HOME!

RECRUITING • FISH • BICENTENNIAL FINALE
On the cover
As the illustration for this issue's cover we chose Michael Haynes's painting of the Corps of Discovery’s exuberant return to St. Louis on September 24, 1806—a scene repeated exactly 200 years later on the last day of the Lewis and Clark Expedition’s bicentennial commemoration. (See photo spread, p. 37.)
November 2006 • Volume 32, Number 4

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The 1901 Bison (a.k.a. Lewis & Clark) Note

I can shed some light on the questions about the Lewis and Clark $10 bank note mentioned by W. Raymond Wood in his letter published in the August issue. In 2004, the U.S. Mint produced a number of items commemorating the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial. One of them was a set containing Lewis and Clark coins and stamps issued in 2004. In addition, the set included a reproduction of the 1901 $10 “bison” note, along with the following information:

“Produced by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, this specimen of the obverse of the United States note, Series 1901, was printed from a plate prepared from the original master die. George U. Rose, Jr., engraved the lettering and numerals and Robert Ponickau engraved the ornament. G.F.C. Smillie (1854-1924) engraved the portraits of Lewis and Clark by Walter Shirlaw (1838-1909) that flank the central motif of a North American bison. Marcus W. Baldwin engraved the bison from a watercolor drawing by the noted Charles R. Knight (1874-1953), who worked from a live specimen in Washington’s Zoological Park and a photograph of conservationist William Temple Hornaday’s (1854-1937) bison group exhibit in the United States National Museum that sparked interest in conservation of native species at a time when the bison was threatened with extinction. The same image appeared later on the 30 cent U.S. postage stamp of 1923. Raymond Ostranderr Smith designed the note at a time when both the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition and the 1905 Lewis and Clark Exposition were being organized and served to publicize the events. Lewis and Clark represented expansion and opportunity, while the bison symbolized the strength and spirit of the American West. The note was legal tender for most debts and was in use from 1901 to 1925.”

Jim Rosenberger
Verona, Wisc.

Editor’s Note: Michael F. Carrick of Turner, Oregon, advises us that an article on the bison note by the late Arlen J. Large appeared in the August 1993 WPO.

For the Record

John W. Fisher took issue with part of our review of his publication Medical Appendices of the Lewis & Clark Expedition in the August issue. In an e-mail he states, “Nowhere in my discussion of Travelers’ Rest do I dispute the claims that the mercury came from the L&C Expedition. I firmly believe that it did. I questioned the researcher’s misinterpretation of Peck’s book and the medicinal source of mercury, which I believe was mercury ointment and not Rush’s pills.” He also pointed out that his e-mail address accompanying the review contained a typographical error. The correct address is jwfisher@starband.net.

On a wholly different matter, the business section of the October 14 New York Times (page C5) ran an item about the wrap-up of a two-year-long world tour by the Rolling Stones, the most lucrative in music history. Noting that the venerable rockers saw their last few gigs as a sort of “victory lap,” the article quotes lead guitarist Keith Richards saying, “We’re kind of looking at it like we’re Lewis and Clark—we’re playing the Wyomings and Montanas.” To us, anyway, it’s not entirely clear what Richards meant (playing the biggest venues, perhaps?), but it was nice of him to mention the esteemed explorers. We can forgive him for not knowing that they never set foot in Wyoming.

—The Editor

WPO welcomes letters. We may edit them for length, accuracy, clarity, and civility. Send them to us c/o Editor, WPO, P.O. Box 3434, Great Falls, MT 59403 (e-mail: wpo@lewisandclark.org).

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8.06 issue, p. 4.

MICHAEL HAYNES
Welcome to Wendy, and a salute to the Fourth Estate

This is the final issue of Jim Merritt’s distinguished editorship of WPO. In the August issue I tried to express our admiration for what he has accomplished and our gratitude for his contributions to the foundation. The application of imagination and high standards for seven years and 28 issues has brought We Proceeded On to new heights of excellence.

Jim is unquestionably a tough act to follow, but we believe that in Wendy Raney we have just the woman to do so with distinction. We tip our hats to Jim Holmberg, recent chair of the Editor Search Committee, and to his colleagues Carol Bronson, Lanny Jones, David Nicandri, and Stephanie Ambrose Tubbs for having the common sense to know that often the richest diamond is in one’s own backyard. Let me explain.

Having been our director of field operations for three years, Wendy is known for her energy, intelligence, and ebullient personality. A self-starter, she is ready to step in where needed regardless of her own job description, and repeatedly she has done that cheerfully. That job description lists her principally as the foundation’s liaison officer to our 40 chapters and as the leader of our commitment to the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail. In her new capacity Wendy will retain her trail responsibilities but will have to surrender her formal commitments to the chapters.

Impressive to be sure, but alone these might not be ideal qualifications for the job of WPO’s editor. Let’s look further.

Wendy came to the foundation after nearly three years’ service as public information officer in the office of Montana’s state auditor, a job that involved considerable writing. Before that, she was for three years a business reporter for the Great Falls Tribune. She had qualified for both of these positions by taking a Master of Science degree at the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University, with an emphasis on reporting and editing.

Her undergraduate major was in U.S. colonial history at Vassar College, in Poughkeepsie, New York, and she did her undergraduate thesis there (I kid you not) on Sacagawea’s role in the Lewis and Clark Expedition. No doubt it was something of a revisionist approach, challenging the traditional interpretation. Along the way she has also taught English in Santiago, Chile, worked in a Livingston arts-and-crafts store, and researched historical and political issues for a consulting business. In closing, let me give credit to Wendy for her three years as editor of The Orderly Report, a period that has seen TOR expand and improve, and emphasize that she will continue to be responsible for this important publication.

In spite of the retirement of a truly distinguished editor, Jim Merritt, the Fourth Estate remains in the best of hands at your foundation.

—Jim Gramentine
President, LCTHF

Wendy Raney with Seaman stand-in at L&C Bicentennial finale in September.
LCTHF’s 2006 awards

At its annual meeting in St. Louis in September the LCTHF awarded kudos to the Camp River Dubois Chapter, the ‘Travelers’ Rest Chapter, the Discovery Expedition of St. Charles, Missouri, and to three individuals: Roscoe (R.G.) Montgomery, Darrell Elder, and Dr. Thomas Lowry.

The Camp River Dubois Chapter received the foundation’s Chapter Award for its leadership role in educating the public about the Corps of Discovery’s winter encampment of 1803-04 at River Dubois, a National Historic Site in Illinois. The citation noted that the chapter “has supplied the replica of the fort at Camp River Dubois with about $100,000 worth of tools, weapons, and civilian and military accoutrements” and contributes more than two thousand volunteer hours a year to operate the gift shop.

The Montana-based Travelers’ Rest Chapter earned the foundation’s Appreciation Award for its Women’s Living History Project, which focuses on the lifestyles of women during the L&C era. Over the last two years the chapter has presented a variety of programs to nearly three thousand people.

Montgomery and Elder were each awarded the foundation’s Distinguished Service Award. Montgomery has made historical presentations on Lewis and Clark to more than 7,500 people and helped design L&C exhibits at the Museum of the Rockies, in Bozeman, Montana. Darrell and his wife, Ann, have taken their traveling exhibit, “Hands On with Lewis and Clark and the Native Americans,” to seven states and more than 70 events over the past five years.

Meritorious Achievement Awards were presented to Lowry, a medical historian whose recent book, Venereal Disease and the Lewis and Clark Expedition, broke new ground on its subject, and to the Discovery Expedition, devoted to telling the story of the Corps of Discovery’s boats and river life.

More information on these awards, including their complete citations, can be found on the foundation’s Web site, www.lewisandclark.org.
Inspiration at Eads Bridge

On September 24, the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial commemoration came to its official close with a ceremony called “Return to the Middle Waters,” a service created and conducted by members of the Osage nation. On the Eads Bridge spanning the Mississippi at St. Louis, tribal elders, drummers, poets, singers, and others gathered in an atmosphere of homecoming, for the Osage still call themselves Children of the Middle Waters, even though their people have not lived in this land for two hundred years.

I was the only white person to be a participant in this ceremony, and my special invitation from the Osage was both an honor and a beautiful burden. But because this entire Lewis and Clark Bicentennial was about learning new ways of looking at the world, I knew my words would be received in the spirit of harmony and cultural sensitivity that had characterized our meetings of the past several years.

As we stood on the bridge over the Mississippi, the river that defines both the geography and human history of the continent, I spoke of a creek far away in Montana. The clear water of Prickly Pear Creek flows over and around boulders and cuts under the banks, leaving exposed tree roots and rocks. Small, muscular trout survive in the unceasing current, resting in the eddies on the downstream sides of the boulders. They dart out into the rushing water and devour insect eggs, grubs, worms, anything edible that spins downstream. The creek flows through Prickly Pear Canyon and into the Missouri River thirty miles away. The Missouri meets the Mississippi just above St. Louis. Looking over the edge of the Eads Bridge, we could see Prickly Pear water right down there.

This river carries water from the blizzard that piled up the snow in the northern Rockies last winter and the water that trickles from springs and snowmelt from northern Minnesota and water from snow and rain that fell in Canada. From here south it collects water from the Appalachians and southern highlands until finally it disperses of its burdens in the Gulf of Mexico. The river has flowed this way forever, without ceasing.

St. Louis is not the first city along its banks at this place. A thousand and more years ago, native people built cities here on both sides of the river. This is a river of life. There is life in the river; life around it and life teeming on its seasonally flooded margins. Despite the dams and bridges and factories and pollutants, the river still flows in a great cleansing cycle. The water evaporates into the sky. You can feel it in the air on any St. Louis summer day. It comes down as gentle rains, in violent destructive torrents, as snow and ice and hail. This river extends into the skies and around the earth. This water is life itself.

Doing what rivers do

I come to the river often, in all seasons. Now, in fall, the river is calmer. In late spring, the river swirls in deadly vortices that suck down foolhardy people in small craft, spewing them out downstream. The river carries whole trees ripped from the banks. In some years the river disposes of all those puny human efforts to control it, and the waters rage into towns and fields and over floodwalls and levees, doing what rivers are supposed to do, spreading life-giving water and silt across the land.

I come to this river to put my own life into perspective, to know that I am not alone but rather joined with all life in an enormous river that began in a distant past and extends to an unfathomable vanishing point. The river is timeless, unlike my own life, with its inevitable limits. It is huge and wide and deep and brown. T.S. Elliot called the Mississippi “a strong brown god.”

This river is to be respected, feared, and celebrated. It is raw power, at once terrifying but strangely comforting. This river defies hubris, that foolish sense that humans are the measure of all things. Rather, it is a reminder of my small place in the universe; but it is also a reminder that I do have a place.

The Mississippi is a river of unity. Here the waters of half a continent mingle and circle back through oceans and air. Untold generations of humans went up and down these waters from one place to another trading, traveling, visiting, creating connections between distant places and people. It is also a river of conquest, exploited and in some cases despoiled. Sometimes it has been an obstacle to be crossed, and sometimes it has been a dividing line between nations or between slave and free.

But above all this river is a living yardstick of our own health. If the river is not healthy because we continue to pollute it, channel it, dam it, and manipulate its flow, it is not good for us and it is not good for our children. If the diversity of life in and around the river decreases, it represents a net loss for life on the earth. It means that we have made decisions that are not good for life on earth, of which we are an integral part. Let us take this river very seriously as our bellwether, our litmus test for planetary health, a sacred place in recognition of its vital role in sustaining the great planetary cycles that both cleanse and sustain. In this river’s health we can read the future. Let us look and listen closely. Let us make wise decisions for the generations to whom we are connected in the great chain of life but whom we will never know.

The river divides but this river also unites. Let us remember.

—Robert R. Archibald
President, Bicentennial Council
House Ad II
pickup
November 2005
issue,
p. 7
(“This Holiday Season”)
Lewis & Clark’s “judicious selection” of explorers

The captains showed keen judgment and flexibility when recruiting for the expedition, which originally called for just a single officer and 10 or 12 men

By Arlen J. Large

We usually hear that the explorers of the Lewis and Clark Expedition called themselves the Corps of Discovery. But the party’s full name actually was the Corps of Volunteers for North Western Discovery. That’s helpful to remember when looking at how this military outfit was put together.

Volunteers. That meant nobody was ordered to go—maybe with one exception, which I’ll get to later. There were no Army impressment gangs hanging around frontier saloons to grab drunken soldiers for this mission. On the contrary, the officers had the luxury of taking their pick from the many young hot dogs who wanted to go.

Meriwether Lewis described the recruitment task in an August 1803 planning letter to William Clark: “Much must depend on a judicious selection of our men. Their qualifications should be such as perfectly fit them for the service—otherwise they will rather clog than further the objects in view.”

The selection process began with President Jefferson’s choice of Lewis to lead the army expedition to the Western Sea. Lewis was a native Virginian, born near Charlottesville in 1774. By 1803 he was an army captain serving on detached duty as the president’s secretary in Washington, D.C.

A problem immediately confronted Jefferson and Lewis: how many people should Lewis take with him? That threshold question would determine the size of the recruitment task. How do you decide how big the unit should be?

The numbers kept changing—and growing—as the magnitude of the project gradually became apparent. The common thread running through the whole recruitment process was improvisation, try this try that, play it by ear.

In January 1803, Jefferson started off by telling Congress that the mission could be performed by “an intelligent officer with ten or twelve chosen men.” He said expenses would be held down if these men were taken from the ranks of soldiers already serving in the army. That way the government wouldn’t have to hire anybody new.

Why did Jefferson think a dozen guys would be enough? I suspect his template for the project was Alexander Mackenzie’s successful Canadian trip to the Pacific in 1793. That whole party, including Mackenzie himself, numbered just 10 men. Jef-

Editor’s note: This article is adapted from a talk by the late Arlen J. (Jim) Large. A prolific Lewis and Clark scholar and frequent contributor to WPO, Large delivered it in early 1996 at a meeting of the Homefront Chapter in Charlottesville, Virginia. He died later that year. We are indebted to former LCTHF President Jane Henley for sending it to us.

Illustrations by Michael Haynes
Ferson probably read Mackenzie’s book about that important journey in 1802, and it not only inspired him to launch a competitive American trip to the Pacific, but also gave him a model for planning its size and equipment.

So an American force of an officer and 10 or 12 soldiers was the understanding on which Congress voted the expedition’s initial $2,500 appropriation, in February 1803. The party’s size began growing almost immediately. Lewis was soon authorized to pick another officer as his backup. By April and May, he was assembling enough equipment in Harpers Ferry and Philadelphia for 15 people: 15 new rifles, 15 powder horns, 15 knapsacks, 15 blankets.

Lewis originally wanted to get most of his soldiers from South West Point, an army post in eastern Tennessee. He would march them to Nashville, on the Cumberland River, where they would pick up two previously ordered boats, float them down to the Ohio River, proceed up the Mississippi to the Missouri, and then head west.

That was Plan A, and it didn’t even begin to fly. The Nashville boats couldn’t be lined up. Worse, the winnowing process at South West Point turned up too few good men. The local commander wrote to Lewis that 20 men there had volunteered for the trip, but only a handful seemed qualified to go.

So on to Plan B. Lewis decided to have his main boat built at Pittsburgh, on the Ohio River, and get most of his soldiers from other army posts when he reached Illinois. and that in turn forced him to take an important new tack in his whole recruitment policy. He asked the army for a temporary detachment of eight soldiers to join him at Pittsburgh, soldiers who already had been scheduled for transfer to garrisons on the Mississippi. He wanted them just to help take his keelboat down the Ohio to Illinois. There they would leave him and join their new units in Mississippi Territory.

See what’s happened: Lewis for the first time was dividing his manpower into two categories: a “permanent” party of people who would go with him all the way to the Pacific, and temporary groups of people who would help him with specific logistical jobs, and then peel off. That was a major departure from the original Jefferson plan.

In June 1803, Lewis was back in Washington. There he learned of a new development that would increase his numbers again. From Paris came word that Napoleon was
willing to sell the Americans all of Louisiana, instead of just the port of New Orleans, as Jefferson had originally proposed. If that deal materialized, the explorers would be going through their own territory all the way to the crest of the Rocky Mountains. There would be no need for a low profile to avoid any diplomatic trouble with France or Spain.

On July 2, Secretary of War Henry Dearborn gave Lewis new orders allowing him to recruit “suitable men” in addition to the party’s previously revised target of 15, which consisted of: two officers, 12 soldiers, and a hired civilian interpreter for dealing with the western Indians. Lewis took Dearborn to mean that the 12 soldier quota applied just to men already in the army, and that he could bring aboard as many additional civilians as he wanted. Therefore, in his letter to William Clark offering the co-captnacy of the expedition, Lewis said he planned on his way down the Ohio to “engage some good hunters, stout, healthy, unmarried men, accustomed to the woods.” He suggested that Clark in Louisville start a similar search for local civilian talent. The 12 soldiers would be picked up later at army posts in Illinois.

Lewis arrived in Louisville in October 1803. He told Clark that among several woodsmen who had traveled with him “on trial,” he had selected two. Clark meanwhile had been turning away applications from “gentlemens sons” who “are not accustomed to labour,” while signing up “the best woodsmen & Hunters of the young men in this part of the country.” He finally picked seven, plus a family slave to be his personal valet.

Now the officers faced a problem of how to reconcile all this civilian recruitment with their written guidelines from Washington. Those orders might seem to allow two distinct contingents going to the Pacific—one made up of regular soldiers subject to military discipline, and a separate group of civilian woodsmen to be treated as hired employees. Both Lewis and Clark had enough army experience to know that wouldn’t work. Everybody would have to be in the army and follow orders on the same basis. Before departing down the Ohio, in late October, all of the so-called “Nine Young Men from Kentucky” were formally sworn into the army at Clarksville, where Clark was living just across the river from Louisville.

Everybody would be entitled to a private’s pay of $5 a month, plus an allowance for clothing and rations. (That compared to Lewis’s $40 monthly pay as a captain.) Also, the new soldiers got a $12 one time enlistment bounty, and so would the old soldiers who agreed to re up if their enlistments expired during the expedition. On Jefferson’s authority, Lewis was able to drop tantalizing hints of greater generosity to come when they all got back. That came true: In early 1807, Congress voted to double everybody’s regular pay during the time of the expedition, and gave each enlisted man 320 acres of land.

The Clarksville recruits almost filled the expedition’s authorized strength under Dearborn’s 12 soldier quota. But it seems the officers decided to keep adding more men, the quota notwithstanding. A Louisville newspaper story attempting to describe the expedition said “about 60 men will compose the party.” That was a little exaggerated, but it indicated the captains were already thinking big.

The next stop was Fort Massac, commanded by Captain Daniel Bissell and located on the Illinois side of the Ohio River, where the officers picked up at least two men (Joseph Whitehouse and John Newman). Reaching the Ohio’s mouth, the party turned north into the Mississippi. Now the explorers got their first taste of trying to make the big keelboat go upstream, which probably nailed down the officers’ conviction that a small crew wouldn’t do. In late November, they pulled into the big army post at Kaskaskia, on the Illinois shore. Lewis wrote to Jefferson that at Kaskaskia “I made a selection of a sufficient number of men from the troops of that place to complete my party.” He didn’t say how many, but it probably was about a dozen. That included some escort soldiers specifically assigned to accompany the Pacific explorers only part way up the Missouri River in a separate boat, and then return.

The keelboat continued north to the mouth of the Missouri, where in late December 1803 Clark set up camp on the Illinois shore. There at Wood River (River Dubois) some new recruits were signed up, and others were discharged as unfit. On paper Clark kept juggling options for an initial party of 25 men, or 30, or 50. He took into account the warnings from fur traders in St. Louis about a blockade danger from the Teton Sioux high up the Missouri River.

When the expedition finally nosed into the Missouri in May 1804, the group had swollen to at least 45 people, including eight or nine French boatmen hired for the first leg of the trip. That leg took them upriver to the Mandan villages, in present-day North Dakota.

Clark later offered an explanation for the size of the party that left Illinois. “Those additions ... were for carrying the stores as well as for protection in case of hostilities from the Indians who were most to be dreaded from Wood river to the Mandans.” Personnel turnover continued as the party moved upstream to its winter fort at the Mandan villages. With the coming of spring 1805, the
Kaskaskia escort soldiers and the French boatmen went back downriver to St. Louis in the keelboat, dropping away like the first stage of a modern rocket. The “payload” stage of 33 people in the permanent party continued on up the Missouri on their way to the Pacific. Though reduced from the original Wood River departure group of 45, it was three times as many as the number Jefferson had sold to Congress.

That wasn’t the end of the improvisation. The officers kept having to change their plans about the party’s size as the trip progressed. They had planned to send a progress report back home with three or four men in a canoe once the expedition had reached the Missouri’s head of navigation. But after the tough portage around the river’s great falls, in Montana, Lewis and Clark decided not to risk a reduction in strength. So everybody kept going.

The conviction that every man was needed again influenced the officers’ plans at the Pacific terminus of the trip. Jefferson had suggested that they send home two men by sea with a copy of the expedition’s outbound journals, if any ship was found in the Columbia estuary. No ship had been seen by the time the party was ready to return overland in March 1806, but two men could have been detailed to stay behind and wait. Clark ruled out that option: “Our party are too small to think of leaving any of them.”

There’s no evidence that the powers in Washington ever authorized a party of this size. When the explorers got back to St. Louis in September 1806, Lewis went out of his way to defend the expedition’s size in his first written report to Jefferson: “We have more than once owed our lives and the fate of the expedition to our number, which consisted of 31 men.” (This number included Charbonneau but not his wife Sacagawea or their boy, Pomp.)

How could Washington quarrel with success? The army honored its payroll obligations to all of the extra people, and the officers got into no trouble about their recruitment decisions. Lewis and Clark made their own assessment of their recruitment needs, and took control of the numbers—never mind the original rules laid down in Washington.

CASE HISTORIES

One of the very first men on Lewis’s recruitment list was a man named John Conner, living in Indiana. Early in 1803, Conner had written to Lewis offering his services as an interpreter. Lewis already knew Conner, and wanted to sign him up. A messenger tracked Connor down that summer. Told he would be paid $25 a month, or $300 a year, Connor said he wanted $5,000 to even consider the job. That was the end of him.

On his way down the Ohio from Pittsburgh in early September 1803, Lewis saw the opportunity to pick up a real medical doctor. At Wheeling the captain met Dr. William Ewing Patterson, who said he was eager to join the party. Young Patterson was the son of Robert Patterson, the University of Pennsylvania mathematician who had coached Lewis the previous spring on methods of celestial navigation. Lewis said okay, but specified that...
Patterson had to be ready to leave on the keelboat at 3 o’clock the following afternoon. The next day Lewis made this terse entry in his journal: “The Doctor could not get ready. I waited untill three this evening and then set out.” That probably was for the best, because Dr. Patterson was said to be very fond of strong drink, which might have become the kind of “clog” that the recruiters wanted to avoid.

Lewis expected some soldiers who had survived that big cut at South West Point, in Tennessee, to join up with him at Fort Massac, but they didn’t show. Not until mid-December did eight men from South West Point straggle into Clark’s camp at Wood River. They looked like potential “clogs” to Clark, except for a corporal named Richard Warfington, and before long four of them were washed out as too sorry to keep. Somebody named Leakens, recruited from somewhere, was booted out of camp for stealing.

After departure up the Missouri River in 1804, the party in various ways lost no less than five men on the way to the Mandan villages—three of them members of the Pacific-bound permanent party. Less than a month out, the explorers met some traders in canoes taking furs back to St. Louis. One of the Kaskaskia escort soldiers in the white pirogue joined them, and went back. Nobody reported the reason, or the soldier’s name—it could have been Ebenezer Tuttle or maybe Isaac White.

North of the Platte River, Moses Reed, who had been riding in the keelboat as a permanent-party member, just up and deserted for no reason that has been written down. Vanishing at the same time from the red pirogue was a hired French boatman named La Liberté. He made good his escape, but deserter Reed was caught, made to run the gauntlet, and dismissed from the permanent party.

Just two days later, Sergeant Charles Floyd died of appendicitis, creating a second vacancy in the keelboat. A third member of the permanent party was lost near the Arikara villages with the conviction of John Newman for mutiny. Nobody recorded exactly what he did or said, but a court martial stuck it to him. Newman got 70 lashes on his bare back and was “discarded” from the keelboat to the red pirogue. His gun was taken away and the officers condemned him to “such drudgeries as they may think proper.” Like Reed, he too was dismissed from the permanent party—both men returned to St. Louis aboard the keelboat the following spring.

At Fort Mandan, Lewis and Clark turned down two men who wanted to fill vacancies in the permanent party. One was François Antoine Larocque, a clerk for the North West Company, a Canadian outfit that was doing heavy trade with the Mandans and Hidatsas. He was “verry anxious to accompany us,” said Clark. But one big purpose of the expedition was to steer western Indians away from their trade connections with Larocque’s company. The captains not surprisingly turned him down.

The other rejectee at Fort Mandan was John Newman, the disgraced mutineer. Newman begged the captains to make him a Pacific explorer again, saying he was sorry for his bad behavior and had reformed. Lewis was sympathetic, acknowledging that Newman had committed his crime “at an unguarded moment,” and noting that since his court martial he had been a model soldier. Nevertheless, the officers feared unit discipline would suffer if they backed down. Said Lewis: “Deeming it impolitic to relax from the sentence, altho’ he stood acquitted in my mind, I determined to send him back.” So poor Newman had to join deserter Reed on the keelboat commanded by the reliable Corporal Warfington, headed downriver to St. Louis.

ASSEMBLING THE PERMANENT PARTY

The very first man that Lewis recruited as a Pacific explorer, other than Clark himself, appears to have been George Shannon. He was a native Pennsylvanian whose family had moved to Ohio. According to several sources, he was in Pittsburgh in late August 1803 and was one of the “young men on trial” that Lewis took with him down the Ohio River on the new keelboat. Shannon was about 17 at the time, making him the expedition’s youngest soldier. Despite his youth, Shannon was already seen as bright and well spoken. After the expedition he became a lawyer, judge, and state senator. Elliott Coues, one of the editors of the expedition journals, said Shannon was “perhaps the one man on the expedition whom either of the captains would have been most likely to meet at home on terms of social equality.”

John Colter was the second woodsman picked by Lewis on his way down the Ohio. Colter was born near Staunton, Virginia. He got aboard the keelboat at Maysville, Kentucky, not far upriver from Cincinnati. He was then 28 or 29 years old, described as five feet ten inches tall, blue-eyed, and somewhat shy, with a quick mind. Somebody said he looked a little like Daniel Boone. Lewis apparently referred to Shannon and Colter in a letter sent ahead to Clark from Cincinnati: “I have two young men with me whom I have taken on trial and have not yet engaged them, but conditionally only, tho’ I think they will answer tolerably well.”

A good prediction. Both Shannon and Colter distinguished themselves on the expedition as hunters and
scouts. In August 1806, the captains had to decide all over again about Colter’s place on the expedition roster. The party had returned to the Mandan villages, in North Dakota, on the way home to St. Louis. Colter asked permission to go back upriver to Montana with two trappers the party had met a few days before. All during the trip, the captains had resisted reducing their strength by even one man. But now the exploring was basically over, and the captains said okay, on the understanding that no other member of the expedition would seek an early discharge. They were cutting some military corners, but Clark made it clear that Colter had earned it: “we were disposed to be of Service to any one of our party who had performed their duty as well as Colter had done.” The decision launched Colter on his new career as a professional mountain man.

Now back to 1803 and Clark’s recruitment of those seven neighbors who greeted Lewis, Shannon, and Colter when the keelboat reached Louisville. Two of the seven were brothers, Joseph and Reuben Field. They also proved to be excellent choices. Lewis called them “two of the most active and enterprising young men who accompanied us.”

A Kentucky historian named George Yater has an interesting theory about Joe Field. Yater has traced the location of the Field family farm to a 200-acre tract south of Louisville, where the family had come from Virginia. The farm wasn’t far from a productive salt spring, where Joe Field’s oldest brother Ezekial ran a salt-making business. Yater speculates that Ezekial had hired Joe to help with the salt-making. The expedition connection came when the explorers needed a new supply of salt boiled from seawater on the Pacific coast. Here’s the way Yater makes the connection: “I suggest that Joseph Field was in charge of the salt-making operation and that he gained his knowledge at the salt licks south of Louisville, a fact that would have been well known to William Clark.” Two others on the Pacific salt making team, William Bratton and George Gibson, were also Clark recruits from the Louisville area in 1803.

Two other Clark recruits were first cousins—Charles Floyd and Nathaniel Pryor. Though neither of them had any previous army experience, both showed enough leadership talent to be made sergeants on the expedition.

Clark went out of his way to get the ninth of the Nine Young Men from Kentucky enrolled in the army at Clarksville. Both he and Lewis knew well the vital need for a man who knew how to repair guns and work with other metal used by a military unit in the field. With great foresight, Lewis had already brought 14 sets of spare firing locks for the expedition’s guns, but someone would be needed who knew how to install them.
John Shields lived in the Louisville area, but he had been born near Harrisonburg, Virginia. He learned blacksmithing as a boy in Tennessee, and Clark wanted him badly enough to overlook the recruiting guideline for bachelors only. (Shields had acquired a wife named Nancy shortly after moving to Kentucky.) Clark also ignored Shields’s advanced age. He was 34, making him the oldest man on the expedition. Once he was signed up, Shields gave the officers some advice on the kind of equipment he would need, such as a bellows and some tongs—tools that hadn’t been on Lewis’s original shopping list. Possibly Shields brought his own bellows and tongs, or maybe they were acquired later in St. Louis. They came from somewhere, because they were on the list of items that the expedition cached at the junction of the Missouri and Marias rivers in the summer of 1805. Shields proved a winner as a skilled blacksmith—praised repeatedly by the officers during the trip. He was a relative of Daniel Boone, which may be why he also proved one of the party’s best hunters.

There actually was a 10th young man from Kentucky—York, Clark’s slave. Both Clark and York were born on the same Caroline County, Virginia, farm. William Clark formally inherited York upon the death of his father, John Clark, after the family had moved to Louisville.

There’s no record of whether York went on the expedition willingly or not, but he must have had mixed feelings. I’ll bet most unmarried young men of any station in life would have jumped at the chance. Going to see the western ocean certainly sounded more exciting than fetching Clark his mint juleps on the front porch. However, York also had a wife in Louisville, a slave woman working for another owner. That would have tugged York in the direction of staying home, but for owner Clark a slave’s domestic attachments didn’t mean much. No matter how York felt about going, in the end he probably had no choice.

At Fort Massac, Lewis and Clark heard good things about a hunter and sign-language expert named George Drouillard, the son of a French-Canadian father and a Shawnee mother. The secretary of war had specifically authorized Lewis to hire a civilian interpreter, at $25 a month. That made Drouillard the third-highest paid man on the expedition, which sounds about right, because he became in effect the expedition’s third officer. At the end of the trip Lewis regarded Drouillard so highly as a hunter, sign talker, and general wilderness wizard that he thought the army should pay him an extra bonus.

Lewis and Clark could afford to be selective during their stop at Kaskaskia, because there were a lot of men to pick from. Kaskaskia was an old French town of about 200 houses on the east bank of the Mississippi. Garrisoned on a hillside about a quarter of a mile out of town was a company of infantry commanded by Captain Russell Bissell (the brother of Fort Massac’s commander) and an artillery company commanded by Amos Stoddard. One of the artillerymen selected was Alexander Hamilton Willard, whose famous namesake was still alive. Willard used to boast that the officers chose him while rejecting a hundred others.

Another soldier chosen was John Ordway, from New Hampshire, who had resigned himself to being stuck in Kaskaskia for the rest of his enlistment. Arrival of the Lewis and Clark keelboat in late November 1803 was Ordway’s ticket to adventure. “I am so happy as to be one of the picked men from the Army,” he later wrote in a pre departure letter to his “Honored Parence.” He said the government had promised the soldiers “Great Rewards” upon their return. Ordway became the expedition’s top sergeant, and historians can thank goodness that he was picked, because he made an entry in his own diary for every day of the whole trip.

Joseph Whitehouse was born in Virginia, probably Fairfax County. Scholars used to think he had been recruited by Lewis and Clark at Fort Massac, until the discovery of Whitehouse’s own statement saying he joined the expedition at Kaskaskia. Whitehouse also kept a journal for most of the trip. The men came to value his skill as a tailor.

There’s a story about the recruitment at Kaskaskia of Private Patrick Gass that helps illustrate the high priority the government gave to the expedition. Gass was from Pennsylvania and 32 years old at the time, about five feet seven, broad in the chest, and strong. He had been a car-
penter before joining the army, and because of that skill, Captain Bissell tried to keep Gass from volunteering for the expedition. Gass ignored all the proper channels, hunted up Lewis, and made his pitch directly. After that, according to one Gass biographer, Lewis “used his authority to override Bissell.” What was that authority? Lewis could wave a War Department order telling Bissell and other frontier commanders that you will detach any suitable soldiers from your units who volunteered to go. Upon the death of Sergeant Floyd, Gass later became an expedition sergeant. He also kept a journal, which I think is a more valuable source of information than some historians give it credit for.

It was probably after the expedition reached its winter camp at Wood River that the officers decided they needed in the regular outfit a couple of local experts on navigating the Missouri River. They signed up Pierre Cruzatte and François Labiche, though they weren’t formally sworn into the army until the expedition went a short way up the Missouri, to St. Charles. The case of Labiche shows how a man recruited for one kind of expertise can later surprise the recruiters with other talents. Labiche was half French and half Omaha, and particularly showed a knack for translating between French and English. Lewis thought that his services as an interpreter entitled him to a post expedition bonus.

As noted, on the way up the Missouri in 1804, deserter Reed and mutineer Newman had been kicked out of the permanent party riding on the keelboat. The captains filled one of those vacancies by promoting Robert Frazer, one of the escort soldiers in the white pirogue, to the roster of Pacific explorers. The other vacancy wasn’t filled until the following winter at Fort Mandan. Jean Baptiste Lepage was a French-Canadian trader who had been hanging around the Mandan villages and said he knew the Black Hills and the northern plains. The captains enrolled him in the army as a permanent member, but he seems to have been pretty much a cipher for the rest of the trip.

The recruitment of the Charbonneau family at Fort Mandan is a familiar story. Toussaint Charbonneau, a native of Montreal, originally was hired just to help the captains communicate with the Hidatsa tribe living in the Mandan neighborhood. He didn’t seem all that valuable until Lewis and Clark learned that his wife was a Shoshone, from the Rocky Mountains. That would make Sacagawea another useful interpreter when it came time to get local help in crossing the mountains—and she fully fulfilled those expectations. If they took her, they also had to take her infant son, Jean Baptiste, born in February 1805, who became a sort of pet of the explorers and particularly charmed William Clark.

The North Dakota addition of little Pomp—Clark’s nickname for the boy—completed the roster of 33 people who would go all the way to the beaches of Oregon.

They came from a lot of different places. Private John Potts made the longest trip to Oregon—he was born in Germany. Sacagawea was from the Idaho-Montana border. There were men from Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Kentucky. John Collins came from Maryland. At least six were born in Pennsylvania. But it was Virginia that topped the list with 10 of its sons—nearly a third of the permanent party. The native Virginians included both of the officers and York, plus Colter, the Field brothers, Pryor, Shields, Bratton, and Whitehouse.

It’s obvious that skillful recruitment played a big part in the success of the expedition, both in the quantity and quality of the people selected. Lewis and Clark’s party was three times the size of Mackenzie’s. That allowed them to gather more new information about the West than Mackenzie did. Having more men to do logistical chores gave the officers more time to draw maps, make celestial observations for the fixing of latitude and longitude, and to write it all down.

Above all, Lewis and Clark had good people. They weeded out the thieves, the worst drunks, the smart alecs who couldn’t take orders. They carefully picked specialists they knew in advance they would need: Shields the blacksmith, Drouillard and Sacagawea the language experts, Gass the carpenter, Cruzatte and Labiche the boatmen, Ordway the ramrod sergeant. Some were just all purpose useful guys to have around—the Field boys, Shannon, Colter, York, Gibson. Yes, there were some—like Hugh Hall, Thomas Howard, and Lepage—who didn’t exactly shine by their own inner light. But nobody turned out to be a real “clog.” The selections, as Lewis wanted from the beginning, really did prove to be “judicious.”

Notes

1 Because the author did not write this article for publication he did not reference his sources, and because he is deceased we cannot ask him to do so retroactively. Many of the quoted passages are dated and can be easily found in Gary E. Moulton, ed., The Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1983-2001), and in Donald Jackson, ed., Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition with Related Documents, 1783-1854 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1968 and 1978). We are grateful as always to Carl Camp—who for the last three years has rendered exceptional service to WPO as a copy editor, proofreader, and fact-checker—for his careful reading of this article and his suggestions concerning it.
Old John’s Skillet

Could this object at the Oregon Historical Society be an artifact of the L&C Expedition? Burn marks and grease stains on one of Clark’s maps offer tantalizing evidence that it might.

By Melissa Darby

Any discovery of an artifact potentially associated with the Lewis and Clark Expedition must be viewed with a healthy dose of skepticism. This is especially true for archaeologists (I am one)—reputations can be made or dashed to ruins on such claims. Hence, I present an artifact that I can only say may (or may not) be associated with the Corps of Discovery. Several intriguing but equivocal bits of evidence support the possibility, not the least of which is the artifact itself. There is also a map, not marked with an X but with a ring, but we will get to that later.

The artifact is a three-legged cast-iron camp skillet that belonged at one time to Old John, a Klickitat Indian. He lived on the lower Columbia River in the broad valley now known as the Portland basin (called Wapato Valley by Meriwether Lewis). Old John was probably associated with the village near the mouth of the Sandy River known as Stand of Pines (Ne-cha-co-lee), a satellite village of some of the people who lived along the Great Narrows of the Columbia River. By his own account he lived in the vicinity of Stand of Pines with his parents when the Corps of Discovery traveled through the region in 1805 and 1806. When the historical record picks up in 1855, he is present, and he continued to live in the area until he died, in 1893.

Two things impress me about Old John. The first is how well-documented his life is by his close friends and neighbors, who reminisced about him in newspaper articles, diaries, and letters. The second is how important and well respected he was in the community. Old John made his living in part by fishing, tanning hides, and helping his neighbors around butchering time. He also took care of their cattle, hoed their potatoes, and watched their farms when they were away. He brought them huckleberries in season. He was a frequent visitor at his neighbors’ houses around mealtimes, no matter that he would stuff food in his shirt for later. He stored his money box at Doc Hartley’s house.

Doc Hartley’s daughter Margaret wrote of the death, from diptheria, of John’s wife in the late 1850s, followed shortly by his daughter’s death, and how for a time Old John was inconsolable.

Two accounts describe the stories Old John told about the time before white men, including his recounting of how Elk Rock, a local landmark, got its name. Mamie Everett remembered that, when she attended the local
Old John, a Klickitat Indian who died in 1893, in an undated photo. He lived on the lower Columbia and as a child may have been part of a village visited by the Lewis and Clark Expedition in the spring of 1806.
grade school, “During noon hour we children would go down to the Zimmerman ranch to see and talk with old Indian John who was loved and respected by all who knew him.” In his last years, when he was very old, neighbors built a new frame house for him to replace his Chinookian cedar-plank, bark-roofed traditional house. His new house had windows, of which he was very proud—he called them “windys.” When he became feeble with palsy, the local women brought him food and took care of him until he was sent to the county poor farm after he could no longer cope for himself.

The reminiscences are united in their praise of Old John during a critical time when Oregon was still a territory. In the early 1850s, Old John was one of a community of Indians living along the Columbia Slough near Fairview, in Multnomah County. When some of the Indians decided to attack white settlers in the area, Old John had advance knowledge of their plans. By all accounts, Old John ran from one farmhouse to another with the alarm. The settlers took heed. Some of the men grabbed their guns and took up a defensive position at the mouth of the Sandy River. No one from the neighborhood was caught in the uprising.

The neighbors were grateful to John for warning them. After the conflict, when vigilantes rode the countryside shooting Indians on sight, a group of them encountered Old John on the trail. Its leader leveled his rifle at him, but Henry Holtgrieve, one of John’s friends, put his hand on the gun and begged him not to shoot. The vigilantes let Old John go.

Though most Indians were sent to reservations, no one tried to remove Old John and his family from their home on the Columbia Slough. Old John lived on the land claim of Patrick Hogan. Later this was leased to the Wilkes family and subsequently purchased by the Zimmermans. Regardless of these land transfers, Old John kept his tenure on the slough.

Old John was so well-known that when he died, both Portland newspapers printed his obituary. The following is from the Evening Telegram of March 28, 1893:

Old Indian John, a well-known character of uncertain age, died Friday at the poor farm, where he was taken last Wednesday, being at that time unable to move or help himself. He is believed to have been about 125 years of age and was an old man so long ago that the memory of the oldest white inhabitant here runneth not to the contrary.

THE SKILLET
Doc Hartley’s daughter, Margaret Hartley Sales, grew up around Old John. She recalled him saying that when he was a young man he visited a camp of “Bostons” (Americans) near the mouth of the Sandy River. Old John said that his father was given the skillet by these men, and later Old John inherited it. Old John gave the Wilkes family the skillet, which they later donated to the Oregon Historical Society. The 1905 accession record states:

Iron Skillet. Owned a great many years by “Old John” … who died in 1893; and was believed by all who knew him to have been more than one hundred years old. He always claimed that this skillet was given to him by white men long before Doctor McLoughlin’s arrival in Vancouver, which was in 1824. Hence it is possible that he received it from Lewis and Clark’s exploring expedition.

Another note in the Oregon Historical Society states, “Old John received this artifact from the first white men he ever saw, when he was approximately fifteen years old.”

Old John’s skillet has all the characteristics of camp skillets manufactured between 1780 and 1840. These were sometimes called “spiders.” This example is small: 8 3/8 inches wide and approximately 2 3/4 inches deep, with legs of 1 1/8 inches and a handle of 8 1/2 inches. Originally it may have had a raised lid for use as a bake skillet. It has the long legs of skillets manufactured during this time rather than the shorter, stubby legs of later skillets. Also, the
handle is attached low on the side of the vessel, not near the rim as it is on later skillets. Skillets manufactured after 1840 had “hang holes” in their handles so they could be hung from a peg. This skillet has no eyelet hole.

The skillet is in excellent condition. Early cast-iron vessels were cast with iron ore that was smelted with charcoal rather than coke, giving it a higher carbon content. When molten, charcoal-smelted iron is very ductile and easy to pour. Cast iron from circa 1855 and later is recognizable from earlier cast iron because it has a certain brittleness, and even when cleaned can easily become rusty and pitted.

Our knowledge of the Corps of Discovery’s inventory is woefully inadequate and mostly based on Lewis’s equipment list and receipts for purchases made in Philadelphia in 1803. Among the items recorded are 14 brass kettles, a black tin saucepan, and some nested copper kettles for presents for the Indians. On another list he mentions six nested copper kettles ranging in size from one to five gallons. There is no mention of an iron skillet. We know, however, that the expedition had more cookware than the items listed in Lewis’s inventory because Joseph Whitehouse, one of the corps’ journalists, mentions caching a Dutch oven on June 11, 1805. It is possible that William Clark, some of the engagés, and Toussaint Charbonneau brought their own cooking equipment on the journey.

It is also possible that the brass kettles listed by Lewis were used for frying, but a cast-iron pan would be a better utensil. In her book on the foods of the expedition, Feasting and Fasting with Lewis and Clark, the late Leandra Zim Holland notes that frying as a method of cooking is mentioned several times in the journals. The explorers began the journey with a keg of pork lard, and the frequent rendering of grizzly fat indicates more frying. Lewis wrote that he ate fried squirrel (caught in the Ohio River by his dog, Seaman) on several occasions in September 1803. Frying is used in the second-stage browning of boudin blanc (white pudding sausage), Charbonneau’s specialty and one of Lewis’s favorite dishes. While wintering at Fort Clatsop, the explorers purchased whale oil, presumably for frying. On October 26, 1805, they ate steelhead trout “fried in a little bears oil.”

THE EXPEDITION ON THE LOWER COLUMBIA

Lewis and Clark had numerous opportunities to trade their skillets to members of Old John’s tribe, both downriver near the mouth of the Sandy River, and upriver along the Long Narrows. Most of Old John’s people lived upriver, but as noted, some of them lived at Stand of Pines, near the mouth of the Sandy River. On November 2-3, 1805, during its descent of the Columbia River, the expedition camped on the south side of the Columbia, a mile or so upriver from the mouth of the Sandy River. On their return journey the explorers camped six nights (March 31–April 5, 1806) on what Lewis described as a “handsome prairie” on the north side of the Columbia, opposite the mouth of the Sandy River. They had planned to stay in the area for just two days, long enough to map and explore it. However, after hearing accounts of the lack of game and food upriver, they decided to remain several days longer, until they could procure enough food to last them
for the several weeks they expected to take traversing the dry Columbia Plateau.

On April 2, some Indians came into camp. In a discourse with Clark they pointed to some “tall pine trees” in the bottomland across the river and indicated it was their village. This was Stand of Pines Village, and perhaps these were some of Old John’s people. Clark visited the village the next day and drew a sketch of it in his journal. (A similar sketch, probably copied from Clark’s, appears in Lewis’s journal entry for April 6.) The inhabitants lived in a kind of apartment complex—a row of seven planked-wall rooms joined together under a long gabled roof. The individual rooms were separated by either a four-foot-wide breezeway or a shared plank wall. Doorways off the breezeway gave access to the rooms, and the breezeway itself gave access to a waste-disposal area behind the complex.

Remarkably, the only known photograph of a plank house on the Columbia River is one of Old John’s, who is posed near the doorway. The photograph recently came to the attention of historians, archaeologists, and Indians of the region. It was taken in the 1870s or 1880s. Old John lived in a single-room house, and Clark was looking at a row of these houses linked together. The photograph shows the roof clad with three sheets of peeled cedar bark held between (and lashed to) long poles set on the planks of the wall. Clark described just such an arrangement when he wrote that the roof was “built of the bark of the White Cedar Supported on long Stiff poles resting on the ends of broad boards which form the rooms.” The planks of the walls are set vertically into the ground and buttressed by an earthen mound. The bark extends out, sheltering the planks and conducting rainwater onto the earthen mound and away from the house.

Clark writes that the houses were in the same style as those of Indians of the Great Narrows, “with whom these people were connected.” The Great Narrows (today’s The Dalles) was 85 miles upriver from Stand of Pines Village. Lewis notes that the language of the Stand of Pines people was the same as those of the Great Narrows, “with whom these people claim affinity.” These observations are consistent with one detail about Old John that lends credence to his association with Stand of Pines Village. Old John identified himself as “Klickitat,” according to a census record left by his surviving daughter. The Klickitat and Wishram shared territory near The Dalles. (When his other daughter died, Old John took her remains upriver in a canoe and buried her on Memaloose Island, identified by Clark as “Sephulchar” Island in the fall of 1805.)

The explorers left their campsite opposite the Sandy River on April 5 and 10 days later reached the Great Narrows. They stayed there two days. Their main camp was on the south shore, but on April 16, Clark led a party of 13, including Charbonneau and Sacagawea, across the river for the purpose of trading for horses they would need for traversing the Columbia Plains.

Great numbers of Indians visited Clark’s camp that day and the next. They were from all over the country and included Nez Perces from the Chopunnish River, far upstream, in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. On April 17, Clark took the opportunity to sit down with the Indians to query them about the region’s geography; in a journal entry for that day, Clark says he “obtained a Sketch” of the Columbia and “Clark’s River” (today’s Bitterroot/Clark Fork/Pend Oreille system). A rough map that Clark may have drawn on that day or the next corresponds to the geographical information he obtained. The map (Plate 102 in The Atlas of the Lewis and Clark Expedition) clearly shows the circular burn mark of what may be a skillet lid, and within the circumference of the mark are drip stains. This burn ring exactly matches the inside measurement...
of the rim of Old John’s skillet. (To check this I made a photocopy of the skillet rim and laid it over a photocopy of the original map; the fit was perfect.) One could imagine Charbonneau, the cook for the captains’ mess, thoughtlessly setting down the lid on Clark’s map. The size of cookware at the time was generally based on volume (e.g., a gallon kettle), but dimensions would have varied from one manufacturer to another in what was essentially a handicraft industry, so the chance is low that two skillet tops would have had identical dimensions.

During this period, the captains were desperately bartering whatever they had left in their meager stores for horses. Among those items were kettles. On April 28, Lewis lamented that they had “disposed of every kettle we could possibly spear.” Assuming he used the term generically, it is possible that a skillet may have been among the “kettles” traded.

It must be noted that, from 1812 on, there were many explorers and travelers in the region from whom Old John’s family could have obtained the old skillet. This discussion is conjectural, and the question will be forever an intriguing mystery—one perhaps best mulled over under the stars, in front of a campfire by a river, while frying fish in a cast-iron skillet.

Foundation member Melissa Darby is the founder of Lower Columbia Research and Archaeology, in Portland, Oregon. Her research for this article was underwritten in part by a fund established in the memory of Leandra Zim Holland.

Notes

1 Gary E. Moulton, ed., The Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition, 13 volumes (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983-2001), Vol. 6, p. 24. All quotations or references to journal entries in the ensuing text are from Moulton, by date, unless otherwise indicated.

2 Ibid., Vol. 1, Atlas of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, Map 79.


4 These authors include the following: E.L. Thorpe, “Naming of Elk Rock,” Gresham Outlook, February 4, 1913 (Thorpe relates the story of the Naming of Elk Rock told to him by Old John thirty years prior); Corra Starks, Early Childhood at Troutdale, Oregon (manuscript at the Troutdale Historical Society, Troutdale, Oregon); H.S. Robinson, “Chief’s Aid to Early Settlers Unrewarded, Says Pioneer,” Parkrose Enterprise Courier, ca. 1950 (undated newspaper article in vertical file about Old John in the collection of Sharon Nesbit, local historian and reporter for the Gresham Outlook); Winifred Anderson, Indian John, “The Last Chief of the Multnomah’s” (manuscript dated April 21, 1976, and submitted to the Gresham Outlook; also in the collection of Sharon Nesbit).

5 Mamie Vance Everett, May 15, 1936, letter in the Gresham Outlook in response to an anniversary issue printed in early March 1936.

6 Myrtle Weatherhead, letter to Sharon Nesbit, February 10, 1992. This is in regard to a manuscript written by her sister about Old John, correcting the manuscript’s note from “Winder” to “Windy”; Anonymous, “Sales Remember Indian John,” Parkrose-East County Enterprise, June 8, 1955, p. 7.

7 “William and Margaret Sales Remember Indian John,” p. 7.

8 Evening Telegram (Portland, Ore.), March 28, 1893.


10 This is from notes taken by Carolyn Gilman at the O.H.S. in 1997. An attempt to locate the record on which her notes were based was unsuccessful.


14 Leandra Zim Holland, Feasting and Fasting with Lewis and Clark, a Food and Social History of the Early 1800s (Emigrant, Mont.: Old Yellowstone Publishing, 2003), pp. 51-52.


16 Ibid., pp. 64-65. Entry for April 3, 1806.

17 The Klickitats and Wishrams shared some of this territory.

18 His daughter Mary Tibbetts died at the Multnomah County Poor Farm in 1913, according to the Multnomah County Poor Farm, Admittance Records #1878. Her daughter Minnie also identified herself as Klickitat in the 1910 U.S. census for Marion County (Enumeration District #206, Sheet 14A). The main territory of the Klickitat was upriver, near The Dalles, but it would not be unusual for a Klickitat group to live in Wapato Valley. It was so rich in resources that several different groups had villages there, and they swelled with friends and relatives during harvest times.


20 Ibid., Vol. 1 (Atlas), Map 102. The caption accompanying the map hypothesizes that it was drawn “about late May 1806,” but this is debatable. A close examination of the map strongly suggests that it is a rough draft of a map of the same region appearing in the back of the notebook Clark was using for one of his journals at the time, the so-called Voorhis No. 3; the Voorhis map, which appears on page 150 of Moulton, Vol. 7, is very similar to Map 96, found in Vol. 1. Inscriptions by Clark on both the Voorhis map and Map 96 explicitly state that they are based on information gleaned from Indians at the Great Narrows on April 18, 1806—not April 17—but Clark’s journal entries for the 18th do not mention any discussion of geography. His entries for April 17, however, make clear that the information he obtained on that day was the same as that reflected in the Voorhis map and Maps 96 and 102.

21 The party traded a kettle on April 18 and two more on April 19. Moulton, Vol. 7, pp. 141, 144.

22 Ibid., p. 177.
Fishing in an Angler’s Paradise, 1805

The Corps of Discovery caught fish by the score as the expedition made its way through Montana. A close look at the L&C journals suggests that later writers may have misidentified several of the species described by Lewis.

By Kenneth C. Walcheck

On June 13, 1805, at a Corps of Discovery campsite immediately below the Great Falls of the Missouri, Private Silas Goodrich went fishing. Leaving the rest of the party after assisting with the butchering of several buffalo, he collected his rifle and a metal container of assorted hooks, split shot, cork bobbers, and line and headed for a willow patch bordering the Missouri, where he cut a stem for a fishing pole. Following a game trail, he dropped down a steep sandstone bank to the river.

After rigging his pole with hook, line, and sinker, he unfolded a small oilskin packet. Inside was a deer’s spleen (called melt); he cut a strip of the spleen and impaled it on the hook. In front of him was a long, slick pool with a massive boulder at the lower end. He cast his baited hook into the dark flow. Almost immediately a large fish rose in the current and sucked it in. Goodrich fought the fish until it tired, then worked it into the shallows and up onto the bank.

In a dozen more casts he caught another five fish. Like the first, all of them were robust trout between 16 and 23 inches long, with a slash of red under their gill plates. Dinner that evening, as recorded by Meriwether Lewis in his journal, consisted of buffalo hump, tongue, and marrowbone supplemented with “fine trout” seasoned with parched meal, pepper and salt, and “a good appetite.”

Cutthroat Trout

The fish caught by Goodrich were cutthroat trout, a species new to science and later designated Salmo clarki, after Lewis’s co-commander, William Clark. Taxonomists have since renamed the genus, and the cutthroat now goes by the scientific name Oncorhynchus clarki. The subspecies found at the Great Falls was the westslope cutthroat, Oncorhynchus clarki lewisi [picture, opposite page].

The above scenario is speculative—this may or may not have been how Goodrich actually fished on the Missouri. The Lewis and Clark journals provide almost no information on angling methods other than the use of deer spleen (and grasshoppers) as bait. We do know that Lewis’s lists of items purchased...
in Philadelphia while outfitting for the expedition included hooks, fishing lines, and eight “stave reels” for storing line. There is no mention of fishing poles, but as suggested, these easily could have been made on the spot; it is also possible that Goodrich and other expedition anglers fished without poles, using hand lines. Goodrich, about whose pre-expedition life almost nothing is known other than his home state (he came from Massachusetts), was clearly an experienced and enthusiastic angler who may well have carried his own tackle on the expedition. Lewis called him “our principal fisherman” and a man “remarkably fond of fishing.” Here and elsewhere on the trip, his and others’ catches—of trout, goldeye, catfish, and other fare—provided what must have been a welcome change in the explorers’ overwhelming diet of meat.

Goodrich’s cutthroat angling occurred in Montana, then as now one of the best places on earth to fish for trout, although today the westslope cutthroat has been displaced throughout much of its presettlement range by related species introduced in the late 19th and early 20th century—rainbow trout from California, brown trout from Europe, and brook trout from the eastern United States. Trout are coldwater fish associated with mountain rivers, and the Great Falls of the Missouri was near the eastern limit of the cutthroat’s range.

**CHANNEL CATFISH**

The expedition’s first Montana fish was a channel catfish, *Ictalurus punctatus*, hauled in on a stretch below the Missouri Breaks on May 22, 1805 [picture, page 24]. Angling had been lean since the explorers’ departure from Fort Mandan six weeks before—“we have caught but few fish ... they do not bite freely,” Lewis observed. He called this species the “white cat,” and the several caught weighed between two and five pounds. (Actually who did the catching isn’t recorded.) The expedition landed its first channel catfish while ascending the Missouri the previous summer, above the mouth of the Platte River on July 24, 1804, in what is now Iowa-Nebraska.

**STONECAT**

Two years later, on the return journey, the party led by

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Westslope cutthroat trout, caught by Silas Goodrich at the Great Falls of the Missouri in June of 1805 and later given the subspecies name *Oncorhynchus clarki lewisi*. The example shown here is a male in spawning colors.

Mountain whitefish, described by Lewis as “a kind of mullet,” probably caught on the upper Beaverhead River in August 1805.
Clark camped on the north bank of the Yellowstone River below its junction with the Tongue River, in eastern Montana. Clark’s journal entry for July 29, 1806, notes the taking of “3 cat fish,” which he described as “small and fat.” He provided no more details, but their diminutive size raises the possibility that they were stonecats, *Noturus flavus* [picture, above]. With recorded lengths up to ten inches, the stonecat is one of the smaller species in the bullhead catfish family. Stonecats are common in the lower reaches of the Yellowstone.

**FLATHEAD CHUB AND GOLDEYE**

Lewis recorded two other new species while encamped near the mouth of the Marias River on June 11, 1805. Goodrich, he wrote,

> caught several douzen fish of two different species—one about 9 inches long of white colour round and in form and fins resembles the white chub common to the Potomac; this fish has a smaller head than the Chubb and the mouth is beset both above and below with a rim of fine sharp teeth; the eye moderately large, the pulp dark and the iris which is narrow is of a yellowish brown color; they bite at meat or grasshoppers. This is a soft fish, not very good, tho' the flesh is of a fine white colour.

He described the second fish as having “precisely the form” and being “about the size of”

> the well known fish called the Hickory Shad or old wife, with the exception of the teeth, a rim of which garnish the outer edge of both the upper and lower jaw; the tongue and pallet are also beset with long sharp teeth bending inwards, the eye of this fish is very large, and the iris of a silvery colour and wide.

Lewis noted that they had caught several of the chub-like fish before reaching the mouth of the Marias, which runs murky and discolors the Missouri downstream of it, but that all “shad” were caught in clean-running water upstream of the Marias. “The latter,” he added, are “much the best” for eating because they “do not inhabit muddy water.”

The chub-like fish was identified as a sauger, *Stizostedion canadense*, by naturalist Elliot Coues in 1893, and subsequent authors have taken this judgment on faith. In fact, there is a good possibility that the fish was actually the flathead chub, *Platygobio gracilis* [picture, below]. The sauger's body color ranges from olive-gray to brown on the back, not white, and it has three or four large, dark blotches extending along its flanks. The front dorsal fin of the adult sauger has stout, sharp spines and a polka-dot pattern of black spots. The sauger has two dorsal fins, while a chub has one. The sauger also has large, smoky, silvery eyes. Lewis was a careful taxonomist and surely would have noted such features. His comment that this fish’s flesh was “soft” and “not very good” is also at odds with what we know about sauger, whose flesh is firm and of superior flavor.

It seems likely, too, that a species resembling chub of the Potomac River (presumably fallfish) would be minnow-like, since chubs are in the minnow family. The flathead chub is one of the most common minnows in the Yellowstone and Missouri drainages and occurs above the Great Falls as far as the Three Forks.
The second fish described by Lewis in his June 11 entry was the goldeye, *Hiodon alosoides*, a species resembling the hickory shad, alewife, and other eastern coastal members of the herring family [picture, below].

Lewis’s description of the goldeye is not completely accurate in reference to eye color and habitat preference. He was correct in stating that its eyes are large, but the iris is not silvery but gold, as the name suggests. His comment that goldeye “do not inhabit muddy waters” is also incorrect, as the species can tolerate highly turbid waters. He was also wrong in describing it as “much the best” in terms of eating quality. As one reference pointedly notes, “The taste of fresh goldeye is said to be insipid, muddy, and like that of salted brown paper, the flesh is soft and an unattractive grey color.”

Based on the reference to this fish as “a kind of mullet,” Coues identified it as a northern sucker, and as in the case of the “sauger,” writers have taken his word on the matter. But a close examination of Lewis’s description suggests that the species in question might have been the mountain whitefish. In most of the particulars—small scales, long nose overhanging the jaw, no teeth, small mouth, blueish back and white belly—the description fits that of the whitefish. (The meaning of “faggot bones” isn’t clear.) Coues was probably unaware that the whitefish’s short head is abruptly curved, with an overhanging and somewhat pointed snout (features pronounced in breeding males). In an earlier entry in Lewis’s journal (for August 3), written while the expedition was proceeding up the Jefferson River, he also seems to be describing whitefish: “The fish of this part of the river” include, along with trout, “a species of scale fish of a white [color] and a remarkable small long mouth which one of our men inform us are the same with the species called in the Eastern states bottlenose,” a type of sucker. The whitefish’s underslung mouth still leads some anglers to mistake it for a sucker.

**Mountain whitefish**

Anyone who fishes for trout on Montana rivers is familiar with the mountain whitefish, *Prosopium williamsoni* [picture, page 23]. Whitefish share the trout’s preference for cold waters. They are frequently caught by fishermen targeting trout and are apt to be regarded as a nuisance. It is true that whitefish are rather homely looking as well as being lackluster fighters, but they still deserve respect as native fish. They have always been common in Montana rivers, and it is puzzling that they haven’t appeared on anyone’s list of fish described by Lewis and Clark, who almost certainly caught them. This is probably due to misinterpretation of journal entries. Take, for example, what Lewis wrote for August 19, 1805, when the expedition was camped on the Beaverhead River. Some of the men used a seine made of willow brush to catch “a large number of fine trout” as well as a kind of mullet about 16 [inches] long which I had not seen before. The scales are small, the nose is long and obtusely pointed and exceeds the under jaw. The mouth is not large but opens with foalds at the sides, the colour of it’s back and sides is of a bluish brown and belley white; it has the faggot bones, from which I have supposed it to be of the mullet kind. The tongue and pallate are smooth and it has no teeth. It is by no means as good as the trout.

**Mountain sucker**

When Clark’s homeward-bound party was descending the Yellowstone in the summer of 1806, he recorded that “one of the men brought me a fish of a species I am unacquainted.” The fish, caught on July 16, just downstream from today’s Livingston, Montana, was eight inches long,
with “a mouth like that of the Sturgeon” (i.e., relatively small and underslung, for feeding on the bottom), and with a red streak running the length of each flank from gills to tail. Clark is clearly describing the mountain sucker, *Catostomus platyrhynchos* [picture, page 24], another fish species new to science. The particular specimen must have been a male in spawning colors.

**Arctic Grayling**

Yet another fish almost certainly misidentified by later writers—as a steelhead trout, a type of rainbow that spawns in freshwater rivers but spends most of its adult life in the ocean—was described by Lewis on August 22, 1805, at Camp Fortunate, on the headwaters of the upper Beaverhead. With a brush drag, a type of crude net, some of the men seined 528 fish. The catch consisted mostly of cutthroats, along with “ten or a douzen of a white species of trout.” These fish were “of a silvery colour except on the back and head, where they are of a bluish cast.”

Except for its larger scales, the fish reminded Lewis of the eastern brook trout. The fish was “not generally quite as large” as the eastern brookie but “equally well flavored.” Calvin M. Kaya, a fisheries biologist at Montana State University, argues that the fish described was the immature form of the Arctic grayling, *Thymallus arcticus* [picture, above]. The grayling’s most conspicuous feature—a large, sail-like dorsal fin—is lacking in subadults, which would explain its absence on the fish collected at Camp Fortunate. Although Lewis doesn’t give dimensions for the fish, he did note that it was smaller than a brook trout—a telling detail, since it’s doubtful that few if any brook trout Lewis knew from Appalachian streams would have exceeded 12 inches. Grayling also have notably larger scales than trout, which in fact appear scaleless. Although the Arctic grayling had been described in 1776 from specimens collected in Siberia, Lewis’s documentation appears to be the first of the species in North America. It would have been the fluvial or river form of the Arctic grayling. Fluvial grayling are now extinct in the Lower 48 except for a remnant population in the upper Big Hole River (Lewis and Clark’s Wisdom River), which joins with the Beaverhead to form the Jefferson.

In his book *The Natural History of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, Raymond Darwin Burroughs concludes that the fish described “may have been the steelhead trout,” a sea-going rainbow trout that, like a salmon, returns to its natal river to spawn. Presumably he means the steelhead in its immature form, before it goes to sea, since adult steelhead can weigh between five and thirty pounds. The problem is that steelhead (and rainbows generally) are native to the Pacific watershed, while the fish seined on August 22, 1805, were taken on the Atlantic side of the Continental Divide. Burroughs mistakenly states that at the time, Lewis was on the Lemhi River, on the Pacific side of the divide; this is undoubtedly the source of his confusion.

**Fish of the Pacific Watershed**

The explorers encountered the steelhead, which they called the salmon-trout, while descending the Columbia in the fall of 1805. Lewis described this fish in his journal entry
for March 16, 1806, written at Fort Clatsop, on the lower estuary. His statement that they had previously seen it “only at the great falls of the Columbia” but that it had now “made its appearance in the creeks near this place” suggests that he understood it to be, like salmon, a fish that runs upriver from the ocean. His description is the first for the steelhead, the sea-going version of the coastal rainbow trout, *Oncorhynchus mykiss* [picture above and on the following page]. (Although their spawning behaviors differ, taxonomically scientists cannot readily distinguish between the coastal rainbow and the steelhead, and they lump them together as the same species.) The expedition also classified, and named in scientific journals. Unfortunately, the time, meaning they had yet to be formally described, their 28 months on the trail were unknown to science at

Most of the fish mentioned by Lewis and Clark during their 28 months on the trail were unknown to science at the time, meaning they had yet to be formally described, classified, and named in scientific journals. Unfortunately, even when Lewis, the Corps of Discovery’s resident naturalist, attempted to provide the kind of taxonomic information needed for the scientific record, he sometimes left out important diagnostic details, and his use of common names like chub and mullet can confuse as much as clarify. For all these reasons it is probably futile to attempt a definitive list of fish species “discovered” by Lewis and Clark, although that hasn’t stopped people from trying. Paul Russell Cutright, for example, in *Lewis and Clark: Pioneering Naturalists*, lists 12. Cutright’s tally is based on identifications made by Coues, however, and as noted, some of these can be challenged. For Montana fish, one can be confident in matching journal descriptions to known species in the case of the cutthroat trout, goldeye, and mountain sucker. Others—the flathead chub, mountain whitefish, and Arctic grayling—are more conjectural. The same might be said for the channel catfish and stonecat, which are mentioned but not described in any detail.

Such matters, like so many related to the Lewis and Clark Expedition, will be debated forever. We can be reasonably sure of one thing, though: Goodrich and his fellow anglers caught a lot of fish, and they surely had fun doing so.

*Foundation member Ken Walcheck, a retired wildlife biologist, lives in Bozeman, Montana. He wrote about meat consumption in the August WPO.*

**Notes**

1. Gary E. Moulton, ed., *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, 13 volumes (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983-2001), Vol. 4, pp. 286-287. All quotations or references to journal entries in the ensuing text are from Moulton by date, unless otherwise indicated.

2. Robert J. Behnke, *Trout and Salmon of North America*
(New York: The Free Press, 2002), p. 139. Unknown to Lewis, of course, the cutthroat trout was the first blackspotted, or true trout, to reach the interior of North America through the Columbia River system. Those fish occupying the upper Columbia River drainage developed into the westslope cutthroat, *Oncorhynchus clarki bouvieri*, occupying the Yellowstone River drainage. Cutthroats were caught by hook and line and were also seined, gigged, or otherwise observed by expedition members on the following dates in 1805 (parenthetical references are to Moulton, by volume and page): Missouri River: June 15 (4:296-297), 16 (11:199), 25 (4:332), and July 21 (4:414). Jefferson River: August 3 (5:37). Beaverhead River: August 13 (11:267), 14 (10:125), 15 (11:269), 19 (11:277), 20 (5:126), 22 (5:144).

3 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, pp. 79, 83, 95; Robert R. Hunt, “Fish Feast or Famine: Incomplete Anglers on the Lewis & Clark Trail,” from Robert A. Saindon, *Exploration with Related Documents*, 3 volumes (Great Falls, Mont.: Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, 2003), Vol. 2, pp. 670-679. Hunt’s article, which originally appeared in the February 1997 *WPO*, refers to an “8 Stave Reel” purchased by Lewis, but it’s clear from the list of items received from tackle dealer George R. Lawton (Jackson, p. 79) that “8” refers to the number of stave reels sold. Lawton also supplied Lewis with a variety of hooks and lines, while other hooks and lines were purchased from the firm of Harvey and Worth (Jackson, p. 83). Lewis’s summary of purchases (Jackson, pp. 93-99) included 2,800 fish hooks for Indian presents. There is no mention of split shot or cork bobbers in any of the expedition’s equipment inventories, but these could have been readily fashioned from available materials.

4 Some members of the Washburn Expedition of 1870, which explored the region that would become Yellowstone National Park, appear to have cut poles from streamside vegetation. Paul Schullery, *Cowboy Trout: Western Fly Fishing as If It Mattered* (Missoula: University of Montana Press, 2006), p. 64.

5 Moulton, Vol. 5, p. 159, and Vol. 4, p. 278.

6 On several occasions during the trip up the Missouri in the summer of 1804 the explorers caught hundreds of fish. On August 16, Clark took some men fishing and returned to camp with a barrel full, and on August 25, five of nine catfish caught weighed in the neighborhood of a hundred pounds each. These were blue catfish (*Ictalurus furcatus*), which are common to the lower Missouri and the Mississippi and can easily reach such weights. (Moulton, Vol. 9, p. 40; Vol. 8, p. 61.)

7 This stretch of the Missouri currently has about 49 species of fish (native and introduced species), including fish as primitive as the paddlefish, as rare as the pallid sturgeon, and as unusual as the blue sucker.

8 The catfish were caught near Beauchamp Creek in Phillips County, Montana. (Moulton, Vol. 4, pp. 180, 182n.) Montana fisheries biologist Bill Wiedenheft (personal communication) estimates there were 37 native fishes in the Beauchamp Creek area of the Missouri in Lewis and Clark’s day.

9 The journals record other catches of channel catfish in Montana on June 11 and 18 and July 10, 1805. In his journal...
nal entry for June 28, Clark reported, “Cat fish no higher,” meaning that no catfish were caught above the Great Falls.

Moulton, Vol. 4, pp. 278-279.


12 The sauger is closely related to the walleye, another fish known for its succulence. A. J. McClane, McClane’s *New Standard Fishing Encyclopedia and International Angling Guide* (New York: Holt Rinehart Wilson, 1974), p. 845. Lewis mentions that the jaws of both fish were rimmed with teeth. Members of the minnow family, which includes the flathead chub, have toothless jaws. I am inclined to believe that Lewis erred in his description of the chub-like fish as having teeth. It is possible that, relying on faulty memory (journal entries were not always written on the day of the events recorded), he mistakenly confused the “chub” with the other catch of the day, goldeye, which does possess a rim of teeth on the upper and lower jaws. (The sauger also has teeth on both its upper and lower jaws.)

13 The same species was evidently caught on July 10, 1805, above the Great Falls. Wrote Lewis, “having nothing further to do I amused myself in fishing and caught a few small fish; they were of the species of white chub mentioned below the falls, tho’ they are small and few in number.” Moulton, Vol. 4, p. 371. According to Montana fishery biologists, it is questionable if sauger were ever present in the Missouri above the Great Falls.


15 Lewis’s statement reads in full, “The latter kind are much the best, and do not inhabit muddy water.” Although he does not specify that “best” refers to eating, it seems strongly implied.

16 Members of the 1870 Washburn Expedition into the future Yellowstone National Park caught many whitefish in addition to trout. Schullery, p. 65-67.

17 Moulton, Vol. 5, p. 119.

18 Coues, Vol. 2, p. 519n. Coues identified the fish as *Catostomus catostomus*, commonly known as the northern sucker and also longnose sucker.

19 Moulton, Vol. 5, p. 37; Burroughs, p. 264. As Burroughs implies, “bottle-nose” is a common name for sucker.


21 Moulton, Vol. 5, p. 144. The passage reads in full, “they are of a silvery colour except on the back and head, where they are of a bluish cast. the scales are much larger than the speckled trout, but in their form [and] position of their fins teeth mouth &c they are precisely like them[,] they are not generally quite as large but equally well flavored.” Brook trout are conspicuously colored—dark blue-green on top, with red and yellow spots—but Lewis didn’t note the difference in coloration.


23 Burroughs, p. 262. Moulton (Vol. 5, p. 147n) suggests the fish might be a steelhead. Coues (p. 545) raises the possibility that the fish is some species of Pacific salmon but then dismisses the notion by observing that Pacific salmon are “not represented” in streams of the Atlantic watershed. Behnke (p. 329) gets it right: “Lewis and Clark did not encounter grayling until they got to the Beaverhead River. They called the grayling ‘white trout.’”

24 For details of the complex and often separate itineraries of Lewis and Clark during August 1805 (a confusing topic) see J.I. Merritt, “Cameahwait’s geography lesson,” *WPO*, November 2003, pp. 36-37.

25 Behnke, pp. 70-73.


The old adage in real estate is “location, location, location.” The same can similarly be said about history; it’s “perspective, perspective, perspective.” History is complexity, and this fine collection of essays provides some yet untold facts and fleshes out ever-expanding facets of the Lewis and Clark legacy. The cover image (right), a watercolor-and-ink painting by a modern-day Pakistani artist, symbolizes the volume’s eclecticism. Clearly an East Asian depiction, it recreates cowboy-artist Charles M. Russell’s inaccurate, but nevertheless spectacular, painting of the Corps of Discovery meeting Chinook Indians (Lewis and Clark on the Lower Columbia, 1905).

This volume’s eclectic nature, however, is its great strength, presenting everything from critical modern deconstruction to the solid, traditional type of scholarly work that has characterized Lewis and Clark literature for more than a century. The 14 authors wear many hats—lawyer, editor, author, film maker, educator, historian, novelist, literary expert, Native-American museum director, doctor, and tour guide. These camps represent and illuminate a wide gamut of modern American perspectives on the corps’ story and its ramifications. Readers may not agree with some of the essayists, but it is good to understand their viewpoints.

The book begins by placing the Lewis and Clark journals in the context of the landscape and travel literature of Jefferson’s day. Next, Edward C. Carter II, a former American Philosophical Society librarian, presents a two-century overview of that organization’s key role in encouraging early western exploration and in the continuing preservation of the Lewis and Clark journals for posterity. Following are two essays, one focused on Meriwether Lewis’s and William Clark’s literary backgrounds and writing styles, the other on their training and skills as physicians to the tribes and their men.

The volume then turns to legal issues, including far-reaching questions regarding the constitutional legality of the Louisiana Purchase, plus its influence on America’s expanding federalism. Raymond Cross tells how “water, disease, and words” have shaped two centuries of Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara tribal history. Charles Boewe describes the accomplishments of C.S. Rafinesque, a linguist and scientist who knew expedition member George Shannon well in the 1820s and who was an extensive reader of Nicholas Biddle’s version of the journals. Joanna Brooks investigates the multiple implications between Sacagawea’s legacy and the novel Cogewea (1927), written by Mourning Dove (Christine Quintasket), a Salish speaker from northeastern Washington’s Colville Reservation.

The final two sections, more than a third of the essays, reflect on the 1904-06 centennial of the expedition and the 2004-06 bicentennial—another real strength of this volume. The authors, including John Spencer and Roberta Conner, insightfully compare how the earlier commemoration focused on national destiny and the fulfillment of Jefferson’s vision for an American economic empire in the Pacific, whereas today’s bicentennial has been far more reflective and multicultural in scope. In regard to the bicentennial and its many events, I might interject what James Ronda said in a talk at Washington State University earlier this year: “We did it right.” Most of the essayists included here probably would agree, and they beg us to wonder how Americans might commemorate the expedition in 2054 and 2104.

In a concluding essay, Dayton Duncan tells about the sub-zero winter night he spent wrapped in five buffalo robes in a reconstructed Mandan-Hidatsa lodge. While stoically fighting off the cold, he perceptively imagines guiding the captains on a modern-day retracing of their route.

Readers knowledgeable about Lewis and Clark history will note some factual errors and omissions in a couple of the chapters. Also, the frontispiece map identifies the Pacific Northwest as the “Oregon Country,” when in fact that designation really was not applied to the region until some years later. These few criticisms aside, this essay collection is one of the finest in the flush of Lewis and Clark books appearing during the bicentennial. There is something here for everyone.

—Glen Lindeman

The reviewer is editor-in-chief of Washington State University Press
For writers of historical fiction the trick is to hew to historical truth while filling history’s inevitable gaps with a good story. The post-expedition years of Lewis and Clark provide the gaps, but neither the scenery nor the cast of characters compares with those of the expedition.

The streets of St. Louis, where Frances Hunter’s historical novel *To the Ends of the Earth* begins, are a foul pudding of garbage, mud, and manure. The opening scene finds Meriwether Lewis, the territorial governor, waking up with a tart whose name he cannot recall. His mind races to his first appointment of the day, with the nefarious James Wilkinson, the commanding general of the U.S. Army. Wilkinson was a key witness in Aaron Burr’s trial for treason but probably was as guilty of planning a western empire in contravention of U.S. sovereignty as Burr. Unabashed, Wilkinson floats a comparable scheme before Lewis.

Lewis spurns the offer and threatens to expose Wilkinson. This is like kicking a rattlesnake, for Wilkinson’s next move is to promise his Spanish conspirators the priceless journals of Lewis and Clark, for a fee with a nice advance. The schemer can deliver only by eliminating Lewis. Lewis, debt-wrecked, puts himself in harm’s way by embarking for Washington, D.C., to document his expenditures, reveal Wilkinson’s plot, and present the journals to Thomas Jefferson.

Lewis travels overland up the Natchez Trace, a dangerous and untamed route, accompanied by his servant, Pernia, a disaffected man with a financial claim on him, and by Captain James Neely, an officer subverted by Wilkinson. Of Lewis’s companions, only his Newfoundland dog, Seaman, can be trusted.

Learning of Lewis’s danger, William Clark leaves his young family in St. Louis to follow him with only his slave York to ride shotgun. When Wilkinson’s skullduggery produces street mobs prowling St. Louis and handbills denouncing both captains, Julia, Clark’s wife, is frightened into a mind-boggling decision to pursue Clark with a lone army officer as her escort. Thus does Hunter set up a modestly entertaining chase-and-rescue scenario reminiscent of a Hollywood western.

Julia, only 17, soon recognizes that she is almost literally a babe in the woods and debates the wisdom of her mission. Although no Sacagawea, she soldiers on, enduring long hours in the saddle, river fords and swamps, gamy trail food, the innuendoes of frontier louts, and ravenous mosquitoes, all before the final confrontation. In contrast to the innocent Julia, most of the novel’s other female characters are tavern slatterns and pliers of the oldest profession.

The downward trajectory of Lewis’s mental state is never pleasant to witness. Relief from the spectacle of his substance abuse and miasmic hallucinations comes when he confronts an ambush commissioned by Wilkinson and pumps a slug into a crude simpleton who is one of his assailants. The precious journals, for which hero and villain alike risk their necks, are ironically the “MacGuffin” of this piece, a favorite Hitchcockian plot device that drives
the action but whose importance, in this case, is assumed rather than proven. Clark’s unswerving devotion to Lewis is predictable. However, it is difficult to connect Hunter’s Clark with the methodical cocaptain of the expedition. Her version is more than a bit of a hothead. He acts impetuously, jumps to conclusions, flies into action, and is quick to hurl a punch or an epithet.

Refreshingly, York has a meaningful role that avoids overt stereotypes. But, except for his complaints about his bondage, there is little vernacular speech or culture to connect him with his identity. Still, the individuality of Hunter’s York is revealed in his challenging an occasional ill-considered decision by his master, such as refusing an order to help flog Pernia, a fellow black (albeit a freedman).

It is said that you can judge a man by the caliber of his enemies. By that standard, Lewis and Clark fare poorly here. The amoral Wilkinson respects no interests but his own. The ferret-like Pernia has a gut instinct for any man’s vulnerability. Captain Neelly, a weak reed, wavers constantly on the brink of inaction. Frederick Bates, the territorial secretary and Lewis’s rival, is so choleric that when he rants the spittle nearly flies off the page. At Grinder’s Stand, where Lewis ends his life, the proprietress rents herself out to guests with her husband’s compliance.

Hunter surmounts her greatest creative challenge by avoiding anticlimax after Lewis’s death. Indeed, the reactions of Clark, York, and Julia to the discovery of the loss of their friend, their efforts to learn the truth of his demise, and to exact revenge in case of homicide, provide the novel’s most emotionally riveting passages.

As we know, the journals did not perish or pass into the wrong hands. Clark and Julia continued to enjoy domestic bliss in St. Louis, and York’s life eventually took a favorable turn. No refund is forthcoming. Wilkinson, one of the great survivors of American history, has cashed the check and is off with a chuckle to his next scam.

(Frances Hunter, by the way, is a pen name. Two women, sisters Liz Clare and Mary Clare, coauthored the novel. Blind Rabbit Press is their own imprint. Order from www.frances-hunter.com.)

—Dennis M. O’Connell

Trippin’ with L&C

The L&C Bicentennial is over, and with crowds no longer an issue, now may be the best time to take to the road in the captains’ footsteps. If you go, be sure to carry Lewis and Clark Road Trips: Exploring the Trail Across America, by Kira Gale (River Junction Press, $29.95, paper).

This large-format volume combines the best features of a highway atlas and a conventional tour guide. It has easy-to-read maps, color illustrations, and concise descriptions of some eight hundred places to visit. Informative sidebars address topics ranging from Prince Madoc and the Welsh Indians to the Nine Young Men from Kentucky. Every part of the Lewis and Clark Trail is covered, along with the captains’ travels in eastern states before and after the expedition. Gale divides her guide into ten regions and introduces each section with a crisply written introduction placing Lewis and Clark into a broader historical context. The author has also compiled a table of known expedition campsites cross-referenced to maps elsewhere in the book and to Gary Moulton’s 13-volume edition of the Lewis and Clark journals.

Gale has done a masterful job compiling so much information in such an easily usable format. If I were limited to one book for planning a Lewis and Clark trip and finding my way along the trail, this would be it.

—J.I.M.
CM Russell Museum auction

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pickup November 2005 issue,
p. 33
(“Joining a Foundation Chapter”)
Wendy Raney is WPO’s new editor

Wendy Raney has been named editor of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation’s quarterly journal, We Proceeded On. She succeeds Jim Merritt and will begin her new role with the February 2007 issue.

“I understand the value of We Proceeded On to our membership and to the advancement of our understanding of the Lewis and Clark Expedition,” Raney said. “I look forward to the challenges ahead and am honored to have this opportunity to work with national Lewis and Clark scholars as well as those looking to make their own mark on history.”

Raney currently works as the foundation’s director of field operations and will retain some of her existing responsibilities. She will continue to coordinate the foundation’s trail stewardship and preservation projects and programs, and will serve as the organization’s Congressional and land-management agency liaison. She will continue to write, edit, and produce the foundation’s quarterly membership newsletter, The Orderly Report.

She was born and raised along the Yellowstone River in Livingston, Montana, where her parents and sister continue to live. Raney graduated from Vassar College, in Poughkeepsie, New York. Her undergraduate thesis studied the ways modern society and historians have transformed and mythologized the role Sacagawea played in the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Raney also has a master’s degree in journalism from Northwestern University, in Evanston, Illinois, with an emphasis in reporting and editing.

She previously worked as a business reporter for the Great Falls Tribune and was the public information officer for Montana’s elected state auditor.

Raney and her husband, Brent McCann, live on a ranch southwest of Great Falls.

Passage

Wilbur P. Werner, 94, a founding member of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation and its president in 1975-76, died July 15 in Mesa, Arizona.

A long-time resident of Cut Bank, Montana, where he practiced law for six decades, Werner was passionately devoted to Lewis and Clark, and he led countless tours to nearby Camp Disappointment and the site on Two Medicine River where Meriwether Lewis had his deadly encounter with Blackfeet Indians in July 1806. He wrote numerous articles about the expedition for a wide variety of publications, including WPO, and donated his many books on Western Americana to the Glacier County Library, in Cut Bank. He served three terms as county attorney and was active in community organizations, including the Boy Scouts and Chamber of Commerce.

Werner was born in 1911 in Falls City, Nebraska, raised on a farm, earned a law degree at the University of Omaha, and moved to Cut Bank in 1937. Through his legal and community work he befriended many Indians on the nearby Blackfeet Reservation. In 1941 he was inducted into the tribe and given the name Weasel Head (Ah-Po-Tu-Can).

He was predeceased by his first wife, Mary, in 1980, and is survived by his second wife, Martha, and by five children, 17 grandchildren, 20 great grandchildren, and two great-great grandchildren.

LCSA history published

The Lewis and Clark Society of America, based in Hartford, Illinois, and founded in 1956 to educate the public about the Lewis and Clark Expedition’s importance to U.S. history and to commemorate the Corps of Discovery’s encampment at River Dubois during the winter of 1803-04, has published its 50-year history.

Written by the late Merrill S. Rosenthal, the 23-page booklet traces the society’s beginnings as the nation’s first incorporated organization devoted to Lewis and Clark. Founded during the expedition’s 150th anniversary, the society led the effort to place a historical marker at Wood River, Illinois, on the Mississippi River north of St. Louis. The site later became part of a state park and eventually a National Historic Site with an interpretive center completed in 2003. The center includes a replica of Camp River Dubois [below].

While maintaining its separate identity, the LCSA is also the Camp River Dubois Chapter of the LCTHF.

Copies of the booklet are available from Donald Hastings at L.C.S.A., P.O. Box 33, Hartford, IL 62048-0033; dhasting@charter.net.
House Ad IV
pickup
August 2006 issue,
p. 7
(“The Trail needs you now”)
September 17-23 in St. Louis and vicinity was a week to remember as the LCTHF held its 38th annual meeting followed by a four-day celebration marking the end of the three-year L&C Bicentennial. Some 230 foundation members attended the meeting, which featured guest speakers, panel discussions, and a fancy-dress ball at the downtown Adam's Mark Hotel. Highlights of the bicentennial’s final signature event included tours of L&C-related sites, reenactments of the Corps of Discovery’s return to the area, and the dedication of a monumental statue of the captains and Seaman.

On Thursday, September 21, members of the Discovery Expedition of St. Charles, Missouri, reenact the Corps of Discovery’s return to St. Charles exactly 200 years before.

Saturday, September 23: well-wishers ashore and afloat greet the white pirogue’s arrival in St. Louis at the foot of the Gateway Arch.

St. Louis mayor Francis Slay speaks at the dedication of *The Captains Return*, artist Harry Weber’s 23-foot statue of Lewis and Clark and Seaman.

At the Gala Ball: Bryant Boswell as Meriwether Lewis, LuAnn Hunter, Bud Clark as William Clark (his great-great-great grandfather), Beverly Leer, and Hal Stearns.

Gerard Baker (left), superintendent of the L&C National Historic Trail, and tribal delegates.
The L&C Bicentennial is over, but the work goes on

I have been asked more times than I can count over the past year, “What will you do when it’s over?” My inquisitive acquaintances are referring, of course, to the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial commemoration. I have done my best to assure each person I encounter that there is no end to history or to the foundation’s work as keepers of the story and stewards of the trail.

In fact, I would say our work has just begun. With the release of the foundation’s 2006–10 strategic plan, there are many objectives to accomplish. The first goal of the new plan is to “Provide national leadership for stewardship of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail.” Among the objectives we will focus on to achieve that goal are: taking an active role in monitoring and protecting historic, cultural, and natural resources along the trail; identifying trail needs and opportunities for chapter and member involvement; and developing stewardship education programs for youth.

A major priority in the coming months will be advocacy efforts to promote extension of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail east to Monticello. Legislation to extend the trail has been introduced in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives and referred to their respective natural-resources committees. It is imperative that foundation members contact their Congressional delegations to urge them not only to support these bills but to sign on as cosponsors.

Additionally, the foundation will work with federal land-management agencies to get an accounting of their costs to properly manage the trail, and will advocate for appropriate funding levels in Congress. Agency budgets are being drastically reduced, but the foundation will encourage Congress and the agencies to provide adequate funding and staff resources to manage the resources of the trail.

The foundation will continue to monitor projects and activities along the trail to protect the integrity of the historic trail corridor. Currently, there is a proposal to build a coal-fired power generation plant in the Great Falls Portage National Historic Landmark. This proposal raises a variety of concerns with regard to the integrity of the historic trail and will be monitored closely by the foundation and its Portage Route Chapter in Great Falls, both of whom plan to take action as appropriate and necessary.

Federal agencies continually update a variety of management plans that impact the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail. Over the past year, the foundation has provided comments on various plans, including the National Park Service’s Draft Management Policies, management plans for the Bitterroot and Lolo National Forests, and the Bureau of Land Management’s Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument Draft Resource Management Plan. Those efforts will continue under the new strategic plan.

Inventoring trail resources
Foundation chapters in many states have contributed to development of an inventory of sites, signs, interpretive centers, gravesites, artifacts, monuments, and other resources along the trail. Efforts will continue to expand that inventory so there is a complete record of what exists along the trail and what was built during the bicentennial. This inventory will help the foundation, private landowners, tribes, and federal, state, and local agencies in managing the historic, cultural, and natural resources along the trail and in preserving existing educational and interpretive information.

Volunteers have contributed hundreds of thousands of hours to the trail and to sharing the stories of the expedition throughout the bicentennial. The foundation has developed a database of volunteer opportunities and plans to expand it over the winter to include opportunities from Fort Clatsop to Monticello, with projects hosted by chapters, state and federal agencies, organizations with similar missions, and other partners. We encourage members to participate in these activities to help share stories of the expedition and assure their historical accuracy while preserving and protecting the historic, cultural, and natural resources along the trail for future generations.

Keeping members informed
The foundation is developing an e-mail system so we can alert members to activities along the trail, including volunteer opportunities, meetings and festivals, and potentially harmful developments. We have found that once volunteers dedicate time and energy to a site or a segment of trail, they want to be aware of what’s happening there.

“What will you do when it’s over?” My answer is simple: We will continue to do what we’ve always done in our historic role as Keepers of the Story, Stewards of the Trail.

—Wendy Raney
Director of Field Operations

Kentucky Web site
A new Web site devoted to Lewis and Clark in Kentucky (www.lewisandclarkinkentucky.org) has been up and running since earlier this year. Sponsored by the state’s bicentennial committee, it explores people and places associated with the expedition and includes links to other L&C-related Web sites. As the “Cradle of the Corps of Discovery,” according to the site, Kentucky supplied 17 of the 33 members of the corps’ permanent party, including Clark and his slave York, George Drouillard, the Nine Young Men from Kentucky, and five others.
No. The ocean was too darn far, at least for someone to see from a canoe. It’s possible that Clark viewed it from the higher vantage of the embankment behind the corps’ campsite. (See letters in the February 2005 issue.)

**On the return journey, did Lewis and his party, after digging up the iron frame of the collapsible boat, take it with them, perhaps for bartering the iron at the Mandan and Hidatsa villages?**

They reburied the frame. If they’d taken it with them, Lewis would have said so in his journal. What happened to it later is anybody’s guess. Maybe, as Jim Holmberg suggested at this year’s annual meeting, in St. Louis, the Blackfeet dug it up and used the iron to make arrowheads.

**Who were those Indians Lewis encountered on Two Medicine River, and how many were killed in the ensuing fight?**

I agree with John C. Jackson (see his article in the February 2006 issue) that they were Piegan (Pikani) Blackfeet, and just one died.

**Are there missing Lewis journals?**

I doubt it. Lewis kept up his journal whenever he was traveling without Clark. His journal lapses occur during stretches when he and Clark were together. Clark was a meticulous journalist—I don’t believe he missed a single day during the entire expedition (although many of his entries were copied from Lewis). Lewis must have figured that, between Clark and the various enlisted men who kept journals, the expedition was covered.

**Was the “short rifle” made for Lewis at Harpers Ferry a cut-down version of the Model 1792 or some sort of prototype of the Model 1803?**

I side with Richard Keller and Ernest Cowan (WPO, May 2006)—the 15 rifles were early versions of the Model 1803.

**Now for the mother of all Lewis and Clark questions: At Grinder’s Stand in the early hours of October 11, 1809, did Meriwether Lewis die by his own hand or someone else’s?**

He took his own life. The evidence, albeit circumstantial, is convincing—especially his extremely erratic behavior in the preceding weeks and the reactions of Clark and Thomas Jefferson to news of their friend’s death.

**Failure or success?**

One question raised from time to time during the bicentennial concerns the expedition’s accomplishments. At a panel discussion during the 2003 annual meeting, in Philadelphia, one participant (a professor at the University of Pennsylvania) provoked the ire of many in the audience by pronouncing the expedition a “failure.” He did so for all the usual reasons cited by academic skeptics, whose arguments boil down to the assertion that Lewis and Clark “discovered” nothing that hadn’t been known to generations of Native Americans. Some critics have gone so far as to state that the captains knew they were failures and that this knowledge was a contributing factor in Lewis’s suicide. Conversely, there are also those who point to their purported “success” in opening the West, thereby paving the way for the destruction of the environment and tribal cultures. Poor Lewis, poor Clark! They are damned for failing and equally damned for succeeding.

Of course, in one sense Lewis and Clark did fail. They failed to find a Northwest Passage, because none existed, and except for their die-hard devotees few have followed the route they traveled, which is about the worst way imaginable to reach the Pacific. Nor do I believe that they materially affected the history of westward expansion. American fur traders were already plying the Missouri and didn’t need Lewis and Clark to tell them about the bonanza of pelts awaiting them in the Rocky Mountains. As L&C scholar John Logan Allen noted at this year’s annual meeting, the Louisiana Purchase was vastly more important than the expedition, even though its bicentennial went virtually unnoticed.

All that said, Lewis and Clark certainly succeeded in carrying out Thomas Jefferson’s instructions, and in the entire history of exploration it is hard to imagine an expedition better led or documented.

Not too long ago the Corps of Discovery was hailed as the spearhead of empire. Today it is more likely to be celebrated for its cultural diversity, a notion that would have utterly baffled the manor-born captains. (In 2003, William Clark’s home town of Louisville dedicated a heroic statue of York, his slave who accompanied him to the Pacific; it has yet to erect a statue honoring York’s master.) This shift in perspective underscores an observation by Stephen Ambrose: the expedition’s greatest legacy is the story itself, and every generation has to interpret that story on its own terms.

To the foundation’s leadership, past and present—thanks for your support and the independence you’ve given me to shape the magazine as I’ve seen fit.

To my able successor, Wendy Raney—best wishes. You’ll be happy indeed if you enjoy the job half as much as I have.

And last but not least, to WPO’s many devoted readers—I am grateful for your engagement in this timeless and compelling story, and I hope to see you on the trail.
A stop at the Three Forks of the Missouri during the foundation's August 1981 "rolling" annual meeting (the editor's first).

BY JIM MERRITT

So long, it’s been good to know you

A few reflections from WPO’s retiring editor

That’s not the case, of course, for most members of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, as I realize whenever I attend one of our annual meetings and am astonished once again by the seemingly boundless interest in the Corps of Discovery. In many ways this has made my job easy. We Proceeded On is what’s known in the trade as a writer-driven, rather than editor-driven, magazine. Almost all the articles I’ve published have come to me “over the transom,” unsolicited, and written by members who have waded up to their necks (sometimes literally) in one tributary or another of the great Lewis and Clark watershed.

That was certainly so in 1981, when I joined the foundation and in August of that year took part in a “rolling” annual meeting, a bus tour of southwestern Montana retracing the route of the Great Captains (as some in our hardy band actually called them) from Helena to Dillon, across Lemhi and Lost Trail passes, and down the Bitterroot Valley to Missoula. There were 101 of us aboard our two busses, including a pair of youngish scholars—Gary Moulton (recently hired to edit the L&C journals) and Jim Ronda (still in the research phase of his seminal work, Lewis and Clark among the Indians)—as well as most of the “Portland mafia” and other charter members of the foundation, which at the time was just 12 years old.

Membership as a whole numbered only five hundred and represented the hardest of hardcore lewisandclarkers. Now the foundation boasts more than three thousand members, and a typical annual meeting draws at least four hundred. In the last decade our ranks have been swelled by people drawn to Lewis and Clark by Undaunted Courage, Stephen Ambrose’s 1996 biography of Lewis; Ken Burns’s 1997 PBS documentary about the expedition; and the three-year bicentennial, which has at last come to a close. Many of these new members are curious about Lewis and Clark but have limited knowledge of the subject, and I have tried to edit the magazine with them in mind. I think of WPO as a special-interest magazine edited for a general reader.

Points of contention

As editor I’ve also tried to elevate WPO’s role as a forum for debate about contentious issues swirling in the captains’ wake. I have avoided taking sides in those controversies and have seen my job as that of a facilitator, helping a writer to make a case as clearly and convincingly as possible, whether or not I agree with it. Now that I’m leaving the editorship I can say where I stand on some of these questions:

At Chinook Point in November of 1805, did members of the Corps of Discovery “vote” on where to spend their winter on the Pacific?

No. Call it a poll, a straw vote, or a nonbinding referendum, but it was certainly not a vote in the conventional sense. Whatever you call it, I do agree with Steven Ambrose and Dayton Duncan about the importance of this “vote” for what it says about the captains’ leadership and the corps’ hard-earned sense of unity.

That same November, did William Clark actually see the Pacific at Pillar Rock, as he claimed in his famous exclamation, “O’cean in view!”?