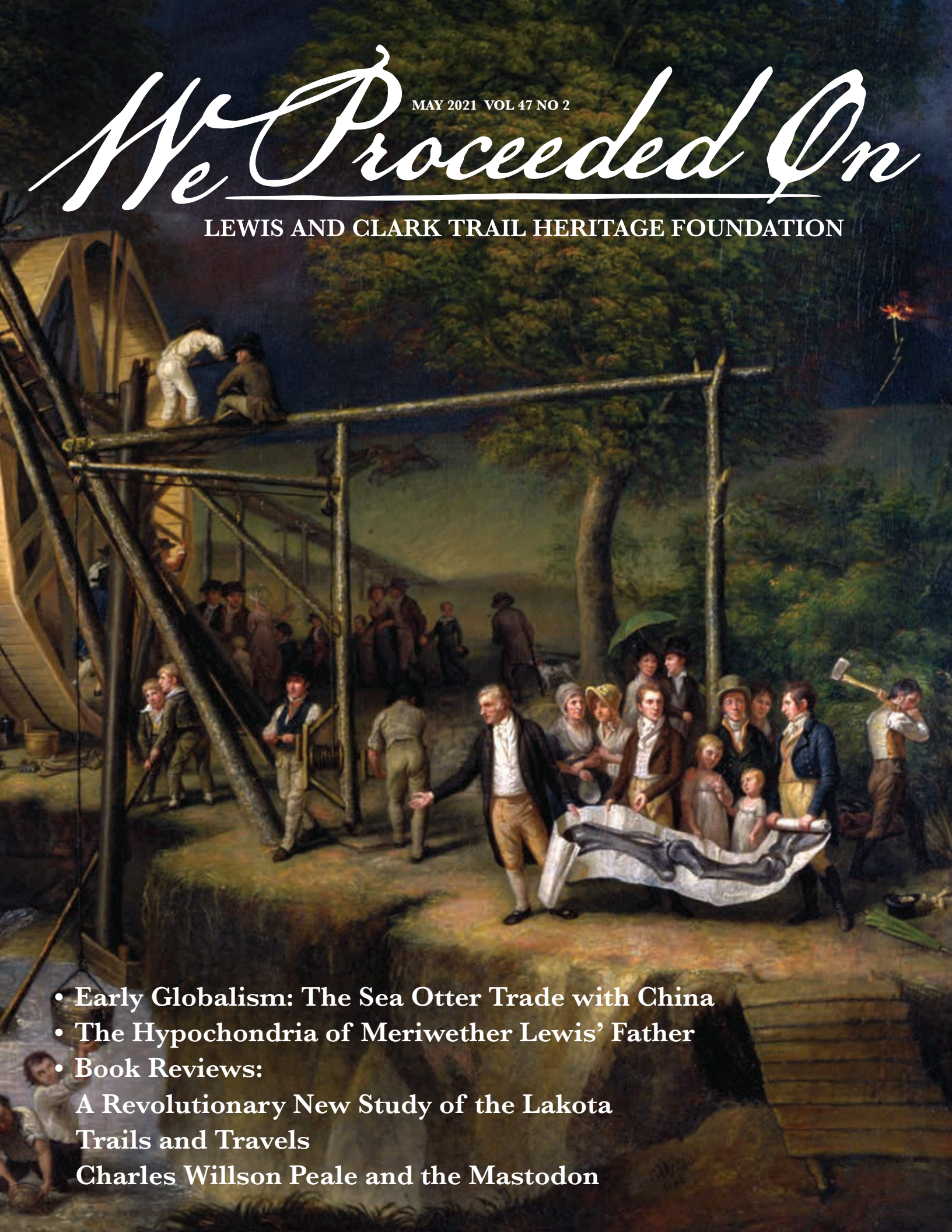
MAY 2021 VOL 47 NO 2

We Proceeded On

LEWIS AND CLARK TRAIL HERITAGE FOUNDATION



- Early Globalism: The Sea Otter Trade with China
- The Hypochondria of Meriwether Lewis' Father
- Book Reviews:
  A Revolutionary New Study of the Lakota
  Trails and Travels
  Charles Willson Peale and the Mastodon

Fresh Eyes on What We Thought We Knew

"How many a man has dated a new era in his life from the reading of a book?"

— Henry David Thoreau

Make a list of the top ten episodes of the Lewis and Clark Expedition and you are going to find the tense encounter with the Brulé Sioux (the Teton, September 23-30, 1804) near the top every time. It's arguably the most dramatic of the fifty-some Indian encounters in the expedition's transcontinental journey, though the historic meeting with the Shoshone leader Cameahwait (August 13, 1805) and the gunfight with the Piegan on Two Medicine Creek (July 26-27, 1806) also rank near the top.

Twice in that suffocating weeklong diplomatic dance in today's South Dakota the Lakota attempted either to prevent the expedition from advancing upriver or to appropriate a third of its cargo. This emotionally and physically exhausting episode enraged the expedition's leaders, especially Clark, who later called the Sioux "the vilest miscreants of the savage race." In frustration he renamed the Teton River the Bad River, and announced, after six days of tension, "I am Verry unwell for want of Sleep." Thanks to diplomatic firmness and perhaps sheer good luck, Lewis and Clark were able to avert calamity and push their way through Lakota country to the Upper Missouri. By the time they reached the Grand River earthlodge villages a week later, they were told by the Arikara leader Kahawissassa, "Can you think any one Dare put their hands on your rope of your boat. No! not one dar."

Thomas Jefferson somehow understood Sioux power from a thousand miles away. On January 22, 1804, the President wrote to Lewis in St. Louis: "on that nation we wish most particularly to make a friendly impression, because of their immense power, and because we learn that they are very desirous of being on the most friendly terms with us." Well, maybe.

The famous confrontation with the Lakota near today's Pierre, South Dakota, looms large in the Lewis and Clark story, but it is a mere blip in the 400-year history of the Lakota. The Americans came and they went in just a few days, leaving behind a flag, some medals, a few trinkets, probably some DNA, and bad blood. The Lakota shrugged it all off and went on with their lives.

The larger history of the Lakota, long before and long after the Lewis and Clark Expedition, is magnificently explored in Oxford historian Pekka Hämäläinen's new book *Lakota America: A New History of Indigenous Power*. (See Mike Jacobs' excellent review on page 29). I have not read any book on any subject in the last ten years that impressed me so much and altered my thinking so significantly. I believe every student of the Lewis and Clark Expedition should read *Lakota America*. Just as Ronda's seminal *Lewis and Clark Among the Indians* (1984) invited us to reverse the lens on the expedition's encounters with Native peoples, now Hämäläinen takes us as close into the heart of the Lakota world and worldview as we who are not Lakota, not Native, are ever likely to get. It seems certain that nobody who reads this book carefully can ever look on the Lewis and Clark Expedition in quite the same way again. *Lakota America* is that important.

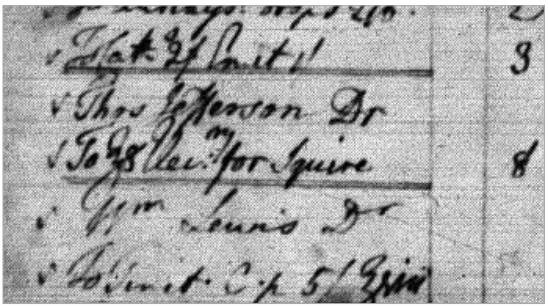
The expedition's encounters with the Lakota began when they met the Yankton Sioux on August 29, 1804, and ended with Clark's shouting imprecations at Black Buffalo from the canoes as the expedition flashed by on the return journey (August 30, 1806). *Lakota America* represents a revolution in the way we think about the Lakota and by implication, all the Native Americans on the Lewis and Clark Trail. Hämäläinen, who is Finnish, now Rhodes Professor of American History at Oxford, has the advantage of being a European who examines American history with fresh eyes, without the historical baggage we all can't help but carry. He forces us to regard the Lakota as a nation state, like Mexico or France, and to realize that they were embarked upon a period of dramatic national expansion and prosperity just when Lewis and Clark floated into their sovereign territory.

We wašíčus (to use the great Lakota term for white people) cannot help but see the Native Americans of the Great Plains in a tragic retrospect – as a subjected people, forced onto imperfect reservations on a fraction of their traditional homelands, crushed by cultural genocide that at times approached physical genocide. Between us and the Lakota who entertained and bullied Lewis and Clark loom the Little Bighorn and Wounded Knee, the theft of the Black Hills, and the assassinations of Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse. Hämäläinen insists that we recognize that the Lakota are still a robust nation state embedded in the Dakotas and Montana, still struggling to maintain their cultural sovereignty and integrity and to resist the aggressions and the indifference of white America. More to the point for our purposes, he asks us to remember that the sense of righteousness, power, legitimacy, and authority that Lewis and Clark brought to this historic meeting was felt perhaps in greater measure by the Lakota about themselves.

continued on the inside back cover...

In this Issue:

Sea Otters p 6



The Gilmer Daybook p 14

Peale's Mastodon p 23

Lakota America p 29

Fresh Eyes on What We Thought We Knew ..... *Inside Front Cover*
By Clay Jenkinson

Message from the President 3

"The Sea Otter is Plenty": Sea Otters, Empire, and the Struggle for the Northwest Coast 6
By Cameron La Follette and Douglas Deur

The Gilmer Daybook and the *"Constitutional Disposition"* of William Lewis 14
By Arend Flick

Reviews:
Behind the Crimson Curtain: The Rise and Fall of Peale's Museum 23
Reviewed by Stephenie Ambrose Tubbs

Lakota America: A New History of Indigenous Power 29
Reviewed by Mike Jacobs

America's National Historic Trails: In the Footsteps of History 33
Reviewed by Margaret Gorski

Adventures Across America: On and Off the Trail of Lewis and Clark 35
Reviewed by Philippa Newfield

Covers

Front and back: "Exhumation of the Mastodon 1806." Painting by Charles Willson Peale, 1806. Image courtesy of the Maryland Center for History and Culture.

We Proceeded On welcomes submissions of articles, proposals, inquiries, and letters. Writer's guidelines are available by request and can be found on our website, lewisandclark.org. Submissions should be sent to Clay S. Jenkinson, 1324 Golden Eagle Lane, Bismarck, North Dakota 58503, or by email to Clayjenkinson2010@gmail.com. 701-202-6751.

We Proceeded On

May 2021
Volume 47, Number 2

We Proceeded On is the official publication of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, Inc. Its name derives from a phrase that appears repeatedly in the collective journals of the expedition. © 2021

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Founder, *We Proceeded On*
ISSN 02275-6706

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We Proceeded On, *the quarterly journal of the Foundation, is mailed to current members in February, May, August, and November. Articles appearing in this journal are abstracted and indexed in* Historical Abstracts *and* America: History and Life.

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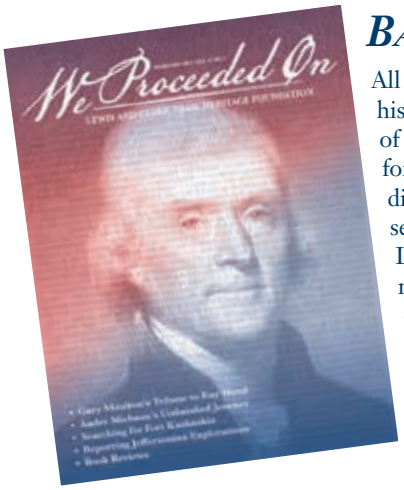

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As Keepers of the Story~Stewards of the Trail, the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, Inc., provides national leadership in maintaining the integrity of the Trail and its story through stewardship, scholarship, education, partnership, and cultural inclusiveness.

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The views and opinions expressed in articles and features published in *We Proceeded On* are those of the authors and contributors, and do not necessarily reflect those of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, its officers and Board, or staff.

We Proceeded On is published four times a year in February, May, August, and November for the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, 4201 Giant Springs Road, Great Falls, MT 59405. Current issue: May 2021, Volume 47, No. 2, ISSN 02275-6706.

Postmaster: Send address changes to PO Box 3434, Great Falls, MT 59403. Periodical postage paid at Great Falls, MT, and additional offices.

Incorporated in 1969 under Missouri General Not-For-Profit Corporation Act. IRS Exemption Certificate No. 501(c)3, Identification No. 510187715.

A Message from the President

LCTHF President Louis Ritten

I hope and pray that you are healthy and safe and have weathered the Covid pandemic well. The entire world was required to make changes to accommodate this disease and LCTHF has not been immune. Our staff had to work remotely at times and in-person meetings have ceased until it becomes safe to gather again. Yet, we have overcome these difficulties by becoming much more proficient in real-time electronic communication. While certainly not accustomed to this modality at the beginning of 2020, most of us have now gained enough experience to realize that, while not perfect, these new technological means can provide an adequate avenue for safely staying in touch with LCTHF friends old and new, keeping up on the latest scholarship, and being informed about LCTHF news and upcoming events. Several presentations sponsored by our chapters and put together by our members have proven so popular that they have been oversubscribed. Our collective embrace of these changes has unquestionably strengthened our organization and offered great benefit to our members while they have been cooped up inside.

Close readers of these quarterly messages throughout my time as president will know that I have been hinting at changes to come. We have already brought aboard Sarah Cawley as our Executive Director and she proved herself to be a very valuable part of our leadership team right off the bat. She, our paid staff, and dozens of our volunteer members have been working behind the scenes for years now on some technical, logistical, and organizational changes that we are close to implementing and that will affect you to a degree. Your willingness to roll with the changes by maintaining your receptivity, equanimity, and a positive, problem-solving approach toward any issues we may encounter is critical to making LCTHF a more effective organization, one better equipped to deal with the future and to attract new members.

What I am asking of you sounds a lot like what Captains Lewis and Clark demanded of the participants in the Corps of Discovery. While I do not have it within my power, nor would I want, to deliver hard lashes well laid on to any recalcitrants, I am respectfully requesting your patience, goodwill, and indulgence as we implement these changes. Thank you in advance.

Around the time this issue of WPO arrives, you will receive a more thorough explanation of the details, but here are the highlights, which can be broken down into two main categories: membership and chapters.

Membership:

Beginning with our big renewal cycle that coincides with our fiscal year end on September 30, we will transition all expiring memberships to the new system. This concept was approved recently by a unanimous vote by the LCTHF Board of Directors. With some limited exceptions, you will not need to initiate any changes in your own membership status until you receive a renewal notice as your own expiration date approaches, even if your membership doesn't expire for another year or two.

The benefits associated with membership will henceforth be available on an a la carte basis, with the price of each benefit closely related to the cost of providing it. This will allow us to offer a less expensive, stripped-down basic membership that will improve our chances of attracting the more budget-conscious future member. Getting new people to give us a try is critically important to growing our membership and fulfilling our mission going forward.

How this will affect you personally will depend upon your own preferences and the decisions that you will make. Some comparisons between the old and new will be presented below.

Chapters:

While a handful of our chapters are thriving, the vast majority are facing headwinds that will become increasingly difficult to overcome as time goes along. Virtually all chapters are experiencing diminishing membership and it is becoming much more difficult to find people willing to volunteer for leadership positions. Nearly ten chapters have closed their doors within the last year; several others do not meet on any sort of regular basis; and many have

not gathered, even electronically, for over a year. Clearly, some of this can be chalked up to Covid, but when its effects are no longer with us, we will still face the demographic challenges that lie at the heart of the problem, and they will have worsened.

To try to arrest this situation in the short run, we are asking our existing chapters and interested individuals to cooperate with others in the general vicinity, such that nine regions will blanket the entire country. By virtue of buying any LCTHF membership, you will become a member of a home region, but the chapters within each region will decide how extensively they wish to integrate their collective activities and how your membership will work within the region. We have asked them to establish a common board to sort through the issues and to serve as the contact point with national. They should create a common regional schedule, including all their current chapter events and perhaps some entirely new regional ones, so they can then collectively offer a broader array of events over a larger territory to a greater number of people. You will be notified and encouraged to participate in all events held within your home region. This will take some time, trial and error, and a fair amount of work up front by chapter officers, but the benefits should quickly become apparent and ultimately prove to be well worth it. Almost without exception, these changes will benefit individual members by offering them additional activities over a wider area, all for a minimal increase in price, if any.

As current memberships expire, each individual will transition into the new system. All renewed memberships, whether purchased at either the national or chapter/region level, will entail both a national and a home region component and you will become a member of both by definition. A portion of the membership dues will go to each entity no matter from whom the membership is purchased. Members will also be able to join other regions and pay just the additional region fees for each of them.

We have not increased membership dues since 2007, and it is possible through the choices that you yourself make that you may pay a little bit more. But breaking out the benefits and pricing them individually in line with their costs allow us to offer a basic membership at less than half the current cost and which includes a region membership in the bargain. The lowest cost to join LCTHF will now be much lower, which will increase our chances of attracting new members.

Comparisons:

The current basic national membership of $49 includes notifications and invitations to national events, *The Orderly Report* (TOR) newsletter, and a paper copy of *We Proceeded On* (WPO). Belonging to just one chapter averages about $10 to $15 annually, so most of our members currently pay a total of about $64 per year.

Under the new system, it will cost $65 to replicate the benefits you currently enjoy, including a home region membership for which you will no longer have to pay separate chapter dues. If you are willing to go green and accept an electronic e-WPO in lieu of paper, you will get a $20 discount since LCTHF will save the cost of printing and mailing (currently about $20 per member per year) for a total dues payment of $45 which is LESS than you are paying today for national alone, AND it includes home region membership!

We will also offer a basic introductory membership for $25, which will include membership in and e-news and announcements from both national and the home region chosen by the member as well as e-TOR. This is the stripped-down version intended to get people to try us out at no great expense. As they get to know us, we hope they will then want to receive WPO, and they will pay an additional $20 for e-WPO or $40 for the paper version. Both WPO formats shoulder the fixed costs of production, which include paying for the editor, design, and image permissions. The amount all members pay will be fair no matter which benefits they choose in that the price will more accurately reflect the cost of those benefits. A paper copy of TOR, which until now has been free upon request, will cost an additional $6 annually.

If you are currently a national member only, you will see an increase in price if you still want paper WPO, but you will now become a regional member with the opportunity to find out about and participate in more events closer to home than the typical national annual meeting would be. You'll get the chance to interact with other members more easily, with a smaller time commitment and more inexpensively. And the region will be strengthened by your presence. This is a win for all concerned for a very minimal investment.

Those who are currently chapter members only will generally see a small price increase, but for the $25 basic fee, they will become a basic national member as well and not have to pay for a separate chapter membership. As they discover more about us as a national group, they may then want to receive WPO and pay the additional amount for the format they choose.

We will have introduced them to national at about half the cost of a current membership with the opportunity for further engagement. In any case, they will benefit from increased exposure to events and fellow members within the entire region and beyond.

For those of you who want to make a greater commitment to LCTHF or would prefer something simpler, annual sustaining-level memberships at $100 and above will be available just as they are now. Lifetime memberships are available as well. They all include basic membership in both national and a home region, along with paper WPO, recognition in the annual report, and a small token of our appreciation for your generosity. Sustaining levels for your home region are also available as an add-on option, and basic memberships for any other region you may care to join are available for $10 each. Family and three-year memberships that will apply for both national and the home region in concert are available for an additional cost, too. We are also introducing an $18 basic educational membership, which includes regional membership, specifically for current students and teachers. At that price, we hope to be able to attract thousands of classrooms eventually.

There will naturally be some adjustment needed by all of us as we transition to the new system. Please bear in mind that the effort involved will only affect existing members because future members will know only the new system. Let's all work together to straighten out any kinks so we can offer a smooth, simple, and inexpensive entree into LCTHF. We cannot grow unless we welcome new people into our organization.

The changes we are instituting will improve our chances of success going forward, but they are not enough by themselves to get us over the hump. Over time, we will be initiating programs to increase membership and enhance the visibility of LCTHF and our accomplishments. Regions will naturally be involved in this effort, too, since both they and national will now benefit when either entity enrolls a new member. Each of us individually also bears some responsibility to draw new people in to LCTHF. We (You!) are the best ambassadors any organization could ever ask for: intelligent, curious, interesting and interested, friendly, dedicated, knowledgeable about the greatest adventure in American history, and simply fun to be around.

Let's all play to our strengths and find ways each of us personally can entice people to join. If each of us does our part and brings in just one new member apiece, we will offer opportunities to enrich their lives while doubling our ranks in the process! Start with friends and relatives who already have an interest in history and adventure. Consider others who may be open to learning more or are curious sorts in general. Purchase gift memberships (for $18 each!) for educators at your former or neighborhood schools. Consider substituting a student membership for the latest electronic gizmo as a gift for your children and grandchildren at holiday, birthday, and graduation time. You will suddenly have more in common to talk about and they will be introduced to a story of adventure and discovery that will fire their imaginations and stay with them for a lifetime. If you can suggest ways we might tie into other organizations' networks to introduce ourselves and solicit members efficiently, please let us know. The possibilities are endless. But they will lie unfulfilled unless each and every one of us actively promotes our wonderful organization. I humbly ask you to do your part. If not, now that I think about it, there are some of you I've just been itching to lay the lash to when the opportunity arose!

Thank you once again for being an integral part of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation. I look forward to echoing the words Lewis wrote as the Corps departed Fort Mandan, "The party are in excellent health and sperits, zealously attatched to the enterprise, and anxious to proceed; not a whisper of murmur or discontent to be heard among them, but all act in unison, and with the most perfect harmony." ∎

Let us proceed on together
Lou Ritten, President
Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation

Attention Lewis and Clark Trail Stewards!

Lewis & Clark Trail Heritage Foundation

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- The Lewis and Clark Trail Stewardship Endowment
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- The Montana Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Sign Maintenance Fund

For criteria, deadlines, and applications, visit lewisandclark.org and click on "What We Do."

Additional info: call (888)701-3434, e-mail us at grants@lewisandclark.org, or ask any LCTHF Board member.

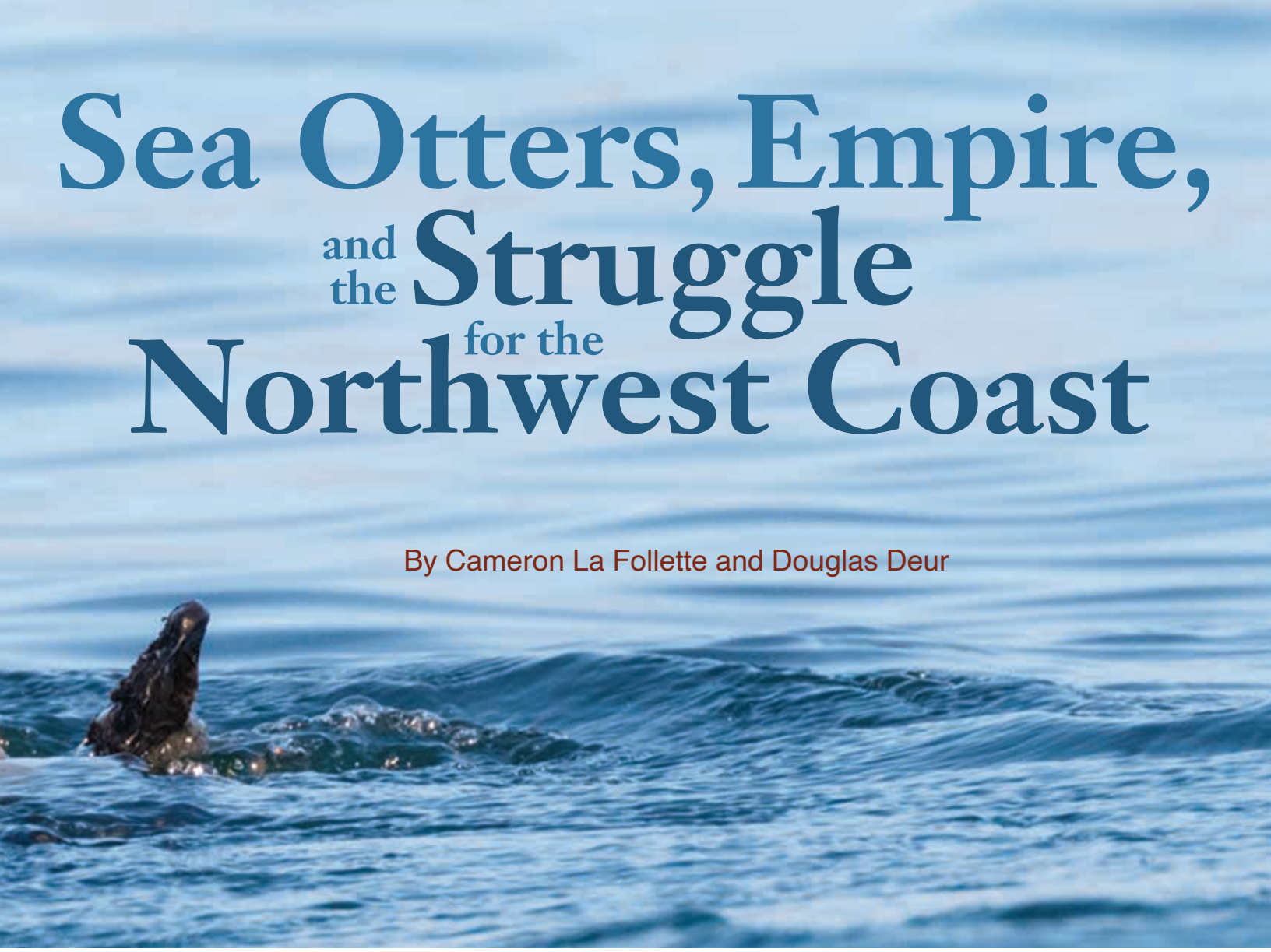
"The Sea Otter is Plenty"–

Historically, large numbers of sea otter lived and hunted in the nearshore waters along a vast arc around the northern Pacific Ocean – from the shores of Japan, across the Aleutian Islands to coastal southern California, and all the coasts in between. Sea otters were a keystone species, consuming kelp-hungry sea urchins and other shellfish, and in doing so allowing vast "kelp forests" to grow, abounding with fish and other marine species. They were at once numerous and of singular importance to the coastal environments of the Pacific Northwest. The otter also played a starring role in the clash between empires seeking to claim the Pacific Northwest, from the late eighteenth to mid nineteenth centuries. But unfortunately for the otter, its importance was due to its fur, the most dense, luxuriant, and lustrous in the world, much coveted for use in hats, robes, and other garb by people of far-flung nations. In time, the sea otter was hunted nearly to extinction across its range for its glistening, sable pelt as empires and traders jockeyed across the north Pacific for supremacy in its name.

This frenzy of slaughter for the sake of acquiring a coveted item of beauty led to many changes on the Northwest Coast. For the otter, the peoples of Europe launched the exploration and settlement of the Pacific Northwest, leading in time to the supremacy of the "Boston Men" – the American traders, most issuing from Boston – over the British. The otter trade brought profound and often ghastly changes to the Native societies of the Northwest, as well as the forced conscription of Aleut and Kodiak people by the Russian Empire to harness their skills at marine mammal hunting.

Sea Otters, Empire, and the Struggle for the Northwest Coast

By Cameron La Follette and Douglas Deur



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The otter also allowed the U.S. and European nations to forge some of their earliest, if narrowly focused, trade relationships with China, whose willingness to pay exorbitant prices for the lustrous pelts ignited and drove the carnage for decades. The Manchu, upon conquest of China beginning in 1644, founded the long-lasting Qing dynasty. Qing royalty and upper classes were well-known for their love of fur and fur-trimmed robes and hats, culled from hunting many fur-bearing animals such as sable, fox, squirrel – and sea otter.[1] The Qianlong Emperor (reigned 1735-1796) presided over the period when Western nations first learned of the Chinese market for sea otter fur.

In the English-speaking world, historians conventionally date the origin of the trans-Pacific sea otter trade to the 1780s publication of James Cook's *Journals* from his third voyage. The *Journals* describe selling sea otter pelts bartered with Chief Maquinna at Nootka Sound when the crew arrived in Canton in 1779 – at an astonishing profit of some 1,800 percent.[2] But in fact, the sea otter's encounters with industrial hunting began with the Russian empire. In the early eighteenth century, Russian expeditions hunted sea otter along the Kuril Islands in the Russian Far East, obtaining impressive sums in market towns near the Russian-Chinese borderlands. Vitus Bering's 1741 voyage from Kamchatka, to explore Alaska across the Bering Sea, returned to Petropavlovsk with hundreds of sea otter pelts from hunting in the Aleutian Islands. The furs brought fabulous prices in China, and launched the fiercely competitive hunting forays by Russian *promyshlenniks* (freelance entrepreneurs) across the Aleutian chain. Alarmed by this free-for-all, the tsarist

Quianlong Emperor in 1735. Painting by Giuseppe Castiglione (1688-1766). Notice the Sea Otter fur along the edges of his gown. Image courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

government chartered the Russian American Company in 1799 as a fur hunting and trading monopoly, and a mechanism for the Russian occupation of Alaska.[3]

By the time of Lewis and Clark's sojourn at the mouth of the Columbia River in the winter of 1805-1806, sea otter hunts and trading ventures had been at white heat for twenty years – the key hunters being conscripted Aleut and Kodiak individuals working for Russian interests to the north and, closer to home, Native peoples who hunted otters and traded the pelts for foreign goods brought by the trading ships. The first British ship to arrive in Cook's wake was the *Sea Otter*, captained by James Hanna, which came to Nootka Sound on Vancouver Island in 1785, and left with some 560 furs for Canton. By the following year seven British vessels cruised the Northwest coast for sea otter trading opportunities, and the maritime fur trade was well and truly begun.[4] In rapid succession, the ships of many nations – Spain, France, Russia, the United States – all plied these waters in search of wealth from sea otter furs.

Lewis and Clark and the Sea Otter

When the Lewis and Clark Expedition arrived in what is now Clatsop County, Oregon, and set up Fort Clatsop as a winter camp, the fur trading ships, both British and American, were a commonplace to the local Chinook and Clatsop people. The Corps of Discovery's mission can only be understood within the context of this growing international fur trade, and the rising crescendo of competing territorial claims that were asserted in the North Pacific due to the great profitability of the otter pelts.

Thomas Jefferson's instructions to Lewis make it clear that he was hoping the expedition would bring back information not only as to the key natural features, Native nations, and foreign traders in this distant land, but also as to whether the young nation could corner the Pacific fur trade through a land route: "Should you reach the Pacific ocean inform yourself of the circumstances which may decide whether the furs of those parts may not be collected as advantageously at the head of the Missouri … as at Nootka sound, or any other point of that coast; and that trade be consequently conducted through the Missouri & U.S. more beneficially than by the circumnavigation now practiced."[5]

The journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition make it clear that its members guessed at the extent of the burgeoning maritime fur trade, and tried to gauge it, as well as, in a minor way, participate in it. There are more than thirty direct references to sea otters in the journals (often commented on by several expedition members), such as Clark's statement of November 1, 1805, that while on the Columbia's "Grand Shutes," quite a ways upriver from the coast, he saw "Great numbers of Sea Otters, they are So cautious that I with dificuelty got a Shot at one to day…"[6]

The journals record some confusion as to the range of the sea otter. Joseph Whitehouse wrote, some three weeks later, "The Sea Otter is plenty, between this and the great falls of the Columbia River; but are very difficult to be got. They are rarely to be caught in traps, & when shot they sink immediately,

"Sea Otter" in James Cook, A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean. *Engraving by S. Smith after John Webber. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.*

Sea otters once lived along the entire Oregon coast. Today, the only places in Oregon to see otters are the Oregon Coast Aquarium in Newport and the Oregon Zoo in Portland. Wild populations live along the Olympic coast of Washington and the central California coast, occupying a small percentage of their original range. Sea otters are social creatures, known for drifting on the ocean swell in groups called rafts as well as for carrying their young on their bellies. They have no insulating blubber, such as whales and other marine mammals do. To keep warm, sea otters rely instead on a high metabolism and their renowned thick, luxurious fur. They must eat nearly a third of their body weight each day. The sea otter diet generally consists of energy-rich shellfish and they are especially fond of sea urchins, which graze on the kelp and other marine algae that form the basis of nearshore ecosystems. Thus, sea otters are crucial to maintaining the health of the rich marine environments of the Pacific coast.

Partly because of the absence of sea otters, Oregon's kelp forests are in jeopardy. Simply put, sea otters eat enough of the sea urchin population to prevent them from overgrazing the kelp forests. Elakha Alliance is working to return sea otters to the Oregon coast in order to protect and restore kelp and the nearshore marine habitats that kelp forests create. To learn about the importance of sea otters, visit the Elakha website, www.elakhaalliance.org. You can also sign up for the newsletter, The Raft, and follow the progress of the technical studies, participate in electronic conferences, listen to podcasts with leading scientists, find scientific articles related to sea otters and kelp ecosystems, and learn about sea otters' importance to Oregon's coastal Indian cultures. ∎

Sea urchins overgrazing the kelp forests.

which makes the procuring of them so difficult."[7] But Lewis recorded in February 1806, "when we first saw those animals at the great falls and untill our arrival at this place we conseived they were the Sea Otter. but the indians here have undeceived us."[8] Were there sea otters ranging far up the Columbia from the coast? It is uncertain. Some early explorers described spotting sea otters upriver, but other later observers did not. Scholars such as Marguerite Forest have argued that sea otter behavior changed dramatically under the intense hunting pressures of the maritime fur trade, with otters spending much less time on land and in fresh water.[9]

It was clear to members of the Lewis and Clark Expedition that the Chinook, Clatsop, Kilamox (Tillamook), and other tribes frequenting the Columbia River mouth were familiar with the trading ships that came annually, offering a rich array of trade goods for sea otter pelts. William Clark on the first of January 1806 inquired of the Chinook and Clatsop which captains of fur trading vessels they had seen recently, and recorded the lists in the journals.[10] These lists, though vital to understanding the sea otter trade on Oregon's Northwest coast at this time, have proven very difficult to pin down to specific ships or captains, owing to both the limited Native understanding of trader names, and Clark's limited understanding of the Native descriptions.

The journals also evince many efforts by expedition members to trade with the Native residents of the coast for the coveted sea otter pelts and, occasionally, Native willingness to sell.[11] Native peoples preferred blue beads, and were often unwilling to sell their treasured pelts for any other item. Ship-borne trade had raised expectations, so that blue beads and other trade goods from metal tools to porcelain plates were already making their way into many Native households in exchange for these pelts, well before the arrival of Lewis and Clark. In spite of the "emence quantity of… Sea otter"[12] Lewis and Clark found "Such high prices we were uneabled to purchase, with[out] reduceing our Small Stock of merchindize on which we have to depend in part for a Subsistance on our return home."[13]

For the Clatsop, Chinook, Tillamook, and other peoples living near the Columbia River's mouth, the sea otter was a species of key cultural value. Ancient oral traditions described the exploits of sea otter hunters in distant times, at places traversed by the Corps of Discovery – of young Nehalem-Tillamook women hunting sea otters at Tillamook Head, of young Chinook men trading for sea otter pelts before obtaining powers and great wealth.[14] The oral

Robert Gray at the mouth of the Columbia River, 1792. Photograph by Asahel Curtis of painting by Fred S. Cozzens, 1925. Image courtesy of Washington State Historical Society.

traditions speak of prosperity related to the hunting of otter, small fortunes made from the pelts and robes, and other items crafted from its fur – giving some hint of the fur trade wealth yet to come.

Extirpation of Oregon's Sea Otter Population

Studies of pre-contact Native middens on the coast demonstrate that the sea otter inhabited not only the coast in the immediate vicinity of Fort Clatsop, but the entire Pacific coastline of what is now Oregon.[15] The Lewis and Clark Expedition made little if any dent in this sea otter population, mentioning that they were plentiful, and carefully recording sales, bargains, and attempted trades for pelts offered by the Clatsop, Chinook, and other tribes. But later the single-minded hunting of sea otters was entirely successful, resulting in complete extirpation of the sea otter on Oregon's coast by the early twentieth century.

Early maritime fur trading accounts touching on the sea otter population of Oregon usually record ships, beginning with Robert Gray's *Columbia Rediviva* in 1792, that entered over the notorious Columbia River Bar (or, in the case of the *Union* of 1795, trying unsuccessfully to do so[16]) for sea otter trading opportunities.[17] Captain George Vancouver's voyage along the southern Oregon coast in April 1792 produced one of the few accounts to mention lesser-known regions. He noted in his journal for April 24 that the Native peoples of the Cape Blanco area (now in Curry County) were dressed in garments "made principally of the skins of deer, bear, fox, and river otter; one or two cub skins of the sea otter, were also observed among them."[18]

Sea otters continued to be mentioned in the records of the lower Columbia fur trade posts, Fort Astoria and Fort Vancouver, where local chiefs served as middlemen – charging 100 to 500 percent markups on pelts entering the Columbia region from other tribes along the coast, and building short-lived international trade empires of their own. One Chinookan chief in particular, Chief Concomly, began to centralize his power and expand his dominion – especially with the construction of John Jacob Astor's fur-trading fort at Astoria in 1811. When the principal fur trading post moved from Fort Astoria to Fort Vancouver in 1824, in part because of declining sea otter abundance, Concomly showed he was irreplaceable to the fur trade. Father Pierre Jean De Smet, visiting Fort Vancouver more than a decade after Concomly's death in 1830, was regaled with tales of Concomly's asserting his fur wealth to the new Hudson's Bay Company managers: "When he used to come to Vancouver in the days of his glory, 300 slaves would precede him, and he used to carpet the ground that he had to traverse, from the main entrance of the fort to the governor's door, several hundred feet, with beaver and otter skins."[19] This frenetic interethnic trade exhausted the north coast fur animals in only a few years, at the same time that epidemic disease swept away Concomly and many of his people.

After Lewis' death on the Natchez Trace, his trunks were inspected and inventoried before sending them on to Richmond and Washington, D.C. It's a fascinating packing list of clothing, including "one pair of red slippers," journals, memorandum books, miscellaneous papers, essays (possibly to be included in his projected three-volume account of the expedition), maps, personal grooming tools, medicine, and the vouchers that the War Department had contested earlier in 1809. If all of these items still existed and were displayed together in a museum, along with the original trunks, it would be an outstanding exhibit, which would provide a window into the last years of Meriwether Lewis' life. Among other things, such an exhibit would correct two misconceptions: the notion that Lewis was indolent during his tenure as the Governor of Upper Louisiana and the idea that he had made no progress on the Enlightenment report of his explorations.

Sea Otter skins at Unalaska, 1892.

In "One Round Portmteau [sic] Trunk," the first-listed item was "One Handsome dressed Sea Otter skin." The individuals who inventoried Lewis' trunks intended the sea otter skin to be forwarded to William Clark.

You can find the entire inventory in Jackson, *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, volume two, 470-474. U.S. Agent to the Chickasaw Nation James Neelly, who was traveling with the Governor, provided an abbreviated list of Lewis' effects in his letter to Former President Jefferson on October 18, 1809. See Jackson, Letters, 467-468 -Ed. ∎

The vast majority of post-fur trade mentions of sea otters focus on the coasts of Coos and Curry Counties, where sea otters were apparently still present into the final decades of the nineteenth century and early part of the twentieth century. But even these occasional glimpses make it clear the populations were dwindling beyond recovery. Coastal newspapers describe local sea otter hunts by American settlers, alongside coastal tribes, starting in the mid-nineteenth century as European-American settlement took hold and settlers familiarized themselves with the coast. One of the earliest examples, described by William Wells in *Harpers* of October 1856, records a small hunt of two female otters with two young in Coos Bay – indicating that there was still a breeding population in the region. Wells gloated that the two they shot would each be worth $35 in San Francisco, much coveted by the Chinese, but becoming less common: "These furs … are fast becoming rare and more valuable. The Chinese in San Francisco pay the highest price for them for shipment to the celestial regions, furs being a mark of dignity and power in China."[20]

Newspapers in the first decade or so of the twentieth century found it noteworthy to record the killing or death of even a single sea otter, such as one killed off Cape Blanco on the south coast during a severe southwester in 1908.[21] "No hunter's trophy equals a sea otter," crowed another story about the same prize.[22] A very late mention of sea otters, again on the south coast, records the killing of a single one in July 1910.[23] But even in the face of the obvious, a 1913 story of a sea otter sighting at Willapa Bay, Washington, just north of the Columbia River estuary, celebrated the potential for a renewed hunt: "Their return means the reopening of the business of otter hunting, which made fortunes for many a fisherman years ago."[24] However, by that time, if not years before, the sea otter was extinct on the Oregon coast, except for occasional strays, and has remained absent to the present day.

Restoring the Sea Otter to Oregon

Attempts to restore sea otters to Oregon and Washington (where they had also been extirpated) came via transfers of otters from Amchitka Island, in the Aleutian chain of Alaska. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service coordinated the transfers, made necessary because the Atomic Energy Commission proposed, and successfully detonated, the five-megaton *Cannikin* nuclear device in a subterranean test on November 6, 1971. It was the largest U.S. underground detonation to date. Ironically, Amchitka had been a nature

Photograph by Chris Pepper of Sea Otter on Vancouver Island, British Columbia. Courtesy of Chris Pepper.

reserve, part of the U.S. National Wildlife Refuge system, designated as such by President William Howard Taft in 1913.[25] Hundreds of sea otters were killed as a result of the *Cannikin* blast.[26] Knowing from prior tests on Amchitka that this would likely be the case, translocations were arranged before the *Cannikin* detonation. Oregon received two shipments of otters: twenty-nine in 1970, and sixty-four in 1971, all released off the coasts of Coos or Curry County on the south coast. Washington also received two shipments of otters, for a total of fifty-nine animals.[27]

Oregon's translocated population was counted annually, and surveyed in 1977. As early as 1972, officials only counted twenty-one Oregon otters, out of an initial translocated population of ninety-three animals. The otter population continued to dwindle, and then died out. Scientists thought a combination of emigration, stress, and possibly shark bite contributed to the failure of the translocation, but the true causes remain unknown.[28] In Washington, by contrast, the translocated population persisted into 1977 and beyond, despite substantial early mortality.[29] By 2007, Washington's sea otter population numbered more than 1,100 individuals, though living in a restricted portion of the otters' original range.[30]

The failure of the first and only sea otter translocation attempt in Oregon eventually led to further efforts. Dave Hatch, a member of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, co-founded the Elakha Alliance in 2000, in partnership with other organizations including the Oregon Zoo, Oregon Museum of Science and Industry, Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians, Ecotrust, several universities, and others. "Elakha" is the word for "sea otter" in the Chinook Jargon, the Native trade language that originated on the Columbia River estuary and that is still spoken by some Native families today. This first incarnation of the Elakha Alliance did much research, public outreach, and partnership coordination on the possibility of attempting again to restore sea otters to the Oregon coast. In late 2017 the Elakha Alliance was reinvigorated, after some years of inactivity, with a new and expanded board. Elakha continues to work towards reintroduction of the sea otter to Oregon's waters via technical studies, public outreach, and coordination with state and federal agencies, to determine the best way to bring the sea otter home to Oregon's nearshore environment after more than a century of absence.[31]

When Lewis and Clark wintered on the northern Oregon coast in 1805-1806, they found a land teeming with wildlife. Following their instructions from President Jefferson, they strove to identify species, their habitats, and the extent of the burgeoning sea otter trade. They bargained with Chinook and Clatsop people for sea otter pelts, learning much about Native bargaining methods in the process.

The sea otter's extirpation in the century following Lewis and Clark has impoverished the nearshore environment, jeopardized the health of Oregon's nearshore kelp ecosystem, and eliminated a keystone species from the coastal environment and coastal Native communities. We believe Thomas Jefferson and Lewis and Clark, were they among us, would welcome the efforts now being undertaken to restore the sea otter to its rightful place on Oregon's coast.

For further information on the Elakha Alliance and its activities, please visit elakhaalliance.org ∎

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Dr. Douglas Deur is a research professor in the Anthropology Department at Portland State University and adjunct professor of Environmental Studies at the University of Victoria (B.C.). His work focuses on the traditional significance of particular landscapes and natural resources to Indigenous communities, especially the Native peoples of Northwestern North America. He also directs National Park Service studies documenting Native American ties to America's national parks.

Notes

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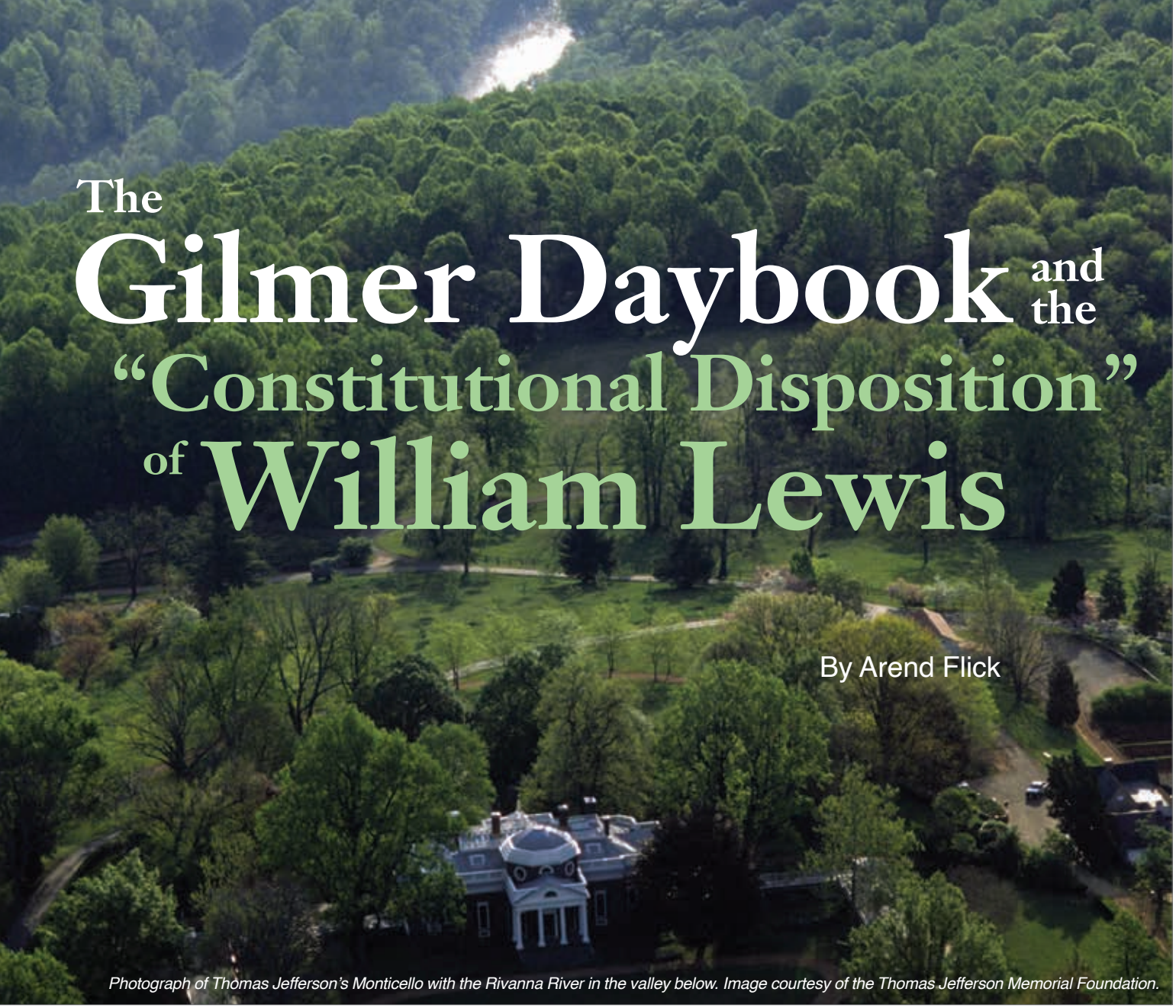
Photograph of Trapper Peak, Bitterroot Mountains, Montana, courtesy of Steve Lee.

The Gilmer Daybook and the "Constitutional Disposition" of William Lewis

By Arend Flick



Photograph of Thomas Jefferson's Monticello with the Rivanna River in the valley below. Image courtesy of the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation.

The Life of William Lewis

In the years leading up to the Revolutionary War, George Walker Gilmer was the most prominent physician in Albemarle County, Virginia, home of Thomas Jefferson and birthplace of Meriwether Lewis. The three families were well acquainted with each other, two of them bound by marriage. Gilmer's wife, Lucy Walker Gilmer, was Lucy Meriwether Lewis' first cousin; Gilmer's brother, Peachy Ridgeway Gilmer, was married to Lucy's sister Mary. Like his father, also a physician named George Gilmer, George Walker Gilmer had studied in Scotland at the University of Edinburgh, then one of the world's preeminent medical colleges. Born and raised in Williamsburg, the younger Gilmer moved to the Virginia Piedmont sometime in the late 1760s. He was already a friend of Jefferson's, probably from their days together as students at the College of William and Mary.[1]

Between January 23, 1771, and early 1775, Gilmer kept a daybook, now archived at the University of Virginia, in which he recorded his patient visits, often along with his diagnoses and prescriptions. He also used the daybook as an account log, revealing that some patients, including Meriwether Lewis' father, William, paid him in tobacco or peach brandy. One of the reasons Gilmer may have broken off his record in 1775 (assuming he did – it's possible later daybooks are lost) is that as the decade wore on, he became more and more involved in revolutionary politics. He was first

lieutenant in the Independent Company of Volunteers of Albemarle County, made passionate speeches in favor of independence, and served for a while during the war as a military doctor. The daybook is fairly legible in its earlier pages but becomes progressively harder to read, in part because Gilmer often uses enigmatic abbreviations, though mostly because his later entries seem to have been made while he was riding on horseback from patient to patient. Earlier entries have the look of having been written at a desk at home after the day's rounds. The daybook has never been transcribed or published. Among his many patients (almost all of them Albemarle gentry) were Meriwether Lewis' future stepfather John Marks and Marks' brothers, several of Meriwether's uncles and cousins, and (most famously) Thomas Jefferson, whom Gilmer nursed through a long illness. But no one's name appears more frequently than that of William (or often "Wm.") Lewis, whom Gilmer saw upwards of forty times in a four-year period. The daybook contributes substantially to our understanding of the life – and perhaps the death – of William Lewis while also indirectly shedding light on his famous son.[2]

We know little about William Lewis, and much of what we think we know is probably wrong, based on oral history rather than documentary evidence. He was probably born in 1735 or perhaps early 1736 at Warner Hall, Gloucester County, Virginia, the great Tidewater plantation house of his great-grandmother's Warner family where his father, Robert, had also been born. Robert Lewis had married Jane Meriwether around 1725 when she was twenty and he a year older. Their fathers, John Lewis and Nicholas Meriwether, were prominent members of the Virginia planter elite who knew each other well, serving together as vestrymen for St. Peter's Parish in New Kent County in the years before John and his wife Elizabeth left the county for Warner Hall, which they inherited upon the death of her brother. It was the first of what would be many more Lewis-Meriwether marriages.[3]

Ambitious members of the Tidewater gentry, including Jefferson's father Peter, began to look west in the 1730s for enlarging – or in some cases simply acquiring – wealth. This was a culture in which land ownership gave status, independence, and political power. The tobacco farming they practiced also depleted the soil so quickly that plantation owners unfamiliar with (or indifferent to) the intricacies of crop rotation had to look elsewhere for new land. Nicholas Meriwether was an ambitious man, and Robert – a third son – a relatively impoverished one. Nicholas Meriwether got to the Piedmont before Robert, eventually becoming

The grave of William Lewis at Cloverfields plantation, Abemarle County, Virginia. The gravestone was placed in 1928 by the D.A.R. The listed dates for Lewis' birth and death are incorrect. Photo by M.R. Devendorf.

the largest landowner in Albemarle County. His holdings eventually grew to over 30,000 acres, some of it spilling into adjoining counties, and by 1735, he had settled his family on a plantation he called "The Farm," on the eastern side of present-day Charlottesville. About this same time, his son-in-law patented over 10,000 acres of prime Piedmont farmland and brought his family from the Tidewater to a plantation just a few miles northeast of Nicholas'. He called it "Belvoir," or beautiful view. William Lewis was a toddler when the family came to Belvoir in 1736.

William Lewis grew up in large family (like his father, he was a middle child), with neighbors that included cousins his own age as well as some of the adult children of his grandfather, who died when William was nine. His father played a prominent role in the political life of the county and state during William's boyhood. In 1742, Robert was elected to the House of Burgesses, and he later served as a militia colonel and county magistrate. Two of William's older brothers followed a similar path. Charles Lewis (born around 1730) became a captain of the Minutemen at the outset of the Revolutionary War and died in 1779 while serving as a colonel guarding British prisoners. Nicholas (born around 1734) became one of Thomas Jefferson's closest friends, managing Monticello for

him when Jefferson was in France. All of the closest male relatives of William Lewis, in fact, had substantial public lives, including his grandfather Nicholas Meriwether, who had been justice of the peace and sheriff of New Kent County.[4]

Jane Meriwether Lewis died in 1757, when William was around twenty-two, and Robert remarried four years later. His second wife was Elizabeth Thornton Meriwether, the mother of Lucy Meriwether, then nine. For the next four years or so, William Lewis and Lucy Meriwether – now stepsiblings as well as cousins and eventually husband and wife – lived under the same roof. It was not at all uncommon for Lewises and Meriwethers to marry in their early twenties, but this was not the case for Meriwether's father. Something delayed the beginning of a typical colonial gentry adulthood for him. Perhaps it was simply the absence of resources (though other land-rich fathers gave acreage to their sons upon attaining their majority) or a suitable wife. But perhaps it was something else.

When Robert Lewis died in 1765, he left William nearly 2000 acres of land just west of Charlottesville, along with a portion of his slaves and stock. For the next three years, William was evidently preoccupied with developing the land and building a residence, which he called Locust Hill. Finally, in late 1768 or early 1769, William (thirty-three) and Lucy (sixteen) married. Their first child, a daughter named Jane after William's mother (who was also Lucy's aunt) arrived in March 1770. Three more children followed: Lucinda (who died very young) in 1772, Meriwether in 1774, and Reuben in 1777.

The Fredericksville Parish Vestry Book from 1742 to 1787 contains multiple references to services performed by Robert Lewis and his son Nicholas during this period, both of whom were often members of the vestry. "Colonel Charles Lewis" is also referenced at least ten times, and his name appears in the St. Anne's Parish Vestry Book, where he was frequently a vestryman (North Garden, his estate, lay within this parish district). But William is almost entirely absent from public record, with the lone exception his act of witnessing an indenture in 1778.[5] It is striking enough to call for explanation that a man whose wealth and status made it reasonable to suppose he would take on civic responsibilities did not do so, at least until his military service began just before the war.

At some point in the 1760s or early 1770s, he almost certainly joined the Albemarle militia. But not, as we might have expected, as an officer. Militia commanders were drawn from the highest echelons of the county gentry, and they gave men in a highly stratified culture a chance to demonstrate leadership ability and civic-mindedness. William Lewis, however, did not serve in a leadership position in the earliest stages of his military career, whenever it began.

Meriwether Lewis' mother Lucy Meriwether Lewis. Image courtesy of Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation.

In early 1775, when he was forty and the war beginning, he joined "The Independent Company of Albemarle" as one of twenty or thirty privates. His older brother Charles was captain of the company; his neighbor John Marks, who would later become Lucy's second husband, was second lieutenant. Each volunteer swore to muster regularly and "provide Gun, shot-pouch, powder-horn; and to appear on duty in a hunting shirt."[6] On April 21, 1775, Lord Dunmore, the colony's royal governor, seized the gunpowder from the public magazine in Williamsburg, ostensibly to protect it from being taken by slaves in a rumored uprising, but probably because he feared revolt by the Colonial Virginia citizenry. This was seen by patriotic Virginians as an act of war directed against them; it was in effect the incident that sparked the Revolutionary War in Virginia, two days after Lexington. The Albemarle company with Private Lewis marched toward Williamsburg on April 29 to confront Dunmore but returned home before getting there at the urging of George Washington, who wished to avoid – or at least delay – a violent altercation. Back

in Albemarle, with tensions temporarily abated, William Lewis' name appears in a muster roll of June 17, along with his brother Charles, his brother-in-law David Meriwether, and John Marks' brothers Hastings and James.[7] But he had still not been chosen or elected to a leadership position. Although a well-connected plantation owner and member of the Piedmont elite, he was a forty-year-old private. One wonders about what deficiencies were seen in him that delayed his attainment of officer status for so long.[8]

In early summer 1775, the Third Virginia Convention – anticipating the war to come – created a three-tier military system for the colony that would include a regular army (the Continental line) to fight the British, a militia (to be used in case of invasion), and a new "Minute Service" to replace the independent companies and provide the heart of Virginia's defense. Sixteen multicounty battalions were formed, with Albemarle being grouped with three other counties into what was called the Buckingham District Battalion. Charles Lewis served as a lieutenant colonel of this battalion and Nicholas Lewis was one of two captains for the Albemarle County troops. (John Marks transferred to the Continental Army later that fall.) After several reorganizations occasioned by further transfers to the regular army, William Lewis was finally made an officer in a vote taken on September 9, 1775. He became a lieutenant, probably in his brother Nicholas' company.[9] He had been elected by the common soldiers in his company to a position that civil authorities had not seen fit to appoint him to earlier. There is inconclusive evidence that this battalion, with Lewis a member, fought the British and Lord Dunmore at the Battle of Great Bridge near Norfolk in December 1775.

William probably spent most of the winter of 1775-1776 at Locust Hill with his family, which included eighteen-month-old Meriwether. In May 1776, the minute battalion was merged into the Second Battalion of Minutemen of the West Augusta District Battalion, under the command of Colonel Charles Lewis.[10] Once again, Nicholas Lewis served as a captain for Albemarle County, and William was one of his lieutenants. This battalion was probably present at the Battle of Gwynn's Island in July. Fearing for his life, Lord Dunmore had withdrawn with Loyalist forces from Williamsburg in late 1775 and was now encamped on a small, fortified island in Chesapeake Bay. In July, American troops defeated the British forces (who did not put up much of a fight, since they were weakened by smallpox) and harried them off the island and out of Virginia altogether, thereby permitting the colony to deploy many of its soldiers northward to augment Washington's Continental Army in New York.[11]

The one letter we have from William Lewis, from "Pages" in Gloucester County, is addressed to his wife and dated June 21, 1776, shortly before the battle. Whether or not his battalion actually fought at Gwynn's Island is unclear. Appended to the letter, however, is a note dated July 17, 1776, from a quartermaster named "Tho. Porter" that reads, "This is to certify that Capt. Nich. Lewis + his two Sub: William Lewis Lieut + John Henderson Ensign have drawn no rations from me but what they have paid for." This is the only source for the oft-repeated myth that William Lewis, as Richard Dillon put it, "served without pay through the Revolution, considering the shouldering of arms to be his patriotic duty."[12]

Sometime between October and December 1776, the Minute Service was seen to have failed and thus disbanded.[13] Thereafter, Virginia's armed forces consisted of a Continental Line, a State Line, and a militia – though the Continental Line continually poached members from the State Line and the militia, thus depleting them of manpower and preventing them from serving much purpose for the duration of the war.

Despite what biographers and historians from Dillon through Ambrose and Stroud have said, there is no evidence that William Lewis served in the regular army in any capacity after the summer of 1776. The definitive list of Revolutionary War officers compiled by F. B. Heitman does not include William Lewis (once we disambiguate for other William Lewises who cannot, for one reason or another, have been the same man who was Lucy's husband and Meriwether's father). Nor does Gwathmey's *Historical Register of Virginians in the Revolution*. Nor does Eckenrode's *Virginia Soldiers of the American Revolution*. Nor does the comprehensive list of officers in the Continental and State lines during the Revolutionary War that was published in the January 1895 issue of *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*. Nor can a record of his service after 1776 be found through a search of records available through the *Fold3* website.[14] It's very unlikely that William Lewis served in an unofficial, undocumented position with the regular army during the war when his peers without exception were commissioned officers. He probably withdrew back into civilian life in the fall of 1776, back to his plantation in Albemarle, perhaps mustering at times with the skeleton militia that still existed there. This is apparently where his brother Charles ended up. After the Battle of Saratoga in October 1777, some 2000 British prisoners of war (along with nearly as many German mercenaries and 400 women and children) were marched

south to Albemarle County and housed in barracks not far from Locust Hill. Charles Lewis was appointed commander of the barracks, though he died shortly after the prisoners arrived. It is possible that William assisted in guarding these prisoners, along with other members of the Albemarle militia. He may also have been involved in such typical home guard activities as suppressing Loyalist sedition and thwarting slave rebellion. We do know that he signed the Oath of Allegiance to the Commonwealth of Virginia in April 1779 (though there is some possibility that the oath was written and most of the signatures affixed in 1777) and the Albemarle Declaration of Independence in June 1779. And that is nearly the extent to which the historical record contains references to his name. He died in November 1779.

Although William was in his early forties by the time his neighbor and acquaintance Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence, he was not older than many of his fellow Virginia planters who served as officers in Revolutionary War. He might well have followed the path of John Marks (only a few years younger) in 1776 and transferred from the minute service to the regulars. Why didn't he? We cannot know for sure, but we can legitimately speculate about the reason based not only on what we know about events in Virginia at this time but also on persuasive (and hitherto for the most part unremarked) evidence in the historical record, including the Gilmer daybook, that provides clues to the state of his mind and body at this time.

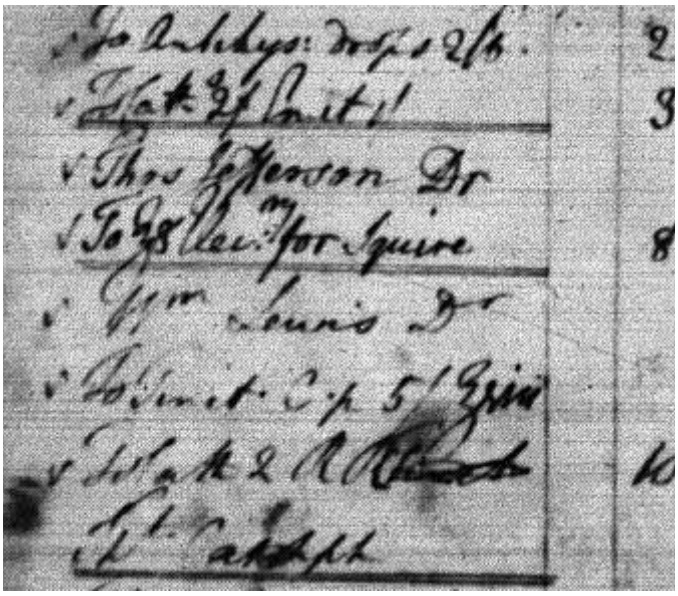
Times were exceedingly difficult for Virginia planters during this period, and it is reasonable to suppose that Locust Hill required all of William's attention in the late 1770s. The war in general and the British presence in Virginia had led to economic collapse.[15] This period of "severe trial" for Virginia might have led to William's decision to devote himself with near exclusivity to the defense of his plantation rather than the defense of his colony or the emerging nation. But many other plantation owners served, and there seem to have been other, more personal explanations for William's absence from the war. A sketch of Meriwether Lewis' life, written in 1813, helps explain this absence. It was written by a supremely reliable observer who lived near the Lewis family and knew William and his brothers well. Thomas Jefferson had been asked to supply a brief account of Meriwether's life for the first edition of the Lewis and Clark journals, edited by Nicholas Biddle and Paul Allen. In this sketch, he wrote of Meriwether that he "had, from early life, been subject to hypochondriac affections. It was a constitutional disposition in all the nearer branches of the family of his name, *and was more immediately inherited by him from his father*. They had not however been so strong as to give uneasiness to his family" (my italics).[16] "Hypochondria" at this time referred to the condition that we know today as depression. Jefferson is saying that Meriwether (with whom he was intimately acquainted, not only as a neighbor in Albemarle but as a housemate in the White House during the time Meriwether served as Jefferson's private secretary) suffered from the same chronic melancholy that his father did. William's life of civic and military duty might well have been curtailed by a condition characterized by periods of major depression or persistent depressive disorder. Jefferson's assessment is that this was a family trait that William passed on to his son, who almost certainly died by suicide.

The Daybook

George Gilmer's daybook supports this diagnosis and provides additional clues about the nature of William's physical and mental health in the early 1770s.

In general, Gilmer notes when a visit to a man's home was to see his wife, child, or slave rather than the man himself. On January 25, 1772, for example, Gilmer treated Lewis' daughter Jane. In late September 1773, he made a number of visits to Lucinda, the last on September 30, from which we can infer that she died shortly thereafter. Many of these entries are illegible, but a type of drug that looks like "anthelenem" was prescribed for Lucinda on several occasions. Anthelmintic drugs were used to kill parasitic worms (hookworm was an especially common malady among colonial children), which probably indicates what Gilmer thought Lucinda was ill with, and what she probably died of. On April 13, 1771, he visited William's "negro wench." Young Meriwether's name is never mentioned, and there is nothing in the period leading up to his birth on August 18, 1774, or immediately afterwards that suggests that Lucy needed Gilmer's services to bring him into the world or keep him there. He was evidently a healthy baby, and his mother was probably assisted by a midwife during her pregnancies. In any case, references to "Wm. Lewis" in the daybook appear to refer to William's illness or injury, not that of a family member, unless otherwise specified.

Medical diagnosis during this period of American history was not particularly scientific, and certainly not empirical. E. G. Chuinard called it "pre-scientific" and health care generally a "scientific morass," even thirty years later when



Gilmer Daybook showing entry of 1772 showing appointments with John Marks, Thomas Jefferson, and William Lewis. Image courtesy of Arend Flick.

William's son was preparing for the expedition. Historian David J. Peck remarks that at this time, the "medical profession understood virtually nothing about the true nature of disease," nothing about the existence or role of bacteria and viruses in causing illness.[17] The most common maladies during this time were of a respiratory or gastrointestinal nature. Bleeding patients as a treatment method was so common that most people had a lancet and a bleeding bowl as part of their home inventory. The therapeutic value of blood-letting was advocated by the leading medical teachers at Edinburgh.[18] Even though he almost certainly employed the treatment method he had been taught in Scotland, Gilmer does not mention bleeding directly as medical remedy in his daybook. But he does make explicit reference to the two treatments he apparently found most salubrious and therefore employed most frequently with his Albemarle patients, including William Lewis: emetics and cathartics. Both of these purgative treatments, the former to induce vomiting, the latter to bring about voiding of the bowels, were thought to rid the body of the toxins that made it ill in the first place. (Thus Dr. Benjamin Rush's celebrated "thunderbolts" of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, which at least had the virtue of not causing anyone's death.) Gilmer's daybook is littered with references to his having prescribed "emet." or "cath.," in multiple cases to William Lewis. We can't be sure what symptoms he was trying to treat, since purgatives were employed to treat just about every illness. But they had been a common treatment for depression for nearly two hundred years, at least since the time they were recommended by Robert Burton in his famous *Anatomy of Melancholy*.[19] Furthermore, on several occasions, for example June 7, 1774, William Lewis was also prescribed something that looks like "Asaf," probably Asafoetida, an herb commonly used in Colonial America to treat hysteria – and melancholia.

There is some evidence in the daybook that Gilmer was also treating William for a chronic lung condition, perhaps bronchitis or even tuberculosis. More than once, the first time on December 2, 1771, Gilmer prescribed camphene, a purified form of turpentine that was mixed with hot water and breathed in by patients who had lung ailments. A few weeks later, Gilmer gave William pennyroyal, a plant from whose leaves and oil a medicine to treat pneumonia is derived. Still in use today, pennyroyal was also given for other maladies as well, so we can't be certain William was suffering from a lung condition during this time. Another prescription for camphene in March 1772, however, suggests that William's complaint was, in fact, respiratory. He must have recovered enough to serve in the military for at least a brief period in the mid-1770s.

Today we know enough about depression to realize that its root causes are more likely to be genetic than environmental, or at least some complex mixture of the two. But in William Lewis' case, it may make sense to ask whether his physical health at this time played a role in giving rise to, or at least exacerbating, his depression. The single drug that Gilmer prescribed most often for Lewis throughout the early 1770s was Cantharides, often abbreviated as "canth." Its uses during this time were wide-ranging, but a repeated cryptic notation next to Lewis' name at times – "neapol" – gives some indication of what Gilmer thought his patient was suffering from and how best to treat it.[20] Syphilis was often referred to as the "Neapolitan disease" during this period, because it was thought by many to have originated in Italy when French soldiers invaded Naples in the late fifteenth century. Cantharides was a common treatment for sexually transmitted infections at the time – as was, of course, mercury.[21] Somewhat paradoxically, it was also thought to have an aphrodisiacal effect on the patient. A substance secreted by bark beetles, Cantharides was applied as a tincture to remove warts or administered orally.

I have been unable to identify any explicit reference to mercury in Gilmer's entries for Lewis or anyone else, which might at first seem to weaken the hypothesis that Lewis was being treated for syphilis or gonorrhea. (The distinction

between the two diseases was not yet understood; most physicians of the time thought gonorrhea was a condition that developed into syphilis.) However, Gilmer does often employ the abbreviations "cal" and "calo" – likely for calomel – in connection with Lewis (and a few other patients) in the daybook, and calomel is mercurous chloride. Mercury pills and salve were the treatment of choice for sexually transmitted diseases for two hundred years, until Salvarsan and other antibiotics came along in the twentieth century.[22]

If Lewis had syphilis, he may have been symptomatic during the early 1770s, when he was being seen by Gilmer. Gilmer would have treated him for various chancres, rashes, and swollen lymph nodes that are the signs of early and secondary-stage syphilis. By the time he joined the Independent Company of Albemarle in April 1775, however, he may have entered the latent stage of the disease, which may have led him to believe (falsely) that he was cured. This latent stage, which can last for years, is a period during which the infected person has no visible symptoms and cannot pass the disease on to others. Then perhaps a tertiary stage began sometime around 1776 or 1777, with early-stage neuromuscular degeneration and cognitive impairment.[23] This is highly speculative, of course, but it is consistent with Gilmer's apparent diagnosis and would help to explain, among other things, his apparent withdrawal from military life after 1776. It could also account for the fact that children fathered by Lewis were conceived roughly in late 1773 (Meriwether) and spring 1776 (Reuben), when he was perhaps both asymptomatic and incapable of infecting Lucy.

Lewis was certainly often ill between 1771 and 1775, likely with a chronic respiratory condition and depression, and probably with a sexually transmitted infection (STI) of some kind. Whether syphilis, gonorrhea, of some other STI, it would have been an additional source of mental torment for him as it cycled between symptomatic and asymptomatic stages. He would not thereby have been unique for his time and place.[24] The history of sexuality and sexually transmitted diseases in colonial Virginia is yet to be written, but there is ample evidence that planter gentry at this time did not always confine themselves sexually to partners to whom they were married, and that disease was sometimes the result. Thomas Marks, William's neighbor and the brother of Lucy's second husband, lived for many years with a woman he never married and fathered a number of children with her (providing for all of them in his will).[25] The most celebrated diarist of early eighteenth-century Virginia, Robert Byrd II, speaks candidly (though in a written code of his own devising) of his frequent bouts with gonorrhea, which he seems mostly to have contracted from servant girls.[26] Venereal diseases were common among slaves (assuming this was the source of William's infection) and a major problem in the Continental Army, not just among enlisted men. Medical records from the Revolutionary War indicate that gonorrhea and syphilis had a "significant impact" among members of the Continental Army – and presumably among members of the militia as well.[27] DNA has now established beyond a reasonable doubt that Thomas Jefferson fathered children during his widowhood, even if the accusations by his detractors that he was syphilitic are improbable. It is not far-fetched, in other words, to hypothesize on the basis of the available evidence that William Lewis may have contracted a sexually transmitted infection outside his marriage, perhaps from a servant girl, a slave, or even the wife or daughter of a friend.

Depression, and perhaps syphilis or gonorrhea, may well have contributed to his death in November 1779. The story as passed down in his family (and later among historians) is that he had been on leave from his army duties and home with his family at Locust Hill, when he attempted to cross the swollen Rivanna River east of Charlottesville to return to his unit. His horse, it is said, slipped in the icy current of the river and was swept away, leaving a drenched and shivering Lewis cast up upon the shore. Too far from Locust Hill to make his way home, he travelled four or so miles northeast and sought shelter at the Cloverfields plantation where his wife had grown up, and where a sister-in-law still lived.[28] He died of pneumonia at Cloverfields several days later and was buried there, perhaps because the weather prevented his body from being returned to Locust Hill.

There were no death certificates or coroner's reports then, and apparently no written account of Lewis's death for over a hundred years. Later accounts of the death are somewhat contradictory and contain obvious embellishments.[29] As we have seen, Lewis was not on active military duty during this time, so he could not have been returning to battle after having come home on leave. The Rivanna crossing at Secretarys Ford could be treacherous during spring and summer flooding, but the river would not likely have been in flood stage in November.[30] An experienced rider like Lewis should have had little difficulty crossing it, even if snow or sleet were falling. Then there is the question of why Lewis was buried at Cloverfields when his family lived (and his youngest daughter was buried) only a few miles to the west

at Locust Hill. The "official" story of William Lewis' death may well be true in part, despite its mythic, highly literary elements (e.g., the perilous quest, the trial by water, the deathbed entreaty). But it will not be unjust to his memory to consider another possible explanation.

If depression played a role in his death, it seems unlikely that it led him to overt suicide. If it had, Jefferson would almost certainly have known, and he would not have said of Meriwether that in observing "at times sensible depressions of mind, I estimated their course by what I had seen in the family." Jefferson is suggesting that since William Lewis hadn't killed himself, he did not expect Meriwether, while sharing the same melancholic disposition as his father, to kill himself. But assuming that the events that led to William's death did begin at the Rivanna (and we cannot know even that with certainty), there may be another explanation for the river's role in his demise.

Hydrotherapy, and particularly *cold* water bathing, has a long medical (and pseudo-medical) history, dating back as far as ancient Egypt and later to Greece. It had a renewed vogue in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, beginning in the early 1700s with the work of an English physician named Sir John Floyer, who wrote several treatises on the virtues of hydrotherapy, all of them advocating cold water bathing as treatment for both mental and physical disorders. The popularity of his books may be measured by the fact that they were republished throughout the eighteenth century and translated into other languages. James Currie, a Scottish physician trained at the University of Edinburgh who lived in Virginia in the early 1770s, was another strong proponent of cold bathing for illnesses of the mind and body. The "cold water cure," in fact, had been a standard treatment method for depression since Hippocrates, who said that it "allayed lassitude." Mental illnesses of all kinds were treated with cold-water immersion throughout the eighteenth century. The chancres, sores, and painful discharges of venereal diseases were also often soothed by application of or immersion in cold water. Byrd writes in his diary that he was pleased his physician "agrees to [his] going into the cold baths" as treatment (if not cure) for his condition. William Lewis may thus have gone to the Rivanna on that cold November day for what he hoped would be its medicinal, or at least palliative, value, whether counseled to do so by Gilmer or by the folk medical practices of his time and place. If so, it would not be surprising that a man who also had chronic pulmonary disease caught pneumonia and died as a result.[31]

Thomas Jefferson was an advocate for cold water foot baths, which he endured or enjoyed throughout his adult life, a morning feature of his characteristic daily regimen.

I offer this as a possible explanation for William's death without claiming it to be what definitely happened. I am speculating – drawing inferences from facts and probable facts – without suggesting that those speculations are themselves facts. But unless Jefferson and Gilmer misdiagnosed Lewis, there is compelling evidence that he suffered from the disorders I have ascribed to him. To speculate about the role those disorders might have played in his death seems reasonable and appropriate.

To what extent Meriwether eventually came to learn details of his father's health, and their possible role in his death, is unknowable. It seems likely that in his adolescence or young manhood, he heard whispers about his father that clashed with the official family story. If so, he would not have been the first man whose father's life, and death, cast a long shadow on his own.[32] As for William, if he becomes less conventionally heroic as a result of our scrutiny of the Gilmer Daybook, the Jefferson biography, and the Revolutionary War service records, he nevertheless becomes more human, and perhaps even more deserving of our admiration. His struggle with mental illness and physical infirmity can be seen as another kind of heroism. And he had the great good fortune to have fathered one of the most remarkable men in American history.[33] ∎

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Notes

1. For biographical sketches of Gilmer's life, see John Gilmer Speed, *The Gilmers in America* (1897; rpt. Miami: HardPress Publishing, n.d.), 31-51 and Richard Beale Davis, *Francis Walker Gilmer: Life and Learning in Jefferson's Virginia* (Richmond: The Dietz Press, 1939), 5-7. John Gilmer Speed was a distant relative of George Walker Gilmer; Francis Walker Gilmer was George Walker Gilmer's son.

2. The Gilmer daybook is in the Gilmer-Skipwith Papers, 1767-1925, Accession #6145, 6145-a, 6145-b, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, VA. I am grateful to Penny White, Reference Librarian, University of Virginia, and Samuel Wylie, Reader Services, Huntington Library, for their assistance in helping me obtain and read a microfilm of the daybook.

3. Merrow Egerton Sorley, *Lewis of Warner Hall: The History of a Family* (1935; rpt. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 1979). See also Sarah Travers Lewis (Scott) Anderson, *Lewises, Meriwethers and Their Kin* (1938; rpt. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 1984).

4. For an overview of the lives of Robert, Charles, and Nicholas Lewis, see John H. Gwathmey, *Twelve Virginia Counties: Where the Western Migration*

Began (1937; rpt. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 1937). William Lewis was the youngest of four brothers. The eldest, John Lewis (1726-1787), inherited his father's Gloucester County plantation but moved to the Dan River settlement in North Carolina where he also seems to have had an active public life, unlike his youngest brother.

5. *Fredericksville Parish Vestry Book, 1742-1787*. The Huntington Library has a microfilm copy of the *St. Anne's Parish Vestry Book, 1772-1785*. The original is at the University of Virginia. It was transcribed and published by Eric C. Grundset in *Magazine of Virginia Genealogy* 51:4 (November 2013): 261-72 and 52:1 (February 2014): 10-30.

6. "Papers of George Gilmer, of 'Pen Park,' 1775-1778." *Miscellaneous Papers of the Virginia Historical Society, 1887*, 82.

7. For good treatments of the Dunmore incident, see John E. Selby, *The Revolution in Virginia 1775-1783* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1988), 1-5 and Michael A. McDonnell, *The Politics of War: Race, Class, and Conflict in Revolutionary Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 49-50. William Lewis' name appears on the July 1775 muster roll in Gilmer, "Papers," 85.

8. One possible explanation is that he was seen as insufficiently committed to the patriot cause. See McDonnell, 79.

9. Gilmer, "Papers," 113.

10. E. M. Sanchez-Saavedra, *A Guide to Virginia Military Organizations in the American Revolution, 1774-1787* (Westminster, MD: Heritage Books, 2007), 24-5.

11. For a discussion of the Battle of Gwynn's Island, see Selby, *Revolution*, 104-6 and McDonnell, 249-50.

12. William Lewis to Lucy Meriwether Lewis, June 21, 1776, Lewis Family Papers (1776-1841), Accession no. 20902, The Library of Virginia. Richard Dillon, *Meriwether Lewis* (1965; rpt. Lafayette, CA: Great West Books, 2003), 8. The apparent fact that Lewis and his two colleagues paid for their own food during this campaign somehow became expanded into the "fact" that Lewis served throughout the war without pay. "Pages," from which the letter was written, is probably Roswell Plantation in Gloucester County, the ancestral home of the Page family. John Page, a militia leader, became lieutenant governor of Virginia in 1776. The plantation lay just across the York River from Williamsburg.

13. McDonnell, 257.

14. Francis B. Heitman, ed., *Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army, From Its Organization, September 29, 1789 to March 2, 1903* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1903); John H. Gwathmey, *Historical Register of Virginians in the Revolution* (Richmond: The Dietz Press, 1938); H.J. Eckenrode, *List of the Colonial Soldiers of Virginia* (1917: rpt. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, Inc., 2001). William Lewis has often been confused with William Lynn Lewis (1729-1811) of Augusta County, Virginia, who served throughout the Revolutionary War.

15. Selby, *Revolution*, viii.

16. Donald Jackson, ed., *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, with Related Documents: 1783-1854*, 2nd ed. 2 vols. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 2.591-2.

17. David J. Peck, D.O. *Or Perish in the Attempt: Wilderness Medicine in the Lewis & Clark Expedition* (Helena: Farcountry Press, 2002), 33.

18. E. G. Chuinard, M.D. *Only One Man Died: The Medical Aspects of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* (1979; rpt. Bozeman: Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, 1997), 43, 68, 67.

19. In section two of the *Anatomy*, Burton lists treatments for chronic melancholy, one of which he calls the use of "purgers," which he describes as "either single or compound, and that gently, or violently, purging upward or downward." One entire subsection of the section two is devoted to upward purgers (that is, emetics) and another to downward purgers (cathartics).

20. Gilmer used the "neapol" designation next to Lewis' name for the first time on 6 April 1771 and at various other times through at least August 1773. Most though not all of these entries also make reference to Cantharides or camphor as a treatment method.

21. There is some evidence that Cantharides was associated with the University of Edinburgh as a recommended treatment method for syphilis. See John Robertson, *A Practical Treatise on the Powers of Cantharides* (Edinburgh, 1806). Robertson was a student at the medical college a few years after Gilmer was. Cantharides was used as early as the fourteenth century to treat sexually transmitted infections. See Franjo Gruber, et al., "History of Venereal Diseases from Antiquity to the Renaissance," *Acta Dermatovenerol Croat*. 23 (2015):1-11, https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25969906/.

22. Frederick F. Cartwright, *Disease and History: The Influence of Disease in Shaping the Great Events of History* (New York: Crowell, 1972), 78-80.

23. Cartwright, *Disease*, 54-6.

24. Linda E. Merians remarks that "Venereal disease existed in epidemical proportions" in the eighteenth century, though her focus is on British and French society. See *The Secret Malady: Venereal Disease in Eighteenth-Century Britain and France* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1996). In the same collection of essays, 16, Susan P. Conner states that "the eighteenth century was obsessed with venereal disease."

25. See Thomas Marks' will, *Albemarle County Will Book 5* (1801-1817), 386.

26. Marion Tinling and Louis B. Wright, eds., *The Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover, 1709-1712* (Richmond: The Dietz Press, 1941). For an account of Byrd's gonorrhea, see F. J. Spencer, "Byrd's 'Running,'" *Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine* 62 (November 1986): 918-22. I am grateful to Professor Jodi L. Koste of Virginia Commonwealth University for referring me to this article.

27. For evidence of syphilis among Revolutionary War soldiers, see Mark S. Rasnake, "History of U.S. Military Contributions to the Study of Sexually Transmitted Diseases," *Military Medicine* 170 (April 2005): 61-5. The incidence of syphilis among slaves in Colonial and nineteenth-century America is well documented, with some experts theorizing that syphilis itself emerged from a mutation in the bacterium that causes yaws, a non-venereal infection then common among children from Africa.

28. Lucy's brother Nicholas had inherited Cloverfields from their father Thomas in 1757. Nicholas died in 1772, and the estate eventually passed down to his son William Douglas Meriwether, who would have been living there along with his mother when Lewis died. William Douglas Meriwether was also, of course, a distant cousin of Lewis'.

29. The first detailed account of William's death was written by a WPA historian named Robert T. Taylor, who based it on an interview he conducted in 1936 with two direct descendants of Lucy's brother Nicholas. (See Robert T. Taylor, July 15, 1936, interview with Miss Margaret Randolph and Mrs. C. N. Rafferty. "Manuscript Notes on the History of Albemarle," University of Virginia Library, MSS1135, Folder 2.) Taylor was told that William was on leave from the army when he stopped for a brief visit at Cloverfields before heading across the river to see his family at Locust Hill. In attempting to cross the Rivanna (westbound), he had the unfortunate accident that led to his death. Bakeless cites Taylor in his account of Lewis' death, which forms the basis for all later accounts. But writers after Bakeless disagree about whether William was staying with his family at Cloverfields or only stopping there on his way to Locust Hill. They further disagree about whether William was leaving his family after having visited them or only just coming home for a visit. Some accounts have him slipping from his horse while heading east toward the battlefront; some accounts have him heading west, which would seem to be away from it. Most accounts have him dying in 1779 but several who agree with this date have him also serving at the battle of Yorktown, which occurred in 1781. None of these later accounts cites sources other than Bakeless, if they cite sources at all.

30. In recent years, major or moderate flooding of the Rivanna has occurred mostly in September (seven times) or March (three times). Other significant floods have been in May, June, and October. See https://www.weather.gov/media/marfc/FloodClimo/JMS/Palmyra.pdf. November 1779 weather reports for Virginia are hard to come by, but the diary of William Clark's brother Jonathan indicates that the Hudson Valley of New York, where he was stationed, experienced light snow on November 3 and rain on November 9. The famous "hard winter" of 1779-1780 does not seem to have begun much before late November in Virginia.

31. Thomas Jefferson was also a devotee of cold-water bathing, though only of his feet. Writing in 1815 to his friend and fellow Albemarlean James Maury, he observed, "Your practice of the cold bath thrice a week during the winter, and at the age of 70 is a bold one, which I should not, a priori, have pronounced salutary. but all theory must yield to experience, and every constitution has it's own laws. I have for 50 years bathed my feet in cold water every morning (as you mention) and having been remarkably exempted from colds (not having had one in every 7 years of my life on an average) I have supposed it might be ascribed to that practice." See Thomas Jefferson to James Maury, June 16, 1815. *Founders Online* https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-08-02-0439.

32. Physician Reimert Thorolf Ravenholt has argued that Meriwether himself contracted syphilis while on the expedition and that his suicide four years later was the direct result of his struggle with the effects of this disease. See "Triumph Then Despair: The Tragic Death of Meriwether Lewis," *Epidemiology* 5:3 (May 2004): 366-79. It would be unspeakably sad if both William and Meriwether died as a result of having contracted the same *Treponema pallidum* bacterium.

33. I'm grateful to James Holmberg of the Filson Library, Louisville, for reviewing an earlier draft of this essay and making useful suggestions for improvement.

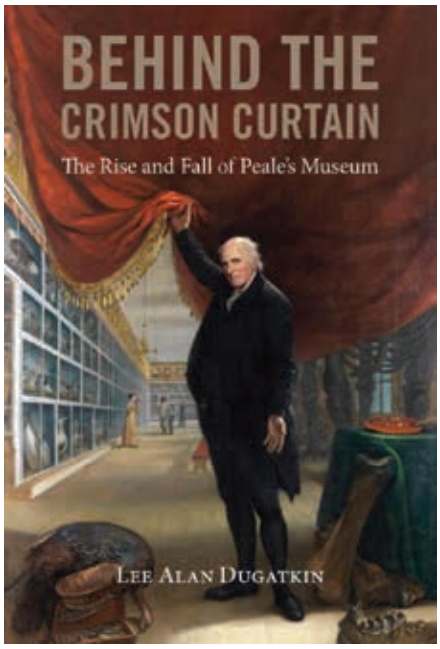
Reviews

Behind the Crimson Curtain: The Rise and Fall of Peale's Museum

By Lee Alan Dugatkin
Louisville, Kentucky: Butler Books, 2020. 303 pp., illustrations, sources cited, endnotes. Paperback $24.95.

Reviewed by
Stephenie Ambrose Tubbs

Conjure up Philadelphia in the 1780s, home of the American Philosophical Society (APS). Consider its famous members, including Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Rush. Combine that with a burgeoning populace thirsty for diversion and you have the essential ingredients for the making of a scientific expedition, in this case an elaborate exhumation of a mastodon skeleton on a farm in the Hudson Valley. *Behind the Crimson Curtain* is the story of a man who was not only in "the room where it happened;" he crafted and filled that room, the Long Room, thus establishing what author Lee Alan Dugatkin rates as the most important and most famous museum in America, Charles Willson Peale's Philadelphia Museum.



To build that museum required a jack of all trades, a Renaissance man who understood the principles of eighteenth century Enlightenment thought and could envision a place built to foster a general public "learned in the science of nature without even the trouble of study." It would become what he termed a "Great School of Nature." Philadelphians and other visitors strongly supported the museum. Attendance at the gate grew to almost 14,000 annually, thanks in part to new displays, state of the art lighting, and the popularity of the star attraction.

After reading Dugatkin's engaging and informative account of the Philadelphia Museum it would seem there could be only one man capable of this task. Philadelphia portrait painter Charles Willson Peale (1741-1827) was, in all respects, that individual. Without Peale's energetic curiosity, his artistic talent, his love of nature, and even his eccentricity, American

Editor's Note:
As you all know, Thomas Jefferson was enthusiastic about the mammoth and the mastodon to the point of eccentricity. He got both Lewis (1803) and Clark (1807) to dig out mastodon bones at Big Bone Lick in Kentucky. Several of his coveted mastodon fossils are still on display in the Entrance Hall at Monticello. This 1801 letter from Charles Willson Peale to President Jefferson about the mastodon excavation that inspired the painting on this issue's cover must have delighted Jefferson and taken his mind off British diplomats, federal budgets, and Hamilton. Jefferson had offered to lend Peale a U.S. Naval Department pump to help him excavate the mastodon site, but as Peale makes clear here, he found what he needed in private hands.

Excerpts from a letter by Charles Willson Peale to President Thomas Jefferson, October 11, 1801

Dear Sir

Your favour of the 29th. July I did not receive until I had reached the place of bones, when I should have been pleased to have answered it, had it been possible or proper to have taken my attentions from engagments so earnest & constant. The use of a powerful Pump might have saved me 50 or 60 Dollars expence, but perhaps the obligation to return one belonging to the Public in a limited time, might not have been altogather convenient—for, contrary to my expectation my stay was longer, and labours much greater than I had contemplated when I planed the Journey. Accept my thanks for your intention to serve me, and permit me to give a short account of my progress and success.

I carried with me up the north river one common Pump and contemplated getting others, or devising such other means, on a review of the grounds ajacent to the Morass, as might then appear best.

The field bordering on the Morass where the Bones were found, being covered with Grain on my former Visit, prevented me from seeing a Bason which seemed to be formed exactly for my purpose; Sufficiently large to receive all the water in the ponds where the Bones lay, not more than 100 feet distant. When I ascended a nole of the

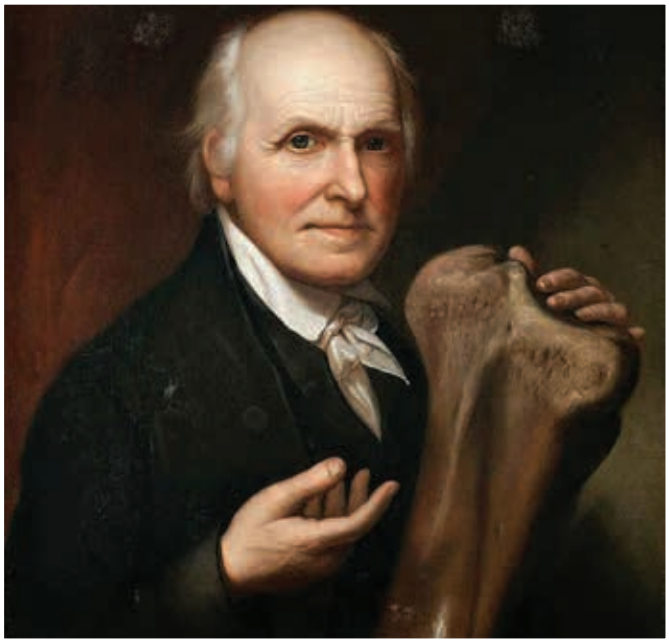
continued next page

museums would be unrecognizable. A hard worker with a willingness to adapt his techniques, Peale began as a saddle maker who took up sign painting and later portraiture. After receiving formal training in London, where he met Benjamin Franklin, Peale served as a captain in the Revolutionary War and obtained a commission to paint George Washington's first official portrait in 1780. Thanks to his talent and important military connections, Peale painted a virtual Who's Who of figures associated with the American Revolution.

On the cover of *Beyond the Crimson Curtain* is "The Artist in His Museum" (1822), one of Peale's last paintings and one of eighteen self-portraits painted by the artist. As with many of his self-portraits, this one beckons our full attention as he opens the crimson curtain and leads us into his Long Room where we see a suggestion of his most famous creature and the one that kept his museum in business until 1849. Viewing the painting, it is almost as if Peale is personally inviting us to go through a portal into another dimension. Indeed, Peale saw his museum as the perfect repository of materials by which to teach. Dugatkin, a professor of biology at the University of Louisville, quotes a newspaper article of Peale's: the museum would be "useful in advancing knowledge and the arts, in a word all that is likely to be beneficial, curious or entertaining to the citizens of the new world."

"The Artist in His Museum" painting shows many of the 140 cases Peale constructed to display what he termed his "world in miniature." The cases contained his collection of interesting and rare animal specimens preserved through taxidermy and presented artistically as if in their own natural environments. The contents of Peale's museum, which one visitor compared to a Noah's ark, eventually grew into a collection of 100,000 natural history, anthropological, ethnographical, and mineralogical artifacts, with at least 20,000 of them on display.

Dugatkin provides readers with a good sense of what was available for public entertainment in 1786 when the museum opened in Philadelphia, at the time considered the unrivaled economic and cultural capital of America. After establishing himself as a portrait painter with a studio in his residence, Peale was in the process of fulfilling a commission to paint some mastadon bones when his brother-in-law suggested the bones might be of more interest to the general public than his paintings. When word got out about the curious bones and patrons expressed interest in seeing them, Peale decided to start his collection. His first specimen was from APS member (and one of the advisors to Meriwether Lewis) Robert Patterson, who gifted him a preserved paddlefish from the Allegheny River.



The ingenious Charles Willson Peale holding one of his prize mastodon bones. 1824.

stubble field and discovered the Bason, The Idea instantly occured of a chain of Buckets carried round an axis, pouring the lifted Water into a Trough communicating to the Bason.

The Power of raising the weight of which, Obtained by a wheel of 20 feet diameter, of a width for men to walk within, as a Squirril in a Cage.

This design was soon executed in the simplest manner, the Buckets made of boards nailed togather, suspended between two ropes tyed into a great number of knots, to prevent their sliping in the Pully—a strong Rope served as a band to drive the axis, for carrying the Buckets. This Machinery, when mooved by 2 or 3 men walking slowly, raised, according to a moderate calculation, 1440 Gallons of Water every hour, and thus I was enabled to emty the Ponds and keep them free of Water, while the men remooved the Mud.

This we conceived was an important object, as the Water came from powerful springs, so intensely cold, as rendered it almost impossible for men to bear the effect of it for any length of time.

Having accomplished this part of the labour, we supposed on remooving the Mud and uncovering the Bones, we should see how

Crucial to this account are these two unrelated curiosities given to Philadelphia's well-connected portrait painter and tinkerer extraordinaire who was capable of doing anything he put his mind to including, but not limited to, taxidermy, engineering, and dentistry. Peale's promotional style and methods of acquiring his collection changed the course of history for American museums and established some of the museum practices we recognize today.

Peale saw his museum as encouraging public knowledge of art and nature and as a space for innovation and philosophical discussions. He used the Linnaean taxonomy when he designed his cases and displays and was always on the lookout for new specimens from all sorts of sources. Indeed, Peale offered to trade the specimens he had multiples of for new ones housed in established European academies. He recognized that by keeping ticket prices low he could attract people from various backgrounds and help to foster the intellectual curiosity early Americans required to get their new nation up to snuff by world scientific standards. Through developing an appreciation of the rational order of nature, Peale believed his patrons might apply that appreciation to their own occupations and relationships. He wanted them to recognize patterns in the natural world that might also apply to the human community.

As a biologist and writer on nature, Dugatkin expertly and straightforwardly presents an account of Peale's museum and the star specimen Peale himself exhumed and reconstructed, the first complete mastodon skeleton to go on display. Dugatkin's finely crafted account gives us further proof of the importance of the American Philosophical Society in establishing Peale's museum and in funding his exhumation of the mastodon, the first scientific expedition in the United States. What he exhumed went on display on Christmas Eve 1801 and was an instant success. The exhibit would continue to attract the public until 1849. Recall that it was not until 1806 that French anatomist Georges Cuvier determined that mammoths and mastodons were distinct species and that both were extinct.

Another painting included in the book, Peale's "Exhumation of the Mastodon" (1806-1808), depicts the device he invented to drain the marl where the Hudson Valley mastodon skeleton was discovered. The painting reminds us of our never-ending quest for knowledge and Peale's desire to present an ordered world with himself very much a part of that order. By inserting members of his family and other important figures who were not there, Peale seems to be saying his family and the greater family of man are all present and active in deciphering the historic past through life-long

they lay, and take them up leisurely—however the task was not so easy, and other difficulties came upon us; the banks, after the support of the Water was remooved, cracked and mooved forward, and obliged us to drive Piles &c.

The obtaining all the bones belonging to one Animal was an important object and therefore I neither spared labour nor expence, yet the great debth of the Morass, with a bottom descending in an Angle of 45 degrees, some of the large Bones after being disjointed by the farmers when they made their rude attemps to pull them up, have as I suppose slid forward into the deep parts of the Morass—for I could not get the second Tusk and a *Femur*. Yet I was so fortunate as to find so many pieces of the Tusk which was broken and part of it taken up before, that the size and form is accurately assertained—the length nearly eleven feet, very much curved; nearly to a semi-circle, with a moderate spiral—

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Several pieces which I got of the under Jaw, prooved that it was broken so much as to loose its Value, and although I got many pieces

A contemporary illustration of the popular success of Peale's mastodon reconstruction in Philadelphia. Visitors were permitted to touch the skeleton, which shared museum space with more traditional features.

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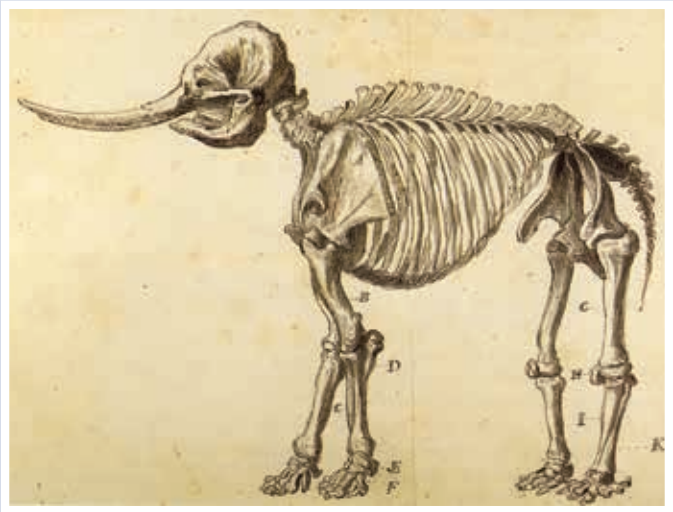
scientific inquiry.

Peale viewed his museum as more than just simple instruction on the natural world. According to Dugatkin, Peale saw the museum as an opportunity to recognize our "better angels." This is evidenced by an alliance agreement signed at the museum in 1796 by members of the Chickasaw, Choctaw, Cherokee, and Creek and members of a rival confederation of the Delaware, Kickapoo, Ottawa, Chippewa, and Shawnee tribes who happened to encounter each other's nations during a visit to the museum on the same day.

Charles Willson Peale successfully supported his large and ever-growing family (including three sons, Titian, Rembrandt, and Rubens, who would join the family business) through his museum's ticket sales, which he regarded as a "by product" of the greater good produced by an enlightened citizenry. While Peale remained the person most associated with the museum's success, he understood that eventually his expanding museum would need federal and or state assistance to survive, even with his sons' taking over and acquiring new spaces along with moves to other cities. The saga of Peale's efforts to secure this assistance is the heartbreaking aspect of this story. Despite his earnest and frequent entreaties to men in power, including his friend and fellow mastodon admirer Thomas Jefferson, Peale kept hitting a wall in terms of securing a permanent place and sustained funding for his enterprise. That development would finally come to fruition with another project in 1846 when Congress agreed to accept the James Smithson bequest establishing the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, D.C. According to the bequest it would be "an establishment for the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men."

Dugatkin's book contains many nuggets of information for Lewis and Clark enthusiasts to sink their teeth into. In addition to his connection to the APS, Peale painted the portraits of Thomas Jefferson, Meriwether Lewis, and William Clark, which are still on display at Independence National Historical Park in Philadelphia. Peale was also involved in the journals through his illustration of four species collected by the captains. He crafted a wax model based on the Saint-Mémin drawing of Lewis wearing the tippet, replacing the rifle Lewis held in the drawing with a "*Calmut*" in accordance with his personal pacifist leanings. Upon Lewis' return in 1806, he gave many of the artifacts collected during the expedition to Peale for display at his museum. What little remains of them, following two fires in 1851 and 1865, ended up at the Peabody Museum of Archeology and Ethnology at Harvard University. Through Dugatkin's engaging narrative readers will



The Peale Museum mastodon. Illustration by Rembrandt Peale, the son of Charles Willson Peale.

of the upper head, and shall put all togather in the most careful manner, yet the form of the skull will be deficient. I obtained a part of the *Sternum* or breast bone; all the Vertebraes, and part of the *os Sacrum*, all the ribs—a *Tibia* & *fibula* or lower part of the hind leggs which was wanting before—besides many small pieces of bones, which carfully put togather, with some inconsiderable additions of Carved pieces, will render this a tolerable compleat Skeleton. Being disappointed of getting all I wanted of this first Skeleton, I determined to try some other morasses, where some few bones had before been found, I went to a Morass 16 miles distant, from this, only three Ribs had been taken up—Here I obtained 43 bones of the feet, 10 tail bones, 2 Tusks, many Ribs, some Vertebres, and a Blade bone.

I found these bones scattered in every direction, and some of them buried between large stones, & even under them, tho' the Stones that covered them were not large. After diging about 40 feet square, and spending about 8 or 9 days of several mens labour—I went to another Morass, 5 miles furthur where several bones had been taken up—but as no part of the Head had been found, my

Peale's magnificent mastodon returned to the United States as a central feature of the Smithsonian's exhibit, "Alexander von Humboldt and the United States: Art, Nature, and Culture." Photograph by Wolfgang Fuhrmannek.

understand why President Jefferson sent Meriwether Lewis to Philadelphia for instruction and why the journals reside at the APS to this day. It is quite easy to imagine Lewis' visiting Peale's museum and gazing at the mastodon skeleton with a bit of trepidation. After all Jefferson himself expected the Corps of Discovery might encounter one out West.

Peale's mastodon ended up at the Hessisches Landesmuseum in Darmstadt,

hopes were particularly to obtain that part. Here I found the Bones more scattered than at the last place—This part of the Morass was not so deep as those I had explored before. After finding a number of ribs and some few bones of the feet—and having dug up manure to a very considerable distance round, in the moment when dispairing of getting any more bones, and thinking to discharge the labourers—By means of a spear which we used, we luckily discovered other Bones—which uncovered prooved to be a fore leg, beneath which was an intire under Jaw not a part deficient, except one of the lesser grinders, which appears to have been lost while the Animal lived. here also we found part of a foot. from this spot to where we found the heal of the hind foot measured 82 feet. After exploring in every direction, at last found the upper head, but in such total decay, that no part would hold togather except the enamel of the Grinders, and that part which joins the neck. The place the Skull once occupied appeared to be a little blacker than other parts of the mud—The *form* in part was discoverable, although all was converted into manure—yet it would seperate & shew the rounded parts.

All the Morasses where these Bones have been found, have marly Bottoms. Bones found in the whitest shell-marle, are most perfect, those parts found in a bluesh coloured marle, less so, and bones found in the black marles, generally in total decay.

The experience I have had, enables me to judge with certainty; several bones we have found, exhibits these facts in the clearest point of view. The Shell-marle it is probable possesses much anticeptic qualities—The Spring water is also essential to the preservation of the bones—I have brought specimens of the several strata where these Bones are found, and Doctr Woodhouse has promised to analize them for me.

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As my wheel buckets and other Machinery excited the curiosity of all the people of that part of the country, I was visited by crouds of all sexes and ages.

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The quantity we collected at the two last explored Morasses, with those that had been before taken, which we have also obtained, will enable my son Rembrandt by the aid of his Chizil

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Germany, in 1854. It is currently back in America as part of the Smithsonian's "Alexander von Humboldt and the United States: Art, Nature, and Culture" exhibit reopening in 2021. Recently six of Peale's miniature portraits fetched $94,163 at auction, a good reminder of his many talents and his secure connection to early American history. According to the auctioneer L.J. Dianni, "People flew in to bid on them, collectors, dealers, museum curators, you name it." Consider that enthusiasm for Peale's paintings when you read *Behind the Crimson Curtain* and gaze at the cover art.

What started in his residence/studio as a sort of "dynamic curiosity cabinet" morphed into a shrine to the Enlightenment and a place of research and instruction including natural history public lectures open to both sexes. Dugatkin reveals that Peale saw his museum as a way to sustain the new nation and an opportunity to instruct patrons without their realizing it. His notion of "rational amusement" continues to influence us through his ideas on museum programming and their organizational structure, which arguably extend to modern enterprises such as Public Broadcasting System documentary programming, National Public Radio, and other forms of rational amusement we continue to enjoy to this day.

Behind the Crimson Curtain is the best sort of book, as it sends you searching for more information on the subject. After finishing Dugatkin's fascinating work, I looked at some examples of Peale's art. His self-portraits in particular are captivating. Peale seems to have a glint of mischief in his eye, an irresistible invitation to cross his threshold into a world we can no longer see but which, through study, we can strive to understand.

Two centuries later Peale's work continues to fascinate and inform. That look in his eye seems to be affirming his faith in the order of nature and saying, "You only have to look. There is more yet to be discovered." Indeed, the oldest DNA in the world was recently revealed to belong to a mammoth, leading one scientist to observe that the history of mammoths appears to be "more complicated" than initially assumed. Somewhere, I think Mr. Peale is smiling. ∎

Stephenie Ambrose Tubbs is a historian and author of The Lewis and Clark Companion *and* Why Sacagawea Deserves the Day Off. *She serves as the co-chair of the Lewis and Clark Trust and is a longtime Board member of Preserve Montana. She and her husband John live in Helena, Montana, and work with the Lewis and Clark Trail Adventures Outfitters in the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument.*

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to carve in wood all the deficiences in order to compleat a second Skeleton, with which he hopes to pay his expences of traveling into Europe. He has long wished to improve his talents in painting, and I am happy to have it in my power to aid him, more especially as by the Exhibition of it, there is a chance of his making something handsome and at the same time to make an exchange of the duplicate subjects I possess, for those of Europe, yet wanting in my Museum, besides settling a good and sure correspondence for a reciprocal exchange of Natural Subjects—It is supposed that a great deal of money may be made in London & Paris with such a Skeleton, but I am taught not to be so sanguine in my expectations—If he can meet all his expences, and take the Portraits of distinguished charactors in the large Cities of Europe, and gain more knowledge with a small addition to his Purse, it will be well. The first Skeleton might soon be erected in the Museum, but the necessity of keeping it apart until my Son has made up the deficiences of the 2d Skeleton, will be a cause of some delay.

Doctr Wistar has been so obliging as to aid me with his knowledge in the disposition of the bones, and he is now determining the enalegy of the feet of this Animal & the Elephant.

Having now given a detail of what I conceive to be the most interesting on this occasion, I shall only add, that it is my intention to explore other places, as soon as I have leisure, and season and opportunity shall be most favorable. Having borrowed some money from the Philosophical Society, which with what I collected elsewhere, was sufficient to pay all my expences, this I am fully satisfied, will be returned to me as soon as the exhibition of this Skeleton is opened, when I shall be enabled to fulfill all my engagments. Therefore with the present prospect it is not necessary to gain other pecuniary aid—my Museum under its present Visitations, supplies the common exigences of the family, and a little more by our frugality, to enable me to pursue some of my plans of improvements that are not very expensive, therefore permit me to return you my most cordial thanks for your kind intention of serving your much obliged friend and Humble Servant. ∎

C W Peale

Lakota America: A New History of Indigenous Power

By Pekka Hämäläinen
Yale University Press, 2019, 392 pp. plus source notes, abbreviations, glossary, and index.

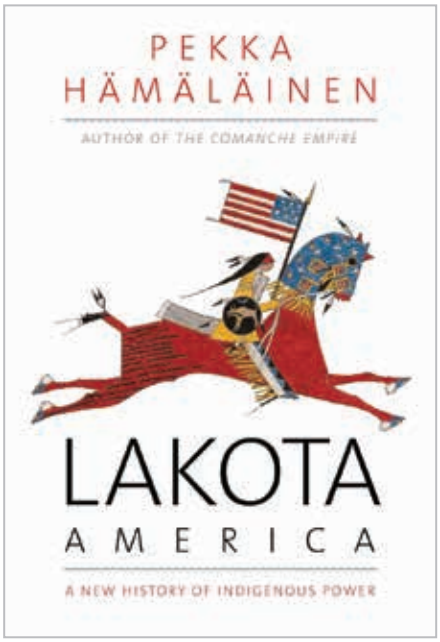
Reviewed by Mike Jacobs

Pekka Hämäläinen opens *Lakota America* with an important insight: "In 1776 two nations were born in North America." The development of the one, Lakota America, and its relations with the other, the United States of America, are the substance of this book. Hämäläinen pursues this theme through 392 pages and buttresses his theses with 106 pages of source notes. It's an academic tour de force.

This is not surprising. Hämäläinen is Rhodes Professor of American History at Oxford University, where he is a fellow of St. Catherine's College. He is the principal investigator in a project examining nomadic empires in world history. His earlier book, *The Comanche Empire*, published in 2009, won the Bancroft Prize, academic history's highest honor.

In *Lakota America*, Hämäläinen recovers the Lakota story, relocating them in time and place, elevating their importance, and projecting their dignity into the present era.

When Europeans reached North America, the Lakota were a subset of an alliance of related people. The word "Sioux" is frequently used to denominate these people, but that name was imposed, not indigenous to the people in any way, except that its usage became so common that contemporaries and historians have used the term as shorthand, and the people themselves adopted it.



Their confederacy was a large one, militarily secure but not dominant by any means. This began to change as European colonialization proceeded, first by pushing Indigenous Americans away from the Atlantic Coast and, soon enough, by the spread of disease through Native communities. This had two consequences. First, it reduced the size and power of coastal Indigenous communities, allowing colonialists to push deeper inland, and second, it fostered confrontation among strong confederacies of Native peoples. Among these Iroquois were dominant. As their confederacy pushed against the interior tribes, the easternmost forced their way west, the Sioux among them. Early in the seventeenth century, they'd arrived in the area that became Wisconsin, where their lifeways evolved in the new environment. No longer strictly people of the forest, the Sioux encountered a more open country studded with lakes lined with wild rice beds and teeming with fish. The open parklands of the Midwest supported deer and moose. The people adapted quickly.

Rapid adaptation to new environments became the pattern of Sioux existence, and it determined the shape, the future, and the fate of the Lakota.

It's important to understand that the people called Sioux and Lakota are not synonymous. The Lakota nation is a subset of the great Sioux confederacy, the westernmost of three closely allied and largely integrated groups speaking mutually intelligible dialects of the same language but maintaining their own geographical territories and their own customs and social organization, including religious rituals. Likewise, the Lakota themselves are a confederacy of seven "oyate." This word is variously translated as people, tribe, or nation. The names of the seven oyate of the Lakota nation are – alphabetically – Hunkpapas, Minneconjous, Ochethi Sakowin, Oglalas, Sicangus, Sihasapas, and Two Kettles. Their common history is their encounter with the United States of America, which exerted itself as the conquering power on the North American continent. In Lewis and Clark literature, the Singangu are referred to as Brulé or Teton Sioux.

The Sioux resisted the Euro-American conquest of their territory, and resistance became a recurring theme in their history.

By 1776 the Lakota had reached the Black Hills in present-day South Dakota, and it is from that year and that place that Hämäläinen dates the founding of the nation. It was the horse, of course, that made Lakota expansion possible. The Lakota became superb horsemen and skilled horse thieves. Horses transformed Lakota culture, shifting their outlook and lifestyle by increasing their mobility and enabling their conquest of a vast tract of land in the middle of North

America. The Northern Great Plains effectively belonged to the Lakota. The people pushed relentlessly westward following the resources: water and shelter in the river valleys and an abundance of bison on the open plains. As much as the horse, the bison built the Sioux nation. Hämäläinen suggests that these resources allowed the Lakota to shift their shape. In fact, he uses the term "shape shifting" to describe the development of their own culture and their response to pressure from the developing colossus to the east.

Thomas Jefferson knew of the Sioux – he used that term – and he explicitly instructed Meriwether Lewis about them. "Although you will pass through no settlements of Sioux, you will probably meet with parties of them. On that nation we wish most particularly to make a friendly impression, because of their immense power." An expansionist, Jefferson had an exaggerated notion of Lakota power. He'd read the journals of Jean-Baptiste Truteau, described as "the schoolmaster," who met the Sioux along the Missouri River in 1794. Jefferson sent excerpts to Lewis. These accounts, Hämäläinen asserts, "were both hyperbolic and disquieting," suggesting a Lakota nation of "from 30 to 60,000 men and abound in firearms." This, Hämäläinen points out, was both "a gross exaggeration," but also testimony to "how ubiquitous Lakotas had become in the deep interior."

Hämäläinen provides an evocative description of the Lewis and Clark Expedition as it neared what he calls "the Lakota Meridian," which encompassed the Missouri River Valley and its hinterlands roughly from the 43rd parallel, not yet the boundary between Nebraska and South Dakota, to the 49th parallel, not yet the international boundary – "the Medicine Line" separating American from British, and later Canadian, territory. The eastern boundary of this dominion approximated the 100th Meridian, which divides North America between east and west.

"Lewis and Clark felt ready," Hämäläinen writes,

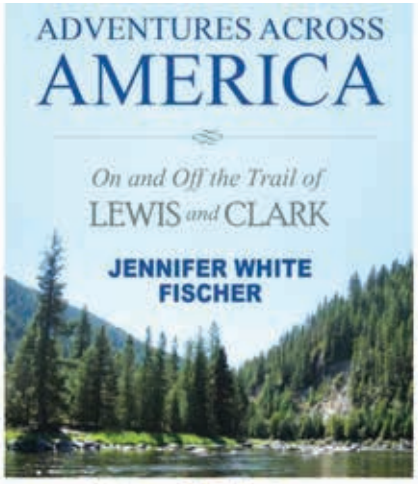
> but things were changing so rapidly in the upper Missouri country that much of their information was already dated when they embarked in early May. The documents they had consulted painted Lakotas as an aggressive but ephemeral presence along the Upper Missouri, detached from the more structured village world of the Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara, and Pawnee. As with nearly all portrayals of the era, they depicted nomads as capricious opportunists who ruled by terror and possessed but a vague understanding of territoriality. If the picture were menacing, it was also reassuring; whatever power such brutes yielded was surely but an anomaly arising from the absence of a firmer, more civilized rule, the kind the captains were determined to deliver upriver.

The explorers might have been encouraged by their first meeting with Sioux people, which occurred on August 29, 1804, near the mouth of the James River. Here they were met by a band of Yanktons, a group not closely affiliated with the Lakota. The meeting was cordial; the Yanktons impressed the explorers with their regalia and the expedition responded with a show of its own, including a flag, dress uniforms, and a salute with guns. Gifts were distributed and trade goods displayed. The party of explorers continued upriver. "The stopover had been hasty," Hämäläinen suggests, "bordering on dismissive, stripping off the expedition's authoritative veneer to reveal what it really was: an undersized reconnaissance venture that needed to move fast before the wide-ranging British might stop them."

The Corps of Discovery reached the Bad River, known to Lakota as "Tranquil Water," where they met the Lakota on September 23, 1804. The site is near present-day Pierre, South Dakota. Their reception was much less friendly, a consequence of poor reconnaissance and a dynamic and rapidly shifting political situation of the Upper Missouri. The two sides exchanged angry – and likely frightened – threats. The ensuing face-off was fraught. "Had someone lost nerve and fired, the Lewis and Clark expedition would have become a footnote in history," Hämäläinen asserts. "Sicangus would have in all likelihood prevailed against the outnumbered Americans, and even if they had not, news of Sicangu deaths would have traveled upstream faster than the wašíču [people of Western European descent] procession, prompting other Lakota oyates to retaliate and abort the expedition." The Sicangu were the southernmost of the seven oyates that made up the Lakota subset of the Sioux nation. The bonds between these seven oyates were closer than those between the divisions of the larger Sioux confederacy, and the impulse to avenge any aggression would have been powerful. We know of course that Lewis and Clark "proceeded on."

The encounter at Bad River highlights Lakota responses that were to become familiar in relations between Americans and Lakotas. The Lakota displayed boldness, self-confidence, even arrogance. They made demands. They did not hesitate. In this case, in the end, the Sicangu leader, Black Buffalo, choose to defuse the crisis, but Lewis and Clark were uneasy. "I call this Island bad humered Island as we were in a bad humer," Clark wrote in his journal.

Sicangus continued to act with impunity. Here is Hämäläinen's depiction: "Sicangu warriors lined up on the riverbank, observing them: hundreds of staring faces show 'great anxiety' and appearing 'generally ill looking.'" Nevertheless, Sicangu allowed the party to land. There followed more demonstrations of the power and importance of the Lakota nation. Lewis and Clark were alternately threatened and regaled, an example of Lakota diplomacy that became familiar to both American and Canadian negotiators – and that continues to the present.



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In the end, of course, American interest and Lakota interests were fundamentally incompatible. Seven decades after Lewis and Clark passed up the Missouri, the two nations confronted each other at Greasy Grass, the Battle of the Little Bighorn (June 25-26, 1876), in what is now south-central Montana. By 1876, the Lakota people had been forced away from the Lakota Meridian into the drier uplands to the west. Here the nation shifted shape again, forging alliances with other Native nations on both sides of the Medicine Line. Importantly, their home range was extended southward past the Platte River, a move that put the Lakota athwart the route of the immigrant wagon trains and later the first railroad line to reach the Pacific Ocean.

Hämäläinen records all of this in great detail. Indeed, the temptation is to say exhausting detail. His insights into Lakota military tactics, material culture, as well as religious belief and practice, draw the reader along, and the weave of Lakota society becomes ever more detailed.

Hämäläinen uses Lakota "winter counts" to broaden the historical perspective. These were painted on bison hides and recorded major events, usually one per year, and often completed by a single person, a respected figure in the oyate. So important are these winter counts that Hämäläinen devotes the endpapers of *Lakota America* to two of them, and he often cites them in his text. An important example is a record read by American Horse, an Oglala elder, who fought at Greasy Grass. The first entry was the Lakota adoption of Paha Sapa, known to white America as "The Black Hills." The winter count puts Paha Sapa at "the center of everything" and, symbolically at least, the beginning of history for the Lakota – though of course their collective memory included other parts of the continent, from the St. Lawrence River Valley to the Great Lakes and the Great Plains.

The moment in that history most familiar is the Battle of Little Bighorn, an event that fixed the Lakota and their leaders – Sitting Bull, Gall, Crazy Horse, and many others – in the American mind. Immense is the literature about the battle and numerous the studies of George Armstrong Custer, for years regarded as an American hero, though nowadays his overweening pride and brutality have reduced his reputation. Hämäläinen refocuses the story to present the Lakota view, going so far as to print a map of the campaign from the Lakota perspective, with south at the top because the Lakota advanced from the north while the US military advanced – or was supposed to advance – mostly from the south (with re-enforcements from the Yellowstone River, which effectively divided areas exclusively under Lakota control from those already subject to the invading American army).

The Americans succumbed to the military adroitness of Lakota leaders, which included feints, withdrawals, and finally a mass attack that cost the lives of Custer's forces, though others lived to tell the tale. Despite the Lakota victory, the Lakota nation was in immediate peril, not just from the U.S. military but from the increasing encroachment of American civilization, represented by an inrush of speculators looking for gold and silver and

railroads bringing settlers who claimed Lakota territory for farms and ranches. Post Greasy Grass, the Lakota history is dark. Within a few years, many had fled across the Medicine Line into Canada, only to return to reservations, mostly in North and South Dakota. Sitting Bull himself ended up at Standing Rock and became the victim of an assassination arranged by Indian Police. The immediate cause was his purported involvement in the Ghost Dance, a desperate movement that sought to resurrect Indigenous culture. The denouement occurred at Wounded Knee on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, December 29, 1890, where a band of Lakota fleeing Standing Rock were massacred, which might have been the ignoble end of Lakota America.

But Wounded Knee was not the end. Instead, the Lakota recovery is under way. Always keen to assert their prerogatives, the Lakota have challenged stereotypes repeatedly, and today the Lakota nation has become active in a campaign to revivify Lakota culture, to recover appropriations of Lakota culture, to protect sacred and historic sites important to the Lakota and significant in their history, and to spread the use of Lakota language.

Significantly, Lakota leadership has emerged to push this movement forward. Jesse Taken Alive (1955-2020) is one example. An elder and Lakota language instructor who became chairman of the Standing Rock reservation, Taken Alive was a key figure in the effort to return remains of Indigenous people to their homelands and to end the use of "Fighting Sioux" as the nickname and logo of the University of North Dakota athletic teams. Another is David Archambault, also a tribal chairman at Standing Rock, who made an emotional appeal to state lawmakers in the opening days of the 2015 session of the North Dakota Legislature. His message is worth quoting.

> As our youth know, growing up on a reservation is difficult. Often forced to face stark realities at an early age, these children endure poverty, homelessness, violence, suicide, hunger and addiction.... Let's say our ten fingers represent our Indian children in school today. Now take one hand away. What you have now before you is the dropout rate that Indian children experience. Now clench four fingers. What you see now is how many Indian children will be skilled enough to go on and be successful in advanced levels of education…. We ask that North Dakota reconsider its approach to its government-to-government relations and bear in mind that although tribes embrace elements of a shared history, each tribe is also unique.

He concluded his speech with an appeal for economic development and subtlety in dealing with Native communities. Archambault's sister, Jodi Archambault Gillette, became an important adviser to President Barack Obama. She helped arrange the president's 2015 visit to Standing Rock. Not long after, Chairman Archambault launched initiatives challenging regulatory agencies and filing lawsuits seeking to stop the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL), which crosses the Missouri River less than a mile north of the reservation boundary, a move that drew international attention to Standing Rock.

In these instances, as they had in treaty negotiations and military engagements, Lakota people asserted their presence and demanded their rights.

Hämäläinen's *Lakota America* traces the arc of Lakota history. It is not perfect, of course. Many readers will be put off by his use of Lakota orthography, essential to proper pronunciation of the language but not familiar to readers of English. Likewise, his insistence on mapping that reflects the Lakota perspective of events will be off-putting to readers more used to interpreting maps with north at the top. In some places, Hämäläinen's prose is challenging and his use of plural forms for tribal names is annoying (Lakotas for Lakota, for example). These are trivial criticisms. The power of his insights draws the narrative along. His book is a very great gift to readers interested in Indigenous history, in the history of the Great Plains, including the Lewis and Clark Expedition and the Battle of Little Bighorn.

Even more important, *Lakota America* offers a platform from which to reassess this history, to tease out the truth, and to establish a firmer historical basis for the continuing relations of these two nations, Lakota and America, whose histories are so intricately and inextricably woven together. ∎

Mike Jacobs is the former editor-publisher of the Grand Forks Herald *in Grand Forks, North Dakota. The* Herald *won the Pulitzer Prize for its coverage of the disastrous Red River flood in Grand Forks in 1997. Mike is a serious ornithologist. He has North Dakota's finest private library. He lives with his wife Suezette in Gilby, North Dakota.*

America's National Historic Trails: In the Footsteps of History

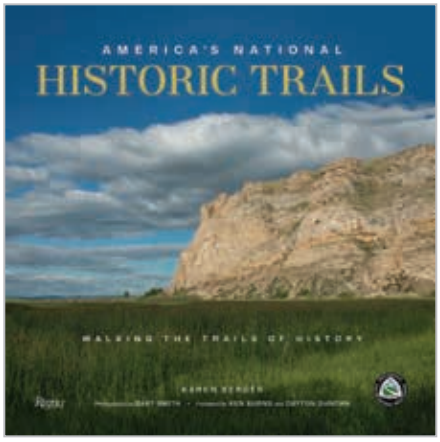
By Karen Berger
Photography by Bart Smith
Rizzoli New York, 2020, 320 pp., $55.00

Reviewed by Margaret Gorski

Writing a book about America's National Historic Trails is a daunting task. These nineteen out of the thirty Congressionally designated trails that comprise our National Trails System cover huge areas and commemorate numerous and significant but vastly different historic events that are seminal to our collective identity as Americans. They traverse over 37,000 miles, run through forty-three states, and tell the history of the exploration and establishment of our nation. The stories start long before the Pilgrims landed on Plymouth Rock and culminate with our more contemporary history of the struggle for civil rights.

Karen Berger accepted that challenge and has given historic trail enthusiasts the gift of *America's National Historic Trails: In the Footsteps of History*. This subject is right up Ms. Berger's alley. Having hiked more than 18,000 miles on six continents, she is the author of eighteen other books including *America's Great Hiking Trails* (winner of the 2015 Lowell Thomas Award and a *New York Times* travel best seller). Ms. Berger has done a remarkable job of summarizing this complex subject in taking us on a journey down the "pathways of imagination."

Although many would describe this as a "coffee table" book given its considerable size and heft, it is more than that. The images by photographer and



National Trails System traveler Bart Smith show the spectacular landscapes along these trails that are beautiful and serene today, but may have once been witness to human tragedy, challenge, or celebration. This book whets your appetite to get your boots and saddles or cars and boats ready to go on an adventure to learn history by travelling the trails of our ancestors.

The fact that there is an embossed logo of the Partnership for the National Trails System (PNTS) on the cover is a clear endorsement that this book goes beyond being just a typical travel guide of things to see and do along these trails. The mission of the PNTS is to promote the National Trails System and advocate for their management and protection. The fact that this organization put its brand on the book acknowledges that Ms. Berger has succeeded in explaining the essence of what make these trails special and worth preserving.

The book begins with a foreword by our long-time Lewis and Clark Trail friends Ken Burns and Dayton Duncan, whose writings are not only intellectually stimulating, but also emotionally captivating. This foreword did not disappoint. It renewed my passion for why we collectively have worked to achieve federal protection of some of America's original landscapes. Burns and Duncan write, "That idea, we believe, is the Declaration of Independence applied to the land, and like the idea of freedom itself, it has evolved and expanded on its own historical journey."

This book is the culmination of the author's personal journey not only to learn about history, but also to experience history through these landscapes of time. Her introduction and description of each of the trails reveal that she "gets" what National Historic Trails are all about. She also lists the number of miles and states each trail traverses, and provides a modern map of the routes. She summarizes the history and highlights some of the most historically significant places to visit that are open to the public or that are iconic to the story.

However, Ms. Berger goes beyond a tally of things to see and do and describes history through a shared experience of "place." She invites us to feel the same heat and wind and dirt beneath our feet experienced by those who paved the way for us. She understands that a National Historic Trail represents "the intersection of story and landscape" and takes us "across time and distance." Our Historic Trails are about connections. They give us the opportunity to relate very personally to those who preceded us through our shared experience of the land. Individually they each tell one chapter of our collective history. As a system and network of National Historic Trails, "they represent the enormous panoply of American landscapes and they embody the idea of multiple use."

The author presents the trails and their stories not by when they were designated by Congress, but by the era

of history they represent. The collection of trails found in the American Southwest reveals the story of Spanish exploration and settlement of New Spain by explorers, missionaries, the military, and settlers over hundreds of years of conflict and coexistence with the Native population. The four trails in the East trace our nation's early settlement by Europeans and military campaigns for American independence. The seven trails connecting the East Coast with the West capture American's restless spirit and the lure of Manifest Destiny that drove the massive migration across this great continent. For the last four trails that the author groups together, she argues that they reflect America's diversity and the triumphs and tragedies of pursuing the American Dream. Unfortunately, as the author points out, the system is incomplete and lacks some key historic eras and events. She makes a case for adding additional trails to the system.

Each section of the book begins with an overview of the overarching events of that era. The author then describes each trail individually with its historic route and presents enticing photographs of the iconic landscapes to be discovered and experienced today as "Living the History." Each trail features a good photographic mix of the landscapes, visible existing trail remnants, and current historic sites and visitor facilities that await the trail traveler.

Ms. Berger describes the collective story that these National Historic Trails tell as one of people who came to and across America from somewhere else and interacted with those who were already here. "A large part of our domestic history is the story of how these disparate cultures have moved and interacted, both peacefully and in conflict." But these nineteen trails "only scratch the surface." The final chapter of the book provides a brief listing and description of other trails that commemorate significant historic events and eras that fill in the missing gaps within the ranks of our National Historic Trails. Trails commemorating the Civil War, the Underground Railroad, and Women's Suffrage are among the significant historical events that are obviously missing from the National Historic Trails system. If we look to a goal of having our National Historic Trails be a more complete telling of our nation's history through time and place, Ms. Berger indicates that there is more work to be done. Perhaps someday these histories will be added to the national system.

Because our National Historic Trails are a complex network of trails, it had to be a challenge to decide what to feature and what to leave out to keep the book to a manageable size. However, if her treatment of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail is an indication of her accuracy and fair representation for all the trails, I would say she did a pretty good job.

As is probably true of experts and fans of each of these trails, Lewis and Clark enthusiasts will read through the section that describes the Corps of Discovery's journey across the continent with an eye to their favorite "home turf" section, checking for accuracy or looking to see what points of interest the author chose to highlight or what she left out. Because the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail is now over 4,900 miles long, the author could be forgiven for errors, such as her confusion over the Corps' multiple crossings of the Continental Divide, and for omissions, like some of the wonderful interpretive sites to be visited along the newest addition to the trail. Nevertheless, the Eastern Portion of the trail is included on the map and shows the designated route now beginning in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

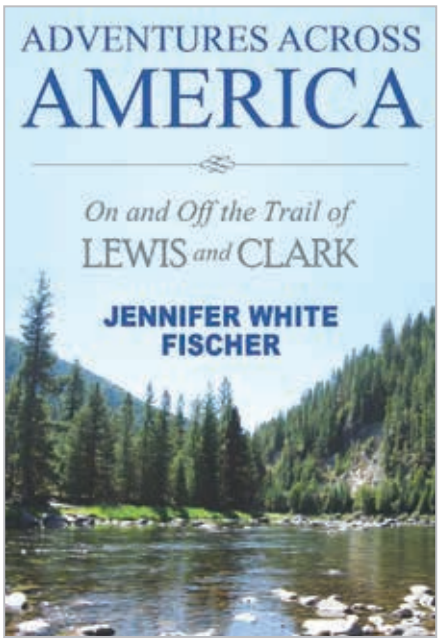
I really enjoyed exploring the historic landscapes of America by reading this book. It was a great way to refresh my knowledge of our nation's history and the landscapes that sculpt our national identity. The varied stories of each trail reveal an honest national history that is both happy and sad. Taken together, they reflect the good, bad, and the ugly of our nation's growth. Walking in the footsteps of history gives us an opportunity to reflect on the American drive, bravery, and brutality that built our successes but also caused some shameful human tragedies. Studying and personally experiencing our history, cultures, and landscapes enshrined in our National Historic Trails can teach us lessons in our collective journey to become a "more perfect union." Ms. Berger's book is a worthy addition to the library of anyone who is a fan of history and our National Historic Trails. I can't wait for my next historic trail adventure! ∎

Margaret Gorski is a Past President (2013-2015) and Board member of the LCTHF and former Board member of the Partnership for the National Trails System. She is retired from a long career in the U.S. Forest Service where she served as the National Coordinator for the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial from 1998-2003. She is currently President of the Friends of Fort Owen in Stevensville, Montana.

Adventures Across America: On and Off the Trail of Lewis and Clark

By Jennifer White Fischer
Gatekeeper Press, 2019, paper,
260 pp., $21.95

Reviewed by Philippa Newfield



A remarkable feature of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail (LCNHT) is that the thrill of discovery and the satisfaction of connection are accessible to everyone regardless of how we travel the Trail corridor – whether by foot, horseback, bicycle, canoe, paddle-wheeler, jet boat, or car. Jennifer White Fischer amply demonstrates this in *Adventures Across America: On and Off the Trail of Lewis and Clark*, her very personal account of exploring the Trail and much more by car and by boat.

Fischer chronicles her travels by car from New Jersey along various portions of the Trail, with many side adventures along the way. She reached the West Coast and took two different cruises on the Columbia and Snake rivers. Her husband or a woman friend accompanied her on each of the various legs. Armed with AAA books and GPS and Garmin systems, the author explored America's byways, highlighting her experiences in small towns and little-known museums, gardens, shops, cafes, and lodging. Her cross-country travels focused on the visitor centers and important sites on the LCNHT, but other wonderful places receive equal notice. The author illustrated the book with her own color photographs, affording the reader representative images of what she describes in the text.

How did Fischer come to Lewis and Clark, a question we always ask those who thrill to their epic adventure? As she relates in the book, one night in 2012 she was looking for something to read and came across her father's *The Journals of Lewis and Clark* edited by Bernard DeVoto. "Bam!" – reading it inculcated in her "a burning desire to travel in their footsteps, to see what they had seen, and to learn more about these exceptional men." With whom among us does that not resonate?

Adventures Across America has forty-five chapters divided into four parts: Heading West to Montana, Heading East and Home, Heading West to the Pacific Ocean, and Heading East Back to New Jersey. The author took the trips detailed in the book during the summer and fall of 2013 and the fall of 2014. She made the river portions of the journey aboard the American Cruise Lines' 200-passenger *American Empress* from Clarkston, Washington, to the Pacific and then on the National Geographic-Lindblad Expedition's fifty-six passenger *Sea Lion* from Portland back to Clarkston. The appendix offers a chapter by chapter list of the places visited and their locations (Lewis and Clark sites are denoted by an asterisk), a brief biography of the author, and a short "Suggested Reading" list.

Although replete with the names of towns and interesting sites, this is not a guide book. Fischer included no maps other than one of the principal rivers and approximate boundaries of the United States in 1803. Readers will need to consult their own maps to follow the author's progress across the country. Not all the cafes and motels are mentioned by name. I would also have commented – before the Covid pandemic – on the lack of websites and phone numbers for the eateries, accommodations, and places of interest Fischer cites, but that is irrelevant now. The small-business/tourism landscape will have undoubtedly changed by the time people return to the open road once the pandemic is brought under control. Whenever that will be, the prediction is that travel, especially by car, will explode owing to pent-up demand. Taking this long view, however, including the websites for at least the Lewis and Clark sites would have been helpful.

Nor is this a history book. Although Fischer provides some information about the Corps of Discovery at each of her Lewis and Clark stops, there are a number of factual errors. The following are but a few examples. Fischer states that Clark "arrived" at the Falls of the Ohio "with nine young backwoodsmen from Kentucky" but he actually brought seven; Lewis brought Colter and Shannon. Clark lived near the Falls of the Ohio. It was Lewis who "arrived." She also says that "Lewis writes about an

encounter with a bear one night" but it was a bison (May 29, 1805) and that Charbonneau "and his two wives moved out of the Mandan Village and into the fort" but they moved from the Hidatsa villages. Although the Mandan and Hidatsa have largely melded today, in 1804 they were two distinct tribes. The Russell mural in the Montana State Capitol shows an encounter with the Salish at Ross' Hole, which is not "near the Three Forks of the Missouri." To say that Astoria, Oregon, is the "oldest settlement on the West Coast" is inaccurate, as San Diego, San Francisco, and Los Angeles were all settled before 1811. Astoria is, however, the oldest settlement initiated by a U.S. citizen, an important qualifier. It was Lewis who initially claimed he had been shot by an Indian, and not Cruzatte who swore that he had shot at an elk. Lewis encountered Blackfeet Indians at the Fight Site, not Blackfoot. There is no evidence that "most historians believe [York] died soon after being freed."

Fischer's main accomplishment is that she enthusiastically transmits details of people engaged, conversations enjoyed, obscure sights visited, landscapes marveled at, and history uncovered. She gained an appreciation "of the incredible and important adventure undertaken by these brave, intelligent (and sometimes very lucky) men of the Corps of Discovery." She "found fascinating places to explore and witnessed the patriotism and individualism of the citizens of our country." Of equal significance is Fischer's demonstration that travelers can readily follow the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail as it traverses sixteen states from Pittsburgh to the Pacific and have a joyous time of it while reliving and learning important aspects of our shared American history. ∎

Philippa Newfield is Immediate Past President of the LCTHF and President of the LCTHF's California Chapter. She and her husband Phillip Gordon traveled the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail by car from St. Louis to the Pacific in a series of ten trips over the course of five years from 2003-2008 and have returned many times since, including to stretches of the newly designated Eastern Portion.

From Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*:

"Our quadrupeds have been mostly described by Linnaeus and Mons. de Buffon. Of these the Mammoth, or big buffalo, as called by the Indians, must certainly have been the largest. Their tradition is, that he was carnivorous, and still exists in the northern parts of America. A delegation of warriors from the Delaware tribe having visited the governor of Virginia, during the present revolution, on matters of business, after these had been discussed and settled in council, the governor asked them some questions relative to their country, and, among others, what they knew or had heard of the animal whose bones were found at the Saltlicks, on the Ohio." ∎

...continued from the inside front cover

Hämäläinen's principal insight about the September 1804 encounter was anticipated by the great James Ronda two decades ago: that it was the Lakota Black Buffalo who proved to be the better leader in that tense standoff, when he made it clear that the Brulé were going to let Lewis and Clark pass upriver, not because of all their huff and puff (Clark: we have "more medicine on board this boat than would kill twenty such nations in one day"), but in spite of it. It was Black Buffalo who resolved the crisis. He essentially said, "We are going to let you go on. In fact, we'll wave the tariff this time. But you need to understand that we are sovereign here, this is our national homeland, and we insist on some acknowledgement, some gesture, however small, to show that you understand what we are insisting upon with respect to sovereignty. A bit of tobacco will be token enough of that acknowledgement." And it was at this point that the captains disgustedly tossed a couple of carrots of tobacco onto the shore, watched Black Buffalo extract the boat rope from his elite dog soldiers, and then proceeded on.

"Had someone lost nerve and fired," Hämäläinen writes, "the Lewis and Clark expedition could have become a footnote in history. Sicangus [the Brulé] would have in all likelihood prevailed against the outnumbered Americans, and even if they had not, news of Sicangu deaths would have traveled upstream faster than the wašíčus procession, prompting other Lakota *oyates* [bands] to retaliate and abort the expedition."

We don't read *Lakota America* to get a fresh account of the Lakota-Corps of Discovery encounter, though Hämäläinen's account is excellent. We read this important and deeply insightful book to find a fuller, more nuanced, more generous historical contextualization for one brief moment in the history and lifeway of an American empire that deserves equal footing with the wašíčus "manifest destiny."

There is so much healing to be done in Indian Country, so much that non-Natives don't know and have not really bothered to try to find out. This book is a foundation for extensive dialogue – between you and me, between you and your friends, between all of us and the Native American peoples of the country, especially on the Lewis and Clark Trail. ∎

Clay Jenkinson

We Proceeded On

The Journal of the Lewis & Clark Trail Heritage Foundation

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