



Meriwether Lewis

Field Notes



William Clark

From the Badger State Chapter of the Lewis & Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, Inc

January 2009

Wisconsin's Chapter ~ Interested & Involved

Number 29

During this time in history:
(Nov.-Dec. 1803-1805)

(The source for all entries is, "The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition edited by Gary E. Moulton, The University of Nebraska Press, 1983-2001.)

December 13, 1803, Clark: "... Fixed on a place to build huts (Camp River Dubois); set the men to clearing land & cutting logs. A hard wind all day..."

December 30, 1803, Clark: "Snow in the morning, I move into my hut. Colter killed a deer & a turkey. Drouillard and Sgt. Ordway set out for Cahokia...I write Capt. Lewis."

November 2, 1804, Lewis: "This morning early we fixed on the site for our fortification which we immediately set about. This place we have named Fort Mandan in honor of our neighbors."

November 20, 1804, Clark: "Capt. Lewis & myself move into our huts. A very hard wind from the west all the after part of the day. A temperate day..."

December 7, 1805, Clark: "... Proceeded on around the bay to the S. E. & ascended a creek 8 miles to a high point and camped...At this place of encampment we propose to build & pass the winter (Fort Clatsop)..."

December 24, 1805, Clark: "Some hard rain at different times last night and moderately this morning...All hands employed in covering the huts and the greater part of the men move into them..."

John Colter's Escape



Drawing of unknown origin

By: Jack Schroeder

Upon their return from the 28 month journey to the Pacific Ocean and back, some former members of the Corps of Discovery had remained in or near St. Louis to participate in the bustling frontier economy that was centered there. The men had trapped beaver regularly during their travels in the plains and mountains. They knew

that there was potential wealth in exploiting the skills they had developed, and their knowledge of the geography of those lands was valuable in itself.

In the summer of 1808 Manuel Lisa, accompanied by George Drouillard, had returned to St. Louis with the furs that he and his 60 men had gathered at Fort Raymond at the confluence of the Bighorn and Yellowstone Rivers. The trip had been profitable, and Lisa was establishing credit enough to mount a more ambitious expedition in 1809.

John Colter had remained in the mountains to work at encouraging more natives to trade their furs at the fort. He had been wounded during the summer in a battle with Blackfeet warriors which has been reported in these pages previously. Colter had recovered sufficiently to take part in the autumn hunt.

John Potts, another veteran of the Corps, was paddling in a canoe with Colter near the Three Forks of the Missouri when they found themselves surrounded by a large tribe of Blackfeet. Colter was able to slip their beaver traps into the water of the Jefferson Fork in an effort to prevent their theft. He stepped onto the shore as he was told to do, but Potts panicked and shoved the canoe back into the river.

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Potts was shot in the hip by an arrow. He raised his gun and shot and killed an Indian brave. Within seconds Potts body was riddled with arrows. His corpse was pulled ashore and savagely hacked to bits. Parts of his body were thrown into Colter's face. It appeared certain that Colter's fate would be equally gruesome. It was common practice for the Blackfeet to devise slow, agonizing death for captured enemies.

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The Indian leaders talked among themselves briefly, and one of them approached Colter, who had been stripped naked, to ask if he was a fast runner. He replied that no, he was a slow runner. This was not true, as Colter was thought to be one of the fastest members of the Corps, and had been selected to run against other tribesmen when the Corps had been challenged by friendly tribes.

The chief led Colter to an open area 300 yards from the warriors, who were preparing to chase him. He was told that he could run for his freedom. He took off running, and with a war whoop a large number of braves armed with spears took off after him. Colter had no time to consider the prickly pear cactus that covered the ground where his bare feet sped. He was calculating that it was five miles to the Madison Fork and his best chance to live.

Having covered half that distance, Colter permitted himself a backwards glance. One warrior had gained to within a hundred yards of him, while the others were not in sight. Colter noticed that blood was flowing freely from his nose, and he knew he would not be able to outrun the Indian.

When the warrior had closed to within 20 yards, Colter suddenly stopped and turned around, throwing his arms up just as the warrior made ready to throw the spear. Whether startled by the bloody sight or the unexpected turn of events, the brave stumbled and fell, breaking the spear. Colter picked up the spear point and ran it through the brave's body, killing him.

Colter later related that when he killed his pursuer, he

felt invigorated as if he had not even run a mile. Arriving at the bank of the river, he saw an island in the middle of the current with a large pile of driftwood on the upstream side. Diving into the ice-cold water Colter swam to the pile of logs, and on the third attempt found an underwater entrance that allowed him to enter a chamber above the water level.



Drawing of a Blackfoot Warrior from the book, *History and Stories of Nebraska*, by Addison Erwin Sheldon, 1913. (now in the public domain.)

When the pursuing Indians found their dead comrade they gave voice to fearsome howls of rage. They continued on to the river and began a search for Colter. As several of the men went up and down stream on both banks in search of signs of their prey, others swam to the island. They swarmed over the log pile, probing the spaces with poles. Although a thick layer of smaller debris provided very good concealment beneath the pile, Colter could occasionally see warriors walking over his hiding place.

There was room enough in his lair that Colter was able to pull his body out of the water. A momentary panic struck Colter when he thought that his pursuers were preparing to

start the log pile on fire, but they did not. As night fell the Blackfeet withdrew.

Colter swam downstream for several miles before he climbed back on land. Thinking that the Indians would guard the one pass which led from the valley, he climbed a nearly vertical mountainside to make his escape. Alone, naked, unarmed, and without shelter he began a two hundred mile walk back to Fort Raymond.

Travelling both day and night, and sleeping only as much as necessary, Colter subsisted on roots and bark. After 11 days he walked up to the guard at the gate of the fort, who was only able to recognize him as a white man from his beard. Colter was emaciated, sun-burned, and exhausted, but he was alive. His ordeal and escape became legendary in being retold around campfires again and again in the two hundred years since it happened.

The essence of Colter's story was con-

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firmed in September 1809 by Alexander Henry, commander of the Northwest Company at Fort Vermillion on the Saskatchewan River. Henry recorded that Blackfoot Indians under Chief Painted Feather had brought beaver furs into the fort to trade in the previous year. At the time they said they had taken the furs from American trappers on the Missouri River. While neglecting to say they had murdered Potts and allowed Colter to escape, the story was detailed enough to confirm Colter's account.

Cont. from pg. 2

In the annals of survival in the American West, perhaps only the story of Hugh Glass can be spoken of with the same awe and reverence. And yet, Colter was destined for one more near-fatal encounter with the Blackfeet.

In the winter of 1808-09 he attempted to return to the site of his capture in an effort to retrieve the precious beaver traps. After arriving at the place where he had made good his escape, he was building a small fire to cook his dinner. He heard twigs snapping behind him and the sound of a gun being cocked. He dove across the fire and rolled into the darkness just as bullets zinged into the campfire. He again climbed the mountain, and rested at the top before retracing his route back to the fort. Along the way he pledged an oath that if God would grant him this one more escape, he would leave the mountains forever.

Colter redeemed his pledge. He left the mountains on the next keelboat to St. Louis, and never returned to the land where he performed his almost super-human deeds, and created legends that are told in reverential tones to this day.

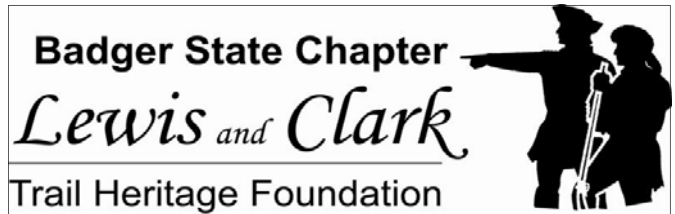
Badger State Chapter Logo

The Badger State Chapter has adopted this newly designed logo to use on Chapter correspondence, etc. It is available as a JPG, and may be used by Chapter Members after requesting permission from the Chapter Directors.



Badger Logo Apparel Now Available

Working with the Lewis & Clark Trail Heritage Foundation and Lands' End we have made it possible to order apparel from Lands' End with the Lewis & Clark logo including the designation "Badger State Chapter". Lands' End is located in Dodgeville, WI.



You can order on-line by visiting www.landsend.com/business or by phone at 800-338-2000. In phone contacts or if you request a catalog, be sure to reference Lands' End Business Outfitters.

For an on-line order you will need to register by establishing your own User ID, password and customer number (customer number is assigned by Lands' End when you order). There is a customer number assigned to our logo but it is for Chapter use only, should we make a group order. When ordering as an individual it is important for you to establish your own customer number, User ID and password.

The Badger State Chapter logo number is 0854151W. The logo can be put on a large selection of items. If you still want to order items with just the Foundation logo (no reference to the Badger Chapter) you can do so by using logo number 0841444.



=We're On The Web=
"Field Notes" is also available on the Internet.

Some people only receive "Field Notes" as a black and white copy. It is far better to get it on line, where some pages are in color. To get on the list to receive the link, drop an e-mail to Bill Holman at: wghmch@chorus.net...we'll send you a link where you can find it and share it with your friends.

January Quarterly Meeting

Our next quarterly meeting will be January 24, 2009 at the Fond du Lac Public Library, 32 Sheboygan St. in Fond du Lac, WI



The business and board meeting will begin at 9:30 A.M. We will be discussing the activities and events for our Chapter during the year 2009, new bylaws and Foundation related business.

At 11:00 A.M. our guest speaker will be Prof. Kerry Trask from U.W. – Manitowoc. Prof. Trask is the author of a number of books including, “Black Hawk, the Battle for the Heart of America”, Henry Holt & Co. LLC, 2006. Trask spoke to us in April 2007 and discussed William Clark and his roll in the Black Hawk War. Prof. Trask will continue this discussion with a focus on the Black Hawk War and on Black Hawk himself. You will find that the Black Hawk War not only connects us to Lewis and Clark history but was also an important event in the settlement of our state.



After the meeting we will have lunch (Dutch treat) and conversation at a local restaurant.



Newsletter articles

Do you have an interesting thought about the Lewis and Clark Expedition, or know someone who shares our interest in “The Journey?” Would you like to share it with others through this newsletter? Then write to either Jim Rosenberger at punkinz@tds.net or Bill Holman at wghmch@chorus.net. If you don't have e-mail, call Bill at (608) 249-2233. If you include a picture with your article, we will be happy to return it upon request.

The Badger Connection

By: Jim Rosenberger

One of the least discussed or considered connections we have with the Lewis and Clark Expedition is our official state animal, the revered badger. The badger does appear in the writings of nearly all the journalists.

The first mention of the badger in the Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition is by William Clark on February 6, 1804, at Camp Wood, IL, “...Windsor killed a badger...” That's it, just a short, blunt statement of fact as only Clark can write it.



The next entry concerning the badger is more enlightening because it provides a bit more detail and might be considered as an introductory discussion of the badger. It occurs on July 30, 1804 and it is my belief that our Chapter founding fathers recognized this date as being important too since our Badger State Chapter charter date is July 30, 1999.

The Corps of Discovery is in the area of present day Fort Atkinson, Nebraska about 15 miles north of Omaha waiting to go into council with the Missouri and Oto Nations. The area will become known as the Council Bluffs.

All the Journal writers mention and describe the Badger except Sgt. Charles Floyd. The Badger is called a Brarow (Ordway), Prarow (Gass) and Brareow (Whitehouse). William Clark comments, “Joseph Field killed and brought in an animal called by the French, Brarow...”

Professor Gary Moulton clarifies by a footnote that the men are attempting to write or say the French word for badger, “blaireau”.

Meriwether Lewis has not been keeping a journal at

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this point of the expedition but does **Cont. from pg. 4** make an entry for July 30, 1804; “This day Joseph Field killed a Braro as it is called by the French engages...” Lewis also describes the Badger but in this instance, Clark’s description is actually a little longer and a little more detailed.

Another footnote by Professor Moulton explains that this entry by Lewis, about the badger, is the beginning of Lewis’s natural history notes which he writes on an irregular basis until Dec. 1805. Moulton also explains that Lewis skinned and stuffed the Badger, sent it back to President Jefferson and that it was probably the first zoological specimen Lewis preserved.

While the meeting place with the Missouri and Oto Nations was named Council Bluffs interestingly, Sgt. Ordway and Pvt. Whitehouse refer to the campsite as “Camp Brarow” and then Whitehouse clarifies on August 2, 1804 that the “...Captains had altered the name to that of Council Bluffs...”

From Council Bluffs to the Pacific coast and return, the journalists occasionally comment about badgers being killed and skeletons and skins being preserved to be sent back to “the states”.

William Clark observed badger holes dug near the top of Spirit Mound in South Dakota and on the Columbia River, near present Portland, Oregon, he comments that he saw a tamed badger at one of the Indian villages. On the return trip, near the Yellowstone River, Clark tells us Charbonneau was thrown from his horse when it stepped in a badger hole.



On February 26, 1806, while at Fort Clatsop, Lewis gives a detailed, scientific description of the badger and comments they inhabit the open plains of the Columbia River just as they do the Missouri. He finishes his description by saying: the badger “...is very clumsy and runs very slow. I have in two instances

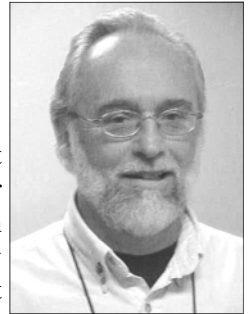
out run this animal and caught it...”

While not one of the major animals discussed in the Journals, the badger certainly made an impression on the Corps of Discovery or as Pvt. Whitehouse wrote, “...It was a novelty among us...”

So there is our legacy and connections to the Lewis and Clark Expedition. This is the final installment in my effort to make the connection and leaves me with one final, obvious thought; Go Badgers!

References; The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, 13 volumes, Edited by Gary E. Moulton, University of Nebraska Press, 1983 – 2001.

President’s Message January ‘09



Jim Rosenberger

Welcome to 2009. It looks like it will be an exciting year. Our country will have the first African American President. The economy is in turmoil and who can say what it will do. We will celebrate the bicentennial of the birth of Abraham Lincoln and it will be the 40th anniversary of man’s first steps on the moon. If you thought the excitement over Lewis & Clark ended with the Bicentennial, 2009 will show you there is enough activity to keep us all interested.

Work continues by actors Ed Norton and Brad Pitt on an HBO special based on the classic, “Undaunted Courage” by Stephen Ambrose which, unless Hollywood is more efficient than business or government, I think will come out in 2010.

Stephenie Ambrose Tubbs has a new book out, “Why Sacagawea Deserves the Day Off and Other Lessons From the Lewis & Clark Trail”. I am aware of two new books on Meriwether Lewis coming out in 2009; “Meriwether Lewis” by Thomas Danisi and John C. Jackson should be out in Feb. and “The Death of Meriwether Lewis: A Historic Crime Scene Investigation” by Kira Gale and James Starrs is due in April 2009.

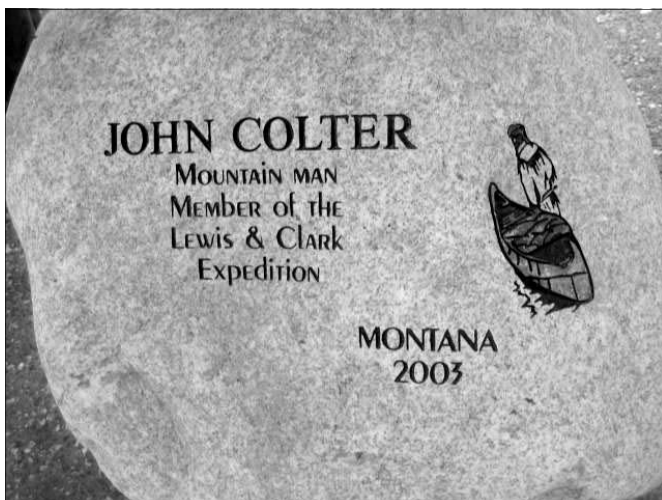
The 2009 Lewis & Clark Trail Heritage Foundation’s annual meeting will be October 3-7, 2009 in Mississippi and Tennessee and will focus on the 200th anniversary of Meriwether Lewis’s tragic death.

Our Chapter is working on a joint picnic meeting with

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the Minnesota Chapter on June 20, **Cont. from pg. 5**
2009 and will be supporting the Illini Chapter in conducting a 2010 Foundation regional meeting built around the journal of Pvt. Joseph Whitehouse at the Newberry Library in Chicago. We are also exploring the idea of having a 2011 regional meeting in our area. This is all in addition to our quarterly meetings, field trip and efforts to support the Foundation and the Lewis & Clark legacy.

I extend my sincere thanks to all of you who have renewed your Chapter and Foundation memberships and continue to support our efforts. If you haven't renewed your membership as yet I encourage you to do so and join us as we discover and participate in the excitement of 2009.



Stone brought from the Yellowstone region of Montana, photographed in New Haven, Missouri, on a Badger Chapter Field Trip in 2003.

The Men of the Lewis and Clark Expedition By Charles G. Clarke

"A Biographical Roster of the Fifty-one Members and a Composite Diary of Their Activities from All Known Sources" (Note: Lewis, Clark, & York were featured in issue #16)

PRIVATE JOHN COLTER (COALTER; COUTER).

Born about 1774, near Staunton, Augusta County, Virginia. He was a son of Joseph and Ellen (Shields) Colter and a grandson of Micajah Coalter. When he was about five years old, his parents moved to Maysville, Kentucky. John spent his boyhood in Maysville and as a young man he probably served as a Ranger under Simon Kenton.



He was five feet ten inches tall; rather shy; had blue eyes; an open pleasing countenance; was quick minded, courageous and a fine hunter. He was recruited by Capt. Lewis at Maysville on Oct. 15, 1803 - one of the "Nine young men from Kentucky" and a permanent member of the expedition. He was trusted with many special missions while with the party.

When the expedition was enroute home, Colter was honorably discharged on August 13, 1806. He returned to the Yellowstone with Forest Handcock and Joseph Dickson, free trappers from Missouri and Illinois. Colter had probably known both men during his Maysville days. The partnership with Handcock and Dickson lasted only some six weeks, for a falling out had occurred. Colter and Handcock returned to the Mandans during October 1806, and they spent the winter there. In the spring of 1807, Colter started for St. Louis alone, and by July he was at the mouth of the Platte River when he encountered, and joined, Manuel Lisa's trapping party bound for the Yellowstone. They arrived there in October 1807, and Lisa immediately dispatched Colter to the Crow Indians then on the Big-horn River. During 1808-1809, Colter trapped the area around the Stinking Water (Shoshoni) River.

By May 1809, Colter had returned to St. Louis. He sold his military warrant for land, probably to the land speculator, John G. Comegys. Colter soon signed up with Andrew Henry whose trapping expedition was headed for the upper Missouri. Colter was sent with a party to trap the rich beaver country of the Blackfeet. Because of his past friendship with the Crows - mortal enemies of the Blackfeet - Colter was forced into a conflict with the latter. He escaped from the Blackfeet in the famous encounter in which another Lewis and Clark member, John Potts, was killed.

Colter now had enough of the mountains and returned to St. Louis. Back in Missouri, probably in early 1811, he married a woman named "Sallie." Mrs. Dye, in *The Conquest*, page 3, it states, "Coalter -married a squaw." Other traditions say she was a white woman. Whichever, they settled on a farm near Charette, Franklin County, Missouri. They had a son, Hiram Colter, who became the father of eight children.

John Colter died about Nov. 22, 1813.

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Seaman Says...

November 15, 1804: It is cold and ice is beginning to flow in the river. I smell snow in the air and suspect it will soon cover the ground. My fur coat has grown in length, is denser and will be the envy of every human as I jump and roll in the snow.



The men are busy building a structure in which they plan to spend the winter. They call it Fort Mandan after the Native Nation which lives nearby and has become very friendly toward us.

I help the men in their construction efforts by putting on a harness and with the use of a rope, pull some of the smaller logs to the construction sight. But perhaps my greatest service is retrieving lost tools for the men. It seems to be a human characteristic to work with tools such as an axe, a saw or a hammer, lay it down and then lose track of it or forget where it is. My keen senses of smell and eye sight as well as excellent powers of observation have resulted in no permanent loss of any of these items. Construction of Fort Mandan should be completed on schedule.



Dr. E. B. Trail writes that according Cont. from pg. 6 to local tradition, Colter was buried in a cemetery near Dundee, Missouri, on Tunnel Hill, which was located between the Big and Little Boeuf creeks. A railroad cut was later made which eliminated all trace of this cemetery. The remains were said to have been scattered along the railroad fill. However, in the collections of the St. Charles Historical Society are the books of the Fee Fee Baptist Church Records. An entry is written, "John Colter -a fur trader with Manuel Lisa." A tombstone, said to have been in the church cemetery, read:

*Here lies John Colter of Lewis and Clark Expedition
Born in 1775 in Va. Died 1813 of jaundice*

This church and cemetery are at Bridgeton, Missouri, not far from Colter's farm at Charette. No trace of the tombstone has yet been found.

While William Clark was putting finishing touches to his map of the Northwest to accompany the long delayed publication of the Lewis and Clark journals, John Colter supplied many new details gleaned from his travels into the Yellowstone, Wind River and other mountain areas not known to Clark.

On May 28, 1811, Colter sought, but could not collect, \$377.60 from the insolvent estate of Meriwether Lewis, deceased. This amount was probably due Colter as extra pay for service during the expedition. After Colter died, his household furnishings were auctioned on December 10, 1813, and brought \$124.44¹/₂. Sallie, his wife, received an additional \$69.00 on January 9, 1815. She had remarried, but died after 1822.

Treasurer's Report

The Badger Chapter has \$3,497.97 in the Chapter Treasury as of January 1, 2009, and 68 active members.



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