OLD TOBY: INDISPENSABLE GUIDE

BEAUTIFUL, BANEFUL BLUE CAMAS
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On the cover
R. L. Rickards’s Shoshone Farewell shows the parting of Cameahwait’s hand and the Corps of Discovery on August 30, 1805. The Indians are headed to the buffalo country east of the Continental Divide while the Pacific-bound explorers, guided by Old Toby, move north toward Lost Trail Pass. For more on Old Toby’s role with the expedition, see Charles Knowles’s article beginning on page 26. Old Toby was still with the explorers when they arrived at Weippe Prairie with its fields of blue camas, a plant whose story begins on page 20.
Letters

Lewis’s iron boat and its enduring mysteries

H. Carl Camp’s article “Journey’s End for the Iron Boat” (WPO, August 2003) would have us believe that the removal of a “handful of rusty nails” from the red pirogue is proof enough to back his theory that the frame of the iron boat ended up at the Knife River villages.

Camp tells how Meriwether Lewis, concerned that a Blackfeet war party was pursuing him, wanted to move downstream as quickly as possible after reaching the Missouri River on the morning of July 28, 1806, yet still took the time to remove the nails and other iron from the red pirogue, which had been stashed on an island at the mouth of the Marias. He fails to mention that Lewis and his party also took the time to dig up several caches before going to work on the red pirogue. (In addition to giving them access to the red pirogue, retrieving to the island provided a better defensive position.)

I doubt the explorers removed the red pirogue’s nails because they wanted to use them for trade with the Indians. Instead, they probably wanted them for repairs to the white pirogue, which they had retrieved from the Lower Portage Camp a few days before. The white pirogue had seen hard usage during the trip up the Missouri the previous year and had suffered through a harsh winter.

In 1998, I had the pleasure of discussing the fate of the iron boat’s frame with Kenneth Karsmizki, then the associate curator of historical archaeology and history at the Museum of the Rockies, Montana State University–Bozeman. Ken firmly believes that the iron frame still lies buried at the Upper Portage Camp, and he has spent many years trying to locate it. He thinks that Lewis would have left it there for future military expeditions to retrieve and then reassemble at locations farther upstream, where pitch for caulking its skin covering could be obtained. Lewis had already transported the 176-pound frame most of the way across the continent, so what would have been the point of returning it? For my money, I’ll stick with Karsmizki’s theory.

JOHN L. STONER
Townsend, Mont.

I enjoyed Carl Camp’s article on the fate of the iron boat, which I read while staying in Philadelphia for several days after the Foundation’s annual meeting to conduct some Lewis and Clark–related research. As chance would have it, the morning after reading the article I came across the following newspaper reference to the iron boat:

“Captain Clark and Mr. Lewis, left this place on Wednesday last, on their expedition to the Westward, we have not been enabled to ascertain to what length this route will extend, as when it was first set on foot by the President, the Louisiana country was not ceded to the United States, and it is likely it will be considerable extended—they are to receive further instructions at Kahokia. It is however, certain, that they will ascend the main branch of the Mississippi as far as possible; and it is probable they will then direct their course to the Missouri, and ascend it. They have the iron frame of a boat, intended to be covered with skins, which can by screws, be formed into one or four, as may suit their purposes. About 60 men will compose the party.”

I found this item in The Pennsylvania Gazette, No. 3805, November 23, 1803, page 3. It quotes a letter received from Louisville, dated October 29, 1803.

Note that, in Kentucky, it is “Captain” Clark, and “Mr.” Lewis. Obviously, the author has only a vague idea of the details of the expedition, but seems to be specific about the nature of the iron boat. I wonder if Lewis did design it to be assembled in four different lengths? I also wonder if the writer’s confusion about the route westward resulted from a decision by Lewis to deliberately conceal, at this early date, the true purpose of the expedition?

MICHAEL F. CARRICK
Turner, Ore.

Sacagawea’s fate

The review of The Lewis and Clark Journals: An American Epic of Discovery, edited by Gary E. Moulton (WPO, August 2003) says Moulton is “clear-eyed” on controversies over the deaths of Lewis and Sacagawea. On Sacagawea, Dr. Moulton writes, “there is little doubt that...

The authors performed a meticulous study of Sacagawea and provide a realistic portrait of her role in the Lewis and Clark Expedition and an examination of her life after the expedition. Much, but not all, of the material for her later life comes from a study requested by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1924 conducted by Dr. Charles Eastman, a Sioux Indian and author. Although a summary of Eastman's findings was published in the *Annals of Wyoming* in July 1941, the full report and its testimonies remained otherwise unknown, buried in the National Archives until one of the authors obtained a copy of it.

Eastman interviewed Hidatsas in North Dakota, Comanches in Oklahoma, and Shoshones in Wyoming. He interviewed Indians and whites who knew Sacagawea or knew of her, including agency personnel and relatives.

After reading their book, I reached the same conclusion as the authors: that while the woman who died at Fort Manuel in 1884 was an imposing, well-made marker. A particularly handsome monument to Scarlet Crow, a Sioux leader, stands next to a small, weathered, and nearly illegible marker for the Nez Perce delegate Ut San Malikan.

Apart from the Indian delegates, a number important participants in U.S. history are buried in the cemetery, including J. Edgar Hoover and John Philip Sousa. A score of 19th-century congressmen, early feminist leaders, and a vice-president lie there as well.

The Congressional Cemetery is located in southeast D.C. on the west bank of the Anacostia River, a couple of blocks off East Capitol Street and not far from RFK Stadium. An attendant is on duty to answer questions and help visitors find gravesites.

**MARK CHALKLEY**
Baltimore, Md.

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**Eagle Feather's resting place**

After the publication of my article "Eagle Feather Goes To Washington" (*WPO*, May 2003) I heard from a reader wondering how many Native-American delegates are buried in the Congressional Cemetery in Washington, D.C. A publication available to visitors at the cemetery lists 35, including representatives of the Apache, Cherokee, Chippewa, Choctaw, Creek, Kiowa, Lakota, Nez Perce, Pawnee, Sac, and Winnebago nations. Among the delegates interred are Taza, a son of Cochihe, and Pushmataha, a Choctaw chief who was a comrade-in-arms of Andrew Jackson. One will also find the graves of women and children who accompanied the delegations.

The memorials cover a long span of American history and reflect varying degrees of preservation. Pushmataha, a hero of the War of 1812, is remembered with an imposing, well-made marker. A particularly handsome monument to Scarlet Crow, a Sioux leader, stands next to a small, weathered, and nearly illegible marker for the Nez Perce delegate Ut San Malikan.

As they described by François-Antoine Laroque in the *History of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* (Moulton, Vol. 16, p. 16) for June 21, 1804, in which he writes, "we had rapid water, and for about a mile had to warp up our boat by a rope."

Clark's entry for the same day states that they ascended by "Sometimes rowing Poleing & Drawing up with a Strong Rope." (Moulton, Vol. 2, pp. 312-313) Although Clark says nothing about warping (he may not have known the term), he does mention in a more detailed entry for the same date that "with the assistance of a long Cord or Tow rope, & the anchor we got the Boat up." (p. 313)

Normally, warping involves hauling a rope upstream in a smaller boat, tying it to a tree or other secure anchor, then winching the larger craft upstream by means of a windlass. I find no reference to the explorers having a windless aboard the keelboat, but given the expedition's collective ingenuity and Gass's skills, I see no reason one might not have been used.

**VERNE HUSER**
Albuquerque, N.M.

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**Another source on Lewis's air gun**

Meriwether Lewis and William Clark may have been "the writingest explorers" of all time but they didn't write down everything, as Michael F. Carrick's article "Meriwether Lewis's Air Gun" (*WPO*, November 2002) makes clear. Carrick's convincing case that the air gun was a repeater rests on a contemporary description of it by Thomas Rodney. Another unrecognized, or at least underutilized, reference to that air gun may be found in "Charles McKenzie's Narratives," a chapter in *Early Fur Trade on the Northern Plains*, edited by W. Raymond Wood and Thomas D. Thiessen.

McKenzie, a North West Company fur trader, traveled to the upper Missouri villages of the Hidatsa and Mandan Indians four times between 1804 and 1807. His first visit, in 1804, overlapped with Lewis and Clark's. McKenzie's narrative independently corroborates several events of the expedition, as do other chapters by François-Antoine Laroque in the Wood-Thiessen volume. McKenzie and Laroque offer personal evaluations of the captains and their crew that provide an interesting perspective on the Americans, and they relate some of the attitudes of the Hidatsas and Mandans toward them. McKenzie says that "The Indians admired the air Gun as it could discharge forty shots out of one load—but they dreaded the magic of the owners." It is not clear whether "forty shots" is a precise enumeration or an approximation, or whether it refers to the number of balls in the chamber or charges in the gun's air reservoir. Nor can we be sure if McKenzie witnessed a demonstration of the air gun or is relating what the Indians told him.

**KERRY LIPPINCOTT**
Casper, Wyo.

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**WPO welcomes letters. We may edit them for length, accuracy, clarity, and civility.**

Send them to us c/o Editor, *WPO*, 51 N. Main St., Pennington, NJ 08534 (e-mail: wpo@lewisandclark.org).
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The mission of the LCTHF is to stimulate public appreciation of the Lewis and Clark Expedition’s contributions to America’s heritage and to support education, research, development, and preservation of the Lewis and Clark experience.

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From the Directors

Looking to the long-term future

This is an exciting time to be a member of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation. Over the course of the four-year L&C Bicentennial, which began in January and ends in 2006, there will be 15 Signature Events, plus the Foundation’s annual meetings and innumerable conferences, symposiums, workshops, dedications, and festivals.

The bicentennial commemoration speaks to the accomplishments of the past, but it also reminds us as an organization that we must plan for our future in the years and decades following the bicentennial. Our foundation has changed a great deal since its founding 35 years ago, and we can be sure that it will be a much different organization 35 years from now. To help shape and direct our future we have formed a Third Century Committee, chaired by board member Jim Gramentine.

While Jim’s group will be thinking about the long-term future, our Development Committee, chaired by past president Bob Gatten, will be honing our strategies for fund-raising, especially through planned giving. Many members have already contributed to our Endowment Fund. So, too, has my own Minnesota Chapter—the first chapter to make this commitment. I hope that other individuals and chapters will follow their examples, for it is critical that we find other means of support to take the place of the bicentennial-related funding we now receive from the National Park Service. The NPS has been a wonderful partner over many years, but we cannot depend on it indefinitely.

With these two committees at work—one guiding us into the future, the other making it financially possible to get there—we are moving forward in an orderly, systematic way to ensure that the Foundation will continue to fulfill in perpetuity its historic mission as keeper of the Lewis and Clark story and steward of the Lewis and Clark Trail.

Another challenge facing us is the evolving relationship between the Foundation and its chapters. A decade ago, we had eight chapters (and one wasn’t meeting). Today, we have forty, located both on and off the trail. During the same period, our membership has more than doubled, to more than 3,500 members.

This dramatic increase in the number of chapters and their many activities is wonderful to see, but the expansion has also created issues of taxation, insurance, fund-raising, and governance which must be addressed. The fact that many chapter members are not Foundation members, for example, potentially threatens our tax status as a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Other concerns relate to the use of bulk-mailing permits and uniform requirements for accounting and the filing of annual reports.

Our auditors, attorneys, and insurance carriers have all told us we must immediately address these matters. To do this we have appointed a task force, and we hope to present its recommendations at the 2004 annual meeting, in Bismarck, North Dakota. We got a start on this process at this year’s annual meeting, in Philadelphia, where board members and chapter representatives went through the useful and enlightening exercise of outlining what the Foundation does for the chapters, and vice versa. The exercise underscored our mutual dependence and the broad common ground we have to build on.

This is my first WPO column as your new president, and I want to use it to thank everyone for the opportunity to serve you. I look forward to working with all of you over the next year and with our outstanding board and staff.

—Ron Laycock
President, LCTHF
ST. JOSEPH VISITORS & CONVENTION BUREAU
1 P. FULL
PICKUP FROM
8/03, P. 7
When, from the future, time becomes present, it proceeds from some secret place; and when, from times present, it becomes past, it recedes into some secret place.

—St. Augustine, Confessions

St. Augustine’s Confessions is an ageless memoir that has stood the test of time, in spite of its anxious ruminations about the very idea. Meriwether Lewis, William Clark, and their Corps of Discovery have long receded into that secret place of the past, and despite our best efforts as historians, so much of the past will always remain secret. Yet there is so much we do know about the expedition, thanks to the meticulous record-keeping of both captains, particularly their measurements of latitude and longitude.

Lewis calculated latitude along their route by measuring the angle between the North Star and the horizon. He attempted to ascertain longitude—a much more difficult exercise—by observing another celestial body, the moon, and measuring the angle between it and various stars. Several readings were taken on different nights, then a set of repetitive calculations was required to yield a coordinate. The first step in measuring longitude was to determine the difference between local time and Greenwich time. This required a chronometer. Lewis used a pocket chronometer that proved increasingly unreliable as the corps made its way across the continent. It was set to local time, which changed the farther west the explorers traveled. Lewis wisely decided to leave the difficult calculations to mathematicians back East.

His precise tabulations were proven correct almost two hundred years later by a modern-day mathematician who plugged Lewis’s data into a computer program that calculates lunar distance. [For more on this, see WPO, November 2001, page 11.—Ed.]

I can imagine Lewis’s frustrations with the tedious act of measuring longitude with faulty instruments. I have read of his exasperation with his chronometer as it continued to collect sand and how the hands strayed farther and farther from accurate time. I am fascinated by Lewis’s diligent focus upon the task of timekeeping along the route despite the difficulty of doing so.

At the same time, I wonder if there was ever a night under a moonlit, starry sky when Lewis sat and contemplated the purpose behind his careful observations. Did he ponder the relevance of struggling to determine the exact time in Philadelphia or Greenwich while seated around a fire among the Nez Perces, amid the shadow of the Bitterroot Mountains? Did he ever begin to question what it means to keep time?

According to Native-American beliefs, land and time are not considered commodities to be measured and used. The reaction of native peoples who observed Lewis and Clark’s efforts to calculate distance and time must have been similar to that of the Lilliputians in Jonathan Swift’s Gulliver’s Travels. In his book A Geography of Time, Robert Levine writes, “Gulliver … looked at his watch before doing anything. He called it his oracle. The Lilliputians he met in his travels decided that Gulliver’s watch must be his God. In other words, they thought he was crazy.”

For the Nez Perces and other Indians, time was calculated according to nature. The change in seasons, the light of the sun, a woman’s cycle, and birth and death determined the rhythm of life. Their view was remarkably unlike that of Lewis, whose life was determined by the rhythm of a ticking clock.

Levine discusses how linguistics helps to discern the different attitudes toward time among various cultures: “The Sioux, for example, have no single word in their language for ‘time,’ ‘late,’ or ‘waiting.’ The Hopi … have no verb tenses for past, present, and future … . It is difficult for the Hopi to conceive of time as a quantity. Certainly it is not equated with money and the clock.
Time only exists in the eternal present.”

For eternity, we humans have been engaged in battle. Not with some demon, or evil force, but with time. Its passage is a constant reminder of our own mortality and the transient nature of our existence in this place. In many ways, the study of history is a sobering discipline, inspiring in myself periods of melancholy, for I know that the people whose stories I learn and tell are no longer here—people like Lewis and Clark, whose feat we commemorate two hundred years later.

It has been a privilege to serve as president of the National Council of the L&C Bicentennial, in no small measure for the opportunity to develop relationships with native peoples, who play a central role in the commemoration and who have had a profound impact on my thinking. They think “outside the box” in ways most of the rest of us cannot because they incorporate cultures premised on assumptions radically different from those the rest of us share. This bicentennial engages both Indian and non-Indian voices from that secret place of the past. Let us listen. For it is about time.

Today Show features L&C Bicentennial

Word about the bicentennial is spreading. The Bicentennial Council and the Missouri Historical Society have teamed with the National Advertising Council in a multimillion-dollar public-service ad campaign to promote the themes of the commemoration. The campaign launched nationally this fall.

The bicentennial also received widespread publicity on August 14, when NBC-TV’s Today Show featured L&C artifacts from the Missouri Historical Society’s collection, including maps, Clark’s elkskin-bound journal, and Lewis’s spy glass. All are part of the Bicentennial Council’s national exhibition, which will tour nationwide after it opens in St. Louis in January.

—Robert R. Archibald
President, Bicentennial Council

DIGITAL SCANNING
1/3 SQ.
PICKUP FROM 8/03, P. 38

LEWIS & CLARK Commemorative Blanket

The Washington State History Museum is pleased to offer this Lewis & Clark Bicentennial commemorative Pendleton blanket. Part of the Collector’s Edition series, the 64x80” blanket is available to the public for $249 through the Northwest Museum Store at the History Museum in Tacoma, WA, or by calling Pendleton directly at 1-800-593-6773. For a larger, full-color view of the blanket, visit www.washingtonhistory.org/lewisandclark/.

A limited, numbered “members edition” of 200 blankets is being made available only to History Museum members for $299 (plus shipping & tax, if applicable). Members receive free admission to the History Museum plus a subscription to COLUMBIA: The Magazine of Northwest History. For membership information, call 1-888-BE-THERE or visit www.washingtonhistory.org.
Laycock heads Foundation; Colter shelter dedicated; Baker leaves post

Ron and Ione Laycock

Ron Laycock of Minneapolis, a long-time Lewis and Clark buff and member of the LCTHF, is the Foundation’s new president.

Laycock, who assumed the one-year post at this year’s annual meeting, held August 10-13 in Philadelphia, has lectured widely on Lewis and Clark at schools and other venues and worked as a guide on many L&C bus and river tours. The Foundation honored him two years ago with its annual Distinguished Service Award for his leadership of the Chapter Committee.

“I’ve been a member of the Foundation since the 1980s and went to my first annual meeting in Bozeman in 1989. I haven’t missed one since,” Laycock said. “I’ve always liked reading about explorers, and Lewis and Clark interested me the most. Going to an annual meeting and finding so many others with the same passion hooked me for good.”

In 1992, Laycock took early retirement from his human-services job to devote most of his time to Lewis and Clark. Over a 10-year period he traveled thousands of miles on and off the L&C Trail, visiting existing chapters and nurturing the development of new ones. He also accumulated some six hundred books about Lewis and Clark which he recently donated to the Thomas Jefferson Library at Monticello.

Laycock and his wife, Ione, have two children and nine grandchildren.

Call for papers

The Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, in St. Louis, is calling for papers for “The Legacy of Lewis and Clark,” a seminar to be held next March 10-12. While mainly focusing on the effects of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, the program will also touch upon the ramifications of the Louisiana Purchase and will address subsequent Anglo-American western settlement and its effect on Native-American cultures and Hispanic communities. Papers on the topics of Jefferson’s dream of an expanding West, the post-expedition lives of Meriwether Lewis, William Clark, and other members of the Corps of Discovery, the continued legacy of exploration, and related themes are also welcome.

This is the final in a series of four St. Louis seminars to commemorate the bicentennials of the Louisiana Purchase and the Lewis and Clark Expedition. It is co-sponsored by the National Park Service, the Spanish Colonial Research Center, the Missouri Historical Society, and the Jefferson National Parks Association. Inquiries about presentations should be addressed to Bob Moore, Historian, Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, 11 North 4th St., St. Louis, MO 63102 (bob_moore@nps.gov; 314-655-1600).

Colter Shelter dedicated

On September 6 the Foundation’s Metro St. Louis Chapter dedicated the John Colter Memorial Picnic Shelter in New Haven, Missouri. Construction of the shelter, which honors one of the most celebrated of the “nine young men from Kentucky” who joined the Corps of Discovery in the fall of 1803, was financially supported by the chapter, the LCTHF, the National Park Service, and the Missouri Arts Council.

Baker moves on

Gerard Baker, superintendent of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail for the last three years, will leave that post next summer to become the Montana state coordinator for the National Park Service’s Intermountain Region. Baker accepted the position after the launching, earlier this year, of Corps of Discovery II, a touring interpretive program for the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial. More than eighty thousand people have seen Corps II since its debut in Charlottesville, Virginia, in January. He was also responsible for building relationships between tribes, the Congressional L&C Caucus, state and federal agencies, and commu-
nities along the Lewis and Clark Trail.
Baker, 49, grew up on a ranch on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation, in North Dakota. A lifelong student of his Hidatsa-Mandan culture and of western history, he began his National Park Service career as a seasonal ranger at Theodore Roosevelt National Park. His first permanent position was at Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site, in North Dakota.

**New tribal liaison officer**
The National Park Service has appointed Richard Basch, an educator and former member of the Chinook tribal council, the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trails’s liaison to Indian tribes, government agencies, and Lewis and Clark organizations. His job will include assisting tribes and local organizations applying for NPS challenge grants and increasing awareness of how tribes can participate in L&C Bicentennial activities.

Basch, who lives in Seaside, Oregon, was a member of the Chinook tribal council from 1972 to 2002. He has been a consultant to the Clatsop County Historical Society, of Astoria, Oregon, and has represented the Clatsop, Nehalem, and Chinook tribes on local, regional, and national L&C Bicentennial planning organizations. He has nearly 30 years’ experience as a school and program administrator at local and statewide levels in Washington State.

**Medical exhibit**
“Only One Man Died: Medical Adventures on the Lewis and Clark Trail,” an exhibit at the College of Physicians of Philadelphia which opened last February, will remain on display there through 2006. The college was founded in 1787 by the city’s leading physicians, including Dr. Benjamin Rush, who advised Meriwether Lewis on medical matters during his pre-expedition visit to Philadelphia. Two other of Lewis’s Philadelphia mentors, Dr. Benjamin Smith Barton and Dr. Caspar Wistar,
were also fellows of the college. Exhibit items include Rush’s medicine chest, early 19th-century medical instruments and pharmaceuticals, and a reconstruction of a Native-American sweat lodge.

Hinds recognized
The Iowa State Historical Society has presented its 2003 Petersen/Harlan Award, recognizing “significant long-term or continuing contributions” to the state’s history, to former LCTHF board member Beverly Hinds of Sioux City. The award cites Hinds for her L&C-related presentations to Iowans and observes that her “professionally illustrated talks on the maladies and medicines of the Lewis and Clark Expedition are exceptional because of her long career in nursing.”

Call for nominations
In her capacity as chair of the Awards Committee, Beverly Hinds is seeking nominations for the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation’s 2004 awards. There are four categories:

Chapter Award: This is a new award, and it will be presented for the first time at next year’s annual meeting, in Bismarck, North Dakota. It will be given, said Hinds, to a chapter or one of its members for some “exemplary contribution” to the Foundation’s mission. Qualifying activities include locally promoting Lewis and Clark history, providing educational opportunities for chapter members or the public, preserving the historic integrity of the L&C Trail, sponsoring research, and “strengthening the Foundation through financial contributions or other means of support.”

Meritorious Achievement Award: to a person, organization, or agency for scholarly research or other significant contributions that bring to the nation “a greater appreciation and awareness of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.”

Distinguished Service Award: to a Foundation member who has made an outstanding contribution toward furthering the purpose and objectives of the LCTHF.

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

Nominations should be made by next April 1. They should be sent to the Awards Committee, care of Beverly Hinds, at 3121 Grandview Blvd., Sioux City, IA 51104 (bjhinds@pionet.net; 712-252-2364; fax 712-252-5940).
NORB O’KEEFE
4/C
of all the spots along the four-thousand-mile Lewis and Clark Trail, the one that has worked its way most deeply into my heart is the White Cliffs of the Missouri River in north-central Montana. I love the place for its wild yet exquisite beauty. I love it because it is remarkably unchanged over two centuries, making it one of the few Lewis and Clark sites where a modern traveler can read from the expedition’s journals, look up, and see exactly what the explorers were describing—without also seeing power lines, highways, subdivisions, dams, or any other distractions. Over the years I have also come to realize that perhaps the most compelling reason I love it is because of the cherished times I have spent there with old and new friends, as well as my family. And since the White Cliffs is such a special place to me, that makes May 31, 1805—the day the Corps of Discovery first encountered it—a special day on my Lewis and Clark calendar.

It began like almost every other day for the expedition up to that point: rise early to renew the daily struggle with the Missouri, the brawling bully of a river whose insistent current had been trying to push them back to the Mississippi for more than a year. The temperature was 48 degrees at dawn (it would rise a mere five more degrees by 4 P.M., according to the captains’ weather diary) and a light rain soon started falling that would continue throughout the morning. Lewis and Clark and some of the crew set off with the two pirogues while the rest of the men took the six dugout canoes to retrieve the meat of two buffaloes that had been killed late the previous evening a little ways off the river. Work and finding the food to fuel the work—these were the two quotidian constants of the Corps of Discovery.

The work was particularly difficult this day. The Missouri contained so many shallow rapids and riffles—what Sergeant John Ordway called “Shoaley places”—that the pirogues and canoes could only be inched forward by means of tow ropes. When the men tugging the ropes walked on shore, Lewis wrote, they found the footing “so slippery and the mud so tenacious that they are unable to wear their mockersons,” but then sharp stones cut their bare feet. A quarter of the time, he noted, they had to do their towing from the river itself, sometimes up to their armpits in the frigid water. “In short,” Lewis wrote, “their labour is incredibly painfull and great, yet those faithfull fellows bear it without a murmur.” The tow rope for the trouble-plagued white pirogue broke at one particularly bad rapid, and the boat, with the captains’ most important possessions (including the journals), nearly capsized.

At noon the captains ordered a brief halt to rest their
tired men and give them lunch. As a special reward for the morning’s toil, each man was permitted a dram of whiskey, “which they received with much Cheerfulness, and well deserved all wet and disagreeable,” according to Clark. The rain stopped, and Lewis and a small group went for a short hunt, killing three buffaloes (although one was swept downriver) in the space of an hour before everyone moved on together.

For a number of days now they had been passing through the Missouri River Breaks, a terrain so rugged and broken with its mazes of bluffs and coulees that the Hidatsa Indians usually avoided it in their yearly forays to the Great Falls and Three Forks to hunt buffalo or raid the Shoshones. Which meant that the Hidatsas hadn’t described this particular section of the river to Lewis and Clark back at Fort Mandan. With neither maps nor informal Indian descriptions to aid them, for the first time since leaving St. Louis the captains were traveling without any advance knowledge whatsoever of what to expect around the next bend of the river. That’s when they entered the White Cliffs. Suddenly, they found themselves in a natural wonderland of white sandstone bluffs rising hundreds of feet above the river, eerie formations carved from the soft stone by millions of years of erosion, with dark igneous rock outcroppings and lava dikes punctuating it all—an incomparable landscape made all the more astonishing by its unexpectedness.

To Sergeant Patrick Gass, a carpenter by trade, the “very curious cliffs and rocky peaks, in a long range … seem as if built by the hand of man, and are so numerous that they appear like the ruins of an ancient city.” Private Joseph Whitehouse noted not only the white cliffs but high pinacles and “some very high black Walls of Stone, lying on each side of the River, which appeared curious.” Ordway thought the long, thin, remarkably straight lava dikes resembled the stone walls of his native New Hampshire and marveled that “in some places [they] meet at right angles.” But Lewis was the prose stylist of the expedition, as he proved that night in his journal, rhapsodizing for pages about the scenic splendor surrounding them:

The hills and river Cliffs which we passed today exhibit a most romantic appearance … . The water in the course of time in decending from those hills and plains on either side of the river has trickled down the soft sand clifts and woarn it into a thousand grotesque figures, which with the help of a little immagination and an oblique view at a distance, are made to represent elgiant ranges of lofty freestone buildings, having their parapets well stocked with statuary; collums of various sculpture both grooved and plain, are also seen supporting long galleries in front of those buildings; in other places on a much
nearer approach and with the help of less imagination we see the remains or ruins of elegant buildings; some columns standing and almost entire with their pedestals and capitals; others retaining their pedestals but deprived of time or accident of their capitals, some lying prostrate an[d] broken others in the form of vast pyramids of conic structure bearing a series of other pyramids on their tops becoming less as they ascend and finally terminating in a sharp point. nitches and alcoves of various forms and sizes are seen at different heights as we pass. . . . the tops of the columns did not the less remind us of some of those large stone buildings in the U' States . . . . for here it is too that nature presents to the view of the traveler vast ranges of walls of tolerable workmanship, so perfect indeed are those walls that I should have thought that nature had attempted here to rival the human art of masonry had I not recollected that she had first began her work.

“As we passed on,” Lewis wrote, in what has become one of the expedition’s most famous passages, “it seemed as if those seen of visionary enchantment would never have an end.” (Clark wisely saw no need to waste time trying to top his friend and co-commander’s descriptive effusion and copied Lewis’s words directly into his own journal—with, of course, a few inevitable variations in spelling. Ordway seems to have cribbed a few phrases, as well.)

They camped that evening near the mouth of what they called Stonewall Creek, on what Whitehouse described as “a handsome bottom” covered with cottonwoods, the only growth of timber they had seen that day. Whether they picked the spot for the trees (easy firewood), for the creek (fresher water), or for the fact that they had covered 18 hard miles (the Missouri’s current hadn’t relented just because the scenery was pretty), it also happens to be the best campsite within the White Cliffs in terms of stunning views, a fact that would have become evident when, as Whitehouse notes, “in the evening, the weather cleared off, and became pleasant.”

The hunters came in with more meat to add to the buffaloes already killed that day—an elk, a mule deer, and two bighorn sheep whose impressive curled horns the captains preserved, according to Whitehouse, “in Order to carry them back with us, to the United States.” Warmed by cottonwood fires, the tired men would have had plenty to eat. Their bonus dram of whiskey earlier in the day would not have prevented them from receiving the fourounce “gill of ardent spirits” that was standard issue every evening. (Did anyone notice that there was now only a month’s supply of whiskey left?) If Cruzatte pulled out his fiddle, his music would have echoed off the sandstone palisades directly across the river, giving the effect of a larger string section playing for the men’s enjoyment.

Lewis and Clark both made short explorations on foot before sunset, collecting specimens of the sandstone and noting the appearance of coal in some places. On the bluffs, Lewis observed a species of pine (the limber pine) which he had never seen before, and in the distance saw “the most beautifull fox that I ever beheld” with distinctive colorings of “fine orange yellow, white and black.” Shortly after nightfall—excepting the night guards and whatever journalists were still busily trying to write down the day’s experience—I would imagine everyone was sound asleep.

With a Northwest Passage to find and a continent to cross, the Corps of Discovery could not linger amidst these scenes of visionary enchantment. The next morning, Ordway says, “we Set out at an early hour and proceeded on as usal with the toe rope.” In other words, back to the daily grind. “But fiew bad rapids points to day,” he notes, “the wild animels not So plenty as below.” They made an impressive 24 miles, and long before stopping to camp they had left the White Cliffs behind. The scenery had become more mundane, yet worth recording nonetheless: great numbers of yellow and red currant bushes, chokecherries, and wild roses and prickly pear cactuses in full bloom. And off in the distance, something less enchanting but equally compelling to their eyes: “a range of high mountains … covered with snow.”

My first encounter with the White Cliffs came in May 1983, when I was working on a freelance magazine article and following the Lewis and Clark Trail for the first time. Bob Singer, a former music teacher from Fort Benton, Montana, who had started Missouri River Outfitters, took pity on a reporter with no advance reservations and less money and gave me an abbreviated tour in a small boat. Even though I had already seen the series of beautiful
paintings of the White Cliffs done by the Swiss artist Karl Bodmer in the 1830s, seeing the real thing was nearly as startling for me as it must have been for Lewis and Clark.

I had stepped back in time. What I saw was precisely what Bodmer had painted and what the Corps of Discovery had described. Over the course of time, roads and highways had avoided the area for the same reason the Hidatsas had: the traveling’s much easier on the flatter plains away from the river breaks. While giant wheat farms and a few small towns could be found on the flatlands, only a scattering of cattle populated the breaks. (Clark had predicted as much in 1805. “This Countrey may with propriety I think be termed the Deserts of America,” he had written on May 26, “as I do not Conceive any part can ever be Settled, as it is deficient in water, Timber & too steep to be tilled.”) A proposal to build a dam for irrigation had been abandoned after a lengthy battle in the 1960s, sparing the stretch of river from being inundated, like so much of the rest of the Missouri. Congress even offered a modicum of protection as a “wild and scenic river,” limiting access to people in boats, preferably without motors, who were willing to put up with barebones campsites and the complicated logistics of putting onto the river at one place and taking out at another many miles downstream. Remote-ness, climate, terrain—and a little legislative help—had spared the White Cliffs from the wholesale changes wrought along the rest of the trail.

Two years after my first visit, I was back. This time I had a book contract and more time (though not much of an advance) to spend. Bob Singer gave me another unscheduled quick visit, but I told him I could get more material for my book if I could go through the White Cliffs more slowly and with a group. Would he let me earn my way by helping with the support work? He looked at his schedule and said to show up again in three weeks ready to tote bags and coolers, clean up camp, and paddle a canoe. A tour group of 13 had signed up for a three-day trip, led by some professor from New Orleans.

The professor turned out to be Stephen Ambrose. At the time he was hardly the celebrity historian he would become. He had written his well-respected multivolume biography of Eisenhower and was in the midst of a Nixon trilogy, but his best-selling World War II books were yet to come. And it didn’t take long in his presence to realize that he had another deep-seated historical passion. He was, as he unabashedly told me, in love with Meriwether Lewis. For nearly a decade he had been taking his family on summer trips along the Lewis and Clark Trail. He had commemorated the nation’s bicentennial on July 4, 1976, by camping at Lemhi Pass. He had spent a night alone, sleeping in his car, parked next to Lewis’s grave site on Tennessee’s Natchez Trace. He had read aloud from Lewis’s journals at his daughter Stephenie’s wedding. He made what my friends already considered my own “Lewis and Clark obsession” seem like a passing interest.

That first night we camped at Stonewall Creek, the same spot where the Corps of Discovery had camped on May 31, 1805. Before dinner, Steve insisted that we all sit facing the river while he, sitting behind us, read us Lewis’s journal from that day. I can still hear his voice, raspy and gravelly and gruff like a drill sergeant’s who has shouted out too many orders, yet caressing the passages as if he were reciting stanzas from a lyric poem. It was a magical moment that made me wonder whether the journalists of...
the expedition ever shared their work aloud with the rest of the party. Somehow I doubted it, but listening to Steve’s recitation at that campsite made me hope that Clark (and Ordway) got the idea to copy down Lewis’s words after hearing them from the author himself.

We made the three-day trip paddling downriver under a merciless summer sun, temperatures in the high nineties, a hot wind often in our face. No one complained. As Steve’s readings of the journals reminded us (he read to us at breakfast, on the water, at lunch, back on the water, and every evening), this was nothing compared to what the Corps of Discovery had gone through to see the same scenery. In fact, in something of a reverse image of the expedition’s experience, my canoe mate, Steve’s college buddy from Wisconsin, Jim Wimmer, and I took every possible opportunity to immerse ourselves up to the armpits in the Missouri; it did wonders warding off the heat. With Steve’s daughter and son-in-law, Stephanie and John Tubbs, and their dog, Curly, I clambered up to the Eye of the Needle, a graceful sandstone arch perched on a sheer bluff nearly two hundred feet above the river—a landmark directly across from Stonewall Creek that Bob Singer had first shown me, from which he and I had witnessed a chevron of white pelicans flying below our feet. All of us—the Ambroses and the Tubbs (with Curly) and the Wimmers—made an hourlong hike to the Hole in the Wall, an even loftier vantage point from which to overlook the ribbon of river snaking through the White Cliffs.

Like the “faithfull fellows” of the expedition, we got to know one another through our shared experience. We became good enough friends that Steve asked me to stand in for him during one of the evening journal readings, something his children said he had never done before; and one afternoon, as our small flotilla floated in close formation while Steve rhapsodized from the journals yet again, his beloved wife, Moira, leaned across the gunwales and confided, “If I hear him say ‘scenes of visionary enchantment’ one more time, I may tip the canoe over.” I retold our adventure in my first book, *Out West*, and I take some measure of reportorial pride that I had identified on paper the passion that, 11 years later, Steve would pour into his masterful biography of Lewis, *Undaunted Courage.*

I brought along an old friend on my next visit. Ken Burns and I were working on a Lewis and Clark documentary film for public television, and it was my great pleasure not only to introduce my buddy to Montana but to bring him to the White Cliffs. I can still remember the size of his eyes when we floated past a cottonwood tree where a bald eagle sat undisturbed on a branch overhanging the Missouri. His eyes got even bigger when we rounded the bend of the river that revealed the Stonewall Creek section.

We set up camp there with longtime colleagues Buddy Squires and Roger Haydock, the cinematographer and assistant cameraman for the film; Larry Cook, who had taken over Missouri River Outfitters after Bob Singer’s
death, and who carried on Bob’s love of the Upper Missouri and its stories; and Larry’s assistant, Dave “Parch” Parchen, a high-school art teacher who in a previous incarnation surely must have been a wild-eyed mountain man. Clouds barreled in from the west in the late afternoon, snuffing out our plans for filming the sunset, and late that night a thunderstorm erupted overhead. Ken and I lay awake in our tent, counting the time between the lightning bolts (which illuminated our tent poles like an x-ray of a skeleton) and the thunder that followed. When the lightning and thunder hit at the same time, we knew we wouldn’t be going to sleep. Because of the turn in the weather, we left the next day without having gotten the film equivalent of Lewis’s descriptions, but rather than being discouraged we were secretly thrilled. It meant we would have to come back. And we had a great thunderstorm survival story to tell our children.

The weather was more cooperative on our return trip—although fierce thunderclouds towered ominously on the northern horizon as we boated down the river in a vessel I calculated would make a perfect lightning rod. Worried about the prospects of another storm and therefore working furiously to take advantage of the dramatic late-afternoon light, we filmed the White Cliffs glistening in the sun, the Eye of the Needle arching high across from Stonewall Creek, a magnificent lava dike displaying “tolerable workmanship,” and a full moon rising dreamily above the Hole in the Wall. Then, with our filming complete, we decided to just keep on going to our pull-out spot, using the full moon as our lamp—an unforgettable night voyage that even a hardened river rat like Larry Cook still refers to with reverence each time we meet.

Every subsequent trip I’ve made has been equally memorable. In 1998, my family finally came along. We joined a group of friends who have made retracing part of the Lewis and Clark Trail a yearly summer ritual. After celebrating the Fourth of July in Great Falls with the Ambroses, we all set off downriver from Fort Benton with Larry and Bonny Cook and Parch under ideal weather. My two favorite images from that voyage both come from Stonewall Creek. One is of our daughter, Emmy, frolicking in the river at day’s end with Bonny, who was patiently trying to show her how to squirt a powerful jet of water with a quick squeeze of her fist. The other is of Will, our son, talking excitedly as he hiked through a defile called the Narrows with Larry and Parch and myself, finding a magpie feather on the trail, and thereby being given the name Magpie—in honor, Parch said, of his and the bird’s shared traits: intelligence, unquenchable curiosity, and the gift of gab.

Two visits were part of longer Lewis and Clark tours put together to help Steve Ambrose raise money for the World War II museum he was hoping to start. Steve’s son Hugh ran the tours’ logistics. Another son and daughter-in-law, Barry and Celeste Ambrose, catered the meals—exquisite affairs of fine food and finer wines for the prospective donors. Steve was the star attraction. I was asked to help provide “expert” commentary. I remember one trip for the weather at Stonewall Creek. It stormed even harder than it had when Ken and I had been there, and I remember telling my new tent mate, a federal judge from New York City, that these Montana thunderstorms could be fierce monsters, but they blew through quickly. Each time the wind picked up, sounding like a Boeing 747 buzzing the cottonwoods, and we braced our bodies at the upwind side of the tent to keep it from sailing off, I would assure him that the storm was nearly over and the stars would be coming out soon. I was an “expert,” so he believed me—at least for the first few hours. But by dawn, when it was still blowing and pelting rain and showed no signs of letting up—and despite the fact that ours was one of the few tents still in its original position—I think my status had lowered in his eyes.

On the other tour, Steve and I uncharacteristically declined the chance to make the short climb to the Eye of the Needle. We’d heard that it had recently been destroyed by vandals, and neither of us had the heart to inspect the damage firsthand. Larry Cook, who had discovered the wreckage on a previous trip, described it for us. Someone apparently had climbed the bluff and pried loose the top four feet of the ten-foot-high arch, leaving behind only some broken beer bottles, the marks of a crowbar, and the rubble of an exquisite landmark that nature had taken eons to sculpt. It was a senseless, sickening act, as if someone had smashed off the head of the Jefferson Monument. An investigation had been launched, aided by a sizable
reward posted for any information leading to a conviction of the perpetrator, but the most it had turned up were persistent rumors with no proof. (The maximum penalty for the crime is 10 years in prison and a fine of $250,000, although some of us suggested a better punishment would be the one meted out for offenses during the Lewis and Clark expedition: 50 to 100 lashes on the bare back.)

There was also talk of having a mason reconstruct the arch, and the Bureau of Land Management was seeking public opinion about the idea. It seemed to me an understandable reaction to the loss of a Montana landmark, but wrong-headed nonetheless, especially considering Meriwether Lewis’s initial, awe-struck reaction to the White Cliffs. Their beauty and wonder, he believed, stemmed precisely from the fact that, though they appeared at first to be the work of man, they were actually the work of nature. That is their special magic. Camping in the shadow of the Eye of the Needle, he had been forced to admit that nature not only did her work first, but also was often better at it than mankind.

Rebuilding the arch would not only miss Lewis’s point, but violate it as well. Hard as it was to imagine the Eye of the Needle gone forever, I argued, its broken remains should be left alone to serve as an additional, but different, reminder: of the ease with which mankind can thoughtlessly destroy nature’s handiwork; and of the responsibility we all share to make sure that scenes of visionary enchantment never have an end.

My last visit to the White Cliffs turned out to be the last adventure Steve Ambrose and I would share on the Lewis and Clark Trail, though neither of us knew that to be the case. By this time, he and I and our families had accumulated memories at nearly every significant spot along the expedition’s route—from dedicating a statue in Kansas City to paddling a bulky (yet amazingly tipsy) dugout canoe on the Clearwater River; from riding horses over the Lolo Trail to sleeping at Fort Clatsop. With the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial only a few years in the future, both of us assumed we had many more memories to make.

Steve’s books had by now made him famous and wealthy (both unusual developments for a history professor), but what impressed and inspired me was the way he channeled his newfound fame and fortune into his passion for sharing and preserving the story of American history. He had founded the National D-Day Museum in New Orleans. He had joined the board of American Rivers, a conservation group, and was spearheading its drive to restore portions of the Missouri to something a little closer to the river the Corps of Discovery had traveled. He had helped keep the National Council for the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial financially afloat. With his son Hugh he was leading a trail-stewardship project for the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, an attempt to educate tourists retracing the expedition’s route not to damage sensitive sites. And all along the Lewis and Clark Trail he had made guest appearances and given generous donations to small, local organizations struggling to build interpretative centers or preserve a small parcel of land.

The mission that had brought us back to the White Cliffs was to accompany then–Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt on a brief tour. The BLM had decided (wisely) not to restore the Eye of the Needle, but the vandalism and a number of other issues had prompted Babbitt to consider new measures to provide the White Cliffs with greater protection. Steve and I were happy to extol their rare combination of scenic beauty and historical significance as Babbitt and his entourage of aides and reporters gathered at the canoe ramp. We described how fortunate we considered ourselves to have been able, on this one section of the trail, to see the same things Lewis and Clark had seen.
nearly two hundred years earlier; how even more fortunate we were to have been able to pass on that experience to our children (and Steve to his grandchildren); and how we hoped that they, in turn, would be able to pass it along to their children and grandchildren. We read aloud from the expedition’s journals with particular gusto. In our enthusiasm, we even suggested that the government declare a White Cliffs National Park (an idea that proved to be wildly unpopular in that immediate area of Montana). Then we paddled our canoes downstream, saw a pair of bald eagles, helped Babbitt put up a section of fence to shield some cottonwood saplings from grazing cattle, and showed him the Stonewall Creek section before a BLM boat shuttled us all back upstream.

A year later, we met again in the East Room of the White House—the very room Lewis had occupied for two and a half years while serving as President Jefferson’s private secretary—for the last official event of the outgoing Clinton administration. At that ceremony, President Clinton posthumously promoted William Clark to the true rank of captain and declared York and Sacagawea as honorary sergeants of the Corps of Discovery. And using the Antiquities Act in the same way Theodore Roosevelt had first used it to save the Grand Canyon, he set aside the White Cliffs as a national monument.

Steve had the honor of speaking at the ceremony and received the pen with which President Clinton signed Clark’s promotion to the same rank as Lewis. I had the honor of being there to hear him quote from Lewis’s journal one more time (and received the pen that created the new national monument). We reminisced about our first trip through the White Cliffs so many years ago, the sheer happenstance that had brought us together, the long and winding trail each of us had traveled since that time, and how lucky we felt that those trails had somehow managed to keep crossing. We discussed the possibility of a big, two-family, multi-generational trip through the White Cliffs to properly celebrate the bicentennial amidst never-ending scenes of visionary enchantment.

I hold the memory of that moment, far as it was from Montana, in the same safe place where I keep my other memories of the White Cliffs—because it was the last time I saw Steve in person, before cancer took him away at too young an age. I like to think that some day, maybe our distant descendants will meet on the Upper Missouri—by chance or by design—and camp at Stonewall Creek and look out at the river while one of them reads aloud from the Lewis and Clark journals with great passion and feeling. Neither Steve nor I will be there, but I now feel more confident that the White Cliffs will be.

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In 1997, with the Missouri now well behind them, the author, left, posed with Burns and Ambrose on the Lolo Trail in Idaho.

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NOTES

1 Gary E. Moulton, ed., The Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition, 13 volumes (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983-2001), Vol. 9, p. 156. All quotations or references to journal entries in the ensuing text are from Moulton, by date.

2 Ibid., Vol. 5, p. 225.

3 Ibid., Vol. 10, p. 96.


5 Stonewall Creek is today known as Eagle Creek. (Ibid., Vol. 8, p. 401)


7 The Eye of the Needle was destroyed sometime between May 25 and May 27, 1997, according to a press release from the Lewistown, Montana, office of the Bureau of Land Management.
Beautiful Blue Camas

The explorers admired this plant of the mountain meadows for its lovely flower — but rued what its edible root did to their stomachs

by Joan Hockaday
One of the most beautiful plants along the Lewis and Clark Trail, blue camas still saturates Weippe Prairie, the mountain meadow in north-central Idaho where members of the westward-bound Corps of Discovery encountered it at harvest time in September 1805. The following June, on their return to Weippe Prairie from the Pacific, they caught it at blossom time, when its gray-blue flowers were so thick that to Meriwether Lewis the meadow appeared dotted with “lakes of fine clear water.”

*Camassia quamash,* as blue camas was later designated, is one of 178 botanical species the Lewis and Clark Expedition is credited with discovering for science. Related to the eastern wild hyacinth, it is historically a member of the lily family favoring moist meadows in the Pacific Northwest. The explorers extolled blue camas for its beauty and damned it—perhaps unfairly—for its effect on their stomachs.

Camas root was a staple of the Nez Perce Indians and other tribes west of the Continental Divide. The Nez Perces came to Weippe Prairie in the fall to dig the bulbous roots and prepare them for winter storage, an elaborate process that involved steaming them in an outdoor pit. They started by excavating a three-foot-deep hole and placing a layer of split wood on the bottom, followed by a layer of stones and more wood. The wood was set on fire to heat the stones. Once the fire burned out, they covered the heated stones with earth and grass and laid the camas roots on top, followed by another layer of grass. Water was then poured into the pit, and on contact with the hot stones it converted to steam. The Indians covered the whole with dirt, then built a fire on top and kept it burning for 10 to 12 hours. Once thoroughly steamed, the roots could be eaten, or sun-dried and pounded into flour to make dough for baking.

In his journals Clark calls blue camas “Pas-shi-co,” his rendering of the Shoshone word for it, *pasigoo* (meaning literally water sego, referring to a type of edible wild lily). The Nez Perces called it *quamash,* from which the English and Latin derive.

Lewis wrote extensively about blue camas during the return journey. At more than 600 words, his journal entry for June 11, 1806, is one of his longest botanical descriptions, filled with the taxonomic details required for a plant’s scientific classification. He compares the blue camas to lilies and hyacinths and to inferior camas cousins observed on his recent ascent of the Columbia River. His words are by turns poetic (“skye blue water-colored petals”) and acutely observant (“the anther in a few hours after the corolla unfoalds, bursts, discharges it’s pollen and becomes very minute and shrivled”). The description ends on a dour note about the blue camas as a food source: “This root is palatable but disagrees with me in every shape I ever used it.”

He was alluding to the intestinal problems that had beset him and virtually every other member of the expedition the previous fall, when they gorged on camas roots after emerging half-starved from the Bitterroot Mountains following their punishing 12-day traverse of the Lolo Trail. As Clark observed, the men “made So free a use of this root that it made them all Sick for Several days after.”

Clark arrived on Weippe Prairie first, and got sick first. He and other members of his advance party came off the Lolo Trail on September 20, 1805. They found a group of Nez Perces busy collecting and preparing camas roots, piles of which covered the plain. The Indians gave the famished explorers a little buffalo meat along with dried salmon, berries, and camas root in both its steamed and baked forms, “all of which we eat harily.”

It wasn’t long before Clark felt the ill effects of his meal. That night he complained of being “verry unwell all the evening from eateing the fish & roots too freely.” The next morning his condition had hardly improved: “I am verry Sick to day and puke which relive me.” Despite the dire effects of the Nez Perce diet, he sent Private Reuben Field...
back up the trail with sun-dried salmon, berries, and a “horse load of roots” and camas cakes for Lewis and the main party. Lewis’s journal records that by this point he was “growing weak from want of food.” He must have viewed the arrival of Clark’s aid package on the 22nd as a godsend, for it was sufficient “to satisfy compleatly all our appetites.” Sergeant John Ordway declared the camas cakes “excelent,” while his fellow sergeant Patrick Gass thought them “good and nourishing,” with a taste that reminded him of pumpkin bread.7

Private Joseph Whitehouse also enjoyed the taste of camas. He referred to the roots as “wild potatoes,” suggesting a starchy taste.8 The raw camas bulb, however, is principally composed of inulin, a type of sugar that when steamed over a long period breaks down into fructose, which gives cooked camas its appealing sweetness.9

When the two parties rejoined at Weippe Prairie, on the evening of September 22, Clark cautioned Lewis and the others “of the Consequences of eateing too much,” but to little avail. The next day he reported, “Capt. Lewis & 2 men verry Sick.” On the 24th, when the entire group departed for the camp of the Nez Perce chief Twisted Hair, Clark noted that Lewis was so bad off he was “Sercely able to ride on a jentle horse.” At least eight others were too sick to walk and “Compelled to lie on the Side of the road for Some time” or “obliged to be put on horses.” On the 27th, Clark reported, “nearly all the men sick,” and on October 2, he recorded that the roots “give the men violent pain in their bowels.” The litany of stomach cramps, diarrhea, bloating, and flatulence (“Capt Lewis & my Self eate a Supper of roots boiled, which filled us So full of wind, that we were Sercely able to Breathe all night”) continued for weeks.10 Only a switch in diet—from roots and salmon to dogs purchased from tribes closer to the ocean—brought relief. On the Columbia River, Private John Collins came up with an inspired idea about dealing with the leftover camas bread in their stores: he used it, wrote Clark, to brew “Some excellent beer.”11

Clark regarded camas roots as a chief cause of the explorers’ gastrointestinal woes, but other explanations have been offered. Overeating could have contributed, at least in the first few days after coming off the Lolo Trail. The oily richness of salmon flesh is a possible culprit, and the dried salmon they ate may well have harbored bacteria capable of producing the symptoms of food poisoning described by Clark. Perhaps all these factors came into play. Whatever the truth, it’s surely unfair to place all, or even most, of the blame on the root of this lovely flower.12

**CAMAS COMES EAST**

Lewis preserved camas and other plants by pressing and drying them between sheets of paper. He probably car-
ried a botanical collecting book for this purpose.13 He had learned the techniques of field collecting and preservation from the botanist Benjamin Smith Barton in Philadelphia in 1803. His samples of blue camas, collected at Weippe Prairie in June 1806, made their way across the Bitterroots and down the Missouri to St. Louis, which the Corps of Discovery reached in September. By April 1807, Lewis was back in Philadelphia, where some of his natural-history specimens, including examples of blue camas, wound up in the celebrated museum of Charles Willson Peale.14 His plans for a published narrative of the expedition included a volume devoted to natural history, and he tried to enlist Barton’s help in the section devoted to flora. For unknown reasons Barton declined, but Lewis found another botanist, Frederick Pursh, who came recommended by Barnard McMahon, a Philadelphia seed merchant, author, and one of Thomas Jefferson’s correspondents. A native of Germany, Pursh had arrived in Philadelphia in 1799 at age 25 and was working for Barton as a plant collector. Lewis met Pursh in May and paid him $70 to help organize his plant collection and prepare drawings for publication. He turned over his botanical specimens to Pursh and left for Washington, D.C., and then St. Louis to take up duties as the new governor of Louisiana Territory.15

Pursh got to work on his assignment the following fall, after returning from a collecting trip for Barton through New York and Vermont. By May 1808, a year after meeting Lewis, he had gone about as far as he could on the project without further consultation—he apparently needed Lewis’s advice on certain details to complete some of the drawings and scientific descriptions. But Lewis never returned to Philadelphia and had no more communication with the German botanist. Caught up in political and financial problems, he died, a probable suicide, in October 1809. By then, Pursh had moved on to a new job, in New York City. He took the drawings with him and also many of the plant specimens left in his care by Lewis.

In 1811, Pursh moved again, this time to London, to work in the herbarium of a gentleman botanist named A. B. Lambert. Hailed by his British peers as “a learned, acute, and zealous Botanist,”16 Pursh brought with him the partially finished manuscript of a magnum opus on North American plants which he was able to complete while in Lambert’s employment. Published in London in 1814, the two-volume Flora Americae Septentrionalis includes descriptions of 130 species collected on the Lewis and Clark Expedition.17 Thirteen of the work’s 27 engravings are of expedition plants.18 Blue camas was intended to be among the species illustrated—but no image of it appears in the book. Evidently, Pursh had doubts about the reliability of the illustration and withdrew it at the last minute, inserting
another flower image where the engraving should have been. In an erratum at the end of the book, Pursh said he “was misled by Mr. Lewis in describing one of the petals to be dependent and the rest ascending, which is not the case.”

An engraving [pictured, page 22] of blue camas finally appeared in print in 1832, in a British volume edited by botanist John Lindley. Unfortunately, Lindley’s text left the erroneous impression that its discoverer was the Scottish botanist David Douglas, who collected plants on the Columbia River almost twenty years after Lewis and Clark. Lindley’s text takes issue with Pursh’s description of “lakes” of light blue camas grown in great abundance on this plain; and at this time looks beautiful, being in full bloom with flowers of a pale blue colour.” (Moulton, Vol. 10, p. 237)

All quotations or references to journal entries in the ensuing text are from Moulton, by date, unless otherwise indicated.

Blue camas has not always carried the scientific binomial *Camassia quamash*, which dates from the early 20th century. Among other names that early botanical writers assigned this plant are *Phalan-gium quamash* (Pursh, 1814), *Camassia esculenta* (Lindley, 1832), and *Quamasia quamash* (Elliot Coues, 1898). Blue camas remains in the lily family, although some recent scientific papers suggest it be moved to the agave family (Agavaceae). Whatever scientists choose to call it and wherever they place it on the taxonomic tree, blue camas will always have a special place in the story of Lewis and Clark. So remembering the camas beer brewed by John Collins on the Columbia, let’s raise a glass to *Camassia quamash* and to Meriwether Lewis, who discovered it for science and the wider world.

**Notes**

1 Gary E. Moulton, ed., *The Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983-2001, 13 vols). Vol. 8, p. 22. Entry for June 12, 1806. William Clark’s entry for that day records, almost word for word, the same sentiments. Two days earlier, when the explorers arrived at the nearby Nez Perce villages, John Ordway wrote, “this level consists of about 2000 acres [acres] of level smooth prairie on which is not a tree or Shrub, but the lowest parts is covered with comass which is now all in blossom.” (Moulton, Vol. 9, p. 321) Patrick Gass observed, “The com-mas grows in great abundance on this plain; and at this time looks beautiful, being in full bloom with flowers of a pale blue colour.” (Moulton, Vol. 10, p. 237)


3 Ibid., pp. 215-216. See also Moulton, Vol. 5, pp. 222-223 and 224n (Clark’s entry for September 21, 1805); Vol. 11, p. 328 (Joseph Whitehouse, September 22); and Vol. 8, pp. 16-20 (Lewis and Clark, June 11, 1806).

4 Moulton, Vol. 5, p. 224n.


6 Ibid., Vol. 5, p. 227.

7 Ibid., Vol. 9, p. 228 (Ordway); and Vol. 10, p. 146 (Gass).

8 Ibid., Vol. 11, p. 331.


11 Ibid., p. 315. Entry for October 21.

12 Eldon D. Chuiard, *Only One Man Died: The Medical Aspects of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* (Fairfield, Wash.: Ye Galleon Press, 1979), pp. 318-323. See also David J. Peck, *Or Perish in the Attempt: Wilderness Medicine in the Lewis & Clark Expedition* (Helena, Mont.: Farcountry Press, 2002), p. 208. Peck points out that Clark, by treating the desperately sick men with cathartic salts and tartar emetic “took an already suffering population and made them suffer more. He took already dehydrated patients and made them more dehydrated.” Whitehouse and Ordway both suggested that their ailments resulted in part from a change in climate—in the Bitterroot Mountains the explorers

had been close to freezing, while in the lower elevation of the camas meadows they found the conditions hot and muggy—but this explanation is dubious. (Moulton, Vol. 11, p. 334; and Vol. 9, p. 230)

13 Moulton, Vol. 12, p. 2.

14 Donald Jackson, ed., *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition with Related Documents*, 1783–1854, 2 volumes (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2nd ed., 1978), Vol. 2, p. 477. This list of Peale Museum specimens and artifacts from the Lewis and Clark Expedition includes samples of both camas bulb and camas bread. If the bulb remained at Peale’s museum, that might explain why the herbarium collection has no cutaway (i.e., sliced) specimen of the camas bulb. See Moulton, Vol. 12, image 33, *Camassia quamash*.

15 Cutright, pp. 358–360; Moulton, Vol. 12, p. 3. McMahon has been described as Jefferson’s gardening mentor. See the introduction by Peter J. Hatch to Bernard McMahon, *The American Gardener’s Calendar, 1806* (Charlottesville: Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation, 1997 facsimile reprint).


18 Moulton, Vol. 12, p. 4; and Cutright, p. 363. Cutright states that 124 Lewis and Clark species described by Pursh are designated with the abbreviated legend, “v.s. in Herb. Lewis.” From Moulton’s figure of 130 Lewis and Clark species, one can infer that six did not include this legend.

19 Pursh took Lewis’s botanical specimens to England and implied that he did so in order to protect them from possible damage or destruction from the pending War of 1812. (Pursh, p. xv) They passed into Lambert’s hands and eventually made their way back to Philadelphia. For a full account of their peregrinations and rediscovery in the late 19th century, see Moulton, Vol. 12, pp. 3–5; and Cutright, pp. 357–367. These sources also discuss Pursh’s disputed ethics in retaining the specimens and his dealings with William Clark about his botanical drawings commissioned by Lewis, subjects beyond the scope of this article. In his introduction to *Flora Americana Septentrionalis*, Pursh claimed that he returned the drawings to Clark; whether or not he did so, they are now lost to history. Another excellent source on these matters is Joseph Ewan, “Pursh and his Botanical Associates,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 96, No. 5, 1952, pp. 599–628. Ewan gives a full account of Pursh’s years in Philadelphia and London. He leaves little doubt that Pursh cut and sliced Lewis’s work, and then absconded with it. (Cutright is kinder to Pursh, arguing that his published descrip-

20 Edward’s *Botanical Register*, Vol. 18 (London: James Ridgeway, 1832), figure 1486. The Royal Horticultural Society’s library, on London’s Vincent Square, is named for Lindley, one of the society’s early secretaries. His books form the nucleus of the collection, which includes some 18,000 botanical drawings.


Old Toby, the name given by Lewis and Clark to the Shoshone guide who took them across the Bitterroot Mountains on their journey to the Pacific, was one of the more important, if enigmatic, of the many Native Americans who assisted the explorers on their epic trip. Toby spent a total of 50 consecutive days with the Corps of Discovery—from August 20 to October 8, 1805—more than any other Indian except Sacagawea. He guided William Clark on his reconnaissance of the Salmon River and took the entire party over Lost Trail Pass and down the Bitterroot River to Travelers’ Rest. From there he helped the explorers cross the Bitterroot Mountains on the snowbound Lolo Trail, a grueling 12-day passage that exposed them to bitter cold and near-starvation. Gary Moulton, editor of the Lewis and Clark journals, echoes other historians when he says that Old Toby “deserves considerable credit for the success of the expedition.”1

The corps’s journal keepers only once referred to Toby by name, and that was during the return trip, more than seven months after they had parted company with him.2 Otherwise he appears in the journals as “our guide,” or variations thereof.3 John Rees, a trader who lived among the Shoshones in the 1870s, believed his real name was Pī-keek queen-ah, or Swooping Eagle. Rees also suggested that “Toby” might be a contraction of Tosa-tive koo-be, which literally translated from Shoshone means gave “brains” to “the white white-man.” According to this explanation, the name alludes to Toby’s knowledge of the terrain, and to race—a “white” white man being a Caucasian like Lewis or Clark, as distinguished from a “black” white man like York, Clark’s African-American slave.4 Perhaps Old Toby was a pet name the explorers gave him retroactively during the gloomy winter they spent at Fort Clatsop, after reaching the Pacific.

Whatever they called him, the old guide entered their
lives on the morning when Clark and a small advance party arrived at the Shoshone village on the Lemhi River, west of the Continental Divide. They had left Lewis and the main party at Camp Fortunate, east of the Divide, two days before, on August 18. Clark’s mission was to determine the best route to the Pacific.

The explorers had encountered the Shoshones after traveling for more than four months upriver in boats from Fort Mandan, in present-day North Dakota, where they had spent the previous winter. The captains had hoped that a short portage would take them to a navigable tributary to the Columbia, but geographical reality proved far different when Lewis, from the top of Lemhi Pass, observed “immense ranges of high mountains to the West of us with their tops partially covered with snow.”

Their highest priority was finding a way through those ranges before winter trapped them in the mountains. The Lemhi flowed north-northwest a short distance before joining the Salmon River. Lewis learned about the Salmon from Cameahwait, the Shoshone chief, in a lengthy discussion with him on August 14. Cameahwait told him that the river ran northwest and then west before eventually emptying into “a great lake of water which was illy taisted.” Cameahwait ruled out the Salmon as a way to the Pacific because of its rapids and canyons, which precluded travel either by boat or on horseback; he said that a better, but still difficult, route was the one taken by the Nez Perce Indians over the Lolo Trail, whose eastern approach was reached via the Bitterroot Valley.

Lewis “instantly settled” on the Nez Perce route, but before he and Clark committed the party to what would surely be an arduous overland crossing they wanted to make sure that the Salmon was indeed impassable, as Cameahwait claimed. To resolve the matter they would have to reconnoiter the river, and for that they would need a guide. Enter Old Toby, described as “an elderly man …
who consented to undertake this task” and “a person well acquainted with the country.” 9 [For more on Cameahwait’s geography lesson, see sidebar, pages 37-38.]

EXPLORING THE SALMON RIVER

It was Clark who settled the question of whether the Salmon River offered a practical route through the mountains. On the afternoon of August 20, after exchanging some presents with the Indians, he set off down the Lemhi Valley with Toby, 10 men, and two horses. 10 The next day they arrived at the junction of the Lemhi and Salmon (which Clark called Lewis’s River), at the site of present-day Salmon, Idaho. Continuing down the Salmon, they arrived on the 22nd at a Shoshone fishing camp at the mouth of a tributary entering from the north. Clark called this tributary Fish Creek; on today’s maps it appears as the North Fork of the Salmon. He found several Indian families catching and drying salmon. The sight of white men “allarmed them verrry much” until Toby, who had been a bit behind, caught up and reassured them that the strangers meant no harm. Toby also pointed out to Clark that an Indian road passed up the North Fork; this would be the route that, 10 days later, the corps would start on during its trek over the mountains. 11 The party exchanged trinkets for some fish and berries and moved downstream another three miles before halting to make camp.

The main Salmon below the North Fork veers west. Clark and his party ventured down the river for another two days, but the farther they went the rougher they found the terrain. They worked their way along the steep north slope above boulder-strewn rapids, then down to the river’s narrow, barely negotiable banks. At one point the passage became too pinched for horses, forcing the riders to veer into the dangerously swift current. After a mile, the party reached a small meadow, “below which the whole current of the river beat against ... solid rock.” 12

Here they halted and set up camp. They were short of provisions, so Clark left Sergeant Patrick Gass in charge of most of the men with orders to hunt and fish. To assure himself that the river couldn’t be navigated in canoes, Clark set off downstream with Toby and three others for another 12 miles on foot. 13 After “clambering over immense rocks and along the sides of lofty precepices,” they descended to another small meadow, below which a large creek entered from the north. Clark, who named this Berry Creek (today it is called Indian Creek), noticed that a trail ran along its banks and that Indians had recently camped there. Using sign language, Toby told him the trail led over the mountains to a north-flowing river (today’s Bitterroot) and that it was used by the Tushepaws, his name for the Salish, or Flathead, Indians.

Pushing on another half mile, they came to the mouth of a smaller stream that also entered from the north. This is today’s Squaw Creek. Paralleling it was a trail that according to Toby cut off a “considerable bend” that the Salmon made to the south. 14 The little group followed the
trail up Squaw Creek for six miles, then climbed a steep overlook offering a spectacular panorama to the west. From this vantage point Clark could see downstream for 20 miles as the Salmon passed through an endless expanse of mountains. In Lewis’s words, what Clark saw left him “perfectly satisfied as to the impracticability of this rout either by land or water.”

Clark’s reconnaissance lasted four days and took him 52 miles downstream from the Salmon’s junction with the Lemhi. Old Toby passed muster as a guide and proved his worth in other ways, too, by negotiating for fish and berries with several Shoshone families encountered along the way and by helping retrieve the horses one morning after they strayed during the night. As Lewis later noted in his journal, Toby appeared to be “a very intelligent old man” who “much pleased” Clark.

**OVER LOST TRAIL PASS**

Clark’s five-man detail reunited with Gass’s group on August 24. Having ruled out the Salmon as a way to the Pacific, the captain immediately dispatched Private John Colter on horseback with a message to Lewis urging him to purchase as many horses as possible—at least one mount per person—for transporting men and provisions and “to hire my present guide” to lead them north over the mountains and into the Bitterroot Valley. To reinforce his recommendation, he sent Toby ahead so that Lewis could question him directly about the route.

Lewis, meanwhile, pulled up stakes at Camp Fortunate and with the rest of his party crossed the Divide. He arrived at the Shoshone village two days later, on the 26th. The next day, Lewis through his interpreter Sacagawea conferred with Old Toby, who “confirmed ... what he had already asserted of a road up Berry Creek which would lead to Indian establishments on another branch of the Columbia” [i.e., the Bitterroot]. Other Shoshones contradicted Toby, but Lewis dismissed their arguments as self-serving: in his view, the Indians wanted the whites to stay for the winter so they could continue trading with them and enjoy the protection of their firearms. Because “the old man promised to conduct us himself,” Lewis added, “that route seemed to be the most eligible.”

On the 29th, Clark rejoined Lewis at the Shoshone village. The reunited captains bargained for more horses, and when they headed north on the 30th, their herd numbered 40, plus one mule—eight animals more than the minimum recommended by Clark for the corps’s 32 adult members. Whether Toby used one of the corps’s horses, brought along his own, or walked isn’t recorded. We do know that six other Shoshones, including four identified as his sons, kept him company for the first two days. On September 1, when the explorers camped for the evening on the North Fork of the Salmon about eight miles upstream from its junction with the main river, five of the Shoshones had turned back, leaving just Toby and one son (whose name the captains did not record) to accompany them over the mountains.

The explorers’ route up the North Fork followed an Indian trail as far as present-day Gibbonsville, Idaho, where a stream known today as Dahlonega Creek enters
from the east. Toby told the captains that the trail, which at this point turned up Dahlonega Creek, led to the waters of the Missouri. Presumably the captains wanted to keep to the Pacific side of the Continental Divide, so they decided to abandon the trail and continue up the North Fork, even though this meant struggling through trees and brush “over the steep and rocky sides of the hills.” It is possible that Toby recommended staying on the Indian trail and that the captains rejected his advice. The trail would have taken them over Big Hole Pass into the upper valley of the Big Hole River; from there, following another Indian trail, they could have struck north, recrossed the Divide at today’s Gibbons Pass, and dropped down into the valley of the East Fork of the Bitterroot. This route, although longer than the one they actually took, would have been easier on both men and horses, and it probably would have taken less time. Even though the captains did not make use of it at the time, Toby had once again provided them with a key piece of geographical information, which they would incorporate into their travel plans the following year. In July 1806, during the expedition’s return from the Pacific, Clark traversed Gibbons Pass from north to south on his way from Travelers’ Rest to retrieve the canoes and supplies cached at Camp Fortunate.

The route Toby intended to follow once the explorers left the trail at Dahlonega Creek remains a topic of debate; so, too, does the route the explorers actually took as they approached the dividing ridge on September 3. No trail at the time existed over Lost Trail Pass, which as noted leads to the East Fork of the Bitterroot, and it could be that the old guide wished to drop into the Bitterroot’s West Fork by keeping west of the route taken. Elliott Coues suggests this in a footnote in his 1893 edition of the journals, and this possibility is reinforced by Gass’s journal entry for September 3, which states that the stream on whose banks they camped “was not the creek our guide wished to have come upon.” We know from what Toby told Clark during the Salmon River reconnaissance that he was familiar with the Indian trail up Berry (Indian) Creek, and this may have been the trail he was seeking. Toby perhaps intended to strike the Berry Creek trail and follow it to the West Fork of the Bitterroot, but instead, as Coues speculates, he “lost his way … and then bluffed the thing through.”

Coues’s suggestion that Toby wanted to be farther to the west raises an intriguing and probably unanswerable question: why didn’t the party take the Berry Creek trail from the outset rather than bushwhacking up the North Fork of the Salmon? It’s fairly clear from Lewis’s conversation with Toby on August 27 that this well-traveled route—which Clark had seen with his own eyes during his reconnaissance of the main Salmon—was what the old guide had recommended for crossing the mountains. Perhaps Clark vetoed this route because of the difficulty he had reaching Berry Creek. Clark on his reconnaissance of the Salmon had gone directly down the river to determine its navigability, but presumably there was an easier, overland route that linked to the Berry Creek trail. Another possibility is that the captains didn’t realize when they started on the North Fork trail that it eventually turned east toward the Continental Divide.

Whatever Toby’s intended route, the one the explorers blazed up the North Fork became a test of their endurance—one that foreshadowed the even more difficult crossing of the Bitterroot Mountains via the Lolo Trail. Pack-laden horses tumbled down the steep wooded hillsides and came up lame. Game was scarce and rations low. On the afternoon of September 3 it began to rain, and that night the rain turned to snow. They went to bed wet, cold, and hungry and awoke the next morning to find the ground covered with snow and their moccasins and baggage frozen stiff. No one seems to have blamed Old Toby for their misery, and at any rate the rough going was now behind them for a while. On September 4, after crossing the dividing ridge, the weary party followed a stream (today’s Camp Creek) down to its junction with the East Fork of the Bitterroot. Here, in a place later known as Ross’s Hole, they found an encampment of four hundred Salish, or Flathead, Indians on their way to the buffalo country. The Salish were allied with the Shos-
The-Lolo-Crossing

The Lolo Crossing

Note: Description of translation chain that includes sign language, below, is wrong. See WPO May 2005, p. 36, for correction / clarification.

hones, and the presence of Toby and his son, as well as Sacagawea, must have reassured them about the white strangers. Because the Salish and Shoshones spoke markedly different languages, communication would have been by sign language, and we can assume that Toby was part of a long translation chain that went from Salish to sign to Shoshone to Hidatsa to French to English. (Toby knew sign and Shoshone. Sacagawea spoke Shoshone, her native tongue, and Hidatsa, the language of her adoptive tribe. Her husband, Toussaint Charbonneau, spoke Hidatsa and French, and several of Lewis and Clark’s men were fluent in both French and English.)

In his journal, Private Joseph Whitehouse observed that the Flatheads “received us as friends.” The band boasted a herd of at least five hundred horses, and the captains enhanced the corps’s inventory by swapping their lame mounts for fresh ones and trading for an additional eleven.

Travelers’ Rest and the Lolo Crossing

The explorers bid farewell to the Salish on the afternoon of September 6 and continued north, proceeding down the Bitterroot Valley. On the 9th, they reached a tributary flowing in from the west—today’s Lolo Creek, where “our guide informs that we should leave the river” to strike west over the mountains—and made camp at the place they called Travelers’ Rest. Toby told them the Bitterroot continued north a great distance, and he didn’t know whether it emptied into the Columbia. The old guide’s ignorance of the lower river, plus the absence of salmon—indicating a major falls somewhere downstream—ruled it out as a water route to the Pacific.

Toby also informed the captains that, a few miles below the junction with Lolo Creek, a major tributary entered the Bitterroot from the east. The river he mentioned was nearly as wide as the Bitterroot, he said, and its open valley formed “an excellent pass to the Missouri.” Toby was referring to a route up the Clark Fork and Blackfoot rivers. He said that a traveler following this road could reach the Missouri River in just four days. This must have been startling news to the captains, who had taken seven weeks to reach this point by following the Missouri from the Great Falls to its headwaters. Lewis and Clark had heard about this route from the Hidatsa Indians during their winter at Fort Mandan, but on the outbound journey they either missed its eastern approach or chose not to follow it (their orders were to trace the Missouri to its source). They would later learn that the Nez Perce tribe followed this “Road to the Buffalo” on its annual trek to the game-rich plains east of the Continental Divide. Lewis would confirm the existence of this stunning shortcut by taking it on the return journey the following July.

On September 10, the explorers’ one full day at Travelers’ Rest, the captains sent out all the regular hunters to add whatever they could to their meager provisions, for as Clark explained, Toby had told them that “no game is to be found on our rout for a long ways.” Presumably to glean more geographic knowledge, Lewis ordered two of the hunters to follow the Bitterroot downstream to its junction with the river from the east mentioned by Toby.

Later that day, when John Colter returned to camp with three mounted Indians he’d encountered while hunting up Lolo Creek, Toby was enlisted to interview them in sign language. The Indians, whom the captains identified as Flatheads but who were probably Nez Perces, said they were pursuing Shoshones who had run off with some of their horses. Lewis must have been far more interested to learn from one of them that his tribe resided just six days’ travel to the west, on a plain beside the Columbia River, “from whence he said the water was good and capable of being navigated to the sea.”
Led by Toby, the explorers departed Travelers’ Rest on September 11. The trail up Lolo Creek was broad and easy at first but soon deteriorated, becoming, in the words of historian James P. Ronda, “a cruel and unforgiving passage.” Their first trouble occurred on the 13th, after they stopped at Lolo Hot Springs. Several trails converged here, and evidently Toby became confused. “There are so many paths leading to and from this spring,” wrote Gass, “that our guide took a wrong one for a mile or two, and we had bad travelling across till we got into the road again.” Clark, who found the route “intolerable,” wrote that the wrong turn took them three miles out of the way. Once back on track, they crossed the present Montana-Idaho border and camped in a grassy glade known today as Packer Meadows.

On the 14th, Toby again led the party astray, taking the explorers off the ridge-line trail and down a well-worn path along today’s Pack Creek to a Salish fishing camp on the Lochsa River. Short on rations, they sacrificed a colt and ruefully named a nearby stream Colt Killed Creek. Gass declared the horse flesh “good eating.” This detour to the fishing camp was the second mistake Toby had made in two days and suggests—contrary to most historical interpretations of his role as guide—that he was familiar, at best, with only the eastern part of the Lolo Trail. He knew the trail started on Lolo Creek. At some point in his life he had probably gone up Lolo Creek and down to the fishing camp on the Lochsa with a party of Salish Indians, who were on friendly terms with the Shoshones. On Clark’s Salmon River reconnaissance Toby told the captain that he had “been among these Tushepaws [Salish], and having once accompanied them on a fishing-party to another river, he had there seen Indians who had come across the Rocky mountains.” One can reasonably assume that “another river” refers to the Lochsa and “Indians” to the Nez Perces. Because the Lolo Trail was a Nez Perce road and the Shoshones were not on good terms with that tribe, they would have avoided it. So it is doubtful that Toby ever traveled on the Lolo west of Pack Creek. Once the explorers got back on the main trail, they didn’t mention Toby in their journals again until the very end of the Lolo passage—another indication that his usefulness as a guide was effectively over.

The next morning, they breakfasted on more of the colt and proceeded down the Lochsa for four miles before turning up a winding trail to regain the ridge line. Horses lost their footing on the dauntingly steep slope and tumbled downhill, crashing through a maze of fallen timber. Some horses were so badly injured they had to be abandoned. One of them, which happened to be carrying Clark’s field desk, rolled forty yards before a tree broke its fall. The desk was smashed, but Clark was astonished that the horse itself “appeared but little hurt.”

The scarcity of food and harsh conditions made the Lolo crossing an unforgettably grim ordeal. In the early morning of the 16th, snow began falling, and by that evening some six to eight inches lay on the ground, obscuring the trail. The explorers trudged on through the thick deadfall and timber, nudging branches that showered more snow on the bone-weary travelers. Clark declared he had never been more wet or cold in his life and feared his feet would freeze in his thin moccasins. They had almost nothing to eat except the occasional grouse they were able to shoot and rations of unpalatable “portable soup.” They killed and consumed a second colt, then a third. On the 18th, Clark left Toby with Lewis and the main party and pressed ahead with six hunters to scout for deer, but by nightfall, when his advance party camped by a “bold running” stream he dubbed Hungery Creek, their bellies remained empty. The next morning, they shot a stray Indian pony, breakfasted on as much of it as they needed, and hung the rest of the carcass in a tree for the main group, which the following day “made a hearty meal” of it.

On September 19, Lewis after a march of six uphill miles reached the top of Sherman Peak and “to our inexpressible joy” spied in the distance a large tract of prairie. The sight of this open meadow—known today as Camas Prai-
rie—and its promise of game “revived the spirts of the party already reduced and much weakened for the want of food.” Lewis reports that Toby said they could reach the meadow by the next day, but the actual distance—at least fifty miles—made that assertion too optimistic by far. It took another two days to go thirty miles to a similar meadow, Wapiti Prairie, which Clark reached on September 20 and Lewis on the 22nd.9 Here they found a village of Nez Perces who supplied them with dried salmon, berries, and camas roots.

The Corps of Discovery’s Lolo ordeal was over. While adjusting to the new diet of fish and roots (almost everyone came down with severe stomach cramps and bloating) the explorers cemented their relationship with the amiable Nez Perces, who agreed to care for their horses until they returned the following spring. Twisted Hair, one of the band’s headmen, helped Clark find trees big enough for making the dug-out canoes they needed to take them to the Pacific.

Although they apparently had little to do, Toby and his son remained with the explorers for the duration of their two-week interlude with the Nez Perces. (Clark reports on September 27, “our Shoshonee Indian Guide employed himself making flint points for his arrows.”) They were still with them on October 7, when the Corps of Discovery headed down the swift-flowing Clearwater River. The explorers struggled to maneuver the ungainly heavily burdened dugouts through the fearsome rapids. On the second day out, one of the canoes split open after hitting a rock and swamped. Its crew hung to the sides while other men worked frantically to tow the vessel ashore. Later in the day, Twisted Hair and another Nez Perce chief named Tetoaharsky caught up with the expedition with the intention of accompanying it to the ocean.40

For the next two nights the explorers lay to near a Nez Perce camp. They dried out the soaked baggage and were able to repair the canoe, but the near disaster and the prospect of more rough water ahead may have been too much for Toby. Sometime during the evening of October 9, he and his son slipped away to return to their people. As Gass noted, “I suspect he was afraid of being cast away passing the rapids.”41 The unannounced departure mystified Clark, who was concerned that Toby and his son had left without collecting their wages. When the captain asked either Twisted Hair or Tetoaharsky to send a man on horseback to catch up with them, he was advised against it—Nez Perces farther upstream would simply take whatever articles Clark gave them.42 The following spring, the captains learned from the Nez Perces that Toby and his son had commandeered two of the corps’s horses for the trek home—horses that were almost certainly more valuable than the trinkets Clark would have given them.43

Not long after the explorers returned to St. Louis, Lewis wrote a letter to an unknown correspondent describing in some detail the Corps of Discovery’s odyssey to the Pacific and back. Recounting the decision, made during their sojourn with the Shoshones, to take the route recommended by Toby, the captain told with a dramatic flourish how “we attempted with success those unknown formidable snow clad Mountains on the bare word of a Savage, while 99/100th of his Countrymen assured us that a passage was impracticable.”44

“Savage” or not, Toby helped the expedition over one of the roughest legs of the journey, added in other ways to Lewis and Clark’s store of geographical knowledge, and assisted them in their dealings with the Shoshones and Salish. He made mistakes on the Lolo Trail and may also have lost his way on the crossing of Lost Trail Pass, yet neither the captains nor any other journal keeper expressed (at least in writing) a negative word about him. Whether or not he actually guided them over the Lolo Trail, he was indeed indispensable.

Foundation member Charles Knowles lives in Moscow, Idaho. A retired geologist who taught for 30 years at the University of Idaho, he is a member and past chairman of the Idaho Governor’s Lewis and Clark Trail Committee.

Notes
1 Gary E. Moulton, ed., The Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition, 13 volumes (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983-2001), Vol. 5, p. 131n. All quotations or references to journal entries in the ensuing text are from Moulton, by date, unless otherwise indicated.
2 Ibid., Vol. 7, p. 248. Lewis’s entry for May 12, 1806, refers to “our old Guide Toby.” Journal keeper Sergeant John Ordway also mentions him by name in his entry for May 4, 1806: (Moulton, Vol. 9, p. 304)
3 See, for example, Clark’s entry for September 27, 1805, “our Shoshonee Indian Guide,” and October 9, “our old guide.”

May 27, 1806: “I suspect he was afraid of being cast away passing the rapids.”

The remaining four men cannot be...


7 Ibid., p. 89. This is Lewis’s entry for August 14, 1805, but he may also have been describing a meeting between Clark and Cameahwait that occurred on August 20. For more on this, see the sidebar “Cameahwait’s Geography Lesson,” pages 36-37.

8 Moulton, Vol. 5, p. 90.

9 Ibid., p. 128. Lewis’s retroactive entry for August 20, 1805.

10 Pierre Cruzatte was ordered to remain and catch up after negotiating for a third horse. Accompanied by Cameahwait and other mounted Shoshones, Charbonneau and Sacagawea returned to Camp Fortunate to assist Lewis’s party in crossing the Divide with the corps’s baggage.

11 Moulton, Vol. 5, pp. 146 and 148n. Clark’s entry states that “a road passes up” the creek “& over to the Missouri.” As discussed later in the text of this article, the trail turned east, leading over what is now Big Hole Pass and down into the upper valley of the Big Hole River, whose waters flow into the Jefferson and thence to the Missouri. When Lewis and Clark reached the point where the trail turned east, they left it and continued north, thereby remaining west of the Continental Divide.

12 Moulton, Vol. 5, p. 152. The entry is Lewis’s for August 23, relating Clark’s experiences.

13 Ibid.


The Berry Creek trail crosses to the headwaters of the West Fork of the Bitterroot. In 1835, the missionary Samuel Parker entered the Lemhi Valley and made his way northwest over the dividing ridge between the Salmon and Bitterroot watersheds. At least one writer has suggested that Parker followed a trail that leaves the North Fork of the Salmon above its junction with the main river and goes northwest up Hughes Creek; see Ernst Peterson, “Retracing the Southern Nez Perce Trail with Samuel Parker,” Montana: The Magazine of Western History, Autumn 1966. My personal knowledge of the area leads me to believe that Parker in fact traveled the Squaw Creek trail pointed out by Toby 30 years earlier. Parker’s description of the geology he saw matches the Painted Rocks formation of the upper West Fork of the Bitterroot. See Samuel Parker, Journal of an Exploring Tour; Beyond the Rocky Mountains under the Direction of the A.B.C.F.M. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Andruss, Woodruff & Gauntlett, 1844), pp. 116-117.

15 Clark’s westernmost point in his reconnaissance of the Salmon River put him about three miles upstream from present-day Shoup, Idaho. Much of this region remains a primitive, roadless wilderness. (Moulton, Vol. 5, p. 157n)


17 Moulton, Vol. 5, p. 138. Entry for August 21, 1805. Again, Lewis must have written this entry retroactively, after talking with Clark following the latter’s return from his Salmon River reconnaissance.

18 This was the first—and clearly preferred—of two alternatives suggested by Clark. The second would have divided the corps, sending one group over the mountains via the Berry Creek trail and the other down the Salmon in canoes, with the two parties reuniting on the Columbia. In his journal Clark also noted, but scratched out, a third possibility. This would have sent the corps over the mountains and into the Bitterroot Valley; some of the men then would have split off and returned to the Missouri via a direct route up today’s Blackfoot River in order to stock up on meat on the game-rich plains. (Moulton, Vol. 5, pp. 163 and 164n)

In his journal entry for August 24, Patrick Gass states that Toby also “speaks of a way to sea, by going up the south fork of this river, getting on the mountains that way, and then turning to the south west again.” Going south up the main Salmon would have taken the explorers upstream from today’s Salmon, Idaho, toward the town of Challis and down into the Snake River Plain. From there they might have worked their way into eastern Oregon following a route, later blazed by fur trappers, that became part of the Oregon Trail. The southern route is also mentioned in Private Joseph Whitehouse’s discussion of the options presented by Toby (Moulton, Vol. 11, pp. 291-292, entries for August 30), and it is described in some detail in Lewis’s retroactive entry for August 14 (Moulton, Vol. 5, pp. 88-90), which relates Lewis’s interrogation of Cameahwait about “the geography of his country.” This information about the southern route was provided by an “old man” (almost certainly someone other than Toby) who was present in the Shoshone village at the same time as Lewis. The route he described was long and hazardous, and Lewis was quick to rule it out as an option. For a cogent analysis of these geographic options, see John Logan Allen, Passage through the Garden: Lewis and Clark and the Image of the American Northwest (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975), pp. 294-298.

19 When Lewis arrived at the Shoshone village on August 26 he found Colter waiting for him with the message. (Moulton, Vol. 5, p. 173) We can deduce that Toby probably arrived the next day. Clark’s entry for the 24th states that he sent Toby ahead to talk to Lewis, but on the 25th Toby was still with Clark, trading with some Shoshones for salmon. In his entry for the 26th, Lewis reports that another guide assured him that Old Toby “was better informed of the country than any of them.” (Moulton, Vol. 5, pp. 163, 167, and 173)

20 Coues, Vol. 2, pp. 571-572. The Coues edition is an updated version of Nicholas Biddle’s edition of 1814. Here and elsewhere, the Biddle/Coues narrative offers a much fuller picture of what is going on. The account of events on August 27 uses the first person plural, but it is clear from context that the “we” who confers with Toby is Lewis. (Lewis’s journal is silent from August 27 through September 8, so this must be inferred.) Clark on the 27th was still at a Shoshone fishing camp some miles below the main village.


22 The journal entries touching on the number of Shoshones are a bit confusing. On September 30, Clark tells us that Toby’s “3 Sons followed him.” On the 31st, he says six Indians followed, four of whom were Toby’s sons. On September 1 he says that “all the Indians leave us except our Guide.” In the Biddle/Coues paraphrase of the journals, the entry for September 2 compounds the confusion by asserting that “all the Indians left us, except the old guide.” Gass’s entry for the same date
records that "A son of our guide joined us to day and is going on." Perhaps one of Toby's sons left on September 1 but decided to rejoin his father. Whatever the specifics, it is clear from future entries that one son remained with Toby for the rest of his time with the Corps of Discovery. See Moulton, Vol. 5, pp. 178, 179, and 183; and Vol. 10, p. 136 (Gass). Also Coues, Vol. 2, p. 578.

The route from the Shoshone village on the Lemhi River took the corps downstream to the Lemhi's junction with the main Salmon, then down to Tower Creek, flowing in from the east. They followed an Indian trail up Tower Creek four miles to their campsite of August 31. On September 1, they continued north on the trail "over high rugged hills" to a campsite on the North Fork about six miles downstream from present-day Gibbonsville, Idaho. (Moulton, Vol. 5, pp. 179 and 182)

23 Coues, Vol. 2, p. 579. As previously noted, the Biddle/Coues account of these events is much more complete than Clark's journal entries or those of Gass, Ordway, and Whitehouse. Also as noted, Lewis left no record of this phase of the journey.


25 Moulton, Vol. 8, p. 168n.

26 Ibid., Vol. 10, pp. 136-137. As Moulton observes in a footnote, the campsite's location and route that day are subject to disagreement among those who have closely studied these matters. The explorers may have camped on the headwaters of the North Fork of the Salmon or on Colter Creek, whose waters flow into the West Fork of the Bitterroot. For an exhaustive analysis of these and other possibilities, see Fazio; also Moulton, Vol. 5, p. 186n.


28 Moulton, Vol. 11, pp. 298-299 (Whitehouse); and Vol. 9, p. 217 (Ordway).

29 Ibid., Vol. 11, p. 299.

30 Ibid., Vol. 5, pp. 187-188.

31 Ibid., p. 192.

32 Ibid., p. 195n.

33 Ibid., Vol. 8, p. 85; Vol. 10, pp. 247-248n (Gass); Coues, Vol. 2, p. 803. The Buffalo Road crossed the Continental Divide at today's misnamed Lewis and Clark Pass (only Lewis saw it) and descended either the Dearborn or Medicine (Sun) River to the Missouri. When Lewis took this route in 1806, he followed the Sun River to the Missouri.


35 Moulton, Vol. 5, p. 203, and Vol. 10, p. 141. Today, the best of several trails over Lolo Pass leads down, and then crosses, Pack Creek, and from there goes over to and ascends Glade Creek (in the journals called Crooked Fork). Instead of crossing Pack Creek to Glade Creek, Toby continued down Pack Creek to its junction with the Lochsa. The trail down Pack Creek was probably more apparent due to the heavy traffic of Salish traveling to the fishing camp. Clark reported that the grass at the fishing camp had been "entirely eaten out by the horses." (Moulton, Vol. 5, p. 215)

36 The captains referred to the Lochsa as the Kooskkooske River. Colt Killed Creek is known today as White Sand Creek. (Moulton, Vol. 5, p 205n) The fishing camp is near today's Powell Ranger Station, located near the explorers' campsite for September 14. (Ferris, p. 173)


39 When Clark reached Sherman Peak on September 18, he estimated the distance to Camas Prairie as 20 miles, while Gass thought it was 40, and Lewis in his journal entry for September 19 says it was 60. (Moulton, Vol. 5, p. 213; Vol. 10, p. 145; and Vol. 5, p. 215) As the crow flies it is more like 50 miles. It stretches belief that Lewis would report Toby saying they could cover such a great distance in a single day. Note that while approaching Lost Trail Pass on September 2, Toby had made a similar statement about reaching Ross's Hole; as Whitehouse recorded, "our guide informs us we will git on the plain tomorrow," which they did. (Moulton, Vol. 11, p. 296) I believe that Lewis wrote much of his Idaho journals retroactively while at winter camp at Fort Clatsop and may have relied on the journals of Whitehouse and others to jog his memory. Given the time gap, he could have conflated Old Toby's two statements.

40 The two Nez Perce chiefs remained with the Corps of Discovery until it reached Celilo Falls, on the Columbia. (Ferris, pp. 184-185)

41 Moulton, Vol. 10, p. 152.

42 Ibid., Vol. 5, pp. 252-253.

43 Ibid., Vol. 7, p. 248.

44 Donald Jackson, ed., Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition with Related Documents, 1783-1854, 2 volumes (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), Vol. 1, p. 339. Lewis's letter, dated October 14 and written to an unknown correspondent, is very similar to a letter Clark wrote to one of his brothers on September 23; Jackson (p. 335n) argues that Clark's letter was actually composed by Lewis and was intended for publication in newspapers. The letter of September 23 does not include the reference to "the bare word of a Savage."
When Meriwether Lewis and William Clark encountered the Shoshone Indians in August 1805 on the Continental Divide, one or the other—or more likely both, but on separate occasions—sat down with Cameahwait, the chief of the tribe’s Lemhi band, to learn as much as possible about the region’s geography. The knowledge they gleaned from Cameahwait and the guide he provided the explorers—Old Toby—proved crucial to getting across the Rocky Mountains.

Most accounts of the expedition say this meeting took place between Clark and Cameahwait on August 20, but there is compelling reason to believe that Cameahwait gave the same information to Lewis at a meeting six days earlier, on August 14. In his journal entry for that day Lewis fills several pages with detailed description of a conversation between him and Cameahwait in which the chief explained routes used by his tribe and others to cross between the salmon country to the west and the buffalo country to the east.

Clark and Lewis were separated from August 9 through August 16 and again from August 18 through August 28. In the first period, when the Corps of Discovery was ascending the Beaverhead River, Lewis and three others broke off from the main party to scout the territory ahead. Over a remarkably busy week they crossed the Continental Divide at Lemhi Pass, made contact with the Shoshones, and returned to the Beaverhead to rendezvous with Clark and the main party on the morning of the 17th. On August 18, the explorers set up Camp Fortunate, at the headwaters of the Beaverhead. The next day, Clark crossed the Divide to explore the Salmon River as a possible route through the mountains, while Lewis remained at Camp Fortunate until the 24th. The two captains reunited at the Shoshone village on the Lemhi River, on the west slope of the Divide, on the 29th.

All of Lewis’s journal entries for the two periods when he and Clark were separated (August 9-16 and August 18-28) include day-to-day references to Clark’s activities. This means that these entries must have been written retroactively. Long after the expedition’s return, when he was helping Nicholas Biddle with editing the journals, Clark marked off the lengthy description of the meeting with Cameahwait which appears in Lewis’s journal entry for the 14th and wrote between the lines that the meeting occurred on the 20th; he further noted that the geographical information conveyed was “related to Capt. C thro the interpreter,” Sacagawea. Biddle, therefore, in his 1814 paraphrase of the journals presents the discussion occurring between Cameahwait and Clark on the 20th. This is also the way it appears in Elliott Coues’s 1893 update of the Biddle edition. In the edition of the journals published in 1904, Reubin Gold Thwaites likewise moved this section from Lewis’s entry for the 14th to Clark’s for the 20th and explained why he had done so in footnotes. Keeping with modern editorial standards, the 1983–2001 edition of the journals, edited by Gary E. Moulton, retains Cameahwait’s geography lesson in Lewis’s entry for August 14 and relies on footnotes to say that it probably belongs with Clark’s entry for the 20th. (The footnotes—numbers 2 and 16 on pages 94 and 95, respectively, of Volume 5—are easy to miss.) Most secondary sources, including seminal studies by
James P. Ronda and John Logan Allen, place the meeting on the 20th and present Clark as Cameahwait’s interlocutor. By contrast, Stephen E. Ambrose in his biography of Lewis, Undaunted Courage, renders the scene as occurring between Cameahwait and Lewis on the 14th.

So which version is correct? Probably both, for a close reading of the journals strongly suggests that Cameahwait conveyed essentially the same information to Lewis on August 14 and to Clark on August 20. Lewis was at least as interested as Clark in the chief’s geographical knowledge, and undoubtedly he would have pumped him for it as soon as possible. Lewis had George Drouillard with him to translate through sign language, and in his entry for the 14th he makes a point of stating that Drouillard “understood perfectly the common language of jesticulation or signs.” While sign language was “liable to error,” Lewis added, “the strong parts of the ideas are seldom mistaken.”

If a discussion did occur on the 14th, Lewis would surely have described it to Clark on the 17th, when they reunited following their first period of separation, and Clark would have been eager for his own first-hand report when he conferred with Cameahwait on the 20th.

In all of his journal entries for the two periods of separation, Lewis is careful to distinguish between what he and Clark were doing on a particular day (e.g., for August 13, “This morning Capt Clark set out early ...”). The geography discussion of the 14th is unequivocally between Lewis and Cameahwait—Lewis consistently relates it in the first person (“I now prevailed on the Chief”; “I soon found”; “he informed me”; etc.). There is no way these first-person references can be to Clark or anyone else besides Lewis. If Cameahwait had talked geography only with Clark, Lewis—following his usual procedure—would have placed that discussion in his entry for the 20th and identified Clark in the third person. Presumably Lewis did not describe Clark’s discussion with Cameahwait because it would have meant repeating the information previously recorded in his entry for the 14th. Or perhaps Clark simply failed to tell Lewis of the discussion. In his own entry for August 20, Clark cryptically notes, “I endeavored to procure as much information from those people as possible without much Success they being but little acquainted or effecting to be So.” The context makes clear that the “information” he sought was geographical.

Further reinforcing the near certainty that Lewis and Cameahwait discussed geography on the 14th is internal evidence in Lewis’s entry for August 20; Lewis tells how, when Clark on that day asked for a guide to conduct him down the Salmon River, he was presented Toby, identified as “the old man whom Cameahwait had spoken [of] as a person well acquainted with the country to the North of this river.” In Lewis’s entry for the 14th he has Cameahwait saying “there was an old man of his nation a days march below [i.e., downstream of the Shoshone village on the Lemhi] who could probably give me some information of the country to the N. W.” This old man who knew of the “country to the N. W.” and Old Toby, a person “well acquainted with the country to the North,” are almost certainly the same. Lewis’s use of the past tense in his entry for the 20th (“the old man whom Cameahwait had spoken”) points to some earlier discussion. Old Toby could not have been a day’s march downstream on the same day (the 20th) he was presented to Clark, but he could have been there six days earlier, on the 14th. Perhaps Cameahwait, aware of Lewis’s keen interest in the country to the north and wanting to please his guest, summoned Toby to the Shoshone camp so he could convey his knowledge in person and be available as a guide.

—J. I. Merritt

Notes
7 Lewis and Cameahwait first discussed geography on August 13, the day they met at the chief’s village on the Lemhi. “Cameahwait informed me that this stream discharged itself into another doubly as large at the distance of half a days march which came from the S. W. but he added on further enquiry ... that the river was confined between inaccessible mountains, was very rapid and rocky insomuch that it was impossible for us to pass either by land or water down this river to the great lake where the white men lived as he had been informed.” (Moulton, Vol. 5, p. 81)
8 Moulton, Vol. 5, p. 130.
9 Ibid., p. 128.
10 Ibid., pp. 88-89.
In his article “Journey’s End for the Iron Boat,” (WPO, August 2003) H. Carl Camp writes that “Lewis and Clark aficionados ... are looking in all the wrong places if they confine their search for remnants of the iron-boat frame” to the area around Great Falls, Montana. I count myself among those who believe the frame was left at the Upper Portage Camp. I am also one of those enthusiasts Camp mentions, in reference to the History Channel’s program “The Technology of Lewis and Clark,” who have focused their “continuing efforts” on finding the iron boat’s remains in the vicinity of the Upper Portage Camp.

I enjoyed Camp’s article about the “Experiment,” as the iron boat was known, as well as the one that prompted it, Mark Jordan’s “Meriwether Lewis’s Ingenious Iron Boat,” in the May WPO. The iron-boat frame is a real enigma for scholars and avocational historians. The frustratingly incomplete record ensures that details about its size, weight, design, and final disposition will continue to be subjects of heated debate—unless, or until, the frame is found and finally yields the answers to these questions once and for all.

I abide by the motto “If you don’t look, you never will find the object of your search.” So, as a professional archaeologist who has spent much of his career seeking material evidence for the Corps of Discovery along the Lewis and Clark Trail, I look. And one of the things I’m looking for is the iron-boat frame. Moreover, I’m looking for it at the Upper Portage Camp. With all due respect to Camp, I remain unconvinced by his indirect evidence purporting that the remains of the iron boat probably wound up as scrap metal in the vicinity of Fort Mandan and the Knife River villages.

SCENARIOS FOR THE FRAME’S FINAL DISPOSITION

Over the course of my search for the iron-boat frame, I have heard a number of arguments concerning its final disposition. From the journals we can be certain that at the Upper Portage Camp on July 10, 1805, the day after the Experiment’s failure, the men, on Lewis’s orders, removed the boat’s hide skin, then disassembled the frame and buried its components. When Lewis returned to the Upper Portage Camp the following July, he ordered the frame dug up, and then either reburied (my view) or transported downriver (Camp’s view). Dayton Duncan, the author of several books about the expedition, is one of those who believes, like me, that the frame was reburied, but he differs from me in thinking that the Missouri River subsequently wiped out all traces of the Upper Portage Camp. In this scenario, over time the riverbed meandered, and the current eroded away the cache and washed the frame downstream. My ongoing collaborative research with NASA’s Stennis Space Center, however, suggests that the riverbed has been fairly stable in the area of the Upper Portage Camp and has not significantly shifted since Lewis and Clark’s day. Even if the riverbed has moved enough to obliterate the campsite, the current would not necessarily have washed away the iron-boat frame, because...
heavy objects resting on a river’s bottom usually bury themselves at the site of sinking. This tendency is borne out by archaeologists working on wreck sites of numerous river steamboats.

Others argue that the explorers returned the iron frame to the cache at the Upper Portage Camp in 1806, but that Indians later found the cache, dug it up, and removed the iron.6 It’s true that Indians found at least one of the expedition’s canoes hidden in southwestern Montana, and in Idaho, Nez Perces discovered an expedition cache exposed when the flooding Clearwater River overran its banks.7 But these instances of Indians finding expedition hiding places were the exception, not the rule. They were accidental finds, not the result of accomplished cache hunters—in the first instance, a canoe sunk in a pond was exposed by low water, and in the second, a cache was exposed by high water. There is no evidence of Indians discovering any other expedition cache.

We have to conclude, therefore, that caches were not that easy to locate. The purpose of a cache is to hide something, and the explorers were pretty good at this, as Clark himself discovered when, in July 1806, he returned to the site of Camp Fortunate, on the upper Beaver-head River, and “Set Several men to work” digging for a store of tobacco buried by Lewis the previous summer. Clark notes that the men “Serched diligently without finding anything.”8 The explorers also came up empty-handed when they failed to locate a well-hidden cache at the mouth of the Marias River.9

Many people assert that on their return to the Upper Portage Camp the explorers recovered the iron-boat frame and subsequently traded this “scrap metal” to Indians at the Mandan or Hidatsa villages. Camp’s variation on this theme argues that the frame was given to Toussaint Charbonneau.

THE OTHER UPPER PORTAGE CAMP SCENARIO

The hypothesis that has piqued my interest—and one I have spent years testing—is that, on the return trip, the party that dug up and examined the iron-boat frame reburied it. I endorse this hypothesis for several reasons.

First, when it came time, in late July 1806, to move the materials cached at the Upper Portage Camp, the expedition members at the site were few in number. By contrast, in 1805 the camp had been occupied by the Corps of Discovery’s full complement of 32 adults. In 1806 Clark was down on the Yellowstone River with 12 of the party; Lewis, having stopped briefly at the Upper Portage Camp, had left with three others to explore the Marias River.10 Less than half of the expedition’s complement were present to transport the bulk of equipment and supplies over the 20-mile portage route around the Great Falls. The relatively small size of the portaging party almost certainly influenced any decision about what could be carried.

Second, I disagree with Camp’s view that “they had more cargo room coming back than going up” the Missouri.11 In fact, they left the Upper Portage Camp in July 1805 with eight dugout canoes and returned there a year later with six, one of which they abandoned, leaving them with five.12 Gass expected that these five canoes, along with the two pirogues left farther downstream the year before, would “be sufficient to carry ourselves and baggage down the Missouri” to St. Louis.13 At this point they were unaware that the red pirogue, which had been cached the year before at the mouth of the Marias, was unusable. Nonetheless, they did not appear to have an excess of cargo room. Rather, Gass seems to suggest that it would take both the white and red pirogues and the five canoes to transport all their baggage.

Third, there is the serious matter of the expedition’s depleted trade goods. Several months earlier, while at Fort Clatsop, the explorers expressed concern about the shortage of trade goods. In his journal entry for March 16, 1806, Clark laments the “scant” number of items they have left for trading on the return trip: “One handkerchief would contain all the Small articles of merchandize which we posses.”14 Lewis reports that by early June they had “exhausted” all their merchandise and were reduced to bartering with brass buttons cut from his and Clark’s uniform coats.15

If, as Camp and others argue, the destitute explorers intended to use the Experiment’s iron for trade, one would expect them to look forward to unearthing the frame with the greatest anticipation. Yet, when they reached the cache and dug up the iron frame, Lewis’s journal entry says noth-
ing about its potential trade value but merely notes, in the most matter-of-fact way, that it “had not suffered materially.” In their own accounts of opening the cache, neither Gass nor Ordway mentions the frame at all.16

Assuming, for the sake of argument, that the explorers indeed regarded the Experiment’s iron as valuable for trade, it is hard to believe they wouldn’t say so emphatically—and express, with a hearty cheer, their jubilation about recovering this treasure trove of metal. In my opinion, their silence speaks volumes. Compare their apparent indifference to the eagerness of Clark’s party when it returned to Camp Fortunate. Most of the men were “Chewers of Tobacco,” Clark reports, and they became “So impatient to be chewing it that they Scercely gave themselves time to take their Saddles off their horses before they were off to the deposit.”17

THE TALE OF THE NAIL

To underscore the value of metal objects as items for trading with the Indians, Camp writes about the explorers’ penchant for salvaging nails. He has a point here, but I believe he exaggerates its importance. From the same evidence I draw a different conclusion.

One such incident occurred in July 1806, when Lewis, returning from his exploration of the Marias River, rendezvoused at the mouth of the Marias with Gass, Ordway, and the other members of the expedition descending the Missouri in canoes and the white pirogue. When Lewis examined the red pirogue, which had been hidden on a nearby island the year before, he “found her so much decayed that it was impossible … to repare her and therefore [we] nearly took the nails and other ironwork’s.” The journal entries of Gass and Ordway also mention removing the red pirogue’s nails.18 Lewis, Gass, and Ordway—all of the journalists in a position to comment on the condition of the red pirogue—state that they recovered nails from the unusable vessel, but none adds any information to suggest that they took them for purposes of trade. (Lewis says the metal items “might be of service,” without specifying how.)

I believe that evidence from the journals shows that the explorers chiefly valued nails for their versatility in making repairs. When the corps was preparing to cross the mountains with horses provided by the Shoshone Indians, for example, Lewis complained about being “at a loss for nails and boards” for making saddles and harnesses.19 When Clark’s party returned to Camp Fortunate in July 1806 and reclaimed the canoes cached the previous summer, Indians had been there ahead of them and according to Ordway had taken “some tin and nails”20—a statement suggesting that the explorers had used these items to repair the canoes. Two days later, when Clark’s party recovered a canoe cached at the mouth of the Big Hole River, he directed that “all the nails be taken out of this Canoe and paddles to be made of her Sides.”21 Here again, we can be reasonably confident (especially given the context of making do with available materials) that Clark was thinking about the usefulness of these nails for repairs on the long trip home.

LEWIS AND PARTY FLEE THE BLACKFEET

Lewis ordered the nails removed from the red pirogue following his encounter with Blackfeet Indians on Two Medicine River, during his exploration of the Marias. Camp suggests that Lewis and the rest of his party took the time to extract the nails despite their fear that a Blackfeet war party was “in hot pursuit.”22 Although it may be true, as Camp adds, that “apprehension hung heavily in the air,” Lewis appears to have felt that time was on their side. Evidence for this is found in a detailed examination of Lewis’s flight from the Blackfeet, which began the morning of July 27, 1806, and ended the morning of the 28th. Although Lewis states that he wanted to “hasten to the entrance of Maria’s river as quick as possible,” he seems to have taken his time doing so.23 His four-man party at one point “halted an hour and a half took some refreshment and suffered our horses to graize.” They had dinner at this stop and then hit the trail again. After going another 17 miles they halted a second time to “rest ourselves and horses about 2 hours.” While on this stop they risked attracting the attention of any pursuing Indians by shooting a buffalo, butchering it for meat, and apparently cooking the meat. They then continued another twenty miles, at which point they “turned out our horses and laid ourselves down to rest,” and slept until morning.24

At day break on July 28, they gathered the horses and continued their journey. Approaching the mouth of the

These two robotic vehicles, on loan from an Air Force laboratory, were used to pull sensors over a 24-acre survey area in the author’s quest to find the Experiment’s iron frame.

COURTESY KEN KARSMIZKI
Marias about 9 A.M., Lewis “had the unspeakable satisfaction to see our canoes coming down” the Missouri. In a little more than 24 hours they had made two rest stops totaling three and a half hours, killed one buffalo, eaten two meals, then stopped a third time to sleep through part of the night. It does seem that retrieving the nails from the red pirogue was important to Lewis, but, contrary to Camp, I doubt he thought they were risking their lives doing so.

CACHING THE IRON BOAT: WHY BOTHER?

One might reasonably ask, Why did the explorers open the iron-boat cache in the first place? The answer is easy. On July 10, 1805, the day after the iron boat’s failure, Lewis wrote that he “Had a cash dug and deposited the Fraim of the boat, some papers and a few other trivial articles of but little importance.”26 One can reasonably assume that when Lewis’s party returned to the Upper Portage Camp a year later, the captain wanted to retrieve these papers and possibly other smaller articles. Lewis makes clear that he examined the frame (which, as noted, “had not suffered materially”), but there is absolutely nothing in his words to suggest that he ordered it packed up for transport downstream.27

In conclusion, I subscribe to the theory that reasonable people can and do disagree. We are all reading the same source materials; we just interpret them in (sometimes vastly) different ways. That is one of the exciting things about the history of the Lewis and Clark Expedition and about history in general. Because Lewis, Gass, and Ordway all mention taking the red pirogue’s nails at the mouth of the Marias on July 28, but, three weeks earlier at the Upper Portage Camp, say nothing of recovering the Experiment’s iron frame, it seems all but certain that they left it there. One thing is certain: if we are all convinced the frame is nowhere to be found, then no one will look for it, and the conviction becomes self-fulfilling.

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Notes

2 Ibid., p. 17n.
3 Gary E. Moulton, ed., The Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition, 13 volumes (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983-2001), Vol. 4, pp. 369 and 371. All quotations or references to journal entries in this article are from Moulton, Vols. 2-11.

Lewis’s journal entry states that he ordered the boat “to be sunk in the water” so “that the skins might become soft in order the better to take her in pieces tomorrow and deposite the iron fraim at this place as it could probably be of no further service to us.” It should be noted that the History Channel program “The Technology of Lewis and Clark” used an illustration suggesting the iron-boat frame was buried assembled. The journals are clear that the sections were disassembled before they were buried. See also Moulton, Vol. 9, pp. 181 and 182; Vol. 10, p. 110; and Vol. 11, pp. 221, 222, and 224.
A sumptuously illustrated bibliography from Lewis and Clark College

The Literature of the Lewis and Clark Expedition: A Bibliography and Essays
Doug Erickson, Jeremy Skinner, and Paul Merchant; essays by Stephen Dow Beckham
Lewis and Clark College/Distributed by University of Nebraska Press
316 pages/$75 Hardcover

Given its historic name, institutional motto (“to explore, to learn, to work together”), and location on the Pacific coast (in Portland, Oregon), it isn’t surprising that Lewis and Clark College has long committed itself to collecting books relating to western exploration. In 1981, this focus was sharpened when Eldon G. “Frenchy” Chuinard (1904-1993), the author of Only One Man Died: The Medical Aspects of the Lewis and Clark Expedition (1979), put his extensive research collection on loan to the college. The loan became a gift of the Chuinard family in 1986. This provided the cornerstone for what has grown to become one of the largest institutional library collections devoted to the Lewis and Clark Expedition. The breadth and depth of that collection is now showcased in a beautifully produced bibliography by Doug Erickson, Jeremy Skinner, and Paul Merchant, with interpretive essays by Stephen Dow Beckham.

Introduced by a brief history of the college’s Aubrey R. Watzek Library, the book provides descriptions of the most important of the college’s Lewis and Clark–related holdings. This alone is an important and welcome contribution to Lewis and Clark scholarship, for, along with the standard works, it documents a number of very rare or little-known publications. Further broadening the appeal of the book are six informative essays by Beckham, the college’s Pampin Professor of History, who since 1977 has been teaching courses, seminars, and field-based programs on the history of the American West. Beckham’s essays provide the intellectual framework for the thematic sections that structure the bibliography. The essays include the most comprehensive discussion of the expedition’s traveling library since Donald Jackson’s 1959 article on the subject in the Missouri Historical Society Bulletin; a description of the various government documents owned by the college relating to the authorization of the expedition and later the compensation of its members; an account of the controversial publication of Patrick Gass’s account of the expedition, which preempted by several years the authorized account; a discussion of some of the surreptitious and apocryphal narratives of the expedition; a history of the many editions of the expedition journals, from Biddle to Moulton; and a review of some of the general histories, centennial publications, and children’s books inspired by the expedition in the century following the expedition.

In addition to an index and a section on sources cited, the last part of the book offers a checklist of 20th-century publications relating to the Corps of Discovery from the Lewis and Clark College collections. These include books, pamphlets, magazines, scholarly journals, theses, and dissertations. At least one I noticed—a University of Montana master’s thesis on fishing along the Lewis and Clark Trail—must have been especially fun to research.

Exceptional design and typography

The book is exceptionally designed and printed, with a beautiful central section of color plates. The chapters are set off by full-page black-and-white photographs of scenery along the expedition route. The photographs have evocative appeal, but, given the bibliographic focus of the book, I wonder if these key spaces might more appropriately have been devoted to photographs of the books and documents that are the focus of the text.

If there is anything to criticize in this handsome and useful publication, it is that it promises a bit more than it is able to deliver. Although marketed as a book about the literature of the expedition, it is also clearly intended as a promotional piece for Lewis and Clark College. Certain key editions are absent from the bibliography, not because its authors are unaware of their existence, but because they are not (yet) numbered among the college’s otherwise impressive holdings. It would have been more accurate to bill the book as a catalog of the Lewis and Clark College collection. Still, it is a book filled with invaluable information and one that every serious Lewis and Clark scholar and/or collector will enjoy reading and want to own.

—Robert McCracken Peck
Bezoars, sniggles, and more: L&C from A to Y

Authors Stephenie Ambrose Tubbs and Clay S. Jenkinson have taken on the daunting task of distilling a vast amount of information about the Lewis and Clark Expedition, then organizing and presenting it in encyclopedic form—a kind of “Lewis and Clark from A to Z,” or more precisely, A to Y. The Lewis and Clark Companion begins with a one-page entry on the air gun of Meriwether Lewis and ends with a seven-page biographical sketch of York, William Clark’s slave. In between are some three hundred other entries varying in length from a single sentence (for example, “Baillet, François: The Philadelphia cook who supplied Meriwether Lewis with 193 pounds of portable soup at a cost of $289.50”) to mini-biographies of major figures such as Lewis, Clark, and Thomas Jefferson spanning seven or more pages. Lewis’s dog, Seaman, gets almost three.

One of the pleasures of a book like this is the serendipity of looking for one thing and stumbling across some arresting factoid that makes you forget what you were seeking in the first place. It’s also a bottomless source for a game of Trivial Pursuit. There’s something of interest on every page—from bezoar (a hair ball from a mammoth’s stomach, used by Indians as a poison antidote), to prisoner’s base (a game the explorers played with the Nez Perces), to tippet (an ermine accessory of the sort presented by the Shoshone chief Cameahwait to Lewis), to weir (an Indian fish trap woven from willow branches). The first and last items mentioned above shouldn’t be confused with a sniggle, a horsehair ball stuffed with bait and used by the Nez Perces to catch fish (the hair snares the fish’s teeth when it bites). A random survey of the B’s turns up Beacon Rock, beaver, Beaverhead Rock, bier (mosquito netting), bison, blue beads (along with whiskey, the one item the captains wished they had carried more of), John Boley (the only member of the Lewis and Clark Expedition who was also a member of the Zebulon Pike Expedition), boudin blanc, blunderbuss, branding iron, bull boat, burning glass, and at least seven Indian chiefs: Ba za conja, Black Moccasin, Black Cat, Black Buffalo, Big Blue Eyes, Big Horse, and Broken Arm.

Although I didn’t notice any in what is admittedly a casual reading, a work of this scope will inevitably include the occasional factual error and misinterpretation of historical material. The authors freely acknowledge this and invite readers to alert them to “errors and omissions” for correcting in future editions. They also observe that their book isn’t based on original research but is mainly “a recasting of information and insights of other Lewis and Clark scholars.”

The Lewis and Clark Companion lives up to its title—a companionable alphabetical tour through the Corps of Discovery’s world. Let’s hope there will be future editions.

—J.I.M.
Tailor Made, Trail Worn authors reply to review

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following article by Robert J. Moore, Jr. and Michael Haynes is a rebuttal to the review by James L. Kochan of their book, Tailor Made, Trail Worn, published in the previous issue of WPO.

In the August 2003 We Proceeded On James Kochan reviewed our book Tailor Made, Trail Worn. In general, we hate rebuttals to reviews, because for the most part they are rife with claims of the “they are wrong and we are right” sort, and under ordinary circumstances we would not respond to Mr. Kochan. However, his review did not stop at merely pointing out discrepancies between the way he looked at materials in the National Archives and the way we looked at those same materials. Instead, Mr. Kochan called into question the historical methodology of our research, insinuating that we plagiarized some materials.

We feel very strongly about our work, not only out of personal pride but because we believe we owe our best efforts in research, writing, and art to the public at large and particularly to members of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation. We believe that because of its length, Mr. Kochan’s review tends to call into question all of the research in our book, rather than the very small amount of material he actually examines. His review mainly discusses three areas of military clothing: formal coats for enlisted men, chapeau bras hats, and trousers. These items are handled in portions of three chapters of our fifteen-chapter book. Mr. Kochan never talks about our research on Creole clothing, Indian fashions, leather clothing, shirts, shoes, weapons, equipment, or army life at the time. So in this respect the review really amounts to a challenge regarding our research techniques on the coats, hats and trousers, based upon the supposition that Mr. Kochan is a “serious uniformologist” (whatever that may be) and that we are not.

Regarding the hats and trousers, we stand by the research published in Tailor Made, Trail Worn. After checking with many clothing experts who specialize in the late 18th- and early 19th-century period, we do not feel that we were in error in our research. Unlike some other published works about military clothing, our book has endnotes that cite sources that provide information to the reader about how we came to our conclusions.

Regarding the enlisted men’s coats, we acknowledge that the scanty surviving information can lead to various interpretations of their appearance. We have never claimed that our interpretations are irrefutable, and until someone discovers original enlisted men’s coats or patterns for them, no one can know for sure what they looked like. One has only to look at reenactors at a Lewis and Clark event to see the many interpretations of these coats. We acknowledge, from the many citations Mr. Kochan lists, that we have not seen all of the materials he cites in the National Archives pertaining to the coats. However, pending a review of those materials, we stand by our interpreta-
tion of the infantry enlisted men’s coats (contrary to Mr. Kochan’s assertion, all of the sources he cites in his review have been seen by us, in the original). We are not on such firm ground regarding the artillery coats, and we freely admit this. We will continue our research, and if we find evidence contradicting our conclusions we will report this in WPO or via e-mail to interested parties.

Mr. Kochan’s review includes a number of unwarranted charges. For example, he says: “The authors state they ‘have done their very best to approach this material with open minds,’ then summarily dismiss reconstructions of army period dress of other researchers (including Zlatich and this writer) that run counter to their interpretation.” In this context he is speaking specifically about artillery coats. We never attacked Mr. Kochan or any other authority this way. An endnote in our book says, in full: “The look of the 1800–1810 artillery coat is clouded by several pieces of overlapping and confusing information. Alexander Hamilton’s orders of 1799, although not implemented throughout the army, did result in the construction of coats for the dragoons and perhaps for the artillery. However, Hamilton’s written orders do not match the color drawings prepared in 1799 to illustrate them, if they were indeed meant to illustrate them. Further, the actual amounts of materials and buttons used on artillery coats of the period do not match with either Hamilton’s written orders or the illustrations. The authors have therefore illustrated an artillery coat somewhat like that of the infantry and bearing little resemblance to the one illustrated, for instance, by Mr. Kochan and David Rickman in The United States Army, 1783–1811, color plate E, figure 1. This is but one dramatic example of how the same historical information can produce two radically different interpretations of military garments. Without the existence of a surviving uniform coat of the type, the question about which of these depictions is correct will probably never be answered.”

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Reviews (cont.)

Muhly, others honored at Philadelphia meeting

At its annual meeting in Philadelphia in August, the LCTHFT presented its 2003 Award for Meritorious Achievement to Frank Muhly, a board member who has long campaigned for recognition of the importance of Pennsylvania and other states east of the Mississippi to the Lewis and Clark story; and to the Macerich Company of Sioux City, Iowa, and its director of marketing, Kristen Walter, for a series of interpretive panels about Lewis and Clark at a Sioux Falls shopping mall.

A resident of Philadelphia and a founder of the Philadelphia Chapter, Muhly was recognized for his efforts in the production of two historical brochures, “The Eastern Legacy of Lewis and Clark” and “Lewis and Clark in Historic Philadelphia.” Beverly Hinds, chair of the Awards Committee, cited Muhly’s “insight, dedication, research, and tenacity” in behalf of these projects.

Walter became interested in Lewis and Clark two years ago, according to Hinds, and persuaded her company to spend $300,000 for a panoramic display at the Southern Hills Mall. Mounted above storefronts, “Lewis and Clark—an American Adventure” is the length of a football field and consists of 38 eight-foot-high panels illustrating scenes of the expedition. Floor-level interpretive signs describe each scene and quote from the Lewis and Clark journals. An accompanying booklet has been printed in English and Spanish.

Distinguished Service Awards were presented to:


Kudos

Hal Price, a resident of Townsend, Montana, and a founder of the Crimson Bluffs Chapter, for his successful efforts to persuade the U.S. Board of Geographic Names to change the name of several islands in the Missouri River to York Islands, as they were originally designated by William Clark; and to protect the Crimson Bluffs, a local L&C landmark, from subdivision development.

Lois Roby of Bozeman, Montana, and a member of the Headwaters Chapter, for a variety of historical and educational L&C projects, including work with archaeologist Ken Karsmizio and self-funded trips to Washington, D.C., and London, England, to conduct archival research.

Jon Stealey of Findlay, Ohio, a board member and founding president of the Ohio River Chapter, for overseeing the design of the Foundation’s brochures, redesigning its Web site, and helping upgrade its computer systems. Stealey was also cited for developing the L&C interpretive panels on display in the airport at Charlottesville, Virginia, last January, during the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial’s kickoff event.

Certificates of Appreciation Awards were presented to:

- The Philadelphia Chapter for the years it spent planning and preparing for the 2003 annual meeting, with special thanks to Nancy Davis; her father, Tom Davis; and Frank Muhly.

- Steve Lee of Clarkston, Washington, the Foundation’s outgoing treasurer, for overhauling its accounting procedures and financial reporting during a period of plunging stock markets and budget retrenchment.

- Larry Epstein of Cut Bank, Montana, the Foundation’s outgoing president, for his leadership on all fronts during the past year.
Reviews (cont.)

Tailor Made, Trail Worn discusses the disparity between Alexander Hamilton's written orders of 1799, the color drawings of the uniforms of 1799, and the lists of ingredients used by seamstresses working on the garments. Our book does little more than mention Mr. Kochan's book in passing—we used it only as an example of how two different researchers can arrive at two very different impressions of a uniform coat based on fragmentary materials. We did not mean this as criticism of his work; rather, we were acknowledging the honest, informed effort of another researcher whose judgment led to a different interpretation.

The reviewer's allegations that we did not examine this or that historical manuscript are, in our opinion, unprofessional, and most of Mr. Kochan's suppositions on these points are false. He claims, for example, that we did not look at certain pattern drawings in the papers of Alexander Hamilton that would have clarified matters pertaining to the 1799 artillery uniform. We did indeed see these drawings—albeit not the originals, but color slides of them produced for the Missouri Historical Society's Lewis and Clark bicentennial exhibit.

Mr. Kochan accuses us of lifting material from his book The United States Army, 1783-1811, in the Men-at-Arms Series of Osprey Publishers. In fact, our research did not rely on this book because we did not agree with its conclusions, and it did not provide enough documentation to tell us where the author got his information and how he came to those conclusions. Mr. Kochan puts us in a very awkward position—when we agree with him, he claims in effect that we took the information from his work rather than obtaining it through our own independent efforts; and when we disagree with him, we are wrong because we have under-researched our book.

Sweeping comments such as “the reconstructed figures in this book sport clothing cut in a manner that seems more in keeping with that worn during...”

Passages

In Memoriam: former Foundation president Don Nell

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WASHINGTON STATE PARKS
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LL&C INTERPRETIVE ASSN. (PORTAGE CACHE STORE)
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ing c. 1805-1817 than that of 1803” are really statements of opinion rather than fact; we have consulted several other “serious uniformologists” and period clothing experts who disagree with Mr. Kochan on these points and support our reconstructions.

Mr. Kochan also criticizes us for using “modern terms” for historic legwear, but in our chapter on that subject we are careful to point out the many terms used during the period and the distinctions between them. In addition, few of the original documents of the period refer to enlisted men’s legwear, formal or otherwise, as “pantaloons.” They are almost always called either “trousers” or “overalls,” as we state in our book, and we remain consistent with the period usage throughout.

In Mr. Kochan’s opinion, “It is clear that neither author has had much first-hand experience in the study of original clothing, accoutrements, and related artifacts of the Lewis and Clark era. Nor, apparently, are they aware of many important public and private collections of vintage uniforms and other materials relevant to their subject. Working with such artifacts would have greatly enhanced their understanding of the period’s fashions and would have provided them with even richer sources for illustrations.” Although we cannot claim to have seen every piece of clothing preserved from the period, we have seen a great deal of it, and, in the opinion of other, more knowledgeable experts than ourselves, we did justice to the uniforms of circa 1803.

The real issue here is the interpretation of historical materials. Most of the substance of Mr. Kochan’s review comes back to the simple fact that we have read many of the same documents but have come to different conclusions regarding them. This doesn’t mean that we are right and he is wrong, or vice versa. Barring the future discovery of actual 1803-04 uniform items, it is probable that none of us will ever have definitive answers to these questions. As noted, we make this very statement in Tailor Made, Trail Worn.

—Bob Moore and Michael Haynes
ADVENTURE CARAVANS
1P. FULL
PICKUP FROM
8/03, P. 10
We want your “stuff” for the Foundation’s archives

October often hears the question “Why should we keep archives?” when discussing the need to collect and preserve the record of modern events. It comes up especially when discussing the bicentennial commemoration of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Interestingly enough, Thomas Jefferson addressed this very issue of keeping archives when he wrote to Peter S. Du Ponceau, an early member of the American Philosophical Society, in 1816.

Archives collections are important, in Jefferson’s words, as “a depository for many original manuscripts, many loose sheets, of no use by themselves and in the hands of the holder, but of great value when brought into a general depository open to the use of future historian or literary enquirer.” In other words, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. When a body of records is assembled, a researcher or literary writer can gain a significant advantage by viewing the parts that fit his or her own purpose, particularly if they are assembled in one location. This philosophy is at the very heart of all archival collections.

Defining an archive’s needs

Even with Jefferson’s sage advice, the archives of the American Philosophical Society struggled in its early years. According to Jefferson, this was “the result, no doubt, of many factors. For one, the library had no true policy about collecting.” While a history of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation’s William P. Sherman Library and Archives has yet to be written, we can learn some valuable lessons from the early history of the A.P.S.

One lesson we follow closely is having a defined collection-development policy. Under that policy, the archives are the depository for the historical and institutional records of the Foundation. Our guidelines encourage contributions from individuals, corporations, and other institutions of materials connected with the Lewis and Clark Expedition, the people and landscape associated with the Corps of Discovery’s travels, the exploration of the West as it relates to the expedition, and the history of the L&C National Historic Trail. Materials in the collection can be scientific, cultural, sociological, political, ethnographic, or linguistic in nature, and can deal with organizational leadership, nationalism, natural history, and many other subjects. To that extensive list we can now add materials relating to the L&C Bicentennial.

Records old and new

Gathering archival collections takes time and care, as well as the generosity and farsightedness of donors. We are especially grateful to early Foundation members such as Don Nell and Robert Betts who contributed so much to our archives. As we look to the future, we continue to collect documents from the past as well as current materials of potential value to future researchers. Just today, an author asked, “You mean you really want all of my notes and stuff?” Since she writes in an area in which we collect, the answer was a hearty “Yes, we would love to add your material to our collections.”

In 1940, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania published a guide to its collections. The guide stated in part that making a gift of materials “should be regarded ... by those who are concerned with the development of democracy in America, as a patriotic duty, timely now and yet timeless in its lasting value.” Libraries and archival collections are a legacy for future generations. We must take every opportunity to preserve these records in a way that is meaningful and lasting. You can assist us in doing this by joining the Friends of the Library or by making a donation to the library. For more information, contact Jill Jackson at 406-761-3950 (jjackson@lewisandclark.org).

—Jill Jackson
Librarian and Archivist, LCTHF