THE LEWIS AND CLARK TRAIL HERITAGE FOUNDATION, INC.

Incorporated 1969 under Missouri General Not-For-Profit Corporation Act IRS Exemption Certificate No. 501(C)(3)-Identification No. 51-0187715

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ABOUT THE FOUNDATION

The purpose of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, Inc., is to stimulate public interest in matters relating to the Lewis and Clark Expedition, the contributions to American history made by the Expedition members, and events of time and place concerning the expedition when of historical interest to our nation. The Foundation recognizes the value of tourist-oriented programs, and supports activities which enhance the enjoyment and understanding of the Lewis and Clark story. The scope of the activities of the Foundation is broad and diverse, and includes involvement in pursuits which, in the judgment of the directors, are of historical worth or contemporary social value, and commensurate with the heritage of Lewis and Clark. The activities of the National Foundation are intended to complement and supplement those of state and local Lewis and Clark interest groups. The Foundation may appropriately recognize and honor individuals or groups or art works of distinction, achievement in the broad field of Lewis and Clark historical research, writing, or deeds which promote the general purpose and scope of activities of the Foundation. Membership in the Foundation is open to the public. Information and an application are available by sending a request to: Membership Secretary; Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, Inc.; P.O. Box 3434, Great Falls, MT 59403.

We Proceeded On, the quarterly magazine of the Foundation, is mailed to current members during the months of February, May, August, and November.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES*

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MAY 1998
President's Message

by James M. Peterson

It is with genuine pleasure that the foundation welcomes our first full-time executive to the new office at Great Falls. Sammye Meadows, a recent resident of Eagle, Colorado, began serving the foundation on March 1, 1998. (Elsewhere in this issue you will find the editor's report about Sammye.)

The foundation's new office is in the U.S. Forest Service's new interpretive center located on the south bank of the Missouri in Great Falls.

The Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, Inc. (LCTHF) is primarily a volunteer organization. Paid staff positions are limited to the executive director, the membership secretary and the editor of We Proceeded On. (As one would expect, the pay is, in general, modest indeed.) Just what is it that our volunteers do? Some examples may serve to answer that question.

The various committees identified in your copy of the "Member's Handbook" constitute the formal mechanism through which the membership gets the work done. For example, the annual meeting site selection committee reviews requests to hold an annual meeting at a given site. The committee advises applicants as to what they must do to be considered as a potential site, reviews the applications, may make an "on-site inspection of the facilities and then recommends to the foundation's board of directors as to the feasibility of the site in question. The board then makes its decision as to that site. Following the approval of that site, the committee may be called upon for advice and help in the task of hosting the attendants at the annual meeting.

The chapter formation and liaison committee promotes and assists with the formation of new chapters and also serves as the foundation's primary contact point with existing chapters. This committee's workload is increasing significantly as the interest in the expedition burghers. A substantial

From the Editor's Desk

You are right if you think there is something different about this issue of WPO. There is more to it. Eight pages more. Twenty five percent more. You can thank Steve Ambrose for the larger magazine. Steve's most excellent gift of $10,000 a year to WPO for 10 years (or as long as his book "Undaunted Courage" continues to sell, up to 10 years), is what made this expansion possible. For those of you who don't keep up on book sales, "Undaunted Courage" has topped a million copies sold. Not a person to let his mind be idle, Steve has had another book published on the war in Europe from D Day to the end of the fighting in Germany (Citizen Soldiers), and is just starting on a book on the building of the Union Pacific Railroad west. It will be published in about three years.

The additional eight pages in this fine magazine will mean some new features and the ability to carry longer articles when necessary. One of them is in this issue. It is a fresh look at cause of the death of Meriwether Lewis. A new feature will be the reprinting of articles from the early days of WPO to acquaint newer members with what this magazine and the foundation are all about and also refreshing the memories of longtime members. The expansion will also help the editor. One of the hardest parts in putting this magazine together is that there is so much information available about Lewis and Clark, the expedition and related areas, that it has been a struggle just to decide what to put in each issue—the curse of abundance.

We have a new executive director for the foundation. Her name is Sammeye Meadows and you will find her somewhere in this issue. She will be in her new office at the interpretive center here in Great Falls by the time you receive this. Jane Weber, the

ON THE COVER—A view of the new interpretive center near Great Falls, Montana, from across the Missouri River.

Photo by Wayne Arnst, Courtesy of the Great Falls Tribune
"A Fatal Rendezvous:"
The Mysterious Death of Meriwether Lewis

Editor's Note: This article was first presented as a paper read at the Annual Conference of the Western History Association. It is reprinted with the permission of the Journal of Mississippi History.

by John D.W. Guice

In the wee hours of the morning of October 11, 1809, thirty-five year old Meriwether Lewis died in a crude log cabin beside the Natchez Trace some seventy miles southwest of Nashville. No one witnessed the actual deed. But Priscilla, wife of John Grinder who owned the stand, heard two shots. Whose hand held the weapon or weapons remains a mystery and probably will forever. Forensic science may well provide evidence to eliminate the possibility of suicide. Otherwise, the question of suicide or murder will remain unanswered. Several friends and associates closest to Lewis accepted the report of suicide. So have many competent historians. Others, however, contend that he was murdered.

We begin our account with the triumphant return of Lewis and his co-captain William Clark to the Atlantic Seaboard in December of 1806, following their historic transcontinental voyage of discovery to the Pacific Ocean. No one awaited the return of these heroes with more eagerness and excitement than President Thomas Jefferson, who deemed the governorship of Upper Louisiana as an appropriate reward for Lewis. Jefferson appointed Clark Brigadier General of the militia and Agent of Indian Affairs, and at the same time he named Frederick Bates as territorial secretary, a decision that eventually brought Lewis immeasurable grief.

On March 3, 1807 the president signed Lewis's gubernatorial commission, but Lewis did not report to the territorial capital at St. Louis until March 8, 1808. Proponents of suicide place considerable significance on this delay. Exactly when Lewis arrived in Philadelphia and the chronology of his errands there remain undetermined, but apparently one of his first actions was to arrange for John Conrad to publish the journals. He also recruited a truly eminent team of illustrators and a mathematician to rectify errors in his field notes. In Philadelphia there were other demands on Lewis's time. He attended the April, June, and July meetings of the American Philosophical Society to which he had been elected in 1803. There were pleasant distractions such as the sittings for portraits, but other chores such as paper work for the War Department probably were irritating. And his efforts at courtship were, at best, bitter sweet. Because Lewis cast his unreciprocated affections upon at least two young women, his unsuccessful quest for a spouse explains in part why he remained in Philadelphia for over three months.

In late July or early August of 1807, Meriwether Lewis departed Philadelphia. Either in Washington or Monticello, he visited briefly with Jefferson, and at least one historian suggests that he observed for the president the Burr trial in Richmond which ended on August 31. Even if Lewis spent part of August in Richmond, why did he tarry in Virginia until some time in November? He did visit with his mother at Locust Hill, and from his November 3rd letter to Mahlon Dickerson we learn that affairs of the heart also explain his delayed departure for Louisiana. Lewis complained of being a "perfect widower with respect to love" and of feeling "that restlessness, that inquietude, that certain indescribable something common to old bachelors." After vowing "to get a wife," he inquired regarding his feminine acquaintances in Philadelphia and urged Dickerson to write him at Louisville, Kentucky, until the last day of November or afterwards to St. Louis.

In early November Meriwether and his brother Reuben Lewis left their Albemarle County home, but before they struck out for Louisville and St. Louis, they visited with George Hancock, William Clark's father-in-law, in Fincastle, Virginia. There he met Miss Letitia Breckenridge, and though he was in her company for just two days, Lewis later wrote of his "passion" for the belle whom Reuben described as "one of the most beautiful he had ever seen."

When Lewis finally arrived in St. Louis on March 8, 1808—one year and five days after Jefferson had signed his commission—he found an administration racked with contention. Much of the discord stemmed from the machinations of the Territorial Secretary and Acting Governor, Frederick Bates, who immediately upon his appointment had scurried to his post and
who proved a treacherous and implacable enemy. Despite the delay in taking his post, Governor Lewis had not been completely inattentive to his responsibilities—endeavoring to direct some territorial affairs by correspondence. But as biographer Richard Dillon observed, “This was an impossible task, an incredible folly.” The most pressing territorial problem related to Indian affairs, and in this arena, Bates admitted his inadequacies in a letter to Lewis, confessing that “On the Indian Subject” he “very often found himself ‘totally in the dark.’” Nevertheless, Bates disregarded the advice of the absent governor. Even from a distance of over 700 miles, Lewis quickly perceived that Bates was botching Indian affairs. So he ordered him to defer to Clark, Pierre Chouteau, and himself in such matters. While the secretary pretended compliance, he did not obey. Regardless of the merits of his activities in Philadelphia, Washington and Virginia, Lewis contributed by his absence to the confusion, division, and hostility that characterized the Indian frontier in upper Louisiana. On his arrival, however, he dealt with these problems with dispatch and effectiveness.

Fortunately for Lewis, except in his dealings with Indians, Bates had done a tolerably good job of administering the territory. Consequently, Lewis totally immersed himself in Indian affairs—even to the neglect of nurturing his friendships back east, even that with Thomas Jefferson, and the neglect of such significant projects as the publication of his journals.

Despite his appreciation of Bates’ accomplishments, Lewis and Bates simply were opposite in their orientation. Dillon aptly describes their differences: “Whereas Bates faced east, Lewis faced the West, and always would.” Bates’ constant disagreement and interference indicated that he could not control his ambition. And there may have been some smoldering hatred that dated back to 1801 when President Jefferson selected Lewis, rather than Bates, as his private secretary. Whatever the cause, the relationship between the governor and the secretary of Louisiana deteriorated to the point that they ceased to be on speaking terms. At the nadir of their association, Bates concluded a long series of denigrations of Lewis with the opinion that the governor had been so “overwhelmed by so many flattery caresses of the high and mighty that, like an overgrown baby, he began to think that everybody about the house must regulate their conduct by his caprices.” In sum, Bates had become an “implacable enemy.”

Fortunately this debilitating predicament did not prevent Lewis from effectively performing the wide range of duties facing the governor. In particular he was unrelenting in his effort to calm the prairie tribes. His affinity for the Native American did not blind Lewis to their susceptibility to manipulation by white traders. Indeed, he felt so strongly about the need for a sound Federal Indian policy that he expounded upon: his views in an article in the Missouri Gazette entitled “Observations and Reflections on the Subject of Governing and Maintaining a State of Friendly Intercourse With the Indians of the Territory of Louisiana.” One wonders how different the career of Lewis would have been had he spent his energies writing Thomas Jefferson instead of composing a treatise on Indian policy?

Lewis became so preoccupied with events in Louisiana that he gave little thought to the change of administrations in Washington. This is understandable, especially in view of the succession of Jefferson by James Madison, another Virginia republican. As did scores of other territorial officials, however, Lewis discovered that often federal bureaucrats presented more obstacles than the entire spectrum of territorial residents. Though he was irritated by the return of an $18.70 voucher and he recognized that the new Secretary of War William Eustis probably approved of the action, he was totally unprepared for the failure of the department to honor a $500 expenditure relating to the return of Chief Sheheke, also known as Big White, to his people by an expedition headed by Pierre Chouteau and Manuel Lisa, both destined to become principal figures in the fur trade. In his letter, the parsimonious Eustis, admonished Lewis that Madison had replaced Jefferson and that the new President approved the decision. Of the Eustis letter, Dillon wrote: “It burst on him like a grenade, shook him badly, and proved to be his death warrant.”

In his reply of August 18, 1809 the stunned Lewis expressed his outrage and insisted every penny expended by his administration was done so correctly. After implying that Bates was at the source of his trouble, Lewis assured Eustis that the territory presently was in “the most perfect state of tranquility... it has ever experienced.” His most poignant line read: “Be assured, Sir, that my country can never make ‘a Burt’ of me. She may reduce me to poverty, but she can never sever my attachment to her.” In order to preserve his honor and prevent financial disaster, Lewis felt he must plead his case in Washington without delay. After a flurry of last minute preparations and with a pile of baggage, on September 4, 1809, Meriwether Lewis boarded a steamboat for New Orleans. One of his trunks contained the unedited, unpub-
lished journals of the Pacific Expedition. So that they might sell his real estate if necessary to pay his debts, the governor prudently had assigned powers of attorney to William Clark, Alexander Stewart and William C. Carr. The governor’s speculative investments left him strapped for cash—not an unusual predicament on the American frontier.  

At New Madrid on September 11 Lewis wrote a will in which he left his entire estate to his mother. While some writers interpret this decision as an indication that he was considering suicide, it could just as reasonably reflect Lewis’s sense of responsibility. At this time a sea voyage to Washington was not without peril, and his real estate represented a valuable asset to bequeath to his mother.

After eleven days on the Mississippi, Lewis disembarked at Chickasaw Bluffs (now Memphis, Tennessee) the site of Fort Pickering, commanded then by Captain Gilbert C. Russell. The date was September 15, 1809. According to Russell’s January 4, 1810 letter to Jefferson, Lewis was in a state of “indisposition” which he attributed to the interminable consumption of alcohol. Some two years later, however, Russell described his condition as a “state of mental derangement.” In the later report, Russell also mentioned that the boat crew had informed him of two attempts by Lewis “to kill himself” while on board, though he revealed no details. Whatever the cause of Lewis’s condition, apparently he was a sick, exhausted person. Consequently, Captain Russell placed him in the care of the post Surgeon’s mate W. C. Smith who prescribed abstention from grain spirits but allowed him claret and white wine. By his sixth day at Fort Pickering, “all signs of derangement disappeared and he was completely in his senses,” and during the remainder of his two-week stay Lewis continued to show strength and stability. Lewis’s correspondence from Fort Pickering casts doubt upon Russell’s description of Lewis as “deranged,” though he may well have been either intoxicated or with fever, possibly from malaria. [Today it is difficult for us to imagine the quantity of whiskey consumed in the Old Southwest. It was certainly a staple on river boats and as well as on the Natchez Trace.] The day after Lewis arrived at Chickasaw Bluffs he wrote President Madison. Some historians view this letter as evidence of the clarity of his mind while others contend that his uncertain hand and the frequency of corrections betray his emotional instability. Lewis wrote of his exhaustion from the heat, of taking medication, but that he was feeling much better. He continued: “My apprehension from the heat of the lower country and my fear of corrections increased me to change my route and proceed by land through the State of Tennessee to the city of Washington...Provided my health permits, no time shall be lost in reaching Washington.” He closed with an apology for allowing his duties to prevent him from writing frequently.

From Fort Pickering Lewis also wrote his old comrade Amos Stoddard at Fort Adams—down river just above the thirty-first parallel. Lewis explained that he had decided to journey over land and asked Stoddard to send $200 that he was holding for Lewis to Washington where he would remain until returning to St. Louis in December. Lewis also wrote of his “indisposition” and of his confidence that he would “put matters right” in the nation’s capital. After writing Stoddard, the governor also sent a land warrant to New Orleans so that the revenue from it might satisfy creditors in St. Louis.

Because Captain Russell also wanted to visit Washington to straighten out his own disputed payments, he had planned to accompany Lewis. However, General James Wilkinson denied Russell’s furlough request. But Major James Neelly, agent to the Chickasaws, was at Fort Pickering, and he agreed to ride with Lewis as far as Nashville. So on September 29, Lewis with his free mulatto servant John Pernier departed the fort in the company of Neelly and his slave. Lewis was armed with two pistols, a dirk, and a tomahawk, and his pack horse carried two trunks and a portfolio which included sixteen red morocco-bound journals from the Pacific expedition and documentation of the questioned bills. Russell had agreed to forward the remaining baggage by boat.

From Fort Pickering, the party followed Indian trails southeastward toward the Chickasaw Agency on the Natchez Trace near the present town of Houston, in Chickasaw County, Mississippi. Lewis was so exhausted after the ride of more than 100 miles to the Chickasaw Agency that he rested there for two days. Though Neelly later wrote to Jefferson that by the time they had arrived at the agency Lewis “appeared at times deranged in mind,” at least some of his actions there indicate control of his faculties. For instance, at the agency he sent word by a traveler bound for Fort Pickering for Russell to store his excess baggage until the receipt of further instructions, rather than to ship it to Washington. Illness on the trail was fairly common. Malaria, heat stroke, or some other malady may have caused the symptoms which
Lewis exhibited at Fort Pickering. Since whiskey was the drink of choice on the Trace, both Lewis and Neelly could have been in their cups. On October 6, the party headed northeastward from the agency toward the Tennessee River. If Neelly's account is correct, they covered the 150 miles to Colbert's Ferry in three days—a furious, indeed unlikely, pace over hilly terrain. Exactly when they crossed the Tennessee is not known, but it appears that the party camped the night of the 9th a day's ride up the Trace from the river. While they slept, two of the horses escaped. According to Neelly, he remained behind to round up the wandering animals, and Lewis forged ahead with Pernier and Neelly's slave, promising to wait for Neelly "at the first houses he came to that was inhabited by white people." Grinder's Stand was the first such place.

The evening of October 10, 1809, Meriwether Lewis reined his horse off the trace through clusters of oak and maples toward two crude log cabins. Seventy-odd miles south of Nashville, the stand operated by Robert Grinder stood just across the Chickasaw boundary. Rather than paraphrase the two most frequently cited accounts of what happened there on the night of October 10-11, below are pertinent excerpts.

The first is from Neelly's report to Thomas Jefferson, written on October 18, 1809. "... he reached the house of a Mr. Grinder about sun set, the man of the house being from home, and no person there but a woman who discovering the governor to be deranged, gave him up the house & slept herself in one near it. His servant and mine slept in the stable loft some distance from the other houses. The woman reports that about three O/Clock she heard two pistols fire off in the Governors Room; the servants being awakened by her, came in but too late to save him. He had shot himself in the head with one pistol & a little below the Breast with another—when his servant came in he says; I have done

![Larry Janoff's painting of Meriwether Lewis approaching Grinder's Stand.](image-url)
versed the yard as before, he again
sat down to his pipe, seemed
some powder in a cannister. . .
served what a sweet evening it
served his face to flush as if it had
drunk a very little. When the
asked if he could stay for the
night; and alighting, brought his
saddle into the house ...

sion of events as told to him by
instructions.

In a letter to a Philadelphia
friend on May 28, 1811, the noted
ornithologist Alexander Wilson
wrote the most often quoted
version of events as told to him by
Mrs. Grinder when he visited
Lewis's grave. "Governor Lewis,
she said, came there (to Grinder's
Stand) about sunset, alone, and
inquired if he could stay for the
night; and alighting, brought his
saddle into the house ... On being
asked if he came alone, he replied
that there were two servants be-
hind, who would soon come up.
He called for some spirits, and
drank a very little. When the ser-
vants arrived... he inquired for his
powder, saying he was sure he had
some powder in a cannister...
Lewis, in the meanwhile, walked
backwards and forwards before the
door, talking to himself. Some-
times, she said, he would seem as
if he were walking up to her and
would suddenly wheel around and
walk back as fast as he could. Sup-
er being ready he sat down, but
had eaten only a few mouthfuls,
when he started up, speaking to
himself in a violent manner. At
these times, she says, she ob-
served his face to flush as if it had
come on him in a fit. He lighted
his pipe, and drawing a chair to the
door, sat down saying to Mrs.
Grinder, in a kind tone of voice,
"Madam this is a very pleasant
evening." He smoked for some
time, but quitted his seat and
traversed the yard as before, he again
sat down to his pipe, seemed
again composed, and casting his
eyes wistfully toward the west, ob-
erved what a sweet evening it
was. Mrs. Grinder was preparing a
bed for him, but he said he would
sleep on the floor and desired the
servant to bring his bear skins and
buffalo robes, which were immedi-
ately spread out for him; and it be-
ing now dusk the woman went off
to the kitchen, and the two men to
the barn, which stands about 200
yards off. The kitchen is only a
few paces from the room where
Lewis was, and the woman being
considerably alarmed by the be-
behavior of her guest could not sleep;
but listened to his walking back-
wards and forwards, she thinks, for
several hours, and talking
aloud... she then heard the report
of a pistol, and something fall
heavily to the floor; and the words
"Oh Lord!" Immediately after-
wards she heard another pistol
[shot], and in a few minutes she
heard him calling out: "0 madam!
Give me some water, and heal my
wounds." The logs being open,
and unplastered, she saw him stag-
ger back and fall against a stump
that stands between the kitchen
and the room. He crawled for
some distance, raised himself by
the side of a tree, where he sat
[for] about a minute. He once
more got to the room; afterwards
he came to the kitchen door, but
did not speak; she then heard him
scraping the bucket with a gourd
for water; but it appears that this
cooling element was denied the
dying man. As soon as day broke
and not before, the terror of the
woman having permitted him to
remain two hours in the most de-
plorable situation, she sent two of
her children to the barn, her hus-
band not being home, to bring the
servants; and on going in they
found him lying on the bed; he un-
covered his side and showed them
where the bullet had entered; a
piece of his forehead was blown
off, and had exposed his brains,
without having bled much. He
begged they would take his rifle
and blow out his brains, and he
would give them all the money he
had in his trunk. He often said, "I
am no coward, but I am so strong,
so hard to die." He begg'd the ser-
vant not to be afraid of him, for he
would not hurt them. He expired
in about two hours, or just as the
sun rose above the trees."22

Neelly provided Pernier with
travel money and sent him to de-
light the report of Lewis's death to
Thomas Jefferson, which he did.
Scholars have searched in vain for
any notations that Jefferson might
have made of his interview of
Neelly. One suspects that
Pernier's account matched that of
Neelly. At any rate, scholars who
support the suicide theory cite
Jefferson's acceptance of Neelly's
report as strong evidence in favor
of their position. Similarly, suicide
proponents claim that Clark's ac-
ceptance of the suicide report also
supports them. On the other
hand, Clark's correspondence prior
to the sad news defends Lewis's
record as governor and indicated
that he fully expected Lewis to re-
turn to St. Louis. In addition,
Nicholas Biddle's 1814 History of
the Expedition Under the Command
of Lewis and Clark contained a tribu-
te to Lewis by Thomas Jefferson
in which he reiterated that Lewis
died by his own hands. Jefferson
also stated: "Governor Lewis had
been from early lifetime subject to
hypochondriac affections. It was a
constitutional disposition in all
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. While he lived with me in
Washington, I observed at times
sensible depressions of mind, but
knowing the constitutional source,
I estimated their course by what I
had seen in his family."24

Apparently Jefferson's authorita-
tive voice settled the issue in the
minds of historians. Except for an 1846 statement by the Tennessee legislature suggesting assassination, no significant voice was raised in favor of murder until nearly the end of the century when Elliott Coues in his 1893 publication challenged Mrs. Grinder’s account as “wildly improbable” and “simply incredible.”29 Coues gave great credence to a newspaper feature story by Tennessee lawyer James D. Park who placed credence in the oral tradition among Grinder’s neighbors that Lewis was murdered. Apparently Coues left a strong imprint on such twentieth century writers as Olin Wheeler, John Bakeless, Vardis Fisher, and Richard Dillon who find it difficult to accept the suicide thesis.

Until the 1980s most present-day historians viewed the 1956 article by Dawson Phelps as the final word on this subject. It was suicide. No doubt about it, according to Phelps, for nearly thirty years the Natchez Trace Parkway historian. I have retraced his steps through numerous archival collections and studied his some twenty good articles. He was an excellent historian. But Phelps had an axe to grind. He felt so obligated to rectify the myths regarding violence on the Natchez Trace propagated by Robert M. Coates’ 1950 best seller, The Outlaw Years: The History of the Land Pirates of the Natchez Trace, that he became obsessed with the safety of that trail. Yes, by 1809 the Trace was not as infested as it earlier was with psychopathic killers such as the Harpe brothers and Samuel Mason. On the other hand, it was not exactly crime free. In a foreword to the 1986 reprint of The Outlaw Years I agree with Phelps on the need to de-mythologize the history of crime on the Natchez Trace, but a person such as Lewis had plenty to fear while traveling it or any other wilderness road.26 That is why he was so well armed. Phelps was reinforced in his conviction of the safety of the Trace by his association with William B. Hamilton. A Mississippi native and Duke University professor, Hamilton also abhorred the myths of violence on the trace. This position is consistent with the attacks by Hamilton and many other historians on the “Frontier Thesis” of Frederick Jackson Turner.

In 1962, Swallow Press printed Suicide or Murder? by novelist Vardis Fisher.28 In this intriguing book Fisher raises many questions regarding the death of Lewis and implies that he was murdered, but the Phelps article remained the authoritative treatment. Fisher had a Ph.D. in history from Chicago. Probably because he was known as a novelist and because he had offended two highly regarded historians, Donald D. Jackson and Julian Boyd, this book was not taken seriously. When one studies the Fisher papers at Yale University, however, one understands just how diligently Fisher tried to uncover the truth and that he did not deserve some of the criticism heaped upon him. While the same cannot be said of the correspondence with Boyd, the letters between Fisher and Jackson reflect a rather warm relationship prior to the publication of this book.30

In the 1980s two important articles supported the Phelps declaration of suicide: In 1981 The William and Mary Quarterly published “The Suicide of Meriwether Lewis: A Psychoanalytic Inquiry” by Howard I. Kushner, in 1986 We Proceeded On, the official publication of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, published “Rest, Rest, Perturbed Spirit” by Paul Russell Cutright. Kushner concludes: “Lewis’s suicide, then, was not merely a means of dying but a grisly final self-punishment, even a self-execution.” Cutright, building upon Phelps and Kushner, affirms “with unshakable confidence” that, because of the “intrusive problems haunting him,” for Lewis there was “only one escape, a fatal rendezvous.”29

While Donald D. Jackson, noted editor of the Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, admitted in 1962 that “thoughtful men still hold opposing views on whether Lewis killed himself or was slain,” he also stated “I am inclined to believe that Lewis died by his own hand.” In the 1978 edition of this work, Jackson reiterated his position before castigating Fisher’s book as “verbose and inexact.” Jackson also suggested that “Fisher approaches the subject not in the manner of a historian but like a detective following a very cold trail.”31

In May of 1994 Dr. Reinert T. Ravenholt, an epidemiologist, attracted the attention of the national press with his argument that the tertiary effects of syphilis drove Lewis to kill himself.32 A study of the Lewis and Clark journals led Ravenholt to conclude that on the night of August 13-14, 1805 Lewis contracted syphilis. Here is a summation of his case. (1) Lewis began the trek in excellent health. (2) Syphilis was endemic among some Indian tribes encountered. (3) Sexual intercourse, frequently urged by the Indians, was commonplace. (4) At least eight Corps members developed syphilis. (5) Among the Shoshoni on the Continental Divide Lewis had a “propitious opportunity and compelling need for sexual intercourse.” (6) Several weeks later he developed a severe and disabling illness. (7) For some months in 1807, after his return, he was “incapacitated” by illness. (8) In 1808-09 he developed a progressive affliction of his central nervous system. (9) During his last months of 1809 he suffered
from a “progressive, episodic, febrile illness, with severe mental and behavioral disorders highly characteristic of paresis.” (10) He recognized that he was suffering from a fatal illness. (11) Thomas Jefferson and William Clark understood why he killed himself.

Ravenholt concludes his article with a summation of modern views on suicide and lists famous people who died from syphilis. Many of Ravenholt’s assertions are highly speculative and not sustained by available evidence. Many causes other than syphilis could account for the symptoms catalogued by Ravenholt from the journals. And even if one concludes infection of Lewis with syphilis, it is unlikely—though possible—that the disease would have advanced as quickly as Ravenholt contends in this case. Often victims of the disease live for years and even decades before the tertiary stage is symptomatic.

While the preponderance of scholarly opinion now favors suicide, over the last century numerous writers of national reputation have argued, at times with great passion, that Meriwether Lewis was murdered. The tide of opinion may be swinging away from suicide either to murder or to a middle ground. In a series of articles in 1991-92 the late Dr. E. G. Chui nard, author of Only One Man Died: The Medical Aspects of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, argued persuasively—that someone killed Lewis. A professor of orthopaedics at the University of Oregon Medical School, Chui nard engaged in an exchange of correspondence with Cutright and Jackson as he prepared his articles. Unfortunately, both Cutright and Jackson died before the appearance of Chui nard’s publications. Chui nard exposes what he perceives as weaknesses in Cutright’s four main reasons for suicide: (1) The failure of Lewis to find a wife. (2) His drinking. (3) His failure to edit the journals. (4) The deterioration of his friendship with Jefferson.

Chui nard contends that malaria caused the condition which Russell describes as derangement and argues that Lewis’s letters from Fort Pickering are evidence that he was in control of his faculties. After reviewing all available accounts of Lewis’s demise, Chui nard constructs his own scenario—a scenario of murder. According to Chui nard’s analysis, it would have been physically impossible for Lewis to have behaved, after his wounds, in the manner described by Mrs. Grinder. The motive was robbery; the murderer was Neelly. Mrs. Grinder’s accounts were fabrications; no frontier woman would behave as she supposedly did.

Because both Cutright and Jackson place great reliance on the Phelps article, Chui nard attacks Phelps’ explanations of Mrs. Grinder’s behavior, his view of the Trace as a safe road, his use of evidence to portray Lewis as a depressed person, and his failure to discuss Neelly’s personal problems. Most references to Phelps contain his concluding statement: “In the absence of direct and pertinent contemporary evidence to the contrary, of which not a scintilla exists, the verdict of suicide must stand.” Chui nard describes this statement as “absurd” and takes Donald Jackson to task for referring to it. He also objects to Jackson’s criticism of Vardis Fisher. In light of Jackson’s letters to Fisher, not all, but some of Jackson’s published remarks are curious. Jackson, for instance, wrote “You have convinced me that Neelly probably was a dishonest man and that Mrs. Grinder was a real nut.”

Chui nard is also brave—or some would say foolish—enough to take issue with the tremendous weight generally given to the readiness of Thomas Jefferson to accept the report of suicide and to explain his suicide by references to his family history of instability. Because Chui nard endorses Fisher on this and other points, it is appropriate here to share with you just one of Fisher’s comments to Julian Boyd. In a letter Boyd criticized Fisher’s “extraordinary analysis of evidence” and continued “...I begin to wonder about something even more important than civility—about honor.” After checking correspondence which he had already deposited in the Yale Library, Fisher blistered Boyd. “What I suspect, my dear Sir, is that you have an idolatrous attitude toward Jefferson, that my book disturbed; or that you liked (sic) to feel that Jefferson had settled the matter and that nobody less than a Jefferson scholar had a right to raise it; or that you feel you have right of preemption in the Jefferson domain and resent intrusions.”

Virtually all proponents of suicide list William Clark’s correspondence as strong supporting evidence, and he may have eventually believed that Lewis killed himself. Letters cited, however, can be interpreted in more than one way. James J. Holmberg, curator of manuscripts at the Filson Club, states in an article on recently discovered Clark letters that “Clark obviously believed Lewis was unstable mentally during this period; thought him capable of taking his own life; and believed he had.” On the other hand, one of the letters quoted by Holmberg indicates that Clark, while he recognized that Lewis was in a financial bind, fully expected Lewis to prevail in his mission to Washington and to return to St. Louis. He wrote: “I think that all will be right and he will return with flying Colours to this County.” Much has been made over Clark’s response to reading the news of Lewis’s death in a Kentucky newspaper: “I fear
this report has too much truth, tho’ it may have no foundation—my reason for thinking it possible is founded on the letter I received from him at your house... I fear 0’ I fear the weight of his mind has overcome him, what will be the Consequence?” How strongly did Clark believe that “it may have no foundation?” Clark believed that the report has too much truth, though it may have no foundation. The analysis by the analysts today will insist that anyone is capable of self-destruction, given the right set of circumstances, even a man of courage like Lewis, but because the Governor was fatigued, depressed, sick and, at times, delirious. (No one has ever suggested that Lewis killed himself while in full possession of his senses.) And, where there was no proof of murder, there was “evidence” of suicide at Grinder’s Stand.

“Is it likely that the cause of Lewis’s death was self-murder? Not at all. By temperament he was a fighter, not a quitter...Sensitive he was; neurotic he was not. Lewis was one of the most positive personalities in American history.”

Many, including Dillon and Fisher, are convinced that a coroner’s jury investigated the death, though its records cannot be found. According to folklore, the jury suspected murder but was afraid to state so formally. In addition to listing potential suspects, Dillon and Fisher challenge the credibility of the key informants, a technique which Donald Jackson finds disquieting. Interestingly, Jackson does not find the use of purely circumstantial evidence of suicide equally “disquieting.” Who could have been the killer? Dillon and Fisher include as likely suspects Pernier, Neelly, the Grinders, or even Russell. Of these, Pernier, whom Lewis owed $240, is most often mentioned as a prime suspect. More likely, they point out, the assassin was an unknown land pirate who naturally would have viewed a person traveling in the style of Lewis as a prime target for robbery. While the ideas of Dillon and Fisher deserve consideration, the conspiracy theory recently advocated by David Chandler is totally without credibility. While newspaper editor and novelist Jonathan Daniels in the 1960s proposed that Lewis was the victim of a conspiracy, he did not list Jefferson as a conspirator.

Concurrence with Dillon and Fisher is based on a careful study of the available evidence in the context of considerable research in territorial history, on a decade of studying conditions in the Old Southwest, on consideration of Lewis’s career, and on consultation with a clinical psychologist who specializes in suicide research. The documentation attributed to Neelly and Russell raises as many questions as it answers, as does the discrepancy in the testimony of Mrs. Grinder. Lewis’s achievements during his brief governorship were impressive in view of the obstacles before him. And it would require quite a search to discover a territorial official who, like Lewis, did not spend an undue amount of energy combating the parsimony, ignorance, and fraticiousness of Washington bureaucrats. Surely Lewis knew that many other territorial officials were blighted by co-workers equally as ambitious and obstreperous as Bates. Though he held Lewis in contempt, Bates never did accuse Lewis of either alcoholism or loss of his mental faculties. Lewis’s attention to personal business matters enroute to Washington could reflect prudence rather than despair. Evidence of his medical condition during the expedition, after his return, and immediately prior to his death is inconclusive. How reliable was Russell’s statement regarding Lewis’s condition and his alleged suicide attempts aboard the steamboat prior to his arrival at Fort Pickering? How many diseases could have caused an appearance of derangement? How did Russell use that term? While the persuasive evidence of the stability and good character of the Grinders compiled by family historians tends to diminish the odds of their culpability, they can not be totally overlooked as suspects. And does not Phelps err when he completely discounts the likelihood of murder by an outlaw on the Trace? Villainous highwaymen sporadically operated in the region throughout the antebellum period and on rare occasions Indians committed crimes.

Obviously, something was on Lewis’s mind as he reined his horse off the Trace into Grinder’s Stand the evening of October 10, 1809. Because the recovery of stray or stolen horses on the Pacific Expedition consumed so much traveling time, it may have been the fate of the horses for which Neelly was supposedly searching? 48 Or his frustration with the War Department? Or the peaceful resolution of Indian relations in Missouri? Or the safety of his unpublished journals? Or his own safety? Or simply food, and rest? Or wishful thoughts of women? Or a drink of whiskey? According to Mrs. Grinder, however, he consumed very little alcohol. Whatever his thoughts, chances are they did not include a fatal rendezvous—especially one of his own contrivance!
clearly irritated Julian Boyd by his repeated inquiries. So the Julian Boyd and Donald Jackson files, in the Vardis Fisher papers, Beinecke Library, Yale University.


Dillon, Meriwether Lewis, 300.

Ibid., 297.

Ibid., 307.

Ibid., 324.

8 Lewis to William Eustis, August 18th, 1809, Jackson, Letters, II, 459-61.

9 Cutright, "Rest, Rest, Perturbed Spirit," p. 9; Dillon, Meriwether Lewis, 326.

10 Kushner, "The Suicide of Meriwether Lewis," 466.


Ibid., 466-67. This letter clearly weakens the idea that Lewis was contemplating suicide.

Ibid., 467-68; Dillon, Meriwether Lewis, 330-31.

Neely to Jefferson, Oct. 18, 1809, Jackson, Letters, II, 467-68.

Ibid., 21.

20 Published in Philadelphia in the Port Folio (Vol. 7, No. 1, Jan., 1812), 3-47.

21 Despite a diligent search, Vardis Fisher and others were unable to uncover any notation that Jefferson may have made concerning his interview with Pernier. Indeed, Fisher

About the author...

Foundation member, John D.W. Guice is a history professor at the University of Southern Mississippi and a recent past president of the Mississippi Historical Society. The article is a chapter in "The Natchez Trace: Pathway to Empire" which he is writing.
THE EXCITEMENT IS BUILDING!

for Great Falls Extravaganza

by Jane Weber
Director,
Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Interpretive Center

Phones are ringing off the hook, hotel bookings are filling early, lists are frantically being finalized for an event-packed week in early July. Over a decade ago the plans were merely dreams. Today, Montana is preparing for Independence Day 1998 and the grand opening of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Interpretive Center in Great Falls, Montana.

Built on a sandstone bluff overlooking the waters of the Missouri, the Interpretive Center is much more than an exhibit gallery. Two-story windows provide sweeping views of Black Eagle falls and the vast prairie spaces beyond. Through the plate glass, geese, pelicans and an occasional bald eagle soar over these open waters, momentarily transforming visitors to a time nearly 200 years earlier.

In the lobby of the Center, a 30 foot canoe is strapped to a truck cart and five men toil to pull the tonnage up a ravine and onto the prairie. Sweat streams down their faces, grit fills their pores, and their expressions betray the bone-tiring fatigue of their labors. The two-story diorama exhibit reveals a snapshot from 1805, a memory of the times when the Corps of Discovery struggled over broken, rocky ground to bypass the great falls of the Missouri River always on the lookout for Indians and the hope of horses.

No artifacts grace the exhibit cases of the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center. In fact, few exhibit cases are found within its walls; instead its treasures are within arms reach, meant to be gently touched and experienced. The familiar smell of cottonwood fills the air as you enter the Mandan earthlodge; elk antler and bighorn sheep horn invite hands-on exploration; a tow rope lays on the floor awaiting a tug from a willing crewman; and reproduction Indian objects can be handled, albeit gently. The exhibit story, itself, also has an unusual twist. Common men in uncommon circumstances? Exhibit panels portray Lewis and Clark's ingenuity and unaltering determination. These intrepid explorers were given the rare fortune to cross the continent and touch the lives of Indians who rarely or never before had seen white men. How these people lived, met and treated each other is a focus for the Great Falls Center.

Indian elders, cultural specialists, historians and Foundation members had a hand in the making of these exhibits. The words on the walls, the original artwork, and the replica objects depicting the turn of the 19th century were drafted, reviewed, and edited by our own Foundation members and tribal leaders from across North Dakota, Montana, Idaho, and Washington. The messages on the exhibit walls represent a true collaborative effort between the Lewis and Clark scholars and Indian cultural experts. Many tribes met by Lewis and Clark as they crossed what James Ronda aptly calls the crowded wilderness contributed to the exhibit creation. Those who have had a hand in the making of this place volunteered unselfishly—reading pages of text, suggesting changes, and critiquing early drawings of the exhibits themselves. Their combined knowledge and opinion inspired the artists and craftsmen who prepared the exhibits. The Great Falls Center
Interpretive Center is truly a model of cooperation.

Together, from June 29 through July 5, 1998, we will celebrate the success of our efforts during a Week of Discovery in Great Falls. Like the center, the week’s festivities are the result of a partnership between the foundation, the Great Falls Lewis and Clark community, Native American Center, Malmstrom Air Force Base, and city, county, and state agencies. Events early in the week include the annual meeting of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation membership and an elderhostel, and college-level course sponsored by the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Association.

Midweek, July 1st marks the start of the tenth annual Lewis and Clark Festival, hosted by the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Association, the Portage Route Chapter and the Lewis and Clark Honor Guard. Over the five day festival, visitors can experience Lewis and Clark’s portage of the great falls; witness the making of the iron boat; listen to scholarly seminars on Indian robe art and life on Montana’s Indian reservations, travel the Portage Route, boat through the Gates of the Mountains; feast on buffalo barbecue; or water raft down the Missouri. The week’s activities will make history an experience to re-live with family and friends.

The afternoon of July 4th will culminate a decade of commitment and unending determination with the dedication of the opening of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Interpretive Center. The festivities will bring Lewis and Clark aficionados, tribal chairmen, Forest Service and National Park Service officials, the president of the National Congress of American Indians Ron Allen, and Montana and Idaho governors Marc Racicot and Phil Batt to the podium for this momentous day. Tribal leaders will present items of their choice for permanent safekeeping in a time capsule at the center. Chairmen from the Crow, Blackfeet, Nez Perce, Shoshone, Shoshone-Bannock, Mandan-Arikara-Hidarsa, and Salish tribes have all been invited to participate. The Winds of Montana, an all-state band, will play period music while the Lewis and Clark Honor Guard formally presents the colors of today and 1805. George Horse Capture, from the National Museum of the American Indian, will present the invocation, followed by commemorative speeches by invitees from the White House, the Department of Agriculture and Interior, the Governor’s office and the National Congress of the American Indian. Scheduled tours of the interpretive center will follow the outdoor ceremonies.

The dedication marks a new beginning for Montana, for Lewis and Clark, and for the Indian people whose territories Lewis and Clark safely passed through. The Great Falls center is a place where cultures meet along a trail that will long be remembered. Meet your colleagues and make new friends on Independence Day 1998. Journey to Great Falls and commemorate over a decade's work to make the Lewis and Clark National Interpretive Center a place of distinction along the Lewis and Clark Trail.

**CORRECTION**

Four errors, three incorrect dates and a wrong name, were made in the article on Blanch Schorer “One Remarkable Lady” in the February WPO. The author of the article takes responsibility for one of the incorrect dates and name, and the editor of WPO takes full responsibility for the other errors.

The correct name of the book is “Sacajawea.”

The date of the claimed death of Sacagawea (page 9, column 2, line 8) should be 1884.

On page 9, column 2, line 5 from bottom: The time of Wind River Bar- tez’ death (wrongly listed as Jean Baptiste Charbonneau) should be 1885.

On page 10, column 1, line 25 from bottom: The death of Sacagawea occurred on December 20, 1812.
Students Impressed by Lewis and Clark

by Kitty Tobin
Sioux City Public Museum

How would Lewis and Clark have responded to the “cools” and “awesomes” of students hearing of the adventures of the Corps of Discovery for the first time? If Lewis and Clark had visited Sioux City, Iowa in the last two years, they would have heard 6,000 elementary students react just that way.

For many students it was their first introduction to Lewis and Clark and the contributions of the Corps to American history. They realize the 100 foot obelisk they drive by every day in Sioux City is in honor of Sergeant Floyd, the only man to die on the expedition.

However, none of the over 225 outreach programs would have been possible without assistance from dedicated members of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation. The Great Falls, Montana Public Schools inspired our local Lewis and Clark historians, Blair Chicoine and the late Strode Hinds, by passing along a copy of their “trunk” curriculum. A large binder contained information and activities. It listed replicas stored in a wooden trunk such as Lewis and Clark would have taken on the keelboat.

After receiving a grant to produce similar trunks of replicas, Blair contacted the Sioux City Public Museum, offering to share his good fortune. Blair, Strode, and I spent the next 6 months developing our trunk shows. My concern was the accuracy of the replicas; Blair and Strode’s concern was drowning me in reading material to make me an instant Lewis and Clark expert. The only hitch came in convincing Strode that the school system considered a musket a weapon, not an artifact. No weapons would be taken to the schools.

Strode was pacified by the fact that Blair, as director of the Sioux City Welcome Center (a convened inspection boat called Sgt. Floyd, no less), gives his version of the trunk show at the Welcome Center. His version takes a closer look at military aspects of the Corp, including firing a musket. To introduce the new program, 4th grade Sioux City teachers were given an afterschool workshop. At the end of the workshop, they were as excited and impressed by the expedition as they were by the replicas themselves.

In the fall of 1995 I began my outreach program in the schools. As a complement to Blair’s presentation, I focus on the daily life of the men and the elements of trade. Dressed in period costume, I touch on how physically different the U.S. was at that time; that the wild west of Lewis and Clark’s days was what many of us would consider the East today. I explain the purpose of the exploration, and outline the journey and the hardships endured during the Corps’ trek through the unknown.

This speech is interspersed with the introduction of replicas, including Indian trade goods, a firestarter kit, fur skins, brick tea, and a tobacco twist. The highlight is starting a fire with flint and steel.

For the remaining time the students relive the past, trying on clothing and attempting to strike a spark with flint and steel. They are much more impressed with my ability to light a fire when nearly all of them fail to get even one spark.

By the time they put on the wamus coat, a full haversack and possibles bag, the thrill of pulling their keelboat up the Missouri has clearly lost its charm.

While it may not be possible to encapsulate the Lewis and Clark exploration in one hour, the trunk show is an ideal starting point for students. A multitude of students’ letters relate a never before experienced fascination with history, incredible admiration for Lewis and Clark, and a deep respect for all the Corps accomplished and how they accomplished it. In this way Lewis and Clark transcend facts and figures to become a personal part of the students’ lives.

It isn’t easy starting a fire using a flint and steel.

MAY 1998
One Step at a Time...

A PREVIEW OF YOUR NEW LEWIS AND CLARK NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL INTERPRETIVE CENTER

Photos by Pete Walkers

From upper left—A view of the center from the river side. The sign in front tells the story. Grizzly bears were unique and buffalo were plentiful as the corps went west way beyond the 15 united states—a land that Jefferson never saw.
From above—Thirteen stripe squirrels were new and prickly pear was a hazard and Indians were nowhere in sight as the expedition headed west from the Mandan villages. Indians told stories on buffalo hides but didn't tell Lewis and Clark which river to follow in Montana. Once they portaged beyond the Great Falls they faced a new challenge—towering mountains and towering worries.
We include on this and the following pages the text of the address presented by Dr. Donald Jackson at Seaside, Oregon, on the occasion of the Sixth Annual Banquet of the Foundation, August 14, 1974.

Dr. Donald Jackson has contributed a wealth of literature about the Lewis and Clark Expedition in his volume *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition; with Related Documents* and in his many articles contributed to historical periodicals. Lewis and Clark students and enthusiasts know him best for his extensive volume on the letters of the expedition which continues to be a unique reference source. In 1965, he received the Western Heritage Award; in 1966, The American Association of State and Local History extended to him their “Award of Merit”. When the Missouri Historical Society honored him with their “Regional Award” in April 1965, alluding to his Lewis and Clark volume, the citation read: “...not only an exciting accomplishment in editing the correspondence relating to that famous journey, but a performance which should serve as a standard in research methodology for the future.”

As editor of the University of Illinois Press for twenty years, he produced some 600 books for scholars throughout the world as Press Editor. During this period, he turned out several works of his own—mostly in the field of history. His specialty was in the field of Trans Mississippi exploration, and in the techniques of collecting and “editing” the journals and papers of some of the early western explorers. In addition to the Lewis and Clark volume, he has produced the following books in the field of history: *Black Hawk: An Autobiography; The Journals of Zebulon Pike, with Letters and Related Documents*, in two volumes; and *The Expeditions of John Charles Fremont*, in three volumes and map case. It was his experience in editing the papers of these explorers that finally brought him to his present undertaking at the Alderman Library, University of Virginia, in Charlottesville, where, since 1968, he has been the editor of *The Papers of George Washington*, a new project for the publication of all the letters, journals, and other papers of the first president. The edition, scheduled to appear in print over the next twenty years, will contain from sixty to seventy-five volumes.

Dr. Jackson is a “Sustaining” member of our Foundation. We were most fortunate to have him and Mrs. Jackson at our Sixth Annual Meeting at Seaside, Oregon, and to have his fine address presented at our Annual Banquet.

**Thomas Jefferson and the Pacific Northwest**

by Donald Jackson

It takes very little time for a visitor to Monticello to discover one of the most striking objects inside the main entrance to Thomas Jefferson’s famous home in Virginia. They are the antlers of a moose and those of an elk, hanging on either side of the front doors, and they are said to have been brought back from the West by Lewis and Clark.

If misfortune had not intervened, we might also see there the mounted head of the Rocky Mountain bighorn, definitely brought to the East by Lewis and Clark and preserved by the Philadelphia painter and museum curator, Charles Willson Peale. That unique specimen, the only preserved mammal head that survived the expedition, was seen at the Rotunda of the University of Virginia by a naturalist in 1825, having been presented to the Library by Jefferson. That specimen appears to have been done in by a zealous and tidy administrator who did not care for moth-eaten hide, dusty glass eyes, and other trademarks of the old fashioned natural history display. But now that the Rotunda of the University is undergoing a massive remodeling, which will restore it in accordance with Jefferson’s original plan, one could wish that a carpenter, breaking through the lath and plaster into a long forgotten cubby-hole, might encounter that moth-eaten specimen, with the eyes powdered over, another of the far too scanty relics of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

However, these bits of bone and hide, and all such specimens and artifacts, only give us the conventional view of Jefferson as an ardent collector, scientist, correspondent with savants, and accumulator of books about his environment. There is more to Jefferson the Westerner than that, more in his early lifetime that made him the greatest armchair explorer of America that we have known.

It is hard to believe that Jefferson thought of himself as a frontiersman, because we think
of him as a cosmopolite, a citizen of the world. But geography substantiates his claim. Born at Shadwell at the foot of the Southwestern Mountains, in the valley of the Rivanna River, he was indeed an early settler in the West of his day. He remarks in his autobiography that his father was the third or fourth settler along the Rivanna River, in the Piedmont region of Virginia, and this appears to be true. Too often we think of him as sitting in his study at Monticello, or in the White House in later years, scheming the conquest of the West in the midst of highly civilized surroundings. The truth is, the itch to explore had been coming on Jefferson since his boyhood. And by exploring he meant learning what was there. It did not so much mean going there, going West in person; to him it was enough that men qualified to observe were giving him information. Jefferson was a sturdy young man, an outdoorsman, a surveyor, but he had no reason to go West himself. In those days a man explored if that was what he had to do to find the boundaries on his land, or survey and map the lands of another man, or go off to counsel with the Indians on the Ohio. These things Jefferson never had to do. He was born in comfortable circumstances, his education provided for, a child of the gentle and affluent landholders and planters of Virginia.

Jefferson's father, Peter Jefferson, who died in 1757 when young Thomas was only thirteen, was a frontier planter but also a surveyor. Peter had endured a most difficult surveying trip in 1746 to determine certain boundaries for Lord Thomas Fairfax, traveling with an expedition of 40 men into West Virginia to the headwaters of the Potomac. The result that we know best was the most famous map of Colonial Virginia and adjacent territory, done by Peter and his associate Joshua Fry, and printed in England in 1751.

Jefferson could not have learned much from his father in terms of actual geography, by age thirteen, but the mood of the household, the atmosphere that suggested difficult mountain trips, long days of peering into surveyors' transits, or dragging the familiar surveyor's chain across the swamps, was very much a part of young Jefferson's early memories.

At the death of Peter, another famous Virginian came into Thomas Jefferson's life. It is traditionally believed that Dr. Thomas Walker was present at the bedside when Peter died. He was a neighbor, living at Castle Hill in Albemarle County, and became the financial guardian of all the Jefferson children. Dr. Walker was a physician, planter, land speculator, active in Virginia politics. Like his friend Peter Jefferson, he had crossed the Blue Ridge, and in 1750, when employed by the Loyal Land Company—was the first white man to make a recorded journey into the Kentucky country. He discovered the Cumberland Gap, equivalent in importance to the discovery of the South Pass in the Rockies in the early 1800s, and he kept a journal. Thirty years later, when Jefferson was governor of Virginia, he would turn to Dr. Walker for information on the western parts of that country.

But no doubt the activity of Dr. Walker and his friends that influenced Jefferson most in his early thinking about the West occurred in the early 1750s. The Loyal Land Company, influenced by the bright reports that Dr. Walker had brought back from his western trip, began to think seriously about further movements in that direction. And three years later the members of that company were making grandiose plans indeed. One member of the company was the Reverend James Maury, and here is how he later described the plans:

Some persons were to be sent in search of that river Missouri, if that be the right name of it, in order to discover whether it had any communication with the Pacific Ocean; they were to follow the river if they found it, and make exact reports of the country they passed through, the distances they traveled, what worth of navigation those rivers and lakes afforded, &c.

The scheme never materialized, but the man the Loyal Land Company had recommended to lead the undertaking was Dr. Thomas Walker. Young Jefferson, who was ten years old at the time, must surely have heard the proposed expedition discussed in his own home. If not, then no doubt he heard of it while studying geography in grammar school, four years later, for his teacher was the Reverend James Maury. Even though nothing ever came of the plan, it served a worthy purpose if it put into young Jefferson's head those dreams about the West that later proved so important to American development.

An ever-present aspect of Jefferson's view of the West was his early interest in the American Indian. It was not uncommon for Cherokee chiefs to visit Shadwell during Jefferson's boyhood. While he was attending the College of William and Mary, in Williamsburg, he spent a good deal of time with Indians who were visiting that provincial capital. In 1762, a chief named Outacity came up from the Holston area of what is now Tennessee, with more than 160 Indians, and Jefferson saw this entourage re-
Jefferson learned to know Indians as far west as the Illinois country, then a county of Virginia, while serving as governor. In June 1781 he smoked the peace pipe and delivered a welcoming speech to Chief Jean Baptiste de Coigny, who had come with a delegation of his dwindling band of Illinois Indians. Even in those days, Jefferson was avidly collecting Indian vocabularies, and later would instruct Lewis and Clark to do the same.

Jefferson’s policy toward the American Indian was not one-dimensional and it was not static. The sequence of his position toward the Indian is almost predictable, if we use a little hindsight. As a small boy—fascination, like the first time we see an elephant. Then, as his mind began to expand and his reading accelerated, we find an element of Rousseau’s “noble savage” in the Jeffersonian point of view. He even refers to himself as a savage, preferring the environment of a savage, when he writes of how glad he is to be back on his Little Mountain at the edge of the frontier.

But when Jefferson becomes governor of Virginia, a new element enters into his thinking. He still respects the Indian, is fascinated by his life and his history and prehistory, but now Jefferson has a new responsibility: as governor, he has an “Indian problem.” It will be with him until he no longer is president. And he knows he is governor of the Indian as well as the white man. It is useful to keep in mind that until near the end of the last century, the American Indian was a factor to be reckoned with in many, many aspects of American life. We were all a little puzzled by those people. Why do they want all that land when they don’t use it? Why do they fight brutal wars among themselves—isn’t one Indian just like any other? Why can’t they see what a wonderful thing it would be just to stake out a little homestead and get a herd of cattle and some chickens?

A few years ago Dee Brown wrote a book called Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee. It was quite avidly the history of Indian-white relationships from the Indian’s point of view. Last year a book of quite another nature appeared. Written by Bernard W. Sheehan, it was called Seeds of Extinction: Jefferson Philanthropy and the American Indian. It is perhaps the first book that explains how the white man’s view of himself and his role on the earth caused him to formulate his policy toward the American Indian. In Sheehan’s view, the Jeffersonian Indian policy was a tragic one, because “with the best of good will” the Jefferson generation “destroyed the American Indian with benevolence, literally killing him with kindness.” Remember that Sheehan is talking about Jefferson’s generation, not General Phil Sheridan’s or General George Custer’s. Can you imagine General Sheridan saying, “The only good Indian is one who has been killed by kindness?”

The Jefferson philosophy—and this is something that lasted for a few years after Jefferson’s death—involved the conviction that the Indian could be incorporated into white society—and should be. Early conversion to a white culture, a white religion—it was supposed to be the salvation of the Indian and it wasn’t.

Part of the plan was that the Indians would be moved west of the Mississippi—using the new Louisiana Purchase as a kind of giant reservation—where they would learn to incorporate themselves back into white society in an orderly fashion. What Jefferson did not foresee—and perhaps no man could have—was that the pressure to move west on the part of the white man would destroy the Indian long before he could even begin to adjust his ways. In 1874, when white men had found gold in the Black Hills of South Dakota and were clamoring to go in and take it from the Sioux, the New York Times said, “We have always observed that when white men want a reservation, it is at once discovered that the Indians have no honest use for it.”

Was the Jeffersonian Indian policy doomed to failure because it was wrong, or would any Indian policy have worked, once Columbus had set foot in the New World? And have we had enough time to know. Another 200 years may prove the wisdom of Jeffersonian philanthropy.

When Jefferson became governor of Virginia in 1779, the country was still at war with England. And since his own state extended West to the Mississippi and Ohio river regions, he became involved in the so-called western phase of the Revolution. One of the heroes of the West already known to him, but now acting under his direction, was Colonel George Rogers Clark. Clark’s exploits at Vincennes, Kaskaskia, and other places with exotic names, were a special
satisfaction to Jefferson, who had been advised of Clark's first plans to conquer the Old Northwest late in 1777. After his term as governor, Jefferson became a delegate to the Continental Congress. One of his earliest undertakings was a letter to George Rogers Clark, dated December 4, 1783. Jefferson thanked Clark for some shells and seeds which the old soldier had sent him, and urged him to keep looking for the bones and teeth of the mammoth.

And then he said: "I find they [the British] have subscribed a very large sum of money in England for exploring the country from the Mississippi to California...Some of us have been talking here in a feeble way of making the attempt to search that country...How would you like to lead such a party?"

Here was Jefferson's first serious attempt to mount an expedition to the Pacific—but he was to have no luck with that particular Clark, who replied from Richmond in February 1754: "Your proposition respecting a tour to the west and North west of the Continent would be Extremely agreeable to me could I afford it but I have lately discovered that I knew nothing of the lucrative policy of the world [...] supposing my duty required every attention and sacrifice to the Publick Interest." In other words, the Revolution had bankrupted him and he was setting out to spend the rest of his days at Louisville, feeling unkindly dealt with by the state and nation for which he had fought.

For a few years, Jefferson would lay aside his plan for an expedition to the Pacific, but not his plans for the American West as a whole. Now that the war was over, the role of the West was a most imperative problem. Some of the states were disadvantaged because their original charters, and later cessions, had cut them off from this vital region. When Maryland declined to ratify the Articles of Confederation until Virginia gave up its western land claims, Jefferson persuaded his state to cede all its western lands except Kentucky and a military grant to veterans; the Articles of Confederation were ratified.

The problem now was to create a government for the West, and particularly for that vast area beyond the Ohio and above the Mississippi which came to be called the Northwest Territory, newly acquired from Great Britain. On the same day in the spring of 1784 that Virginia ceded her lands, Jefferson was appointed to a committee in the Congress to decide on a governmental scheme for the new territories that eventually were to come into the Union. Led by Jefferson, the committee came forth three weeks later, proposing a plan under which settlers moving into the new western area could organize themselves first into territories, later into states, and very important—to exist on an equal basis with the original thirteen states. It may be that Jefferson became too fanciful in creating proposed names for the new states: he devised the names Sylvania, Metropotamia, and Cherronesus, among others. But less exotic names finally prevailed. The plan that he and his fellow Congressmen proposed was somewhat altered by Congress, but it became the basis of the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. As historian William Goetzmann has said, the new law was written in such a creative way that it solved the problem of empire. "Along with the Constitution proposed in the same year, it was perhaps America's most farsighted and creative piece of legislation."

During his final years as governor of Virginia, Jefferson received one of those awful questionnaires that still come to us in the mail in this country. It was from the secretary of the French legation in America, the Marquis de Marbois, and it had been sent to representatives of all the states. The questions were aimed at finding out what America was really like: what are your boundaries, what are your natural and commercial productions, tell us about the botanical and zoological specimens you produce, and your Indians, of course. Most of the questionnaires seem to have fallen where they often rightly belong, in the wastepaper basket, but Jefferson the methodical man could not toss his away. He began to hack away at those questions.

Some he could not answer by himself. He wrote to friends such as George Rogers Clark, and his old guardian Thomas Walker, and began compiling his statistics. The questionnaire arrived in 1781 and in the fullness of time he replied to the Marquis. But his notes wouldn't stop growing. They finally became the only book he ever wrote: Notes on the State of Virginia, published in 1787, important in the present context because it was a kind of model that Lewis and Clark might well have adopted when they began to observe the West. No one could ever believe that Lewis, at least, had not read and digested Jefferson's Notes of the State of Virginia before he set out for St. Louis and points west. And of course Lewis and Clark were to correct many of Jefferson's misconceptions as published in his book—such as the assertion that the Allegheny
Mountains might well be the highest on the continent. The next phase of Jefferson's life was an especially happy one: he became minister plenipotentiary to the Court of France, charged with the task of developing commercial ties between America and Europe. To Jefferson, of course, "commercial" meant mostly "agricultural," and we shall soon see how he applied that aspect of his instructions. But first, let us take up the matter of John Ledyard.

Along came a young man named Ledyard, who said, I will go to Russia and into Siberia, and across the straits, and somehow get into North America. Then I will cross it from West to East. Unburdened by maps, unburdened by information, just sauntering along like Johnny Appleseed (if I may mix up my time periods a little). I'll explore the Northwest.

I am not ready to believe that the methodical Jefferson, who was later to put so much thought into every last detail of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, considered that Ledyard might succeed. He may have felt that any idiot who proposed to explore the Northwest ought to have a chance to try. So he encouraged Ledyard—and as you might expect—nothing came of it. Ledyard was turned back in Russia, and never got across the Bering Straits.

And let us not forget: the Ledyard affair came eighteen years before the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

A small thing happened during Jefferson's stay in Europe that had a direct bearing, I think, on the Lewis and Clark Expedition. He sprained his wrist. Jumped a fence and sprained his wrist. His friends gave him a lot of good advice about what to do, and the advice that appealed most to him was: go down to Aix en Provence and take the waters. In those days, as today, certain waters were thought to be of a healing quality. So he went. And because he was trying to develop our commercial ties with Europe, he continued on to the ports of southern France and northern Italy. One section of his tour included the crossing of the southern Alps between Nice and Turin. Four days of the journey he spent on a mule. No great hardship for an old horseman, but still another chance for him to practice the chores of an explorer. He made notes, always notes. It took him three months. Before he had left Paris he pored over maps of all the towns he could find: Lyon, Marseilles, Turin, Milan, and so on. Careful, almost compulsive preparation and record keeping characterized the man. I am reminded that among his papers there is a list of plants available in the markets of Philadelphia, with the first day of their season and the last day—and that list covers a period of eight years.

On his journey he made careful observations and engaged heavily in the collecting of plants and seeds. He studied farms, vineyards, and orchards, and he kept a journal. He made a list of plants in the mountains, from the tenderest to the hardiest in order of their resistance to cold, ranging from the caper to the orange, palm, olive, pomegranate, walnut, fig, and almond. He became excited about the prospect of introducing the olive tree into the United States as a source of oil, and he bought some trees to experiment with. Finally, he got personally acquainted with snowy peaks, much more rugged than those rounded blue ridges he could see from his north portico back home in Monticello. The pass through the Alps from Nice to Turin puts a traveler in mind of certain Rocky Mountain passes, such as Loveland Pass in Colorado.

And so, years later when it came time to write instructions to Lewis and Clark, Jefferson had his own background of travel under various conditions and at various altitudes, and he knew something about the observations that could and should be made. One can press the analogy too far. But it is quite likely that Lewis had read the journal that Jefferson kept and could form an idea of how best to keep such a journal. Here is a sample of Jefferson's journal:

From La Baraque to Chagny. On the left are plains which extend to the Saone, on the right the ridge of mountains called the Côte. The plains are of a reddish-brown, rich loam, mixed with much small stone. The Côte has for its basis a solid rock on which is about a foot of soil... of middling quality. The plains are in corn, the Côte in vines. There is a good deal of forest. Fine mules which come from Provence and cost 20 louis. They break them at 2 years old and they last to 30.

During all his adult lifetime, Jefferson had been collecting books about the North American continent. There can be little doubt that he had the finest library of books about the trans-Mississippi West to be found anywhere. He had Daniel Coxe's Carolana, which contained valuable theories on geography in general. Jeffreys' Natural and Civil History of the French Dominions in America. Baron Lahontan's New Voyages to North America. Great travel narratives such as Jonathan Carver's Travels, and Samwell's Narrative of Captain Cook. And every atlas he could lay his hands on. When he returned from Europe he wrote to William Dunbar this comment:
"While I was in Europe I purchased everything I could lay my hands on which related to any part of America, and particularly had a pretty full collection of the English & Spanish authors on the subject of Louisiana."

He would continue to buy geographical books for the rest of his life, but it appears that he did form the real nucleus of his geographical library while he was serving in France and traveling in Europe.

I think that one great influence on Jefferson's attitude toward the West, and his determination to conquer it and know it through the agency of others, was his election to membership in the American Philosophical Society. That was—and still is—a society "for promoting useful knowledge," patterned on the old Royal Society of Great Britain, consisting of a small group of inquirers into natural phenomena. It had been founded by Benjamin Franklin and others, and Jefferson later became its vice president and then its president.

As Nathan Schachner has said, "The association stimulated him and enlarged his powers; while his constant correspondence with members such as David Rittenhouse, Charles Thomson, Benjamin Rush, Caspar Wistar...and other intellectual worthies clarified his concepts and crystallized them on paper."

Jefferson and his fellow members of the Society made at least two attempts to sponsor an expedition to the Pacific. The botanist Moses Marshall was approached in 1792, and in the following year a more famous botanist, the Frenchman André Michaux. A fund was raised for Michaux on a sliding scale; he was not to be paid in full unless he got to the Pacific—and, of course, got back. Michaux had gone only as far as Kentucky when it was learned that his chief aim, supported by certain officials in the French Republic, was to raise a western force to attack Spanish possessions beyond the Mississippi. When the scheme was exposed, Michaux was recalled by his government. There are little ironies about the Michaux expedition.

First, the young man who asked Jefferson if he could be allowed to go with Michaux, and was turned down, was Meriwether Lewis. And second, the man in Kentucky who was Michaux's contact, and had agreed to lead a military force against Spain, was that old soldier and long-time acquaintance of Jefferson's—George Rogers Clark. If you can stand one more irony, it was of course George Rogers Clark's young brother William who would finally team up with Lewis to make the exploration a reality.

What happened later, we all know. Upon becoming President, Jefferson had authority to implement that which before he could only request—an expedition to the Pacific. And to those of us who read about the Lewis and Clark Expedition, one of the most pleasing aspects is how consummately satisfied Jefferson was with the undertaking. His own long years of thinking about it, and the careful planning that he and Lewis put into it, and the amazing skill with which it was carried out—everything now fell into place. Also, he felt a very justifiable proprietorship in the expedition. So much so that on at least one occasion he fended off a request from another western traveler for help in getting his journal published.

The request came from the western part of Virginia, now West Virginia, from old David Robinson, who fifty years earlier had been captain of a company in the French and Indian War. In June 1805, while Lewis and Clark were still on the Missouri, David Robinson sent Jefferson a journal of his travels in the western country. He said he had three sons on the frontier even now, was going back there himself and wanted to share with the world the things he had seen in that strange country.

Jefferson returned the journal with his thanks, saying that Lewis and Clark were at that moment collecting a vast amount of accurate data and implying that Robinson's, then, might not be worth the cost of printing.

So a potentially valuable or at least interesting narrative of western travel has been lost to us—perhaps a small price to pay for the thousands of observations made by Lewis and Clark. Another irony here. One of the sons mentioned by the old soldier and traveler was John H. Robinson, a St. Louis physician. Within a year, that young man would be a principal figure in the second great overland expedition across western America—the Zebulon Pike expedition.

So there is a continuity about the events that opened up the West, and a continuity in those experiences of Jefferson which led him to produce the first fruits of our nation's western experience. It often occurs to me that the Lewis and Clark expedition began to grow, and become first a possibility and then a reality, in that house called Shadwell on the Rivanna—to the great delight of a small Virginia boy who was soon to hear his father, his future guardian, and his future schoolmaster talking excitedly about a plan to explore the waterways that might lead them to the Pacific.

From the East

From the Lewiston, Idaho Tribune, March 3, 1957

The State Senate in Boise took the first steps toward preserving, as a point of historical interest, the site on the Clearwater River where Lewis and Clark built dugout canoes for their trip down the Clearwater, Snake and Columbia rivers in 1805.
by Phil Scriver

A cold, dark night gave way to a cloudy windy overcast morning. By the early afternoon the clouds disappeared in favor of a warm summer sun. Daylight remained until nearly 10 p.m. making for a long and warm evening. By dark everyone was more than ready for a few hours of sleep.

The expedition's journals give us a fair laundry list of the day's tasks that were assigned. This was the day that Captain Clark took Willard, Colter and three others to start laying out the portage route. Clark says they left Lower Portage Camp at 8 a.m. traveling up the Missouri River then up Portage Creek (frequently referred to as the small river) to the spot they could start the trek across country portaging around the falls. After reaching flat ground above the river canyon and skirting two ravines that fed into the river canyon, the survey party struck the river at the first falls. They followed the river to determine how far they had to go before putting their canoes back into the water to continue their journey.

Clark's journal entries for this day and the next describe each of the five falls, Giant Springs, Medicine River and White Bear Island. He measured the height of each falls with a spirit level, marked a cottonwood tree with his name and date, and had time to comment on the many buffalo carcasses in the river and formulate a theory why they were so plentiful. The survey camp camped the second night, June 18, at what became Upper Portage Camp.

While at that camp the party shot a grizzly, seven buffalo and one calf, one beaver and one elk. In separate incidents Willard and Colter were each chased by grizzly bears. Willard eluded his but Colter went into the water before Clark was able to scare the bear away.

After Clark and his crew left to survey the portage, Lewis sent two hunters out to get elk for skins to cover the iron boat. He set six other men to work building the carts or trucks for hauling the expedition's baggage across the prairie. The rest of the crew were put to work unloading the white pirogue and spreading the baggage to dry and be repacked and readied for the portage. After the pirogue was emptied it was dragged into a willow thicket where it was secured and camouflaged. Three men were detailed to build a cache for storing excess baggage. The crew was then detailed to take the five canoes up the Portage Creek to the point they would start the overland trip. There the canoes were beached to dry out. Two of the men had a close call when their canoe overturned in the rapids of the creek.

Lewis prepared an extended entry in his journal discussing the buffalo they found in the area and the large number who drowned, giving his theory of how the ones in front of the herds were pushed over the ravines or the falls by the ones in the rear. The grizzly, according to Lewis, were so troublesome because they were protecting their feeding grounds; the dead buffalo carcasses. He also reported on Sacagawea's improving condition and what medicines he had been treating her with.

The next day was much like the 17th, cold early with overcast skies and very windy, becoming warm and sunny later in the day. This day saw the return of the elk hunters who had killed 10 deer but no elk. This was not good in Lewis' mind but he settled for buffalo hides in place of the elk skins. The portage wagons were completed by that evening. Lewis was able to spend some time examining the iron boat frame in preparation for its construction.

The annual Lewis and Clark Festival seeks to show what an 1805 camp of the expedition would have been like. By presenting a first person living history scene, they are trying to interpret our heritage so the visitor will truly feel they have walked into the camp of the Corps of Discovery. After they have donned the correct clothes and acquired the correct tools and equipment and after they have learned what the journals have to say about what the expedition did on the particular days to be interpreted, each member must learn to think and act like the Corps of Discovery would have.

"What a country! Here it is the middle of June and it is still as cold as it was in early April. The morning sun will sure feel good today." These could have been the early morning thoughts of many on the expedition. As the morning wore on thoughts could well have been about the lingering cool damp, but more would have focused on the continual wind.

Clark and his crew were probably anxious to get the portage started as well as eager to see the falls and other features of the land. They were probably a quick brisk step of eager anticipation that made the climb up and down the hills go unnoticed.

For the hunters it was just another day's work. There was a certain air of anticipation since they were trying to get the skins to cover the iron boat. But they were
experienced hunters in a land with plenty of game close by. When they returned without any elk they were probably tired and disappointed. They knew Captain Lewis specifically wanted elk hides. The disappointment probably weighed heavier on them than the physical exertion.

The crews that labored with the baggage faced just another day of work. They undoubtedly cussed the wind. Since it was constant and strong it made their work more difficult in keeping things where they were put and it took added energy walking in it. It did help the process of drying anything that was wet.

When the white pirogue was cached the men probably had certain thoughts of relief from the days on end they had toiled dragging its dead weight against the strong current of the river. Lightening the load probably lightened their spirits. I would imagine they had several comments relative to leaving the boat in the willow thicket.

To the men that took the canoes up Portage Creek it was just a day of toil. The two that came close to drowning probably had very anxious moments and racing hearts. I doubt even these men who had frequently faced danger could continue. They must have had to pause and regain control of themselves. There was undoubtedly a certain amount of cussing of all things from the water and rocks to maybe the captains and other members of the expedition. Although the journals never mention any incidences of conflict or any members who were not willing to unquestioningly follow the captains, there must have been some fleeting thoughts that were not suitable for mixed company. This close scrape could have been one of those times.

When Colter was being chased by the grizzly and Clark was trying to scare it away but could not get a clear shot, Colter very well could have had thoughts of “Well shoot the blankety blank thing!”

Monday June 17, 1805 was like most every day on the journey. A few special events occurred that caused certain thoughts, both good and maybe not so good. But for the most part the days were filled with hard work from early morning until the men fell into bed exhausted. The relief from the tedious struggles of dragging the boats upriver helped to make the day’s work a little easier. The work at hand and the need to pay close attention to what they were doing gave little time for conversation or thinking. Any extra time or energy was devoted to maintaining a vigil in this unknown land they were crossing.

The best way to more fully understand how these explorers would have thought is to “walk a mile in their shoes.” Don the clothes, be exposed to the elements and perform the tasks they did.

MONTANA LEWIS AND CLARK COMMISSION APPOINTED

Governor Marc Racicot has appointed nine individuals to serve on the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Commission. Appointees are: Jeanne Eder of Dillon; Hal Stearns, Jr., of Missoula; John Lepley of Fort Benton; Teresa Korpela of Great Falls; Eadythe Mc Cleary of Hardin; Leif Johnson of West Yellowstone; Betty Stone of Glasgow; Darrell Kipp of Browning; and Curley Youpee of Poplar.

Other members of the Commission are Montana Historical Society Director Brian Cockhill; Travel Montana Program Director Matthew Cohn; and Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Parks Division Administrator Arnold Olsen. The Commission, created by the 1997 Legislature, will hire a full-time director to coordinate the 200th anniversary of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.
One of the often-repeated misconceptions about the Lewis and Clark expedition is that on their Voyage of Discovery they expected they might see dinosaurs or prehistoric creatures still living in the wild American West. This statement is not correct for several reasons. First and foremost, in 1804 dinosaur remains had not yet been discovered and identified as such anywhere in the world. Put another way, people in 1804, even Thomas Jefferson and the foremost scientists of the day, knew nothing about dinosaurs. The notions of prehistoric creatures and extinction were so new that President Jefferson and Meriwether Lewis cannot really be considered naive for thinking that mammoths or mastodons (which had been discovered) might still exist in the West. For Jefferson and Lewis, mammoths were not necessarily “prehistoric creatures.” Dinosaurs, however, were another matter entirely. The term “dinosaur” wasn’t even coined until 1842, and the idea of extinct reptilian lifeforms was quite radical even then, forty years after Lewis and Clark’s expedition. Charles Darwin, natural selection, evolution, patterns of extinction, and the geological dating of fossil remains were all far in the future in 1804.

At the time of Lewis and Clark in the early 1800s, scientists and philosophers were just beginning to discover the fossilized remains of animals previously unknown to science. We know today that most of these animals were not dinosaurs but extinct species of mammals such as mastodons, sloths and mammoths. Whatever their classification, they presented a startling new conundrum for scientists, who, at the beginning of the 19th century, were influenced as much by religion as by science. How long ago had these creatures lived, that their remains had become fossilized and been buried under many layers of sediment? Most Europeans and Americans in the early 19th century believed that the earth was created just a little over 5,800 years earlier. This was the result of Irish Archbishop James Ussher’s 1650 calculation of the age of the earth. Using the Bible as his guide, Ussher went back through the generations described in the Bible and pinpointed exactly when Adam and Eve were created by God. His conclusion was that the world was created on Sunday, October 23, 4004 B.C. Of course, Ussher was still taking the description of a year in the Bible to mean literally a year as it was defined in the modern era. Geologically, then, it was thought that the earth was quite young, which left questions about how the bones of large creatures like the mammoth could have become fossilized so quickly.

Notions about the age of the earth were changing near the turn of the 19th century, however, with the 1797 publication of the theories of James Hutton, a Scotsman who has been called “the Father of Geology.” Hutton described an earth that was destroying and renewing itself in a never-ending cycle which showed “no vestige of a beginning, — no prospect of an end.” Some scientists and philosophers were beginning to think that the earth might be anywhere from 100,000 years old up to several million years old, based on the amount of sedimentary rock they observed at different locations.

The other major notion of the early 19th century which made fossil finds difficult to reconcile was the concept of extinction. Why would God create a creature or a species and then let all of them die off? In 1804, it was thought by most Europeans and Americans that all species were saved by Noah on his Ark. The idea of extinction, then, seemed to go against what was written in the Bible. At the time of Lewis and Clark, the most extensive work on fossils had been conducted by the French scientist Georges Leopold Chrétien, Baron Cuvier (1775-1838). Cuvier began his work at the Jardin des Plantes in Paris, France’s museum of natural history, in 1799. Cuvier initiated the science of “comparative anatomy,” looking at the bones of animals and identifying the functions of each, comparing them with similar creatures. In 1804, Cuvier was just developing his notion that, from his study of fossil remains, some of God’s creatures had in fact become extinct. In other words, at the time of Lewis and Clark, the search for fossil remains had just begun.
and few people believed in the possibility of extinction.

Every story has a little grain of truth to it, however, and the story of Lewis and Clark looking “for dinosaurs” is no exception. By 1804, Thomas Jefferson, Charles Willson Peale, Caspar Wistar and other scientific Americans had excavated the skeletons of mammoths, which they called the “great incognitum,” and “a large lion-like creature” Jefferson called Megalonyx (later identified as a giant ground sloth) in New Jersey and Virginia. They believed that these animals might still be living further to the West. Why? Because if no creatures ever created by God had become extinct, then every creature, even those for which fossilized remains were found, still existed somewhere on earth. Jefferson differed from most men of his time in that he believed that extinction might be possible, although the chance that mammoths still lived in the West was also very real to him. Jefferson wrote to the prominent French naturalist Bernard Germain Etienne de la Villé’s sur Illion, Comte de Lacépède (1756-1825) on February 24, 1803, about the upcoming expedition to be led by Meriwether Lewis. Jefferson told Lacépède that it was “not improbable that this voyage of discovery will procure us further information of the Mammoth, & of the Megatherium also... “The President described the Megalonyx, which was similar to a specimen found in France which Lacépède had found. Jefferson added that there were “symptoms of it’s late and present existence. The route we are exploring will perhaps bring us further evidence of it....”

Jefferson had been interested in fossil remains for many years. In his tangle with the Comte de Buffon, which resulted in Notes on the State of Virginia, Jefferson not only proved that North America had larger living animals than Europe (with the example of the moose), but also claimed a fossil record of larger finds with the “great incognitum.” As a result, Lewis and Clark were on the lookout for mammoths, sloths, or other creatures unknown thus far to science. In Jefferson’s orders to the co-captains, they were to observe “the animals of the country generally, & especially those not known in the U.S. the remains and accounts of any which may [be] deemed rare or extinct.” Lewis and Clark found no mammoths, but they did find many creatures previously unknown to science: the grizzly bear, prairie dog, pronghorn antelope, and mountain goat, along with many other species and subspecies of animals. Perhaps animals like the pronghorn were every bit as “otherworldly” to them as dinosaurs seem to us today.

Perhaps the most interesting sidelight on the expedition itself with reference to dinosaurs is that although Lewis and Clark were not looking for dinosaurs during their Voyage of Discovery, they nevertheless encountered them and described them for science! There are three instances where fossil evidence of prehistoric creatures was discussed in the journals of the Lewis and Clark expedition. The first was on September 28, 1803 in Cincinnati, Ohio. During a stopover in Cincinnati, Meriwether Lewis met a local physician named Dr. William Goforth, who was excavating the fossil remains of a mastodon at the Big Bone Lick in Kentucky. Lewis traveled to Big Bone Lick himself, and sent a box of specimens back to Jefferson, along with an extremely detailed letter describing the finds of Goforth. The letter weighed the pros and cons of whether the tusks found by Goforth belonged to a mammoth or to another animal. The letter demonstrates how well Lewis had learned the scant knowledge of the period regarding fossil remains, and seems to reveal a personal interest in the subject. It is by far the lengthiest surviving letter written by Meriwether Lewis.

The second instance of the discovery of fossil remains was on August 6, 1804, when Sergeant Patrick Gass found the “Petrified Jawbone of a fish or some other animal... in a cavern a few miles distance from the Missouri” (the expedition was encamped midway between present-day Omaha, Nebraska and Sioux City, Iowa at the time). Curiously, the August 6 find was not mentioned in the Journals of Lewis and Clark, or by Sergeant Gass in his journal. It was only found in the descriptions of mineralogical specimens sent back to President Jefferson from Fort Mandan in 1805.
On the return journey, July 25, 1806 near Pompey’s Pillar in Montana, William Clark reported the third and final fossil find of the expedition relating to prehistoric creatures. Clark said that he employed himself in getting pieces of the rib of a fish which was Semented within the face of the rock; this rib is about 3 inches in Secumperation about the middle [the fallen rock is near the water—the face of the rock where the rib is is perpendicular]. It is 3 feet in length tho a part of the end appears to have been broken off. I have several pieces of this rib, the bone is neither decayed nor petrified but very rotten. The part which I could not get out may be seen, it is about 6 or 7 Miles below Pompey’s Tower in the face of the Lard. [larboard] Cliff about 20 feet above the water.\footnote{Based on the later work of Lord Rutherford (1871-1937) and the measures of radioactivity in rocks, today most scientists believe that the earth is at least 5,700,000,000 years old as a solid entity; it may have taken 780 million years for the planet itself to form from molten material. See David Norman, Dinosaur! page 23.}

Today we know that Clark’s fossil find was in a rock strata from the Cretaceous Period (144-66 million years ago), the last of the three eras of the dinosaurs. It is in an area that was a terrestrial zone during the Cretaceous, thus ruling out Capt. Clark’s guess that he had discovered “the rib of a fish.” Having seen the carcass of a whale on the Pacific coast, Clark might be expected to jump to the conclusion that the giant ribcage he saw protruding from the rock was a large “fish” (dolphins and whales were not generally recognized as seagoing mammals in the early 19th century, and were often called fish). So what did Capt. Clark really find? The most common dinosaurs found in the rock strata Clark described, the Hell Creek Formation in Montana, are Hadrosaurs (“duck-billed dinosaurs”), Triceratops, Albertosaurus, and Tyrannosauroidea REX. In other words, although Lewis and Clark knew nothing of dinosaurs, and were not looking for dinosaurs on their Voyage of Discovery, they may have found a dinosaur.\footnote{Donald Jackson, editor, Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. With Related Documents, 1783-1854, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1962, pp. 15-16.}

Clark’s dinosaur find, although not well chronicled in terms of exactly what he found, is commonly cited in books about paleontology as one of the earliest world-wide finds of dinosaur bones. In addition to all of their other finds, the Corps of Discovery paved the way for 19th century bone hunters and 20th century paleontologists in the American West.

—FOOTNOTES—

\footnote{The term “dinosaur,” taken from the Greek words for “terrible lizard,” was coined in England by Professor Richard Owen, an anatomist. Many credit a speech by Owen to the British Association for the Advancement of Science at Plymouth, England in 1841 as being the first use of the term, although this precise date has been disputed by other scholars. It is known for certain that Owen was using the term by 1842. See Dinosaur! by David B. Norman, New York: Prentice Hall, 1991, pp. 10, 55-57. For further general reading on dinosaurs and their discovery, see Louise Psihowos and John Knoebber, Hunting Dinosaurs New York: Random House, 1994. For more detailed descriptions of modern theories about dinosaurs, see Robert T. Bakker The Dinosaur Heresies New York: William Morrow, 1986 and Sylvia J. Czerkas and Everett C. Olson (editors) Dinosaurs Past and Present Los Angeles: Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, 1987.}
Meadows Named Foundation Executive Director

Sammye Meadows is from the Cumberland Mountains of Eastern Kentucky. She graduated from Centre College of Kentucky and immediately moved west to Colorado. She spent the next twelve years in Vail, ski bumming and eventually working for the town government. Then she moved to Alaska. She lived in Petersburg, Wrangell, Juneau and Kodiak, spending free time kayaking, mountain climbing, camping and skiing in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Denali National Park, the Alaska Range, Kodiak Island, and Glacier Bay National Park. In 1986 she relocated to Santa Fe, New Mexico, to work on the film, "The Milagro Beanfield War." Afterward, she followed the film’s director, Robert Redford, to Sundance, Utah, to work as his environmental spokesperson. In 1991, she returned to New Mexico and Colorado to work as executive director of the Taos Art Association and later of the Vail Alpine Garden Foundation. In March 1998, Sammye arrived in Great Falls, Montana, to serve as executive director of the Lewis & Clark Heritage Foundation.


Greetings From Great Falls!

From the foundation’s brand new national headquarters, in the spectacular new Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center, overlooking the Missouri River - to be exact!

I'm very pleased to introduce myself—Sammye Meadows: member and freshly appointed executive director of the foundation. As you know, last year the foundation and the National Bicentennial Council hired Michelle Bussard to serve both organizations as joint executive director. Since that time both groups have grown rapidly, and the time for each to have its own professional leadership came sooner than expected. So I'm the beneficiary of that, and I'm eager to begin.

I look forward to working closely with our board, committees, the National Bicentennial Council, and with all of you as we move into the expedition's bicentennial observance and onto the future.

I hope I'll get to meet you at the annual meeting—please introduce yourself!

Sammye Meadows
Executive Director
Forest Service Begins Preparations for the Bicentennial

To some, the years 2003-2006 seems like a long way off. But to students and enthusiasts of the Lewis and Clark story, the Bicentennial of this epic adventure is just around the corner. In anticipation of the growing interest to follow the trail and to see and experience what the Corps of Discovery did on their explorations almost 200 years ago, the Northern Region of the US Forest Service has stepped up its preparations for the observance of the bicentennial.

The time Lewis and Clark spent overland shattering the myth of an easy Northwest Passage to the Pacific is the part of the story that focuses on lands which are today closely associated with the National Forests in Montana and Northern Idaho. Their route struggling up and over the continental divide passes through, near, or looks at almost all of the national forests of the Northern Region (plus the Salmon NF). These national forests provide some of the best opportunities for public re-enactment and self discovery of the overland portion of the route since they have some of the least altered landscapes remaining from the time Lewis and Clark saw them.

The bicentennial is expected to create a steady increase in use of the trail and associated sites with a peaking of group use during the actual 200th anniversary years of 2005 and 2006. To prepare for this increase in use, the Regional Forester of the Northern Region has appointed a full time coordinator to develop the region's bicentennial observance strategy. Assisted by representatives from each of the involved national forests, they will be assessing the current conditions of the trails, facilities, interpretation along the route to decide what may be needed to ensure that people following the story will have a quality experience during their visit. It is the goal of this bicentennial team to coordinate with and be responsive to all the other interests, local communities, Native American tribes, and national observance plans that are being developed for this 200 year anniversary. For further information or if you would like to discuss bicentennial planning issues contact Margaret J. Gorski, Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Coordinator at 406-329-3587 or write her at USDA Forest Service Northern Region P.O. Box 7669 Missoula, Mt. 59807 or e-mail: mgorski1@fs.fed.us.

(More on Margaret Gorski on page 39)

This is it! This is the place! This is where the action is!

THE EXCITEMENT IS BUILDING!

FOUR MAJOR EVENTS
(five if you count the Fourth of July celebration)

are happening and are yours to enjoy on the banks of the Missouri River in Great Falls, Montana where Lewis and Clark faced a major obstacle in their drive to reach the Pacific Ocean.

**JUNE 29 - JULY 2**
The 30th Annual Meeting of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation

**JULY 1 - JULY 5**
Lewis and Clark Festival and Encampment—
The best of the best according to Stephen Ambrose

**JULY 4 —**
Grand Opening Ceremony: Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Interpretive Center and national headquarters for the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation

and...a wonderful extra

**JULY 3**—A special round table discussion featuring nationally renowned historians and authors:

John Logan Allen • Stephen Ambrose • Dayton Duncan • George Horse Capture • Joe Horse Capture • James Ronda • Herman Viola

COME AND JOIN US IN GREAT FALLS FOR YOUR BIGGEST WEEK OF THE SUMMER!
(and maybe the year)

For further information call 406-761-4434
This letter is to voice concern and irritation over two articles printed in the February 1998 Issue of We Proceeded On. I ask that this be printed in the next issue.

Specifically, the two articles of concern are: "Roll On Columbia" by Martin Plamondon II and "Recreating The Missouri River A Fitting Tribute To Lewis And Clark" by Hugh Ambrose, reprinted from the Great Falls Tribune. Both are inappropriate for WPO. In my opinion in that they smack of the typical environmentalist emotional rhetoric so commonly used as a tool in the furtherance of the causes of the environmental movement.

We all know that things went down hill since the time of the Corps of Discovery, it could be said that's true since Columbus stumbled onto the Bahamians. But it isn't the mission of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation to join with the Sierra Club in saving the world nor the purpose of WPO to be a messenger for the Society for The Prevention Of Cruelty To the Spotted Field Mouse, however one might weave Lewis and Clark through it all.

The Foundation and WPO are about events and special people of the past in special places and WPO should take us back to those times. What somebody perceives has happened or should be is for different organizations and publications. Let's please leave the political messages out and keep WPO on the trail of Lewis and Clark.

Hank Deschenes
Great Falls, MT

Editor's Response...

When I edited Rural Montana magazine for the nationwide association of rural electric and telephone cooperatives, I used to take great delight in satirically needling the "radical" environmentalists about their concerns over such issues as caribou not following traditional migration routes because they wouldn't cross under the proposed Alaska Pipeline. I flew over the completed pipeline and watched a herd of caribou cross under the pipeline as though it wasn't there. In another case they opposed the building of high voltage power lines across the mountains in southwestern Montana on the grounds that it would disturb and probably kill the animals grazing in the area. Both the wild animals and cattle and I (as I fished a creek) moved under those power lines with no noticeable disturbance or damage to our psyches or physical bodies.

On the other hand, I never thought the pipeline or the power lines added any great beauty to what nature had already created on the tundra or the mountains. As I drive along the Missouri or the Columbia Rivers, I often dream about what the rivers might have looked like when Lewis and Clark came through. I think in all of us there is a desire, a dream, to know and be there "back when."

That doesn't make any of us messengers for the Society For The Prevention Of Cruelty To The Spotted Field Mouse. It does make us aware of our environment. None of us would want to be with the expedition when they endured the stink of the rotting buffalo carcasses that had been swept over the falls or fallen from the cliffs along the river. That is nature's way as are forest fires, earthquakes, floods, drought, mosquitos, prickly pear and hail storms.

However, sometimes people try to change nature for their own advantage. It doesn't always work the way they think it will. The channeling that straightened out the lower Missouri has ended up causing more problems than good. Sometimes changes do work. The hydro electric dams on the upper Missouri have been very beneficial for Montanans. The Missouri, to many is a living thing. Not so much on the lower part as on the upper part. Incidentally, Hugh Ambrose's essay was directed to the lower Missouri River.

Hugh Ambrose and Martin Plamondon III speak of the Missouri and Columbia Rivers as living rivers. They are joined by Ken Burns and William Least - Heat Moon in "Lewis & Clark: The Journey of the Corps of Discovery." The rivers speak to them. Ambrose and Plamondon speak of the rivers as being alive but dying from channeling (primarily in the lower Missouri), damming, pollution from many sources, stagnation. We are lucky in Montana. The Missouri is still alive here with an active current, an abundance of fish and a wild and a wondrous scenic stretch. It tells its story in a somewhat restrained way, but it can still speak.

Not so much of the Columbia and the lower Missouri. They have been "civilized" almost to death. Their voices have been muted. The lower Missouri rebels with devastating flooding. The Columbia is too firmly chained and clogged with silt to offer much resistance.

Lewis and Clark buffs who travel the rivers know they aren't (with a few exceptions) seeing what the Corps saw. But they dream their dreams of how it might have been. Thousands of people were horrified when the Eye of the Needle was vandalized. Few raised their voices when the rivers of Lewis and Clark lore started dying. Keeping them alive is not a political message. It is keeping the trail of Lewis and Clark alive.

—Marty Erickson
WASHINGTON STATE
CHAPTER FORMED

During last July's annual meeting of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, over 50 Washington residents crowded into a meeting room and expressed an interest in forming a local chapter of the Foundation. At this meeting, a steering committee was selected from the group to proceed with the formation of the chapter. Those committee members include: Pam Andersen of Olympia, Dee Coons of Clarkston, Lee Edel of Longview, Marilyn and Murray Hayes of Shoreline, Rennie Kubik of Kennewick, Steve Lee of Colton, Tom Olson of Camano Island, Don Payne of Federal Way and A.G. Wesselin of Centralia.

The purpose of the chapter will be to stimulate public interest in matters relating to the Lewis and Clark Expedition with particular emphasis on their activities while in Washington state. The activities of the chapter are intended to complement those of the national foundation, other chapters, the Bicentennial Council and the Washington Governor's Lewis and Clark Trail Committee. Meetings will be planned for at least three times each year in various locals in the Evergreen State. With the bicentennial of the Expedition approaching fast, steering committee members feel that exciting opportunities exist for a chapter.

First Meeting

On November 22, 1997, 50 Corps of Discovery enthusiasts met in Tacoma for the first meeting of the Washington State Chapter of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation. It was the culmination of more than three months of work by the steering committee to organize this new group. The membership unanimously approved the proposed bylaws and slate of officers presented. Barb Kubik, president of Washington State's Lewis and Clark Trail Committee and LCHTF board member, reported on the history and relationship of the various national and state Lewis and Clark organizations. Bob Hunt, author of numerous articles for We Proceeded On during the past ten years, led a discussion on how to personalize your expedition research, with additional comments contributed by Dr. Reinert Ravenholt. As of January 8, the chapter had 77 members. 1998 meetings are planned as follows: February—Ilwaco; May—joint meeting with the Idaho Chapter in Lewiston/Clarkston; June/July—Great Falls (during the Foundation's annual meeting); and September/October—Walla Walla. For further information about the chapter, our meetings, or joining us, contact Don Payne, president, 32237—3rd Avenue SW, Federal Way, WA 98023.

ELDERHOSTEL WILL STUDY EXPEDITION

An elderhostel on the Lewis and Clark Expedition will be offered this summer at Montana State University-Bozeman, said Marilyn Jarvis, elderhostel coordinator with MSU Extended Studies.

One session will be held from June 14 to 20 and the other from July 26 to Aug. 1. Three courses will be offered in each session.

"On the Trail of Lewis and Clark: A Naturalist's View" will give a non-technical review of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, including maps, illustrations and commentary on plants, animals, biogeography, diseases and health problems.

"Lewis and Clark: Forerunners of Our National Exploration Policy" will follow the historical threads that run through the Louisiana Purchase and the expedition. Students will see how the agents of federal exploration policies contributed to international development and the eventual establishment of Yellowstone National Park.

"Cultural Experiences of Indian Tribes Encountered by Lewis and Clark" will discuss spirituality, sacred ceremonies and places, warfare, dances, music and roles of women in traditional cultures.

The fee is $380, less a $75 deposit. For more information, call Jarvis at (406) 994-4820 or e-mail her at mjarvis@montana.edu

CATCH THE WHITE CATFISH LIVING HISTORY EVENT

The Western Historic Trails Center is pleased to announce that a White Catfish Living History Event will be held on our grounds on Saturday and Sunday, July 25 and 26. During the event the center will also host guest speakers giving presentations on Lewis and Clark.

The Discovery Corps, a non-profit educational group dedicated to preserving the memory of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, will establish a living history camp open for public viewing. The event would be to commemorate a known Lewis and Clark rest and repair camp that occurred in this area during July of 1804.

The Western Historic Trails Center is an interpretive center situated on approximately 450 acres just off 24th Street in Council Bluffs, Iowa (Exit 1B or 180/29). The facility, designed and built by the National Parks Service, interprets the historic trails of Lewis & Clark, Mormon, California and Oregon Trails. The center is open daily in the summer from 9 a.m. - 6 p.m. Free admission. For more information please feel free to call 712-366-4900.

If you would like to order Courageous Colter and Companions by L.R. Colter-Frick, the published price is $39.50 plus $4.50 for postage and handling for a total of $44.00. Make the check payable to Video Proof and mail to: Video Proof, 1585 West Fifth Street, Washington, MO 65090-1215.
OBITUARY

ALLEE MARGARET PARKER OLSEN

Allee Margaret Parker Olsen was born in Seattle, Washington on April 24, 1911, the second daughter of William and Margaret Parker. Her sister, Elva, was also born on April 24, two years earlier. Music was a big part of the family as her father played trombone, touring the country with John Philip Souza. He was acclaimed as Souza's finest trombone player at that time. Her mother had a beautiful singing voice, a mezzo-soprano. Elva played the piano, and Allee the violin. They often had “little concerts” together. Family life was simpler in those days: picnics in the park as a family, riding the street car, which was the mode of transportation in those early Seattle days, for those unable to afford an automobile.

The Parkers also could not afford a home, so they moved many times, living in West Seattle, Queen Anne Hill, the Montlake district, a farm in eastern Washington, near Woodland Park and the Roosevelt district. Allee was 13 when her mother passed away and she and Elva traveled by ship to California to live with an aunt and uncle. California proved to be lonesome for the two girls and when the aunt and uncle eventually adopted a boy, Elva and Allee took passage on a ship back to Seattle.

They settled in the Wallingford area, living with family friends and attending Lincoln High School. Elva continued with her piano, eventually becoming a concert pianist and teaching piano for many years. The early years linked these two girls together, attending many special events, traveling and “being there” for each other. Elva passed away in 1994.

Allee and J. Louis Olsen were married in June of 1934. Allee worked for nearly 30 years for Safeco Insurance.

Three boys were born to Allee and Louie: Terry in August of 1935, Tom in February of 1937 and George in November of 1944. Allee was so proud of “her boys” and especially her eight grandchildren. Two great-grandchildren were also added to the family tree.

In her later years, she was active in the United Daughters of the Confederacy (her father was born in Arkansas, but many family roots are in South Carolina). The Daughters of the American Revolution, The Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation and her various church activities. She is a descendant of the Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery expedition, a 4th generation of Alexander Willard, a gunsmith and blacksmith. Her interests included gardening, bridge, golfing and she was an avid reader.

Allee was an optimist, continually seeing life with a positive attitude; she was humorous, had a strong faith in God, was compassionate, always willing to pitch in and help. To all who knew Allee, she was that special friend.

This obituary was taken from the memorial service program for Mrs. Olsen.

CORRECTION

The book review in the November 1997 WPO on Carol MacGregor’s “The Journal of Patrick Gass” listed Patrick Gass as having two wives. He had only one. The editor regrets the error.
Thomas Jefferson's mockingbird could whistle a tune while the President played it on the violin. Incidentally, William McKinley's parrot could whistle "Yankee Doodle".

—L.M. Boyd's Trivia

No Merry Weather for Lewis and Clark

Commenting on the lot of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark during their stay at Fort Clatsop during the winter of 1805-06, an atmospheric science researcher at the University of California, Davis, said they may have been caught in the El Niño Southern Cycle. The explorers endured rain 96 out of the 106 days they were on the Pacific Coast.

Terry Nathan thinks the 19th-century explorers really had something to complain about. He says the force at play was La Niña, the opposite of El Niño. El Niño is a warming of the eastern Pacific Ocean, La Niña is a cooling of the sea. El Niño Southern Oscillation refers to the twin phenomena.

Nathan and other scientists decipher weather of the past using proxy data—the width of tree rings, for example, from nature, and from human history, documents such as explorer's journals.


A few years ago Nathan got to thinking: How miserable was it? "It's always raining up there," he said. "Was it anomalous?" He began trying to answer the question. His preliminary research suggests Lewis and Clark did indeed endure an unusually wet Oregon winter.

Looking at weather records from Astoria from 1961 to 1996, Nathan found that rain fell on more days during the Corps' stay than in any modern year during the same period. The explorer's recorded rain on 96 days between Dec. 8 and March 23. By comparison, he counted only 88 days of rain in the wettest winter of the past 35 years. That was in 1974-75, which has been identified as a La Niña winter.

Historical climatologists have identified the year before Lewis and Clark arrived in Oregon as an El Niño year, Nathan said. About 50 percent of the time El Niños are followed immediately by La Niñas.

Nathan has more work to do to complete his case that Lewis and Clark were drenched because of a La Niña. He plans to check information compiled by scientists who read tree rings and study journals kept by Southern California missionaries that same year.

—Sacramento (CA) Bee

Historians Criticize Ambrose Book

Two history professors say that while Stephen Ambrose's best-seller on the Lewis and Clark expedition may be an enjoyable read, it is full of errors.

Stephen Sylvester and William Thackeray, both professors at Montana State University-Northern, contend "Undaunted Courage" is not as much history as dramatization, and one in which the author should admit he takes liberties with the facts.

The two are also critical of the author. "He definitely did slipshod work. He needs to address his errors and correct them in the next edition, although to do that he'd probably have to rewrite the entire book," Sylvester said. Thackeray is less critical.
“It’s a good book, but it has some conspicuous mistakes,” he said. “And for someone who has followed the path of Lewis, it’s strange that he made the mistakes he made.”

Thackeray points to Ambrose wrongly saying that Lewis saw the Rocky Mountains for the first time from the White Cliffs area of the Missouri Breaks.

“We know now what he really saw were the Little Belts, Highwoods, Big Belts, Bear Paw and Little Rockies,” Thackeray said. “…We know that Lewis was mistaken, but Ambrose doesn’t correct it in his book. This is very careless for him not only not to correct it but to perpetuate the mistake.”

While contesting the professors on some points, Ambrose admitted the book contains some errors. He said they are corrected as they are found.

“I appreciate having the mistakes made known. When I’m wrong, I’m wrong and I correct it,” Ambrose said. “I’ve corrected some things in later editions.”

— Great Falls (MT) Tribune

The following editorial in the Great Falls Tribune responds to the Ambrose critics.

Good History

Academic nitpickers are banging on Stephen Ambrose’s best-selling book, “Undaunted Courage.”

The academics—two professors at Montana State University-Northern in Havre—say the book is “laced” with errors and isn’t really history.

Do they mean it’s not boring enough to be history?

“Undaunted Courage” is in its 40th printing with more than 1.25 million copies sold. That’s a lot of people turned on by a 200-year-old event.

Ambrose unashamedly acknowledges some mistakes and corrects them in successive editions. Most are geographic faux pas such as misplacing a creek or misidentifying a mountain range.

And he doesn’t agree that all of them are mistakes.

In any case, the criticisms have some of the ring of sour grapes. It’s a good book that has gotten millions of people interested in history. That’s a good thing.

Attorney Leaves $250,000 Seltzer to Lewis and Clark Center

The late Leo Graybill Jr, a prominent Great Falls attorney who died in December, bequeathed an original O.C. Seltzer oil painting, “Chief Yellow Weasel,” to the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center. The painting has been appraised at $250,000, according to Dale Gorman, president of the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center Fund, Inc.

The large oil was painted in 1935 by Seltzer, a renowned Western painter.

“The painting was done, but the person who had commissioned it didn’t like it because the water wasn’t clear blue—it was muddy,” Turner Graybill, Leo’s grandson said. “Seltzer was offended by that. He had worked hard to make the water muddy because the horses were standing in it. When it was rejected by the guy who was going to buy it, my grandfather either purchased it or Seltzer gave it to him.

“My father felt really good about having the family give this painting to the center,” Graybill said. “It was one of the last things he wanted to do.”

— Great Falls (MT) Tribune

The C.M.Russell Auction of Original Western Art was held in Great Falls March 18-22. Lewis and Clark were a big part of the auction activities. The following items were gleaned from news reports about the auction.

Highest price paid for L & C painting

The highest price paid for the work of a living art-
ist at this year’s auction was $10,000 for “Legend of the Falls,” an acrylic by Larry Zabel from McAllister in southwestern Montana. Zabel’s piece, which depicts the Great Falls Portage Route Chapter’s Honor Guard re-enactment of Lewis and Clark’s portage around the falls was this year’s People Choice winner for painting. Zabel’s Quick Draw at Saturday evening’s auction also brought top price of $2,800. He did an acrylic painting of a buffalo on a shield. The Quick Draw is a contest to see what artists can do in 30 minutes. (Larry Zabel and his Lewis and Clark paintings will be featured in an article in the August WPO.)

Copies of Piece Available But Not the Original

Benita Wheeler of Great Falls has copies of her newest watercolor for sale at the Western Heritage Artists Show, but you can’t buy the original. It was sold before the show even opened. The watercolor of the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center was commissioned by Maggie Nybo, who presented it last week to Jane Weber, director of the center.

— Great Falls (MT) Tribune

Historian: Lewis and Clark Fullfilled Nez Perce Dream

Nez Perce elders were expecting the Lewis and Clark Expedition because they had been warned of their coming in dreams, historian Jim Magiera told a seminar at the Western Art Show (one of five art shows/auctions held in Great Falls during the C.M. Russell week). “The Nez Perce had dreams of people coming from the east who had hair on their faces, smelled bad and ate horses and dogs, something they would never do,” Magiera, a Havre history teacher and seasoned U.S. Park Service ranger, said. “Furthermore, it was clear they were incompetent woodsmen because they were taking all the wrong trails and passing up food,” said Magiera, who was adopted by a Nez Perce brother and who heard oral traditions from elders of the tribe.

Magiera also noted Watkuweis, an elderly woman of the tribe, who probably saved the expedition from being demolished by the tribe. She had been treated kindly by Canadian whites after being captured as a child. She told the warriors not to hurt them when they were sick from eating salmon and camas bread and could have easily been overcome.

“And,” Magiera said, “Their timing was critical because she died the night after Clark came to their camp. Had they been just one day later...”
late Bob Bivens, a key player in early efforts to build Lewis and Clark fever.

Sherman is adamant about giving credit to the local volunteers. "My mission is as a peddler and shoveling good people into projects," he said. "They had a bunch of live wires here and they began to get excited about the expedition...it just mushroomed."

He toured the center this week with Director Jane Weber.

"I had tears in my eyes thinking of the kids who will come here again and again. What a wonderful gift for Montana and the nation," he said.

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**Book Reviews**


A Review by Martin Erickson

Ken Burns closes his preface to "Lewis and Clark: The Journey of the Corps of Discovery," by quoting the philosopher Jacob Needleman who said, "America is the land of zero. We start from zero. We start from nothing. We start only from our own reason, our own longing, our own search."

Burns is describing the making of the documentary film of the same name, but is also describing what the Corps of Discovery discovered. They discovered, he says, nothing but themselves, and in so doing, they discovered us.

It is a philosophical view of an amazing journey of some two plus years across a land that had previously been partially charted, but was mostly uncharted by either Europeans or any citizens of the United States. It was uncharted, but not undiscovered. It was a land already populated by Indians who had a solidly developed system of commerce. They were neither savages nor uncivilized.

Dayton Duncan's beautifully written and illustrated book, the companion piece to the film, gives us a view of the expedition from many different angles. The 12 chapters in the book cover not only the highlights of the journey, but expand on such topics as the paternalistic approach to the various Indian tribes as "children" of the "Great White Father" in Washington. Duncan's summary chapter "We Proceeded On" looks at the changes in the land, the rivers and the people since the expedition ended in 1806. The preceding chapter looks at what happened to the members of the expedition and the various tribes they met on their journey.

Interspersed throughout the book are sidebars by Duncan on topics as varied as Jefferson's instructions to the Corps, Sacagawea and the "Writingest Explorers".

I saved one of the best things about the book to the last. Just as in the film, the book has essays by William Least Heat-Moon (Vision Quest), Stephen Ambrose (Friends) and Erica Funkhouser (Finding Sacagawea). The essays add another dimension to...
an already well done and very readable book. Least Heat-Moon looks at the relationship between Lewis and Clark and the Indians. Ambrose takes a close look at the unique friendship between the two leaders of the expedition. Funkhouser wrote a definitive poem about the “Birdwoman” gives us an insight into the relationship between Sacagawea and the two captains.

The book is essentially a series of vignettes written in an easy, flowing style that will appeal to almost all levels of readers. The wonderful photos and illustrations throughout the book (150 in all) make it an extremely appealing book to open at any point and enjoy.


A Review by Dr. Jack DeForest

This interesting publication highlights the pioneering expeditions of an elite New World explorer. The author, a Canadian historian, has studied the impressive career of Alexander Mackenzie (1762-1820) who left Scotland as a child in 1774 and ventured across wilderness Canada to the Pacific Ocean in 1793 at the age of 31 after a 1789 journey up the now named Mackenzie River to the Arctic Ocean. His exploration journals were published in a 1801 book, VOYAGES FROM MONTREAL, a “monumental text of his great travels.” This assessment in Professor Gough's detailed book is based on extensive research discussed in the sources section—noting some referenced volumes are out of print.

Sir (awarded in 1802) Mackenzie's economic activity focused on establishing fur trade business while seeking travel routes to the Pacific that would generate trading enhancement with China, Japan and Russia. He repeatedly urged British government activity to develop commercial routes and business establishments across Canada to the Northwest coast. He felt effective British action would stimulate profitable air trade and help block commercial action by the United States. While this book has little reference to the Lewis and Clark expedition a decade later, it is a good summary by Gough who researched available historic material and personally traveled from Mackenzie's birthplace to Montreal and across both expedition ventures to the Arctic and Pacific oceans. His dedicated research and assessment of the unique Mackenzie career is useful North American information for teachers and students.

The discussion of Mackenzie’s unusual family arrangement, personal behavior and vigorous desire to encourage economic action is a useful public service by the author who has interest in providing educational data on events that undoubtedly influenced the leadership activity of President Thomas Jefferson who got his book in 1802. Both he and Meriwether Lewis were impressed by the author's business success and activity to develop continental trading. President Jefferson read the book with interest and was concerned about the author's urge for British regional economic activity.

This information likely played an important role in his generating the 1803 good-buy Louisiana Purchase from France that doubled the United States geographic area and undoubtedly encouraged immediate creation of the great Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery expedition that left St. Louis on the Missouri River in May 1804 and returned from the Pacific coast in September 1806 with valuable information that played an important role in future public migration and the development of the western states.

About the author...

Dr. Jack DeForest is an environmental economist and a member of the foundation.

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Fort Clatsop Expansion Takes Step Forward

The long-awaited expansion of the Fort Clatsop National Memorial took a major step forward recently. U.S. Rep. Elizabeth Purse (D-Ore.) introduced legislation in the form of H.R. 3378 that will permit the expansion. The legislation is the result of years of work by Fort Clatsop Superintendent Cindy Orlando to extend the memorial to include 143 acres of what is now county-owned land.

"The land will be a buffer to protect the park for future generations," Orlando said. "We want our children and our children's children to have a chance to visit Fort Clatsop and experience what Lewis and Clark experienced."

When the memorial was created by Congress in 1958, its size was restricted to 130 acres. Purse’s legislation will lift that restriction and allow Fort Clatsop to accept the land being donated by Clatsop County.

If the bill passes Congress and the Board of Commissioners does decide to make the donation, the memorial may develop a small portion as a parking lot and a boardwalk to Sunset Beach and leave the rest of the land in its natural state.
PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE
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amount of travel has been involved in this committee’s work in recent years.

As would be expected, a committee chairman is a most vital factor in the extent and quality of a committee’s work. The foundation has been fortunate indeed in the choice of its chairman. (Any member of the foundation desiring to become involved in committee work is invited to make such known to the appropriate chairman, to the president, other officer, board member or the executive director.)

Aside from the work of the committees, a review of the events the foundation finds itself concerned with reveals that foundation members, acting on their own volition, often make truly significant contributions. Members, for example, have traveled to St. Charles, Missouri, to volunteer their help in the construction of a new keelboat replica to replace the one which burned. Others have labored to secure signage and other interpretive information at historical sites pertaining to the expedition. One member sought and found the Indiana burial site of an expedition member. Finding it in poor condition, he undertook the task of having the site refurbished. The same member noted some inaccuracies in information displayed at a national site and called it to the attention of the agency in charge of that site. Other members will serve as speakers at a variety of events, act as local guides for people trying to locate local Lewis and Clark sites or simply serve as sources for authentic information about the expedition. There seems to be no limit to the sort of individual contributions which can be made.

EDITOR’S DESK
Cont. from p.3

center director, is already in place at the center along with other staff members.

The first public event was held at the center the evening of February 21st. Gary Moulton, the editor of the new edition of “The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition,” spoke in the center theater to a full house. The theater seats 158 people and, unfortunately, some people had to be turned away at the door. Are Lewis and Clark are very much alive in Great Falls, Montana? You betcha!

I also attended a slide presentation on the medical aspects of the expedition by Dr. Ron Loge. It was presented in a town in southwestern Montana and was just really a swell show. Ron does an excellent job. His article on the same subject “Two Dozes of Barks and Opium” appeared in the February 1997 WPO. The same evening Joe Mussulman was in another town 56 miles away doing his presentation on the music of the expedition. Joe also appears in WPO. Both were sponsored by the Montana Committee for the Humanities. Lewis and Clark are alive in Montana and I think all over the country.

Things are proceeding at a helter skelter pace to make sure the 1998 annual meeting/grand opening of the interpretive center and the Lewis and Clark Encampment are all coordinated so that you have an exciting, fun-filled and informative time when you come to Great Falls June 29-July 5, 1998. I’ll see you here.

Any review of the contributions of foundation members would be incomplete without a reference to the daily efforts of our paid staff. It is all too easy to overlook their vital contributions. They, too, see their work as a “labor of love”—a fact for which the foundation members can be thankful indeed! So, too, can we all be thankful for the unsung efforts of our officers and directors. None shirk from doing work which often can aptly be described as a chore, and which often has nothing directly to do with Lewis and Clark.

In conclusion, I must say that I have never had the pleasure to work with a finer organization. It is indeed an honor and a privilege to serve you!

NORTHERN REGION OF FOREST SERVICE NAMES BICENTENNIAL COORDINATOR

For the last seven years, Margaret Gorski has been the district ranger of the Powell Ranger District on the Clearwater National Forest. She is familiar with the issues and potential challenges that may be generated by the bicentennial since she has been responsible for managing a portion of the Lolo Trail, a rugged ridgetop route where Lewis and Clark struggled for 11 days through the Bitterroot Mountains. They followed an ancient Nez Perce trail which is now also designated as the Nez Perce National Historic trail. She has also been involved in the development plans to renovate the recreation and interpretive facilities at Lolo Pass.

Her responsibilities include coordinating the Northern Region’s bicentennial strategy with other federal, state, and local planning efforts.
Capt. Wm. Clark / Monday, June 17th 1805

...we proceeded up the river passing a Succession of rapids & Cascades to the Falls, which we had herd for Several miles makeing a dedly Sound, I beheld those Cateracts with astonishment the whole of the water of this great river Confined in a Channel of 280 yards and pitch- ing over a rock of 97 feet 3/4 of an, from the foot of the falls arrises a Continued mist which is extended for 150 yds. down & to near the top of the Clifts on L Sd....I in assendending the Clifts to take the hith of the fall was near Slipping into the water, at which place I must have been Sucked under in an instant, and with deficueity and great risque I assended again, and decended the Clift lower down (but few places Can be descended to the river) and took the hight with as much accuricy as possible with a Spirit Leavels &c.