

Grand Canyon Chapter

Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, Inc.



The Desert Dispatch Vol. 13, Issue 3

July 2010

From the Journals

July 3, 1806 — Lewis.

"All arrangements being now completed for carrying into effect the several schemes we had planned for execution on our return, we saddled our horses and set out. I took leave of my worthy friend and companion Capt. Clark and the party that accompany him. I could not avoid feeling much concern on this occasion."

July 8, 1806, — Clark.

" after diner we proceeded on down the forke...at which place we Sunk our canoes & buried some articles, as before mentioned the most of the Party being Chewers of Tobacco become so impatient to be chewing it that they scarcely gave themselves time to take their saddles off their horses before they were off to the deposit..."

July 11, 1806 — Lewis:

(White Bear Island)
"I sincerely belief that ther are not less then ten thousand buffaloe within a circle of 2 miles around that place."

July 23rd, 1806 — Clark:

"I gave Sergt. Pryor his instructions...and directed that he G. Shannon & Windser take the remaining horses to the Mandans."

Source: "The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition"
Edited by Gary E. Moulton, The University of Nebraska Press, 1983-2001
Lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu

The Captains Grand Plan Was It Really Downhill From There?

It seems to me that on July 1st of 1806 members of the Corps of Discovery should have been in very high spirits. Relaxing at Travelers Rest after struggling once more across the Bitterroot Mountains, they must have reminisced about how they had endured a long, wet, and miserable winter at Fort Clatsop while combating boredom and subsisting on rotten food. Then, how they began the long journey home pushing their way back upstream against the mighty Columbia, surviving with scarce food, scant provisions for trade, thievery, wandering horses and weeks of waiting to cross the icy barrier which separated them from friends, families, and country.

Now, all of that was behind them. As they faced east there were no more "tremendous mountains" to cross, river travel would be WITH the current, and the land ahead teemed with game. I just bet that on that day someone must have said, "Well Men— it's all downhill from here."

Nonetheless, as good as life may have seemed, this was a military expedition which was launched with specific objectives; few of which had been met. They had failed to find the Great Northwest Passage to the Pacific or an easy route over the western mountains, and certainly not a single dinosaur.

Anxious to find some good news to report to the president and congress which had approved their mission, the captains formulated a grand but risky plan which would ultimately split the Corps into five widely separated and indefensible units with each to pursue different missions until they could rendezvous on the Missouri River some 800 miles to the east.

To implement this plan Lewis would take nine men with seventeen horses and follow the Nez Perce' buffalo route directly overland to the Missouri River. Six men would remain there to dig up their cache on Bear Island and prepare to portage around the falls of the Missouri. Three others would accompany Lewis to explore the Marias River to its northern source, hopefully to establish a legitimate claim to the most northern parallel of the Louisiana Territory. Afterward, they would proceed to the mouth of the Marias to meet the portage group led by Sgt. Ordway who would be coming down the Missouri.

See A Grand Plan....., Page 3

Members Learn How Lewis Moved Supplies Cross Country In 1803

Meeting at the Phoenix Elks Club on Saturday, March 13, members and guests enjoyed an exceptional power-point presentation by chapter member **Lorna Hainesworth** as she meticulously correlated her discovery of a valuable and neglected document with an understanding of how Captain Lewis and his suppliers traveled from Philadelphia and Harpers Ferry to Pittsburg.



While searching for a connection between the expedition and her home state of Maryland, Lorna found a previously unknown letter written by Meriwether Lewis to William Linnard in Philadelphia on June 6, 1803.

She confirmed the letters contents with well respected L&C scholars, reviewed countless historical documents, and traveled across the country on a quest to understand the letters relationship with known documents.

Her research has shown that this letter is the centerpiece of five crucial letters which Lewis wrote that pertain to supplies and their transport. Reviewed together, not only do these documents highlight a group of participants in Lewis's expedition preparations, but they also provide a travel timeline for Lewis and his stores to Pittsburg.

Thanks to Lorna for an exceptional presentation, and to Wayne McKinley for again arranging our catered luncheon and use of the fine Elks Club facility.

Members also heard an energized talk by visiting LCTHF Membership Committee Chairman, Jim Rosenberger.

Jim, who also serves as the President of the Badger State Chapter, briefed the group on concerns about the decline in membership, possibly brought about by the end of the bicentennial commemoration.

He emphasized a "back to basics" theme as ways for local chapters to bolster their own memberships. An important challenge for all chapters is to keep the Lewis and Clark story in front of the public.

For example: when airdates for the upcoming HBO series based on Steven Ambrose's book, "Undaunted Courage" are announced, chapters need to contact schools, libraries and other interested organizations to let them know we are prepared to help with presentations, materials and demonstrations.

Also; among others, schedule meetings consistently, and by advertizing meetings in local media, the public is reminded of the influence the Lewis and Clark Expedition has had on our nation's history.

- ❖ Seven chapter members will be heading to the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation's Annual Meeting in Lewiston Idaho starting the end of July. A chapter meeting is planned to be held during that gathering.
- ❖ A Board of Directors meeting is planned for late August following member participation at the LCTHF Annual Meeting



A Grand Plan....continued

Initially, Ordway and the remaining members would accompany Captain Clark overland from Travelers Rest to Camp Fortunate to retrieve cached dugout canoes and badly needed supplies. That unit would then proceed to Three Forks where Ordway and nine men would leave the party and continue down the Missouri to meet Lewis's men on Bear Island. Together they would portage around the falls of the Missouri and meet Lewis downstream at the Marias. Their combined force would then go down the Missouri to the mouth of the Rockejhone River (today's Yellowstone) to meet Captain Clark.

Meanwhile, Clark and his group of twelve (including the Charbonneau family) was to ride east with fifty horses to the Yellowstone where they would build canoes needed to descend the river. Here also, the most daring part of the plan was to commence. Capt. Clark would divide his group again by dispatching Sgt. Nathaniel Pryor and three men overland to Fort Mandan on a mission of utmost importance.

Now much has been written about Lewis's excursion up the Marias where he nearly lost his life in a fight with Indians before making a 100 mile dash to the Missouri just in time to meet Ordway's canoe party as it arrived from the lower portage camp. However, I rather like the episode you don't hear much about — **Pryor's Mission.**

It seems that a vital part of the captain's ambitious plan was a desire to fulfill President Jefferson's wish to have chiefs from various tribes along the Missouri visit him in Washington. But, in order to accomplish that objective they needed help.

The leading figure in this scheme was a fur trader named Hugh Heney who was stationed at Fort Assiniboine in Canada, 150 mile north of the Mandan Villages. Heney, who had made two trips to visit Lewis and Clark during the winter of 1804 –1805, shared a considerable amount and variety of information with the American captains, and had expressed his willingness to help their government in their dealings with the Indians he knew best.

The captains had composed a long letter to Heney, reminding him of his offer and appealing to his personal interests as well as those of the United States. In the letter they asked if he would try to persuade the most influential Chiefs of the Teton, Sisiton and Yankton Sioux, to visit President Jefferson, and for himself to escort them, preferably in company with the returning Corps.

If they agreed, the chiefs would hopefully be impressed by American strength and riches, would go home and persuade their people and their neighbors to live in peace, welcome American trading posts up and down the Missouri, and become developing partners in extending the American empire all the way to the Pacific Coast.

For that reason, Pryor's Mission was to drive the Corps valuable horses, to the Mandan's to trade for urgently needed supplies, then continue to Fort Assiniboine to deliver the captains letter of appeal to Heney.

The part which makes little sense, however, is if this mission was of utmost importance, and the Expeditions outcome depended on its success, why would the captains be so naïve as to assign only three men to drive fifty Indian ponies a distance of 400-450 miles overland through unfamiliar Indian Territory?

By the time Clark's unit reached the Yellowstone they already had bad luck keeping horses. Leaving Travelers' Rest on July 3 with a herd of fifty, nine of their best mounts had disappeared by July 7. Then, on the night of July 20, twenty-four more were spirited away – possibly by Crow Indians.

So, upon Pryor's departure their four footed assets were reduced to seventeen horses and, while heading toward Fort Mandan Sergeant Pryor with Privates Shannon, Winsor and Hall would lose all them to the Horsemen of the Plains. The Corps of Discovery was now flat broke and the all important letter had been "returned to sender."

Alone and afoot deep in the wilderness these men could easily have become casualties of the captains overconfidence. Instead, they shouldered their baggage and walked back to the Yellowstone where they killed a bison, built two bullboats from the hide and set out down the river heading for home. Now that takes courage!

Drifting along with the Yellowstone's current they spent twelve hours a day on the water, and caught up with Captain Clark's party on August 8 about 160 miles below the mouth of the Yellowstone in present day North Dakota.

Heading west it had taken the Expedition 132 days to go from the mouth of the Yellowstone to Travelers Rest. Despite glitches in their grand plan, Clark's group made that return in just 31 days. Lewis made it in 35. So, were they just very anxious to get home or was it really all downhill from there?

Just What Is a Bull Boat?

A **Bull Boat** is a small water craft boat, constructed by covering a skeletal wooden frame with a buffalo hide. The framework was made of willow branches bent in a huge bowl shape about four feet across the top and eighteen inches deep. A bull buffalo hide (thus the bull phrase) was then stretched around this framework. The entire boat weighed about 30 pounds. The hair was left on the hide because it prevented the craft from spinning and aided in keeping the water out. The tails were also kept intact and used to tie numerous bull boats together. Once in the water, it was not very steady because it bobbed around like a cork, but it was serviceable for short trips.

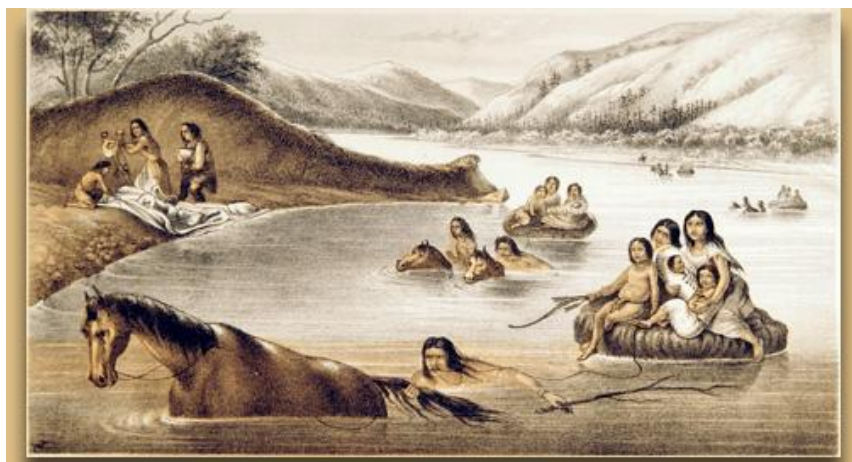
From 1810 to 1830, American fur traders on the tributaries of the Missouri regularly built boats eighteen to thirty feet long, using the methods of construction employed by the Indians in making their circular boats. These elongated bull boats were capable of transporting two tons of fur down the shallow waters of the Platte River.

Sergeant Nathaniel Pryor, assisted by Privates Shannon, Windsor and Hall, had been assigned to drive the company's remaining horses from the vicinity of Billings, Montana to the Mandan villages near the Corps' Fort Mandan, drop some of them off there, and take the rest up to Fort Assiniboine in today's Manitoba, Canada, to deal with trader Hugh Heney. But Indians stole the horses so Pryor and his men constructed "bull boats" and floated down the Yellowstone River, catching up with Clark's contingent on August 8 a few miles down the Missouri from today's Williston, North Dakota.



Pryor had made two boats as insurance against loss of all their guns and ammunition in case of a mishap. Both boats were the same size; 7 feet 3 inches in diameter and 16 inches deep, with 15 ribs or cross sticks in each.

He was pleased to find, as he later told Clark, that "they passed through the worst parts of the rapids & Shoals in the river without taking a drop of water, and waves raised from the hardest winds dose not effect them." They shouldn't have been surprised, for in the fall of 1804 (October 9), Clark had remarked: "I saw at Several times to day 3 Squars in single Buffalow Skin Canoes loaded with meat Cross the River. At the time the waves were as high as I ever Saw them on the Missouri."



Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana

Fortunately, Pryor and his companions were either really lucky or else they were quick learners, for the boats normally would have had to be dried out almost daily and treated with a mixture of tallow and ashes to keep them from becoming waterlogged. Their watercrafts served for a full two weeks without a mentionable mishap until August twelfth, when one of them received a serious puncture. They repaired the damage alright, but that afternoon they left the "leather canoes" on the bank — in accordance with accepted Indian custom.

A New and Simpler Plan

Going downriver, Sgt. Pryor and his men caught up with Captain Clark's group on August 8, 1806 on the Missouri and broke the news of his failed mission, and the loss of the horses intended for trading. Realizing that the Corps of Discovery was effectively bankrupt, Clark gave hunters urgent instructions to procure as many skins as possible for the purpose of purchasing corn and beans from the Indians.

Then on August 11, Clark received more bad news. He met two traders heading upstream who informed him the middle Missouri was under siege from warfare raging among several Indian tribes, and that both British and American traders were being threatened, robbed, wounded and even killed.

Now they could forget about contacting Hugh Heney with their Grand Plan. They would be lucky to get through the field of combat with their lives.

Also traveling downstream, Captain Lewis learned the news of Pryor's misfortune the next day when he read a note which Clark had left at his campsite on the eleventh. Still in great pain from the wound Cruzatte's misdirected rifle ball had made in his buttock, Lewis was aware that their prospects of obtaining Sioux Chiefs to accompany them had ended. He resolved that their only recourse now was to initiate a new and simpler plan: to take back *any* Indian chief they could persuade to go.

All the members of the Corps of Discovery were finally reunited on August 12th just below the mouth of Little Knife River, and by the fourteenth were back among the Mandan and Hidatsa villages where the inhabitants were glad to see them and expressed their hospitality with generous gifts of corn, beans and squash.

Although their reception was much appreciated, the captains were distressed to learn that the peace which Chief Sheheke (Big White) had brokered earlier with the Arikaras had reverted to warfare, and that the Sioux were still in command of the lower Missouri.

Still eager to fulfill Jefferson's wish to show Indian leaders the advantages of American culture and civilization, the captains invited the principle chiefs of all the villages to accompany them to Washington. Several expressed a desire to do so but feared for their safety from the hostile tribes downriver.

The issue was settled by the resident interpreter and able mediator René Jusseume. Chief Sheheke of the Mitutanka Village would go if Jusseume would go too, and each could take his wife and children.



Chief Sheheke (Big White)

Traveling downriver with their guests they met two traders who passed on more disturbing news. The Arikara chief, Piahito ("Eagle's Feather"), who the captains had persuaded to visit Jefferson earlier was dead. He had sailed east on the returning keelboat in the spring of 1805, proceeded on to Washington, and succumbed there to a fatal illness.

Despite uncooperative wind and weather, persistent hunger and exhaustion, and a short, bitter exchange of mutual defiance with the Sioux, the men applied their oars with enthusiasm, averaging forty miles per day—up to ten times faster than on their upriver trip in 1804.

With their excitement mounting as the end of their quest drew nearer, did either of the captains give a second thought as to how to get Sheheke, Jusseume, and their families home safely again?

Pryor's Second Mission & More

On March 9, 1807 Henry Dearborn, Jefferson's Secretary of War, sent William Clark instructions to see to it that Sheheke and his family were escorted safely back to their home 1600 miles up the Missouri. He authorized a small force—one sergeant and ten privates, with the option to add from two to six recruits — to be commanded by **Nathaniel Pryor**, who had recently been promoted to the rank of ensign (second lieutenant).

He also authorized a draft for \$400 from the War Department for presents to Sheheke's people, plus whatever was necessary in fitting out the party for the voyage. Finally, he authorized Clark to grant a two-year monopoly to trade on the Missouri River from the Arikara towns on up, to any merchants or traders who would agree to accompany Pryor's detachment.

Clark replied to Dearborn on May 18 that he had completed all arrangements as instructed, and that Pryor would set out that very evening with fourteen soldiers and an interpreter, plus a trading party of twenty-two under the command of Auguste Pierre Chouteau.

Some 1300 miles up the Missouri their group became engaged in a battle with a large force of heavily armed Sioux and Arikara Indians who still held the Americans responsible for the death of their chief, Piahito. During the skirmish, which lasted about an hour, Pryor's detachment suffered three wounded while Chouteau's party counted four dead and six wounded. One of Pryor's wounded was twenty-two-year-old George Shannon who had also served as a private in Sgt. Pryor's squad with the Corps of Discovery, and had accompanied Pryor on his ill-fated assignment to take the horses to the Mandans.

Since Sheheke's village was only a three days march around the combative Arikars, Pryor offered to escort Sheheke overland. The chief declined, preferring instead to return to St. Louis because his interpreter had been badly wounded, and he was unwilling to risk the safety of their wives and children.

When Pryor's party returned in mid-October of 1807 he submitted a comprehensive report explaining the circumstances that led to the failure of his second mission. He concluded that if his opinion were asked concerning the optimum force needed to escort this unhappy chief home, he would say at least 400 men, but "surely it is possible that even one thousand men might fail in the attempt."

For the next sixteen months Sheheke and Jusseaume, remained in St. Louis with their wives and children waiting for transport home.

In July, and again in August of 1808, a frustrated Jefferson wrote asking Lewis what he thought could be done to get the chief and his family back home. Lewis remained unresponsive for nearly six more months.

Finally, on February 24, 1809, Lewis consummated a detailed contract between Chouteau of the St. Louis Missouri Fur Company and himself as the territorial governor and representative of the United States Government, to return his guests to their homes on the Knife River.

Because of resistance from Sioux and Arikara warriors, Sheheke's return home ultimately required a collective force of more than 600 soldiers, cost a total of \$20,000 plus four American lives and George Shannon's leg.

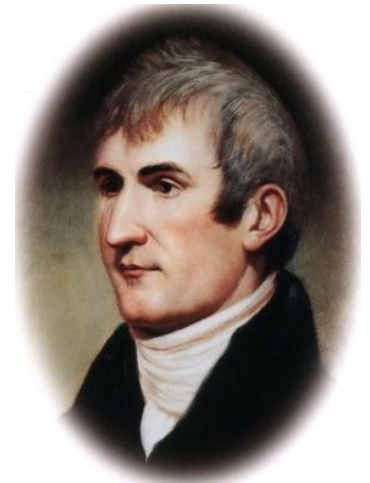
On May 13, 1809, Lewis mailed William Eustis, the new Secretary of War under President James Madison, an invoice for \$500 to cover Indian presents for Chouteau's trip. That letter, historian Donald Jackson points out, "represents the beginning of Lewis's financial ruin and the events leading to his death."

Eustis quickly rejected the claim. He reprimanded Lewis for failing to get prior approval for those items, and overstepping his authority by soliciting volunteers for an expedition that combined commercial and military objectives.

Basically, Lewis's plan had been consistent with the orders Clark had received from Henry Dearborn two years earlier, but now Jefferson's brand of unfettered government was not acceptable in the stricter atmosphere of Madison's new administration.

Lewis replied to Eustis on August 18: "Yours of the 15th July is now before me, the feelings it excites are truly painful." In an upsurge of pain and paranoia he set out on his journey to Washington on September 4th begging to be allowed to show his financial records and explain his actions.

On the morning of October 11, 1809, Governor Meriwether Lewis died of gunshot wounds in the wooded hills of today's Tennessee, probably unmindful that by the age of 35 he had already accomplished more than most could ever imagine.



In Commemoration

Grace (Sue) Jenkins, a charter member of our chapter passed away peacefully at the age of 79, on June 16, 2010 after suffering a massive stroke while singing the last notes of an Old Irish Blessing with the choir at her church, Sunday, June 13.

Sue met her husband of over 57 years, William C. Jenkins (former *Grand Canyon Chapter* President and Mayor of Scottsdale 1974-1980), while working as a “Harvey Girl” at Grand Canyon NP. Bill predeceased her in July, 2008.

Well known for her volunteer work she received the President's Volunteer Service Award in 2004 for having dedicated at least 4,000 hours over the course of her life to serving others. Sue and Bill also received the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Hall of Fame Award from Arizona State University in November 2008.

Together they hosted numerous chapter meetings, introduced the Corps of Discovery to educational and civic organizations around Arizona, and represented the chapter at many LCTHF Annual Meetings across the country.

A celebration of her life will be held on October 16th at Scottsdale Congregational United Church of Christ 4425 N. Granite Reef Road, Scottsdale.



Thanks to the following individuals for renewing chapter memberships.

David & Audrey Aungst

John & Jean Bagley

Gay Cameron

Donnis Deever

Jane Delaney

Larry & Callie Epstein

Ray & Donna Gentry

Lorna Hainesworth

Clifford & Carol Harris

Walt & Patricia Hartinger

Gene & Glenda Hill

Jerry and Susie Holcomb

Tom Jacobs

Sue Jenkins

John & Ann Lubliner

Larry & Doris Martin

Brooke Myers

Dawn Myers

Jeanne Myers

Jan Nichols

Sandi Nikula

Jack & Betty Nottingham

Wayne Novak

Norma Schaefer

Dan & Barbara Sears

Todd Weber

Joyce White

Where Do We Go From Here?

The 200th anniversary of the Corps of Discovery's historic expedition up the Missouri River and across the continent has come and gone — along with the national media attention and “sunshine” groupies. Unfortunately, as national interest has faded so have presenters of programs related to the expedition.

For a chapter that is 1200 mile off-the-trail we have had to pretty much fend for ourselves in that regard, and we have done well. But now it is time to think about what we want to accomplish in future years.

To that end, your officers need to hear what you folks think the chapter should do in planning for the future. Do you want organized trips to historical sites around the state, presentations on a variety of subjects, or just social gatherings with an occasional newsletter?

As with any volunteer organization, a core group of dedicated individuals has helped the chapter to succeed. Some have passed on, many have served well beyond their terms. To continue to flourish, fresh ideas are necessary, and more participation from members is essential to proceed on.

Dave Aungst

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On the Calendar

August 1 - 4, 2010: On the Trail in Nez Perce Country

42nd Annual Meeting of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation at **Lewiston, Idaho**. The meeting will be based at the Nez Perce Events Center just east of Lewiston. Three field trips are planned during the meeting. Pre-Meeting and Post-Meeting trips are available.

Registration (limited to first 300) includes field trips, Sunday Reception dinner, lunches and dinners on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. Register on-line at: www.lewisandclark.org, or call 208-476-3123

November 5, 6 & 7, 2010: LCTHF Regional Meeting

Lewis at Cumberland Gap 1809. Hosted by the Ohio River Chapter. Meeting at Cumberland Gap National Historic Park, Kentucky. Registration form at www.lewisandclark.org.

Saturday, November 13: Chapter Meeting

Program and Location to be announced.

July 31 – August 3, 2011: 43rd Annual LCTHF Meeting

The 43rd Annual Meeting of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation will be held in Omaha, NE/Council Bluffs, IA

July 31 – August 3, 2012: 44th Annual LCTHF Meeting

The 44th Annual Meeting of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation will be held in Clarksville, IN

Whatever Happened to Sergeant Pryor?

Nathaniel H. Pryor was a man the captains described as “a man of character and ability” and was often was assigned responsibilities of army administration. Born in Virginia, he moved with his parents to Kentucky and was one of the nine recruits from that state enlisting on October 20, 1803. On April 1, 1804, he was appointed Sergeant in charge of the 1st Squad and became part of the Permanent Party.

Pryor was promoted to lieutenant after the end of the expedition, but left the army in 1810 to become an Indian trader on the upper Mississippi. He later rejoined the army and fought in the War of 1812 at the Battle of New Orleans and was promoted to captain in 1817. His regiment was disbanded later that year and he again entered the Indian trade, this time on the Arkansas River where he became a well known citizen of the Arkansas Territory.

Highly respected by the American Indians, Pryor married an Osage woman, and the then-governor of the Upper Louisiana Territory, William Clark, appointed him an Indian Subagent in 1830.

He died in 1831 at the age of 49. The town of Pryor, Oklahoma, where he is buried, was named for him as well as a mountain range in Montana and rivers in Montana and Oklahoma.

The Desert Dispatch

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Grand Canyon Chapter for its
members and friends.

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