together. In contrast to Clark's comparatively mishap-free trip, Lewis had survived two near-death experiences—first the fight with the Blackfeet, then his accidental gunshot wound at the hands of Pierre Cruzatte.⁴⁴

What did Clark accomplish during his journey? Most importantly, he was the first American to map the Yellowstone River deep into the intermountain west. His report on the region's profusion of fur-bearing animals prompted a mad rush by traders and trappers to the area. His assertion that it was "large and navigable" was correct, but only in part.⁴⁵ Steamboats would not reach the Yellowstone Valley until 1875 and would be supplanted by the railroads less than a decade later.

Since he did not meet any tribes during his descent of the river, Clark was unable to establish the necessary diplomatic and economic relationships Jefferson had sought. Most importantly, Jefferson's dream that the Yellowstone could become a crucial north-south route to Spanish gold would prove to be chimerical. Drawing on information provided by Indians, Lewis and Clark initially believed that the headwaters of the Yellowstone were but a "short distance to the Spanish settlements."⁴⁶ But by 1809, after Clark had returned to St. Louis and talked to more traders and Indians, he reported accurately that "a man on horseback can travel [from the mouth of the Bighorn] to the Spanish Settlements in 14 days."⁴⁷

The valley of the Yellowstone would never be the same after Clark's visit. One of his men, John Colter, returned to the region to trap beaver even before the rest of the expedition reached St. Louis. A year later, the indefatigable St. Louis-based fur trader Manuel Lisa would build a fort at the mouth of the Bighorn and Yellowstone, the first of five posts erected at that location during the heyday of the fur trade. The American Fur Company later built Fort Union at the junction of the Yellowstone and



CHARLES FRITZ, POMPEY'S TOWER—JULY 25, 1806

July 25, 1806: Clark's party inspects the "remarkable rock" he named "Pompey's Tower."

Missouri. It lasted from 1829 until 1865, near the end of the robe trade.

Today you can drive from Livingston to the mouth of the Yellowstone in about six hours, mostly on interstate highways. The landscape there is still much like what Clark saw: "Generally fertile rich open plains the upper portion of which is rolling and the high hills and hill sides are partially covered with pine and stone."⁴⁸ The huge numbers of bison, elk, and grizzlies are gone now, of course. Only the Crow Indians, one of the few tribes that never relocated from its original homeland, remain.

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NOTES

¹ Gary E. Moulton, ed., *The Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition*, 13 volumes (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983-2001), Vol. 8, p. 182. Entry for July 14, 1806. All quotations or references to journal entries in the ensuing text are from Moulton, by date, unless otherwise indicated.

² Bernard DeVoto, ed., *The Journals of Lewis and Clark* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1953), p. vi.

³ To be fair, although Ambrose and Dillon present full narratives of the expedition, they describe their books as biographies of Lewis. Among the books that treat Clark's trip down the

Yellowstone in greater detail are John Logan Allen's *Passage through the Garden: Lewis and Clark and the Image of the American Northwest*, John Bakeless's *Lewis and Clark: Partners in Discovery*, and David Lavender's *The Way to the Western Sea*.

⁴ Moulton, Vol. 8, p. 83. Entry for July 3, 1806.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 179. Entry for July 13, 1806.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 179-180.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 180. The gap Sacagawea recommended is today's Bozeman Pass, since followed by the Bozeman Trail, the Northern Pacific Railroad, and Interstate 90.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 181. Entry for July 14, 1806.

⁹ Not to be confused with Hamilton, Montana, in the Bitterroot Valley.

¹⁰ Moulton, Vol. 8, p. 181. Entry for July 14, 1806.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 185. Entry for July 15, 1806.

¹² Donald Jackson, ed., *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition with Related Documents, 1783-1854*, 2 volumes (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), Vol. 1, p. 63. Jefferson to Lewis, June 20, 1803.

¹³ Moulton, Vol. 3, p. 269. Entry for January 7, 1805.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 363-64. Fort Mandan Miscellany, "Affluents of the Missouri River."

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. 4, p. 67. Entry for April 25, 1805.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 70. Entry for April 26, 1805.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. 8, p. 187. Entry for July 15, 1806.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 186. Entry for July 15, 1806.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 190. Entry for July 16, 1806.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 200. Entry for July 18, 1806.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 195. Moulton, p. 197, note 2, asserts that the words "Rivers across" may have been added "to a blank space and they may not be in Clark's hand, nor do they look to be a Biddle emendation."

²² *Ibid.*, p. 201. Entry for July 18, 1806.

²³ For more about dams on the Yellowstone and Missouri, see Robert Kelley Schneiders, *Big Sky Rivers* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003), an excellent environmental history.

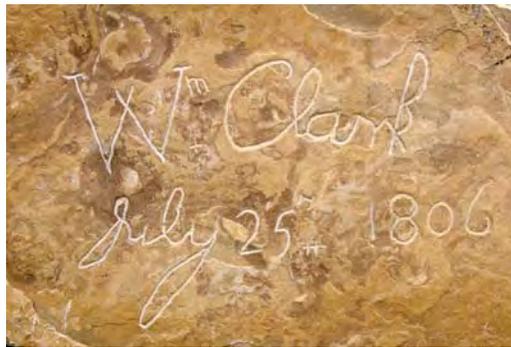
²⁴ Moulton, Vol. 8, p. 219. Entry for July 24, 1806.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 225. Entry for July 25, 1806. Surprisingly, neither captain recorded seeing the most formidable ungulate of all, a moose, for the entire duration of the expedition. However, one of their men, Reuben Field, wounded what he called a "moos deer" on July 7, 1806.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 226. Entry for July 25, 1806.

²⁷ Schneiders.

²⁸ Paul S. Martin and Christine R. Szuter, "War Zones and Game Sinks in Lewis and Clark's West," *Conservation Biology* 13 (1), 36-45 (February 1999). Their hypothesis has been disputed by other scholars who attribute geographic variation in the abun-



Clark's signature on Pompey's Pillar.

dance of bison not to human predation but to habitat differences and climate change.

²⁹ Moulton, Vol. 8, p. 328. Entry for August 29, 1806.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 201. Entry for July 18, 1806.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

³² In his 1893 edition of the explorers' journals, Elliott Coues proposed that this site be henceforth known as "Camp Cottonwood." See Elliott Coues, ed., *History of the Expedition under the Command of Lewis and*

Clark, 3 volumes (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1965; reprint of 1893 edition), Vol. 3, p. 1142, note 33.

³³ Moulton, Vol. 8, p. 219. Entry for July 24, 1806.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 225 and 305. Entries for July 25 and August 17, 1806. Clark's signature remains the only surviving physical evidence of the expedition left along the trail. Clark was not the first white man to see the sandstone formation, however. Ten months earlier, the Canadian trapper François-Antoine Larocque, who had visited the captains at Fort Mandan, ascended the Yellowstone with two companions and described the formation the natives called "Erpian Macolié." The classically educated Nicholas Biddle gave it today's name "Pompey's Pillar" in his 1814 edition of the journals.

³⁵ Jackson, Vol. 1, p. 315. Clark to Toussaint Charbonneau, August 20, 1806.

³⁶ Moulton, Vol. 8, pp. 213-215. Speech for the Yellowstone Indians, undated.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 212. Entry for July 23, 1806.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 238. Entry July 27, 1806. This was the same day as Lewis's disastrous fight with the Blackfeet several hundred miles to the north.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 252. Entry for July 30, 1806.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Schneiders, p. 69.

⁴² Moulton, Vol. 8, p. 268.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 272-273. Entry for August 2, 1806.

⁴⁴ Clark's journey, albeit uneventful compared to Lewis's, was not entirely free of mishaps. In addition to the theft of the entire horse herd, the party sustained three injuries. On July 12, when a canoe ran into an overhanging log, Private Thomas Howard was "a little hurt," according to Clark. On July 18, Charbonneau was thrown from his horse while pursuing buffalo and wound up a "good deal bruised on his hip, shoulder & face." On the same day, George Gibson was also thrown from his horse and fell on a fire-blackened snag that penetrated two inches into his thigh. Clark dressed the wound and fashioned a travois-style litter that Gibson used for two or three days.

⁴⁵ Moulton, Vol. 8, p. 277. Entry for August 3, 1806.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *The Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, 8 volumes (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1904-05), Vol. 6, p. 267. Miscellaneous Memoranda.

⁴⁸ Moulton, Vol. 8, p. 277.

“SOME DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HIM AND ME”

Benjamin Smith Barton agreed to describe Meriwether Lewis's plant specimens, but the noted Philadelphia botanist appears to have pursued his own agenda

BY SUSAN BUCHEL

In October of 1810, four years after the return of the Lewis and Clark Expedition and a year after Meriwether Lewis's untimely death, Thomas Jefferson dropped a note to Dr. Benjamin Smith Barton, the distinguished Philadelphia botanist and professor of natural history and medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, who had recently been his guest at Monticello. Earlier that year, Barton had been contracted by William Clark to describe the expedition's scientific findings in a companion volume to the general narrative being edited by Nicholas Biddle. The professor was in possession of Lewis's notes on natural history, and in his letter Jefferson reminded him that Lewis's family anxiously awaited the return of these materials.¹ Barton replied immediately, assuring him that the documents were in good hands and that he would indeed return them as soon as possible. He then added defensively that during Lewis's post-expedition visit to Philadelphia, in 1807, “there was some difference between him and me, originating *wholly* in the illiberal and [. . .] conduct of some of my enemies here, who laboured, not without some effect, to excite uneasiness in his mind as to my friendship for him.”²

Barton was one of several Philadelphia luminaries, all members of the American Philosophical Society (A.P.S.), who had tutored Lewis in scientific subjects in 1803, be-



Benjamin Smith Barton (1766-1815), in an undated portrait by Samuel Jennings.

fore he left for the Pacific. Historians who have written about Lewis's post-expedition visit make no mention of any rift between the explorer and his former mentor, but one almost certainly occurred.³

Lewis spent several months in Philadelphia in the spring and early summer of 1807 to advance the publication of the planned three-volume history of the expedition. The first two volumes would be a narrative of the trip and a discussion of geography and other subjects, while the third volume, according to the prospectus, would “be confined exclusively to scientific research.”⁴

Most scholars agree that Lewis intended to write the first two volumes himself, but the manner in which the scientific volume was to be completed remains less clear. Mention of this third volume invariably includes the possible role of Barton in its completion.⁵ This author, who has examined Barton's unpublished papers in the archives of the A.P.S., has found no evidence that any such arrangement existed.

Jefferson had written Barton in December 1806, three months after the expedition's return, assuring him that Lewis would eventually get to Philadelphia with his collection of natural-history specimens and that he would “doubtless ask the aid of yourself and brother literati of Philada. in his arrangement of these articles.”⁶ The letter

imparts no sense that either Jefferson or Lewis assumed Barton would play a greater role in the scientific volume than any other of Lewis's tutors. If Lewis expected Barton to coauthor the volume, one might think his name would appear in the prospectus, but it does not. Instead, the prospectus states unequivocally that the three volumes "will be prepared by Captain Meriwether Lewis" and will be ready as soon "as the avocations of the author will permit him to prepare them for publication."⁷

Barton had been involved in the scholarly review of an early shipment of specimens dispatched by Lewis from Fort Mandan in the spring of 1805. Jefferson had received the specimens and forwarded them to Philadelphia. He called upon his A.P.S. colleagues—Barton, Charles Willson Peale, Bernard McMahon, William Hamilton, and Adam Seybert—to identify them. The minutes of the society's November 1805 meeting report that "a box of plants, earths and mineral[s], from Captain Merewether Lewis" had arrived and that the dried plants had been referred to Barton "to examine and report" on them.⁸ Lewis's specimens were discussed in more detail at the next A.P.S. meeting, on December 20. Along with the 60 dried and pressed specimens of plants, Barton agreed to identify the insects, two small mammals, and a live horned lizard that had arrived separately from St. Louis with a delegation of Indians.⁹ Other specimens were assigned to Barton's colleagues for review.

It's clear from Jefferson's letter that the analysis of specimens was meant to aid Lewis in preparing his materials for publication. One can also reasonably infer that Jefferson intended Lewis to have right of first publication. Most of the reviewers appear to have understood this. Peale, for example, drafted a paper based on a specimen of the pronghorn antelope and submitted it to the A.P.S. It was deemed "worthy of publication" at the September 1806 meeting, but Peale withheld publication in deference to Lewis's right to be first in print.¹⁰

Barton showed less restraint. He had recently launched

the *Philadelphia Medical and Physical Journal*, serving as its editor, publisher, and major contributor. Lewis's western specimens soon became the subjects of short "reports" in Barton's *Journal*, sometimes with Lewis mentioned as the source of the information, but often not.¹¹

Lewis would have had the opportunity, while residing with Jefferson in Washington, D.C., during the winter of 1806-07, to catch up on his reading, including back issues of Barton's *Journal* in which these reports appeared. One wonders how he responded to seeing his expedition findings in print before he could report on them himself.

Lewis arrived in Philadelphia in late April of 1807 and began contacting his former mentors regarding the scientific volume. Peale agreed to supply some of the zoological illustrations.¹² By May 4, Lewis and Barton had at least a cursory discussion about some of the mammals Lewis had found west of the Mississippi.¹³ When they met again, on May 9, Lewis returned Barton's copy of Le Page du Pratz's *History of Louisiana*, which he had borrowed four years earlier. Presumably at the professor's request, he wrote an inscription stating that the book had traveled with him to the Pacific.¹⁴

With such pleasantries aside, the discussion most likely turned to the plant and zoological specimens in Barton's care and the publication of the scientific volume. The specimens had been in his possession now for 17 months. Lewis, no doubt, was eager to see them and learn how Barton had classified them. He discovered, instead, that Barton had almost completely neglected his assignment.¹⁵ Scholars have offered ill health or other demands on his time as possible reasons for Barton's failure, although Barton never defended his inactivity on these (or any other) grounds.¹⁶

By agreeing "to examine and report" on the specimens in the presence of his A.P.S. colleagues, Barton had publicly committed himself to aiding the scientific documentation of the expedition's findings. He had reinforced this commitment by stating in his *Philadelphia Medical and Physical Journal* that

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This example of the broad-leaved gum plant, *Grindelia squarrosa*, was among those botanical specimens shipped from Fort Mandan and assigned to Barton for description and classification. The note at the bottom, in Lewis's handwriting, states that it was collected on August 17, 1804, "at our camp near the Old Maha [Arikara] village," in today's Nebraska.

Captain Meriwether Lewis has transmitted to the American Philosophical Society ... a number of plants, which he has collected in different parts of the country that is watered by the river Missouri and its branches. A catalogue of these plants ... is [being prepared] for the Society, by one of its members [i.e., Barton]. These specimens, with others which we may hope to receive from Captain Lewis, will serve as a beginning of a *Flora Missouriica*.¹⁷

This was one of several announcements Barton made during Lewis's absence about his plans to publish his own catalogue of North American plants. He expected the first volume to appear in 1807. This work, he asserted, would "contain the description of a much greater number of plants than are enumerated in the whole *Flora Boreali-Americana* of Michaux."¹⁸ Barton had tutored not only Lewis but also Peter Custis, who explored the Red River in 1806. Barton's statement suggests a presumption on his part that his catalogue would include specimens collected by Lewis and Custis.¹⁹

Barton had been gathering plants for some time with the goal of producing a definitive botanical catalogue. By the late 1790s, his collection contained some 400 specimens, only half of which he had personally gathered.²⁰ Barton had mounted and formally identified only a few specimens, and his herbarium remained unorganized until 1806, when he hired a young German botanist, Frederick Pursh, to assist him.²¹ In his field work that summer, Pursh added over 900 specimens to the collection. The following winter he labeled, mounted, and identified virtually the entire collection—some 1,200 plants in all.²² Meanwhile, Barton ignored the mere 60 Lewis specimens entrusted to his care. If Barton's health was too poor to begin the task of identifying them, or if he lacked the time or interest, one wonders why he didn't turn the job over to his industrious assistant.

Lewis must have wondered, too. Finding his collection untouched, he surely asked for an explanation. Barton may well have believed that Lewis would be better served by including his western discoveries in a broader North American catalogue—Barton's projected magnum opus—

rather than in the scientific volume of the expedition history. One can speculate in his defense that Barton may have suggested that he had merely "delayed" identification of Lewis's plants until the two could discuss this possibility. If Barton did make such a proposal, it would have had little appeal to Lewis.²³

Lewis had probably been forewarned of Barton's neglect and may have come to this meeting with an alternative plan in mind. Shortly after arriving in Philadelphia, he had received a letter from Bernard McMahon, a leading horticulturist and regular correspondent with Jefferson, who had asked him to assist Lewis. As a member of the A.P.S., McMahon was well aware that the plants in the Fort Mandan shipment had been given to Barton for examination. He also may have been privy to Barton's lack of progress, for Frederick Pursh, the professor's assistant, boarded at the McMahon home.

McMahon knew that Lewis was bringing a more extensive collection of plants to Philadelphia for examination. In his letter he urged Lewis to arrive by the 20th of April in order to meet Pursh, who McMahon felt was "better acquainted with plants, in general, than any man I ever conversed with on the subject." He described Pursh's work for Barton over the past 12 months and noted that Pursh was about to start a new season of collecting in the field for Barton. Despite this commitment, McMahon told Lewis, Pursh "would be well inclined to render [you] any service in his power" and would delay his trip a few days in order to meet Lewis.²⁴ Why would McMahon send such a letter unless he suspected, or knew through Pursh, that Lewis's plants had languished under Barton's care?

The record is silent on whether Lewis met Pursh before his May 9th meeting with Barton. We do know that on the very next day, May 10, he paid Pursh \$30 in advance for assisting him "in preparing drawings and arranging specimens of plants for my work." (A second payment, of \$40, followed on May 26.)²⁵ Pursh would begin working on Lewis's collection that fall.

It is likely that Lewis asked Barton to return his plant



A specimen of Indian tobacco, *Nicotiana quadrivalvis*, collected by Lewis on October 12, 1804, in today's South Dakota. Lewis's note says it was cultivated by the "Ricaras" [Arikaras].

ACADEMY OF NATURAL SCIENCES, EWELL SALE STEWART LIBRARY

specimens at their May 9th meeting. It is probable, as well, that Barton never saw the larger plant collection Lewis had brought with him to Philadelphia. Lewis deposited all his specimens with McMahon for safekeeping until Pursh's return.²⁶

Barton possibly had overestimated Lewis's dependence upon him for identifying his specimens and likely had no idea that Lewis would so quickly contract with Pursh. The professor probably regarded Lewis's decision to replace him with Pursh—his own assistant, no less—as a rebuff. Prickly by nature, Barton could not have taken this well; indeed, he had a reputation for turning against students who no longer depended upon him or failed to show him proper appreciation.²⁷ Lewis, for his part, must have been exasperated by Barton's inattention to his specimens while simultaneously reporting on them in his *Medical & Physical Journal*.

Whatever the outcome of their meeting, the clash between Barton and Lewis intensified as the summer progressed. Barton had recently organized the Philadelphia Linnean Society and was the new organization's president. At its first meeting, on June 10, he delivered a "Discourse on some of the principal desiderata in Natural History."²⁸ Lewis's best friend in Philadelphia, Mahlon Dickerson, attended the meeting.²⁹ Perhaps Lewis was there too. If not, he would soon learn what Barton had said.

In a oration that dwelt at length on his own efforts and aspirations, Barton discussed the status of natural history in America. He gave particular attention to subjects he thought especially in need of study. Topping his list was botany. With respect to the trans-Mississippi West, he said, botanical knowledge "is still more imperfect. Hitherto, these countries have not been explored by men competent to the task of telling us what are their vegetables or other riches."³⁰ Imagine Lewis's reaction to that barely disguised insult!

Barton went on to boast how "my own American Herbarium contains several hundred species of North-American plants more than are contained in the whole Flora of Mr. Michaux. ... Indeed, I have already made considerable progress in describing our plants"—an assertion that completely ignored the contributions of his assistant, Frederick Pursh, who in fact had done all the work. (Pursh was probably in the field by now so would not have been present to hear this slight.)³¹

A meeting of the American Philosophical Society in mid-June further undermined Lewis's relationship with Barton. Mahlon Dickerson entered this cryptic note in his diary: "attended Philos Soc had a very unpleasant disc respecting the horned lizard—walked afterward with Capt. L."³² While the minutes of the meeting fail to mention any "unpleasant discussion," they note that Lewis and his specimens (including the horned lizard, whose description had been assigned to Barton) were on the agenda. Lewis himself was present at the meeting (he was a member of the A.P.S.) and took part in the discussion. It was at this meeting, too, that Charles Willson Peale announced the withdrawal of his scientific paper on the pronghorn antelope "because Captain Lewis would publish a further description in his book."³³

Barton, who presided over the meeting (he was the society's vice president), was nearing completion of a paper on the horned lizard and had already commissioned an illustration for it.³⁴ The "unpleasant discussion" may well have centered on whether Lewis or Barton had the right to publish a description of this animal. As noted, the live specimen of the horned lizard had not arrived in Lewis's shipment but had accompanied an Indian delegation he had arranged while in St. Louis, so Barton may have insisted the specimen was not part of Lewis's collection.

Lewis could have asserted the contrary and invoked his right of first publication. The minutes do not mention any discussion, unpleasant or otherwise, of the horned lizard, suggesting that the interaction occurred before or after the formal meeting.

Lewis left town on or about July 8, never to return.³⁵ Later that fall, from Locust Hill, his mother's home, in Albemarle County, Virginia, he wrote to Dickerson that his stepbrother, John Marks, would be coming to Philadelphia to attend lectures at the University of Pennsylvania. Lewis said that Marks carried letters of introduction he had written to "Wister, Rush and Peal." His omission of Barton, a lecturer in the university's medical department, underscores the seriousness of the rift.³⁶

The Lewis-Barton imbroglio was widely known among botanists and remained a topic of discussion for the next few years. Letters between Stephen Elliott, of South Carolina, and Rev. Henry Muhlenberg, living just outside of Philadelphia, serve as an example. Elliott wrote of recent conversations he'd had with fellow scientists:



An undated portrait of Benjamin Smith Barton in his later years.

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With regard to Govr. Lewis' work I understood from Dr. Barton that in consequence of a dispute between Gov. L. and himself the work was suspended and no person could be engaged to conduct the Scientific part of it. Dr. B. complained much of ill usage, and seemed par[ticularly] displeased with McMahan. ... Since I returned home I ... heard from [Alexander] Wilson the ornithologist a very different story—W. says the Botanical part is progressing under the care of a German named Bursh or Brutch and is nearly completed. ... McMahan could probably give you the best information on the subject.³⁷

Muhlenberg added more grist for the mill:

He [McMahan] has given me the same information respecting Mr. Lewis's work. Mr. Pursh ... undertook the description of the plants and I think finished it with the drawings. Dr. Barton speaks rather too hard of Lewis' Discoveries. I have received from Mr. Lewis only 6 different seeds and they are all valuable plants. I will not publish anything about them until his work has been published.³⁸

A letter McMahan sent Jefferson after hearing of Lewis's death has puzzled historians for many years. McMahan expressed his condolences and assured the former president that Lewis's plant collection was safely within his care, but felt compelled to add:

in consequence of a hint ... given me by Govr. Lewis on his leaving this City, I never yet parted with one of the plants ... for fear they should make their way into the hands of any Botanist, either in America, or Europe, who might rob Mr. Lewis of the right he had to first describe and name his own discoveries, in his intended publication; and indeed I had strong reasons to believe that this opportunity was coveted by _____ which made me still more careful of the plants.³⁹

McMahan left the name blank. Scholars have only been able to guess who might have sought Lewis's collection. Joseph Ewan suggested Pursh or Michaux, and Donald Jackson believed that Muhlenberg "might also have aroused McMahan's suspicions."⁴⁰ This author believes the name on Lewis's lips as he left Philadelphia was that of Dr. Benjamin S. Barton. Ironically and sadly, Lewis's own mentor, aspiring to publish a catalogue of North American plants without leaving his armchair, privately coveted Lewis's collection while publicly denouncing his former student's considerable achievements.

Susan Buchel, a member of the LCTHF and its Portage Route Chapter, is currently the museum curator at Kalaupapa National Historical Park, on the island of Molokai, Hawaii. She still considers Great Falls, Montana, as home after serving six years as interpretive specialist at the Lewis and Clark Na-

tional Historic Trail Interpretive Center. Her research for this article was partially supported by a grant from the LCTHF.

NOTES

¹ Donald Jackson, ed., *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition with Related Documents, 1783-1854* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2nd ed., 1978), Vol. 2, p. 559.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 561-562. The brackets indicate illegible or missing words.

³ Barton's role in preparing Lewis for the expedition is related in many histories and will not be reviewed here. Lewis's activities in Philadelphia after the expedition are described in Paul Russell Cutright, *Contributions of Philadelphia to Lewis and Clark History*, WPO Supplement, No. 6 (1982); Stephen E. Ambrose, *Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), and other well-known interpretive histories.

⁴ Jackson, Vol. 2, pp. 393-396.

⁵ Gary E. Moulton, ed., *The Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition*, Vol. 12 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), p. 3. Moulton offers that Jefferson and Lewis "may" have been counting on Benjamin Smith Barton to "be the author of or at least a collaborator on Lewis' anticipated natural history volume." Paul Russell Cutright states that Lewis and Jefferson "wanted" Barton to prepare the natural-history volume and that he agreed to do so, but cites no primary evidence; see Cutright, *Contributions*, p. 21.

⁶ Jackson, Vol. 2, p. 694.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 394.

⁸ American Philosophical Society, *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. XXII, Part III, No. 11, Minutes 1743-1838 (Philadelphia: McCalla and Stavely, July 1885), p. 379. Hereafter listed as *Proceedings*.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 380, and Jackson, Vol. 1, p. 276.

¹⁰ The organisms described were mostly mammals (elk, bighorn sheep, ermine, and species of hare, shrew, and squirrel) but included one bird (a magpie), and one tree (a cottonwood). American Philosophical Society, *Proceedings*, pp. 387-388 and 398.

¹¹ Benjamin S. Barton, *Philadelphia Medical and Physical Journal*, Vol. 2 (1806), pp. 108, 159; Supplement 1 (1806), pp. 36-55, 67, 71-72, and 161; and Supplement 2 (1807), p. 194.

¹² Jackson, Vol. 2, p. 411. Peale at this time also began work on his iconic portrait of Lewis.

¹³ Benjamin S. Barton, Papers, 1789-1815, Series II, Subject files, Notes, Zoology (4 of 5), American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia. A note in Barton's handwriting dated May 4, 1807, states, "Capt M. Lewis told me, that he saw, in very remote parts of his journey, appearances, exactly similar to those which are known to be produced by the ... tuza ... in Georgia."

¹⁴ Jackson, Vol. 2, p. 462.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 276. Barton had, at least in a preliminary way, identified one of the mammals as a shrew.

¹⁶ Moulton, in Vol. 2, p. 3n, surmises that "Barton grew too ill or unwilling to assist" Lewis. Paul Russell Cutright is also generous in attributing the lack of progress to Barton's ill health in his *History of the Lewis and Clark Journals* (Norman: Univer-

sity of Oklahoma Press, 1976), p. 43. Joseph Ewan, in his article “From Calcutta and New Orleans, or, Tales from Barton’s Greenhouse,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* (1983), p. 127, simplistically places the blame for not getting Lewis’s first 60 plant specimens organized on young Frederick Pursh’s “alcoholism.” As this article makes clear, while Pursh’s problems with alcohol cannot be denied, this argument fails given the voluminous work he accomplished on Barton’s behalf during this period.



Barton portrait by Charles B.J.F. de Saint-Mémin.

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¹⁷ Barton, *Philadelphia Medical and Physical Journal*, Vol. 2, Part 1, Section 3 (1806), p. 176.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Supplement 1, Section 3 (1806), p. 77. André Michaux had published his catalogue in 1803. Henry Muhlenberg was also collecting specimens toward a North American catalogue at this same time.

¹⁹ Custis, a naturalist, and Thomas Freeman, a civil engineer, were co-leaders of this venture. The Freeman-Custis Expedition is thoroughly covered in Daniel Flores, *Southern Counterpart to Lewis and Clark: The Freeman and Custis Accounts of the Red River Expedition of 1806* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986).

²⁰ Barton collected about 200 species on field trips he made and also accepted donations from his students and various correspondents. See, for example, Barton Papers, Series I, Correspondence, letter to Samuel Sidman, April 24, 1805, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia. In this typical letter, Barton writes, “I Being, at present, occupied in making out a catalogue of our N. American plants, any specimens from you will be highly acceptable to me.” Barton’s papers contain innumerable letters of this nature.

²¹ Francis W. Pennell, while serving as curator at the Academy of Natural Sciences in the 1940s, believed that the state of Barton’s herbarium demonstrated a lack of interest on Barton’s part in the laborious task of classification. As noted in the text, very few of the 400 specimens had even been mounted, much less identified. Francis W. Pennell, “Benjamin Smith Barton as Naturalist,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 86 (1942), pp. 115-118.

²² *Ibid.* Pursh would add another 270 plants during the 1807 field season. These, along with further additions from acquaintances, brought Barton’s Herbarium to approximately 1,600 plants—nearly all of which were organized by Pursh. After Pursh left Barton’s employ in the fall of 1807, no other plants were added to the collection until Barton’s death, in 1815.

²³ Lewis was strongly proprietary about the expedition’s journals and the information they contained. He discouraged other expedition journal-keepers from publishing their accounts before his and was dismissive of their abilities to do justice to the science. See Cutright, *A History of the Lewis and Clark Journals*, pp. 19-20.

²⁴ Jackson, Vol. 2, p. 398.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 463.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 485.

²⁷ Jeanette E. Graustein describes many instances of acrimony between Barton and former students in “The Eminent Benjamin Smith Barton,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 85 (1961), pp. 423-438.

²⁸ Benjamin S. Barton, “A Discourse on Some of the Principal Desiderata in Natural History ... Read before the Philadelphia Linnean Society on the 10th of June, 1807” (Philadelphia: Denham and Town, 1807).

²⁹ Jackson, Vol. 2, p. 681.

³⁰ Barton, “Discourse,” p. 40.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

³² Jackson, Vol. 2, p. 682.

³³ American Philosophical Society, *Proceedings*, p. 398.

³⁴ Through the A.P.S., Barton had paid the artist Christophe Reider \$10 for the illustration. Barton, Papers, Series I, Correspondence, receipt from Reider, April 10, 1806. American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia.

³⁵ Jackson, Vol. 2, p. 393. He paid his boarding house hostess “in full” for his rent on this date.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 719.

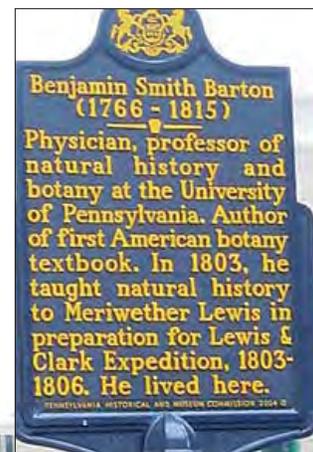
³⁷ Henry Muhlenberg, Rev., Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Stephen Elliott letter to Henry Muhlenberg, October 21, 1809.

³⁸ Henry Muhlenberg, letter to Stephen Elliott, November 8, 1809, Arnold Arboretum transcript. Jackson, Vol. 2, p. 354, includes a portion of this quote in a footnote, and adds that he finds the sentence about Barton a curious statement. Given the documents unearthed in this article, and the context of this statement within the ongoing correspondence of the two botanists, Jackson would probably no longer think this odd.

After hearing of Lewis’s death, Muhlenberg again wrote his friend, “the work of the unfortunate Mr. Lewis is going on. Mr. Clarke assists with great care. We may expect a valuable acquisition to natural history ... notwithstanding the rigid censure of Dr. Barton.” (January 31, 1810)

³⁹ Jackson, Vol. 2, p. 485.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 486.



PHILADELPHIA CHAPTER, LCTHF

Members of the LCTHF’s Philadelphia Chapter gather on December 19, 2004, at the unveiling of a historical marker (above) at the site of Barton’s home at 712 Arch Street.

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An inclusive view of the Corps of Discovery and its collective achievement

Joined by a Journey: The Lives of the Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery

Mike Crosby

Bureau of Land Management
126 pages / \$15 paper

For most of the last hundred years of scholarship on the Lewis and Clark Expedition, the emphasis has usually been on the two eponymous explorers: their courage, fortitude, and scientific contributions. Of the rest of the group that made the historic trip, only Sacagawea was much celebrated.

But recent years have seen a shift to a more collective notion of the epic journey. Hence the term “Corps of Discovery,” unearthed from Lewis’s writings, has gained currency to describe the group in terms other than the leaders’ names. Of late, there has been a growing recognition of, and interest in, the individual contributions of each member of the diverse company that traveled to the Pacific. Mike Crosby, a former teacher who now works for the Bureau of Land Management in Idaho, has stepped forward with a book that attempts to present all of these separate roles and activities in an orderly catalog, entitled *Joined by a Journey*.

In this systematic effort, no individual known to the record has been left out. Crosby undertakes to divide the entire expedition roster into logical units based on their tasks, common experiences, or identities, with a chapter devoted to each unit. Some of these categories will be more or less familiar to L&C buffs: “The French of the Permanent Party” (LePage, LaBiche, Cruzatte), “The Mountain Men” (Collins, Weiser, Potts, Colter), “The Sergeants,” and “The Charbonneau Family.” Other groupings are Crosby’s original conceptions or at least reflect his particular approach. He has chapters on “The Return Party,” “The Salt Makers” (Bratton, Howard, Gibson, Werner, Willard), and “Miscellaneous Specialists” (Shields, Thompson, Wind-



Cover art by Antonia Hedrick shows Lewis and party at Lemhi Pass on August 12, 1805.

sor, Goodrich), as well as one titled “Discipline—Robinson, Hall, Newman, and Reed.” (A better title might have been “The Troublemakers.”) In this way, Crosby tries to give context to each of the many individuals and help us understand how they functioned in the larger endeavor.

Crosby’s book reminds us again of the contributions of all the members of the Corps of Discovery, from the celebrated to the obscure, and including a few troublemakers.

Not surprisingly, though, certain individuals get their own chapters. The gifted hunter and interpreter, George Drouillard, and Clark’s versatile but long-suffering slave, York, seem logical choices in this regard. George Shannon gets special treatment not only due to his youth at the expedition’s outset, but for what Crosby astutely points out was an unusually long record of service to its goals, ending only in 1814, when the former private finished serving as a source for Nicholas Biddle’s narrative account of the journey. Although a dog hardly seems to merit equal attention with the others mentioned, a chapter

on Seaman is lively reading as well.

With its highly accessible, almost conversational style, *Joined by a Journey* is directed more at the general reader than the enthusiast, but even so, thorough students of the expedition will appreciate Crosby’s attention to detail. There are a few odd notes: the author’s insistence on referring to Sacagawea as “Janey,” based on what seems to have been Clark’s pet name for the Shoshone woman, is one that leapt out at this reader. Yet the narrative is altogether more readable than many more conventional works.

It is tempting to compare this work to other recent books devoted to Lewis and Clark’s rank and file, such as Larry Morris’s *The Fate of the Corps*. But Crosby’s book does not aim to give the full biography of each individual; it tends to stick to the events of the expedition itself, and this focus keeps it relevant to a broader public. *Joined by a Journey* may not further enlighten the scholar, but it will serve as an excellent educational resource for those new to the story of the great exploration.

—Mark Chalkley

Joined by a Journey can be purchased by mail for \$20 (postage included) from the Sacajawea Cultural & Education Visitor Center, 200 Main St., Salmon, ID 83467 (208-756-1188). Proceeds go toward the Sacajawea Center.

Facsimile of Sgt. Floyd's journal lets the reader second-guess the editor

Exploring with Lewis and Clark:
The 1804 Journal of Charles Floyd

James J. Holmberg, ed.

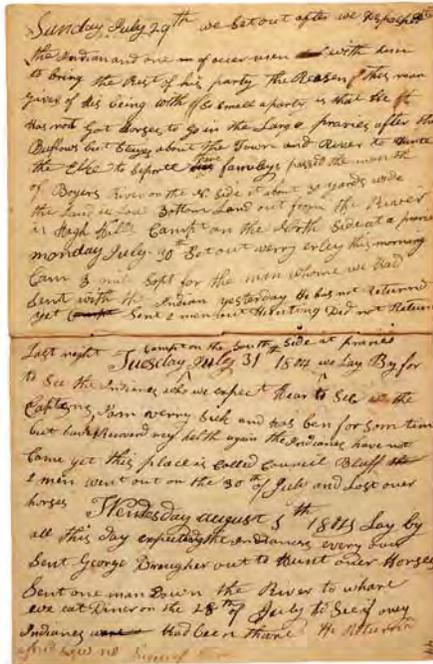
University of Oklahoma Press
97 pages / \$45 cloth

There is a special poignancy to the story of poor Charles Floyd. The only member of the Corps of Discovery to die on the expedition, he succumbed from what was probably a ruptured appendix early in the journey, and was buried with military honors on a bluff on the Missouri River near today's Sioux City, Iowa. Born about 1782, he would have been 21 or 22 years old.

One of the Nine Young Men from Kentucky, Floyd was recruited by William Clark in Louisville and along with his cousin Nathaniel Pryor was one of the corps' original three sergeants. Like the other sergeants and at least one private, he kept a journal. Its first entry was recorded on the "Showery day" of May 14, 1804, when the expedition departed Camp River Dubois. It ends, 56 pages later, on August 18, two days before he died.

As editor and scholar James J. Holmberg tells us in *Exploring with Lewis and Clark: The 1804 Journal of Charles Floyd*, the young sergeant's journal was probably shipped back to St. Louis from Fort Mandan in the spring of 1805. It presumably was returned to his family and was then lost to history until discovered in 1893 in the Draper Collection at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

This edition of Floyd's journal is notable for its scholarly attention to detail. It is a facsimile edition, with a format that presents a page of the journal on the lefthand page of a spread, opposite a righthand page with the editor's transcription and a column of annotation. This layout gives the reader



Floyd's journal for July 31, 1804 (bottom entry) notes, "I am very Sick and Has ben for Sosome but have Recovered my helth again." He died three weeks later.

some idea of the difficulty faced by Holmberg and other editors of manuscript documents, especially, as Holmberg notes, "when the author's handwriting and grammar are a challenge." Holmberg's interpretation of Floyd's rough penmanship at times differs from that of Gary E. Moulton, whose editing of Floyd's journal is found in Volume 9 of his 13-volume *Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition*. Readers with the patience to decipher Floyd's penmanship may come up with their own interpretations.

Holmberg's introduction is a fine summary of Floyd's brief life and the story of his remains. After he died, his fellow explorers brought his body a mile upriver for burial on a high bluff safe from flooding but not from the river's shifting bed. By 1857 the Missouri had cut into the bluff and exposed part of the grave. Residents rescued the remains and reburied them 600 feet back from the river. In 1895 his bones were again exhumed and reburied. Six years later an obelisk was placed on the site to honor this "young man of much merit," as Lewis called him.

—J.I.M.

New biography tracks the remarkable life of Jean Baptiste ("Pomp")

Sacagawea's Child: The Life and Times of Jean-Baptiste (Pomp) Charbonneau

Susan M. Colby

Arthur H. Clark Co.
203 pages / \$28.50 cloth

Few characters in American history are as fascinating as Jean Baptiste Charbonneau, the son of Sacagawea and Toussaint Charbonneau. As an infant and toddler he traveled with the Corps of Discovery to the Pacific. Adopted later by William Clark and classically educated in St. Louis and Germany, he was the product of three cultures—Indian, French-Canadian, and Anglo-American—and spoke English, French, Spanish, German, and several Indian languages. As a young man he spent five and a half years in Europe and later in life worked as a trapper, trader, interpreter, guide, and government official in California.

Jean Baptiste did not write his memoirs or leave any personal records, but many details of his life are known through the observations of others, including Lewis and Clark. From his birth at Fort Mandan on a cold winter day in February 1805 to his death in Oregon in 1866, he led an auspicious life. In *Sacagawea's Child*, author Susan Colby takes readers along with Jean Baptiste on his incredible journey.

His formal education began at St. Louis Academy, a progressive school that steeped him in the Enlightenment and gave him a solid grounding in Greek and Latin as well modern languages and other subjects. (The school was the forerunner of St. Louis University, which according to Colby "to this day proudly claims him as an alumnus."). As a 16-year-old he met the 25-year-old Friedrich Paul Wilhelm, Duke of Württemberg, who had stopped in St. Louis on a tour of America. Duke

2006 Awards

The Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation is seeking nominations for its 2006 awards:

- **Chapter Award:** To a chapter or one of its members for some exemplary contribution to the foundation's mission. Qualifying activities include locally promoting L&C history, providing educational opportunities for chapter members or the public, preserving the historic integrity of the L&C Trail, sponsoring research, and strengthening the foundation financially.

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- **Appreciation Award Certificate:** To a person or organization for gracious support (in deed, word, or funds) of the foundation and its endeavors to preserve and perpetuate the lasting historical worth of the L&C Expedition.

Send nominations to Carol Bronson, executive director of the LCTHF, for forwarding to the Awards Committee. (cbronson@lewisandclark.org)

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Reviews (cont.)

Paul took Jean Baptiste back to Germany. Drawing on studies by German scholar Monika Firla and others, Colby suggests that the duke probably expected to gain as much from the relationship as he gave back to it. He was a man who "admired the Jeffersonian ideals of racial harmony" (a questionable assertion) "and a classless society," and who may have seen in Jean Baptiste a reflection of Rousseau's noble savage. "Also, he would be able to learn about Native American ethnology and linguistics from this lad who had lived among the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Kansas Indians." The duke, Colby informs us, collected other exotic protégés in his travels, including "a mixed blood Mexican, two Africans and a 'small Indian' named Antonio."

Seduced by the West

Following his European sojourn, Jean Baptiste returned to the United States and became a trapper and mountain man on the upper Missouri. Why he went back to the wilderness is a matter of speculation. Colby's plausible explanation is that Jean Baptiste and his father "were seduced by the charm and the freedom of an unfettered life on the plains and in the mountains, and they found that they could never leave it."

Later years found him in the Spanish Southwest, at Bent's Fort and on the Santa Fe Trail. Drawing from well-documented sources, Colby manages to pinpoint many of Jean Baptiste's activities and encounters with other frontiersmen, including the legendary Jim Bridger and Kit Carson.

One wonders how this person of mixed ancestry related to other Indians and to Anglos. Colby's careful research separates reality from myth and shows that he was well regarded by both Indians and whites for his intelligence, wit, charm, and competence. One contemporary chronicler remarked on his "quaint humor and shrewdness" and "intelligence and perspicuity," which earned him "admiration and respect." Another noted his reputation as "the best man on foot on the plains or in the Rocky Mountains."



Duke Paul Wilhelm of Württemberg (1797-1860), Jean Baptiste's friend and benefactor.

An Army officer he guided described him (somewhat ambiguously) as "humanity in confusion ... near gentleman, near animal but above all capable, loyal and a most valued asset."

It was not always possible, however, to resolve his cultural personas to everyone's satisfaction. During his service as alcalde, or magistrate, at Mission San Luis Rey, a Spanish official described him as "a half-breed Indian of the U.S." known for "favoring the Indians more than he should."

This is the second biography of Jean Baptiste to appear during the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial. The other work, *Sacagawea's Son: The Life of Jean Baptiste*, written by Marion Tinling and reviewed in the May 2002 WPO, was aimed for a young-adult readership. Both biographies serve their respective readerships well and are worthy additions to the Lewis and Clark canon. Because it is sourced and amply footnoted, Colby's biography will be of greater interest to scholars and serious students of the Corps of Discovery. Special praise is due the publisher, Arthur C. Clark, for the fine typography, paper, and linen cover. For ease of referral and to guide readers in understanding the text, I also like the publisher's decision to use footnotes rather than chapter notes at the end of the book.

—John H. Sandy

The reviewer is a librarian at the University of Alabama.

Explorations

*Into the World of
Lewis & Clark*

Volume 2



*Essays from the pages of
We Proceeded On, the quarterly journal of
the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation*

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Robert Patterson: Lewis's instructor in practical navigation

When Meriwether Lewis was tutored in the sciences in preparation for his expedition to the Pacific, one of his teachers was the Philadelphia mathematician Robert Patterson (1783-1824). Thomas Jefferson recruited Patterson and four other members of the American Philosophical Society to coach Lewis in natural history, medicine, and other fields of knowledge. Patterson's job was teaching Lewis celestial navigation. It was an assignment he shared in part with Andrew Ellicott, who also taught Lewis surveying.

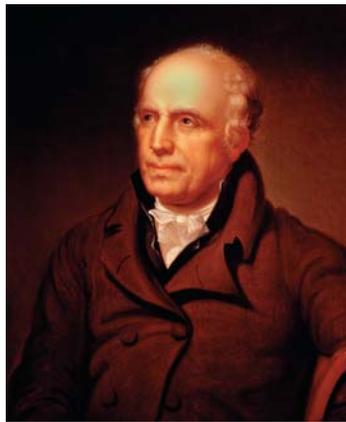
Patterson was 60 years old at the time. He had arrived in Philadelphia 35 years before, one of thousands of Scotch-Irish immigrants from Protestant northern Ireland who made their way to the colonies in the 18th century via William Penn's City of Brotherly Love. He had grown up on a farm near Belfast and from an early age showed intelligence and ambition. In school he was so adept at mathematics that he wound up instructing his teacher in the subject. At age 16, following an invasion of Ireland by the French, he enlisted in the militia and rose to the rank of sergeant. His soldiering drew the attention of British officers who offered to buy him a commission. Instead, he returned to civilian life and worked on the family farm before emigrating at age 25.

Philadelphia in 1768 was a bustling, cosmopolitan city, the largest in the colonies. Patterson soon found work as the master of a Quaker school in Buckingham, a town in neighboring Bucks County. One of his students was 16-year-old Andrew Ellicott. The two would be friends and colleagues for the next 52 years. (Ellicott died in 1820.)

Celestial navigation came of age in the 18th century with the invention of the chronometer, an accurate, sturdy, spring-wound clock that, when used with tables of the angular distances of the sun, moon, and planets, enabled mariners for the first time to calculate longitude (their position east or west of Greenwich, England). Patterson became a self-taught expert in the practical science of celestial navigation and returned to Philadelphia to teach it to sea captains.

Patterson must have been pleased with life in the Delaware Valley, for he encouraged his family to join him. In 1771, his parents arrived in Philadelphia along with four of his siblings (two brothers and two sisters). He had saved at least 500 pounds and used it to open a country store in New Jersey. Evidently this venture was unsuccessful, and in early 1774 he returned to teaching, this time as principal of an academy in Wilmington, Delaware. That same year he married Amy Ewing of Greenwich, New Jersey. They would have eight children, six surviving to adulthood.

While the Pattersons were beginning their life together, tensions were building between Great Britain and the Colo-



Mathematician Robert Patterson

nies. Patterson became an ardent patriot and put the military skills he had acquired in Ireland years before in service to the cause of independence. In the spring of 1775, after the opening shots of the American Revolution were fired at the battles of Lexington and Concord, he became a part-time drill master in the Delaware militia. When his academy was disbanded the following year, Patterson moved his family to a farm in Roadstown, New Jersey. He joined the New Jersey militia and rose to the rank of major.

After his unit disbanded, in 1778, Patterson returned to teaching, this time at the newly established University of Pennsylvania,

where he remained for 35 years as a professor of mathematics. He lectured on navigation, surveying, bookkeeping, and other aspects of "practical mathematics." Along with his professional activities, Patterson served on Philadelphia's city council, as an elder in the Scotch Presbyterian Church, and as a member of the board of the celebrated museum founded by his friend Charles Willson Peale. One of the museum's most popular items was a preserved paddlefish contributed by Patterson. In 1805, Jefferson appointed him director of the U.S. Mint.

In addition to teaching Lewis the rudiments of navigation, Patterson and Ellicott advised him on what instruments he would need on the expedition. Jefferson had suggested taking a theodolite and a Hadley's quadrant, but Patterson and Ellicott believed a theodolite would be too fragile for the rigors of an overland trip. Instead they recommended a sextant, which in addition to being sturdier was more accurate. Among other instruments, Lewis wound up taking a sextant, an octant, and an artificial horizon.

Lewis recorded 23 observations for longitude during the course of the expedition. Determining longitude based on observational data and reference to navigational tables is a complicated process, one that Lewis didn't try to do himself. Instead, after the expedition he turned over his data to Ferdinand Hassler, a mathematician who struggled at the task for 10 years before finally quitting in despair. Until recently, historians agreed with Hassler's conclusion that Lewis's data were faulty. It turns out that Hassler was unfamiliar with the valid, if unorthodox, observational method that Patterson and Ellicott had taught Lewis. Several years ago, when a physicist entered Lewis's numbers into a computer program based on the Patterson-Ellicott method, 20 of Lewis's 23 observations proved correct to within half a degree.

—J.I.M.

This profile is based on a longer study of Patterson by foundation member Nancy M. Davis of Philadelphia.

Soundings (cont. from p. 48)

After Floyd was buried, near present-day Sioux City, Iowa, Clark reflected in his journal that Floyd had “at All times given us proofs of his impartiality Sincerity to ourselves and good will to Serve his Countrey.”¹⁰

An hour after my surgery I was wheeled into a hospital room that offered beautiful views of Bozeman Pass and the same field where Clark had taken his compass readings before entering the mountains. Floyd was not there with Clark because he had the misfortune to fall ill long before appendicitis was first successfully operated upon, in the late 1880s. Like many writers on Lewis and Clark, I have often envied the romance of their journey. But on this particular day I was grateful that my attendants were neither Lewis nor Clark but capable physicians and nurses armed with two hundred years of medical knowledge.

The writer suffered his appendicitis attack

just a few days after his tour of the Bozeman Valley with Jim Sims. (See his story, “Clark on the Yellowstone,” beginning on page 24.)

NOTES

¹ Gary E. Moulton, ed., *The Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition*, 13 volumes (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983-2001), Vol. 2, p. 493.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 9, p. 391. July 31, 1804.

³ Donald Jackson, ed., *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition with Related Documents, 1783-1854* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978) Vol. 1, p. 366. Lewis to Dearborn, January 15, 1807.

⁴ Moulton, Vol. 2, p. 492. August 19, 1804

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 495. August 20, 1804.

⁶ Among our contemporaries, President George W. Bush had an appendectomy in 1956.



The author's view of Bozeman Pass from his hospital window.

⁷ While Floyd's symptoms closely resembled appendicitis, author David Peck and others have pointed out that he could have suffered from ailments ranging from stomach ulcers to tularemia.

⁸ David J. Peck, M.D., *Or Perish in the Attempt: Wilderness Medicine in the Lewis & Clark Expedition* (Helena, Mont.: Farcountry Press, 2002), p. 103.

⁹ Moulton, Vol. 2, p. 495. Entry for August 20, 1805.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

SPARROW BOOKS
1/3 Sq.
Pickup from
p. 39, 11.05

**YELLOWSTONE
SAFARI**
1/6 V
Pickup from
p. 39, 11.05

Sergeant Floyd and me

An attack of appendicitis recalls the Corps of Discovery's single fatality

BY LANDON Y. JONES

Serjeant Floyd is taken verry bad all at onc with a Beliose Chorlick.

—William Clark,
August 19, 1804¹

I awoke at midnight on August 14, 2005, with a beliose chorlick. As Clark would have it, a “cholic” is a severe abdominal pain. Mine came 201 years to the week after Sergeant Charles Floyd’s, but I now know a little of how he felt. Lying in bed in our home in Bozeman, Montana, I was gripped by an intense, crampy pain that had twisted my stomach into a hard fist. “It must have been that seafood salad I had yesterday,” I told my wife, Sarah. Oddly, after trying unsuccessfully to go back to sleep in bed, I decided to lie on the floor, as if a firm surface might somehow bring comfort.

Floyd’s illness appeared to come on just as suddenly. He had experienced some earlier discomfort as the expedition moved up the Missouri in the summer of 1804. “I am verry Sick and Has ben for Somtime but have Recoverd my helth again,” he wrote at the end of July.² By August 15 he felt well enough to go fishing with Clark and a group of ten men, dragging an improvised seine made of brush through a creek to entrap more than 300 fish.

Floyd had been among the first recruits for the expedition as one of Clark’s “Nine Young Men from Kentucky.” He had no previous military service, having enlisted directly from civilian life, where he had worked as a postal rider and constable. It may have helped that he came from the same close-knit society of Kentucky land owners as did Clark. He was a first cousin of one of the sergeants, Nathaniel Pryor, and may have been a distant relative of the co-captain.

Floyd proved himself to be a “young man of much merit,” as Lewis later remarked.³ The sight of this vigorous young man so swiftly disabled alarmed everyone on the expedition. All of the journal-keepers commented on Floyd’s illness. Deeply worried, Clark stayed up all night with Floyd. “[We] attempt in Vain to relieve him, I am much concerned for his Situation,” he wrote, “we could get nothing to Stay on his Stomach a moment.” Clark observed that all the men were



August 20, 1804: The Corps of Discovery lays to rest Sergeant Charles Floyd, the only man to die on the expedition.

“attentive to him,” especially York.⁴

At 3 A.M., with nothing staying on my stomach either, I agreed to let Sarah drive me 15 miles to the emergency room at Bozeman Deaconess Hospital. Every bump on the road hurt, but my trip would have been easy compared to Floyd’s, lying in the keelboat on the morning of August 20 while the men poled and pulled it 13 miles upstream. We “Came to

[to] make a warm bath for Sergt. Floyd hoping it would brace him a little,” Clark wrote.⁵

When I arrived at the E.R. in Bozeman, the attending physician interviewed me and then asked me to push on my abdomen with my finger.

“Tell me where it hurt the most,” he said.

“Here,” I said, indicating my lower right abdomen.

“I think you may have appendicitis,” he said.

Appendicitis is the most common reason for emergency abdominal pain in children and young adults, though people of all ages can get it. It strikes one in fifteen people over the course of a lifetime.⁶ Floyd, then just 21 or 22, was right in the target zone. At 61, I was something of an outlier.

I had a CT-scan to confirm the diagnosis and was promptly wheeled into the operating room for an emergency appendectomy. It turned out that my appendix had not only been infected, it had ruptured.

Floyd’s appendix had most likely ruptured, too, and led to peritonitis, an infection of the delicate skein of membranes which lines the abdominal cavity and supports the internal organs.⁷ Both Lewis and Clark administered to him, presumably with their usual treatments of purging and bleeding. As Dr. David J. Peck points out in his recent study of the medical aspects of the expedition, “Whatever they tried, it did not work and probably only made Floyd worse.”⁸

Floyd died “with a great deel of composure” on the second day after experiencing his worst symptoms.⁹ It is possible that he had silently endured severe pain for several days during the course of the infection but before the rupture.

Soundings continues on page 47

ILLUSTRATION: RICHARD SCHLECHT/
NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC IMAGE COLLECTION