New Perspectives

Western Exploration in the 1740s -- A Medical Mystery
## Contents

President's Message: A call to action 2

Letters: Harpers Ferry short rifle debate 4

**La Vérendrye, An expedition before Lewis and Clark**  
Seventy years before Lewis and Clark explored the West, a French Canadian and his four sons dedicated their lives to a search for the Western Sea.  
By Marion Erickson Veraldi and Lorna Veraldi 6

**When Winter Comes**  
A look at the Lewis and Clark Expedition from new perspectives.  
By Frank X. Walker 14

**The Mystery of the Bones**  
Bones of the Arikaras show no signs of syphilis, but the notes of Captains Lewis and Clark indicate Corps members contracted the disease from Arikara women during their 1804 visit.  
By Thomas P. Lewy and P. Willey 22

Reviews  
*Native America, Discovered and Conquered;*  
*The Life and Times of Nathaniel Hale Pryor;*  
*By His Own Hand? The Mysterious Death of Meriwether Lewis*  
By His Own Hand? The Mysterious Death of Meriwether Lewis 27

Bicentennial Reflections  
Why the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial was not a bust  
By Landon Y. Jones 30

Bicentennial: Look past the numbers  
By David L. Nicandro 36

L&C Roundup  
Foundation receives $1.6 million for trail stewardship;  
Regional meetings; Borlaug honored; Locust Grove homecoming 33

Soundings  
Influential Americans  
By Gary E. Moulton 36

---

On the cover  
Relatively few artists have rendered likenesses of York, Captain William Clark’s slave, in the 200 years since he explored the West with the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Charles M. Russell painted this depiction more than 100 years after the expedition encountered the Mandans. In recent years, a number of artists have endeavored to shed light on York’s story through their own art. Frank X. Walker provides insight into what York might have said about his experiences with the Corps of Discovery beginning on page 14.
President's Message

A call to action from President Gramentine

It came to pass that on New Year’s Eve day an epistle in the form of an e-mail was received by your humble servant. It came from Command Central in Great Falls and contained at its heart the executive director’s statement, “We have important work to do.” She went on to explain that she wished we could issue a “Call to Action” to the entire membership.

Receiving a message from Carol Bronson at any time of the day or night during any of the 365 days in the year is not an unusual experience. Indeed, her nominal bosses over the years, ranging to my certain knowledge, from Larry Epstein through Ron Laycock and Gordon Julich to the incumbent, have urged her to ease off on the throttle, reduce her hours at the office and protect her private life to a greater degree. We do this, of course, while together with our colleagues on the board of directors increasing her work load and sending her requests and suggestions at all hours of the day as well. So it should be confessed that in the above referenced instance, I had initiated the exchange late on the Friday before the new year.

It should be further admitted that since the grand finale of the bicentennial in St. Louis last September, a certain subtle lethargy had settled in these quarters. I had not devoted myself to the job with quite the same enthusiasm and energy that I had my first eight months in office, though likely that has been of some relief to staff. While I understood my job better than unexpectedly taking office, a definite letdown had occurred. Call it “the post-commemoration blues.” Not as serious as that experienced by Meriwether Lewis, mind you, but significant nonetheless.

When Ms. Bronson, our twenty-first century’s captain, issues a major signal, however, this humble servant becomes obd’nt as well, especially when the message is so clearly exactly right for the times.

The work we have to do is indeed important. Given the serious challenges we face, a call to action is exactly what we require. For the good of the order, we need to reverse the financial and membership decline. Let me outline how we can do that and leave it to you to fill in the details.

First, each chapter could devote a session to reviewing our strategic plan that was approved in St. Louis.

Which objectives and actions listed therein can best be implemented by your chapter? This document is at the heart of what we deem critical, and we kept it relatively brief. If you lack a copy, go to our website—www.lewisandclark.org—and do a search for “Strategic Plan.”

One might also review Wendy Raney’s excellent article in the November 2006 issue of We Proceeded On, page 38. Her thoughts focus on the trail, not surprisingly, but one does not have to live near the trail to love and work for it.

Preceding and during the bicentennial, we did a great job of taking the Lewis and Clark story to the nation’s schools and civic groups. As a result, we have a better-informed cadre of youth approaching adulthood than at any previous time. Now we need to bring them into the foundation, either as regular members or in auxiliary organizations. Ditto adults of all ages.
Meanwhile, let us continue to visit schools and interested youth and civic organizations wherever we can find them.

Membership Committee Chair Jim Rosenberger recently wrote to all chapters offering several ideas about membership recruitment that can benefit chapters as well as the foundation. I especially liked his “Every Member is a Recruiter” concept. He offered several other suggestions, while also inviting chapters to share their ideas with the committee. Both Jim and I would be pleased to provide copies of his letter to anyone interested.

Finally, I would be remiss not to mention the foundation’s increased financial needs at this stage of our return to an era of self-reliance. The early response to the Third Century Endowment Fund campaign is encouraging and has been wonderfully augmented by the recent establishment of the Lewis and Clark Trail Stewardship Endowment, a legacy from our partnership with the Bicentennial Council and the Missouri Historical Society. (Article on p. 33.) It seems clear that the 2006-07 Annual Appeal will be the most successful to date. The membership’s understanding of the foundation’s needs and purpose certainly has improved, and its response has been ever more generous. We are truly grateful.

Yes, we have important work to do, and we require an active, committed membership serving on several fronts. Our cause is far greater than the health of the foundation itself. Rather, it concerns the enhancement of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail and the place of the Lewis and Clark Expedition in the nation’s history. In a small but not inconsequential way, what we accomplish will strengthen America. For that, Ms. Bronson is welcome to interrupt my winter doldrums any time.

-Jim Gramentine
President, LCTHF
The Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, Inc.
P.O. Box 3434, Great Falls, MT 59403
406-654-1234 / 1-888-701-3434
Fax: 406-771-9237 www.lewisandclark.org

The mission of the LCTHF is:
• To be the stewards of the story - stewards of the trail, the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, Inc. provides national leadership in maintaining the integrity of the Trail and its story through stewardship, scholarship, education, partnership and cultural inclusiveness.

Officers
President
Jim Gramentine
Mequon, Wisc.

President-Elect
Karen Seaberg
Atchison, Kans.

Vice-President
Vacant

Secretary
Phylis Yeger
Floyd Knobs, Ind.

Treasurer
Clay Smith
Great Falls, Mont.

Immediate Past President
Ron Laycock
Benson, Minn.

Executive Director
Carol A. Bronson

Directors at large
James Brooke, Colorado Springs, Colo.
• Peyton "Bud" Clark, Dearborn, Mich.
• Chris Howell, Topeka, Kan.
• Jim Mallory, Lexington, Ky.
• Larry McClure, Tualatin, Ore.
• David Puck, San Diego, Calif.
• Hal Searns, Helena, Mont.
• Bill Stevens, Pierre, S.D.
• Stephene Ambrose Tubbs, Helena, Mont.

Active Past Presidents
David Borlaug, Washburn, N.D.
• Larry Epstein, Cat Bank, Mont.
• James R. Fazio, Moscow, Idaho
• Robert E. Gatten, Jr., Greensboro, N.C.
• Jane Henley, Charlotteville, Va.
• Gordon Julich, Blue Springs, Mo.
• Barbara J. Kubik, Vancouver, Wash.
• Ron Laycock, Benson, Minn.
• H. John Montague, Portland, Ore.
• James M. Peterson, Vermillion, S.D.
• Patti Thomes, Oconomowoc, Wisc.

Incorporated in 1969 under Missouri General Non-For-Profit Corporation Act. IRS Exemption Certificate No. 501(c)3, Identification No. 54-187718.

The Harpers Ferry short rifle debate continues

In the article, "The Short Rifle of Lewis and Clark," (wpo, May 2006) one crucial detail regarding the Model 1800 rifle case was deleted by the editor. The article did not include an important detail that clearly rules out the "long rifle" (M1792) in any barrel length as a candidate for Lewis's 15 "short rifles."

Ernest Cowan and I have been polling collectors and shooters at our lectures for many years and they have unanimously agreed that it is virtually impossible (and unheard of to date) to burst an octagonal barrel at the muzzle. Lewis experienced a 13 percent failure rate on his short rifles, a rate that is far too high to be associated with any octagonal-barreled weapon, otherwise history would be full of such accounts.

Understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the two types of iron barrels in question allows us to rule out those with octagonal barrels.

Lewis left enough clues to solve the mystery of his rifles, but each piece of the puzzle has to be fitted with the others to get the full picture. Continued focus on the old pieces of the puzzle will not give us the answers we seek. When we include the new pieces, a picture emerges that tells us something is definitely wrong with the old information.

We now know for a fact, from correspondence and at least three known rifles made prior to December 1803, that existing Harpers Ferry storekeeper production records are absolutely wrong, perpetuating a long-standing myth that no short rifles were made at Harpers Ferry in 1803. We have always found it rather hypocritical that historians writers will accept as the "year of production" any date on a Model 1803 rifle except 1803. That storekeepers did not report them until 1804, perhaps simply to fit into fiscal year budgets, cannot explain away the hard evidence proving that numerous rifles were built in 1803, which were, by arsenal policy, dated the year in which they were made. George P. Moller (American Military Shoulder Arms, University Press of Colorado, 1993, Volume 2, p. 347) makes an interesting statement about 1810 Schuykill Arsenal bookkeeping in his chapter on U.S. 1807 contract rifles: "The dates that the rifles were entered in the storekeepers' records usually summarized several earlier deliveries and should not be construed as the actual dates of deliveries."

Harpers Ferry bookkeepers probably were guilty of the same practices. We find conflicting production records in many firearms books for all arsenals, Harpers Ferry included, forcing us to look elsewhere for the truth.

Regardless of the overwhelming factual evidence that the expedition carried fifteen Model 1800 short rifles (made prior to December 1803), there will always be those who cannot, or simply will not, accept anything new, regardless of how strong the evidence. We, as researchers and historians, have the responsibility to present new information, even if it painfully contradicts decades-old theories, to allow open-minded and well-informed readers the opportunity to draw their own conclusions. The biggest mistake made by older historians is the blind acceptance of old information while dismissing new evidence without giving it unbiased consideration. This does history an injustice and stops our advance of knowledge. It is time to set the record straight on both Lewis's Model 1800 and the military Model 1803 rifles and accept the role they played in our early firearms history.

RICHARD H. KELLER
Chambersburg, Pa.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Richard Keller and Ernest Cowan co-authored the article, "The Short Rifle of Lewis and Clark," (wpo, May 2006). This letter is in response to a letter by Stuart Wier, which appeared in the August 2006 issue. Wier contends that there is no evidence to support manufacture of the Model 1803 rifle, or a preliminary version of that rifle, for the expedition.

Richard Keller and Ernest Cowan's article, "The Short Rifle of Lewis and Clark," (wpo, May 2006) discusses a prototype version of the Model 1803
(which the authors refer to as the Model 1800) with the serial number 15. Keller and Cowan raise the intriguing possibility that this may be one of the 15 rifles made for Lewis at Harpers Ferry.

LCTHF past-president Ron Laycock recently showed me an article in the January-February 1978 issue of Muzzleloader magazine that would seem to point to the existence of another of the Corps of Discovery’s 15 Harpers Ferry rifles. The article, by Larry Janoff, refers to Paul Seeley of Santa Rosa, California, as the owner of an Indian trade gun that started out as an 1803 Harpers Ferry rifle. (The year 1803 appears on the lockplate.) The barrel, writes Janoff, “has three rings instead of one, very early rifling, seven lands and seven pointed V grooves. Also stamped near the proof marks is the number 14.”

When I wrote Keller about this article he replied that he was familiar with it and had examined a photograph of the rifle in question. He says that in the photo a “2” can barely be seen before the “14,” so that the serial number is actually 214, which of course precludes its being one of Lewis’s Harpers Ferry rifles. He says the “2” is marred but can be made out; even if it couldn’t, the numbers 1 and 4 are the same distance from the proof mark one would expect if they were the second and third digits of a three-digit serial number. He notes that this rifle has a straight upper ramrod pipe like other high-number Model 1803s but unlike the one with serial number 15.

JIM MERRITT
Pennington, N.J.

EDITOR’S NOTE: The writer is a former editor of WPO.

Education
Networking—a key word for the Lewis and Clark Expedition: becoming a community in their own right, meeting Indian peoples along the way, identifying with nature.

Foundation chapters should do the same. Here are some ways. “Adopt” several schools and invite teachers to your next meeting. Encourage them to do a program at one of your meetings. Work with teachers to develop a lesson plan(s) appropriate for your area. Use your own subject matter experts and get into those classrooms. Establish an essay contest about some aspect of the expedition. Lead a nature walk in your area and compare and contrast with the sights and sounds of the Corps of Discovery. Work on a local stewardship program that ties in with your schools. I guarantee teachers will love working in concert. And don’t forget the community at large. Send an historic piece about some aspect of the expedition to your local paper such as, “What happened to the corps members after the expedition?” A regular column will be appreciated. Good luck.

HAL STEARNS
Board member, LCTHF
Helena, Mont.

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

FULL-COLOR PRINTS
• Significant events on the Lewis & Clark Trail.
• Uniforms of the Corps of Discovery.

MICHAEL HAYNES

Explorations into the World of Lewis & Clark
Edited by Robert A. Saindon
194 articles from WPO
3 volumes, 1,493 pages
$79.85 paper

Order from
Digital Scanning, Inc.
(888-349-4443; wwwdigitalscanning.com)
La Vérendrye

An expedition before Lewis and Clark

BY MARION ERICKSON VERALDI AND LORNA VERALDI

If the Lewis and Clark Expedition is a major chapter in the history of the American West, the expedition of French Canadian Pierre Gaultier, le Sieur de la Vérendrye, is only a footnote. Yet seventy years before Meriwether Lewis and William Clark searched for the elusive Northwest Passage, La Vérendrye began his search for what the French called the Western Sea. And evidence seems strong that La Vérendrye’s sons were the first white explorers in what is now the state of Montana, sixty years ahead of Lewis and Clark.

Lewis and Clark had congressional funding and the enthusiastic support of President Thomas Jefferson. La Vérendrye paid his own way west, constantly backtracking to borrow money, harried by a hostile bureaucracy half a world away. Lewis and Clark had dramatic strokes of good luck. For La Vérendrye, almost everything that could go wrong did go wrong. Lewis and Clark were welcomed home as heroes. La Vérendrye returned in disgrace and died almost a failure. Today, Lewis and Clark are household names. Hardly anyone has heard of La Vérendrye.

Before Lewis and Clark headed up the Missouri River, others had mapped the Pacific Northwest coastline and explored the mouth of the Columbia River. La Vérendrye stepped into uncharted territory whose western boundaries were unknown. Today, the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail is marked clearly and traveled by historians and vacationers alike. Where exactly La Vérendrye’s sons traveled remains open to question.

1731 - 1741
WESTWARD - SLOWLY

On June 8, 1731, La Vérendrye set off by canoe from Montreal with fifty men, among them his three oldest sons: Jean-Baptiste, 18; Pierre, 17; and François, 16; and his nephew, Christopher Dufrost, Le Sieur de la Jemeraye, 20. (La Vérendrye’s youngest son, Louis-Joseph, then 14, joined the expedition in 1735.) By August, they reached Grand Portage on the western shore of Lake Superior. There his men mutinied, refusing to travel further until the next spring. This was the first of a series of setbacks that prevented any significant progress west for another seven years.

From 1731 to 1738, La Vérendrye slowly pushed into the interior, establishing a series of trading posts: Fort St. Pierre on Rainy Lake in 1731; Fort St. Charles on Lake of the Woods in 1732; and Fort Maurepas on the Red River in 1736. But the fur trade never produced enough profits to fund the exploration. Instead of traveling
Strong evidence indicates that the La Verendrye brothers were the first white explorers in what is now the state of Montana in the 1740s.

west, La Verendrye repeatedly traveled east to Quebec to borrow money, digging himself ever deeper into debt and aggravating suspicions that he was not serious about the mission.

Tragedy also stalled the expedition. In June 1736, La Verendrye’s nephew, La Jemerey, died of a fever. A few weeks later, a group of La Verendrye’s men, including his son Jean-Baptiste, were killed by the Sioux, victims of tribal warfare that frequently disrupted trade and travel.

It was 1738 before La Verendrye finally pushed onto the western prairies. He took canoes as far as he could up the Assiniboin River and built Fort La Reine. From there he launched repeated forays to the Mandan villages, hoping to find guides among western tribes who came there to trade.

La Verendrye led the first such expedition. Traveling on foot with a large band of Assiniboons, he arrived at the Mandan villages near present-day Bismarck, North Dakota, in December 1738, planning to continue west. However, shortly after his arrival, his baggage disappeared and his Cree interpreter deserted. With no trade goods, and unable to communicate with his hosts, La Verendrye returned to Fort La Reine, leaving behind two of his men to learn Mandan. Discouraged and ill, he struggled back through the bitter cold. “Never in my life did I endure such misery, pain, and fatigue as in that journey.”

In the fall of 1739, La Verendrye’s men returned from the Mandans with reports of Indians on horseback who had come to trade with the Mandans and promised to guide the French to the Western Sea. In the spring of 1740, La Verendrye sent these men with his son Pierre back to the Mandans. They were to hire guides and search for the Western Sea while La Verendrye took care of pressing business in the East. By then, La Verendrye’s wife was dead; he spent the winter of 1740-41 in Quebec City in the home of his loyal supporter, Governor Beauharnois, who helped him settle lawsuits brought by competing creditors.

Left deeper in debt by the settlements, La Verendrye returned to Fort La Reine in June 1741, only to find that Pierre had come back unsuccessful. None of the western tribes had come to trade with the Mandans that year. Pierre and his two French companions had traveled on their own far enough to see what looked like “Spanish forts” (perhaps distant rock formations that a modern traveler can see from the highway in what is now northwestern South Dakota). There were hostile Sioux in the area; Pierre hadn’t been able to continue farther.
1742 - 1743
THE YOUNGER BROTHERS' EXPEDITION

By the spring of 1742, La Vérendrye was so deeply in debt that he dared not leave the trading posts. He had to attend to business. Still, he knew Minster Maurepas was running out of patience. So he sent his two youngest sons, François and Louis-Joseph, and two other men, La Londette and Miotte (presumably the Mandan-speaking Frenchmen who had traveled with Pierre in 1740). The brother known as “the Chevalier” (who most historians believe was Louis-Joseph) later wrote a report about the journey.

Like the other letters and journals about the expedition, the Chevalier’s report moldered in French archives for almost a century after the British takeover of Canada. Finally, during the 1850s, Pierre Margry, a Parisian archivist, published a series of articles in the *Moniteur* about La Vérendrye’s explorations. He didn’t know much about American geography and theorized that the brothers reached western Montana near what is now Helena. Many lesser historians, inspired by the articles, added their theories. Where the sons traveled in 1742 and 1743 has been the subject of much speculation.

Francis Parkman, whose friendship with Pierre Margry gained him entrance to the French archives, offered a theory not so very different from today’s most widely accepted theories. He thought the explorers traveled near the Little Missouri River, then to the Bighorn Mountains, returning through the Black Hills to a point on the Missouri River some miles south of present-day Pierre, South Dakota. Information uncovered since Parkman’s time has made it easier to track the brothers’ route.

According to the Chevalier, on May 19, 1742, the brothers reached the Mandans. They waited there until July for the *Gens des Chevaux* (Horse People), but then hired two Mandan guides and set off on foot west-southwest, hoping to meet the Horse People on the trail.

The Chevalier regrett ed not collecting samples of the colorful rocks they saw in what must have been the badlands of western North Dakota. “Had I foreseen at the time that I should not travel over this territory again, I should have taken specimens of each kind. I could not load myself with them then, knowing I had a very long road to travel.”

- the Chevalier

After walking 20 days west-southwest, the French reached what their Mandan guides called the Mountains of the Horse People. There they built a shelter at the base of a high butte. Every day, one of the party climbed to the top of the butte to watch for the Horse People. Finally, on September 14, the lookout spotted a pillar of smoke to the south-southwest.

It was a village of *Beaux Hommes* (Handsome People). Sending their Mandan guides home, the French stayed 21 days with the Handsome People, from whom the French presumably acquired horses. On October 9, the French continued south-southwest, traveling first with the Handsome People, then with a village of *Petites Renards* (Little Foxes), and then with a village of “Pioyas,” who accompanied them south. Finally, on October 19, they found the Horse People, whose village had recently been attacked by the *Gens de Serpent* (Snakes).

The Horse People said the French would have to find other guides to the sea—the *Gens de l’Arc* (Bow People), who did not fear the Snakes and often traveled to trade with tribes on the seacoast.

Once more, the French set out to the southwest. On November 18, they came upon a large village of *Gens de la Belle Riviere* (People of the Beautiful River), who told them the Bows were nearby. Three days later, they found the Bows, who turned out to be extremely hospitable. The Bows persuaded the French to ride with them against the Snakes, promising the campaign would take them to the Western Sea.

On they traveled, every day adding people from the villages who had come to ride with the Bows against the Snakes. Two thousand warriors and their families eventually joined the march through “magnificent prairies.” On January 1, 1743, high mountains came into view, dark blue on the horizon. On January 8, the huge band made camp. François stayed with the baggage. The Chevalier and the other French rode out with the warriors.

On January 12, the war party arrived at the foot of the mountains, beyond which, the chief assured them, was the Western Sea. But as the warriors prepared to continue over the mountains, scouts rode back in alarm. They had found the enemy camp nearby, but for some reason the Snakes had abandoned their camp in a hurry, leaving many of their possessions behind. The Bow warriors feared the Snakes had gone to attack the undefended Bow camp and raced back to their families.
“Everyone fled as he felt inclined,” the Chevalier lamented. Even though he had begun to suspect that the sea the Bow chief described was a “sea already known,” the Chevalier was nonetheless disappointed to be forced to turn back before he could see what lay beyond the mountains. The French traveled east-southeast with the Bows through February. In March, they joined a village of Petite Cerises (Little Cherry People) to journey back to the Mandans.

On the way to the Mandan villages, the French climbed to a hilltop and under a cairn of stones buried a lead tablet La Vérendrye had ordered two years earlier. The tablet bore the name of King Louis XV, his coat of arms and an inscription laying claim to the uncharted lands the explorers had traveled:

Anno XXVI Regni Ludovici—XV—Prorege—
Illustrissimo Domino—Domino Marchione—
De Beauharnois M-D-CC-XXXXI
Petrus Gaultier De Laverendrie Posuit. . .

In the twenty-sixth year of the reign of Louis XV, Pierre Gaultier de la Verendrye, acting on behalf of the Marquis de Beauharnois, deposited this plate in 1741 in the name of our most illustrious sovereign, the King.

The Chevalier scratched an update in French on the back of the tablet:

Pose par Le
Chevalier de Lar
St. Lousy Lomlette
A. Miotte,
le 30 de Mars 1743

“Deposited by the Chevalier and de La Vérendrye, witnesses—St. Louis de la Lomdette, A. Miotte, the thirtieth of March, 1743.” The Chevalier could not record the location where he left the tablet, for his astrolabe had broken months before.

The tablet might have been lost to history. However, on February 16, 1913, a group of students out for a Sunday afternoon walk found the lead tablet on a hill overlooking the river at what was by then Fort Pierre, South Dakota. South Dakota historian Doane Robinson recognized its significance. And Robinson was correct in his assertion that the Mandan villages referred to in the La Vérendrye journals were near Bismarck, North Dakota. (Other historians of his time thought the villages were on the Missouri River near the mouth of the Knife River. In the 1930s, North Dakota archaeologists came to realize that the Menoken Village site about 16 miles east of Bismarck and the Double Ditch site about 10 miles north of Bismarck matched the geographic description of the Mandan villages La Vérendrye visited in 1738, and his sons in 1742.)

Though Robinson deserves credit for these perceptions, he stubbornly insisted that the brothers never got west of the Dakotas. He wrote several articles in which he attempted to identify places and tribes of the Dakotas as those described by the Chevalier. Doane Robinson defended his theory as long as he lived, and his son Will continued to do so after his father’s death. It seemed to be a matter of family honor that the La Vérendrye explorations be kept within Dakota boundaries. However, the foundations of Robinson’s theory were questionable.

Journal dates were Robinson’s strongest argument for his Black Hills theory, but there are errors in some of the dates in the Chevalier’s report, as later transcribed and translated. Two errors in dates in the first part of the journal can be corrected by reading the text. “On
the second of August, we reached the Mountains of the Gens de Chevaux.23 Of course, this should be August 11. The explorers left the Mandans on July 23 and walked for 20 days. Then the journal states that they remained with the Handsome People for 21 days after arriving on September 18. Although the journal says they left there “on November 9,”24 this should be October 9.

The January dates are very confusing. “On the 9th we left the village ... Finally on the twelfth day we arrived at the mountains.”25 Does this mean twelve days after leaving the village or January 12? A clue can be found by studying their father’s account of his trip to the Mandans. He refers to “the sixth day” and means December 6.26 It seems likely the Chevalier meant January 12.

The most puzzling date in the whole journal is February 9, the date the Chevalier reported returning to the Bow village after the war party retreated.27 This date was Robinson’s arguing point. If the French started east-southeast about five days after this date, they could not have reached the Missouri River near Pierre, South Dakota, by March 19. It appears, February 9 is another error. Perhaps it should read January 19. The war party had reached the mountains on January 12 and waited possibly three or four days for scouts to locate the Snakes. Then it took the Frenchmen three days to race back to the Bow village. They must have arrived before February 9.

There have to be at least two other errors, May 18 and May 26. May 18, according to the translated journal, is the date the explorers reached the Mandan village on their return from the southwest.28 Why would it have taken them from April 1 until May 18 to ride horseback less than 200 miles from Pierre, South Dakota, to Bismarck, North Dakota, when they then traveled more than 130 miles from the Mandans to the Turtle Mountains with a large group of Assiniboinns, most of them on foot, in seven days (May 26 to June 2)? More likely, the date was not May 18, but rather April 18. The French likely arrived at the Mandan village on April 18 and covered the distance from the Mandan village to the Turtle Mountains between April 27 and June 2.

It is not hard to understand why there were errors in dates. Translators working with the faded ink of hundred-year-old documents certainly could have made mistakes. The Chevalier’s journal reflected recollections written after the fact. The tribes with whom he traveled certainly did not conceive of months or dates in French terms, and the Chevalier himself may have been careless about dates. However, to find his way back, he most surely would have kept careful track of compass directions and of the number of days it took to travel from point to point.

Surprisingly, Robinson seems to have ignored compass directions reported by the Chevalier and to have underestimated the distance the French likely would have traveled. Traveling light, four energetic Frenchmen and two Mandan guides surely would have walked more than eight miles a day, which, if Robinson is correct, they
would have averaged between the Mandan villages and the Mountains of the Horse People. The Black Hills are visible from the ridges of southwestern South Dakota near Reva Gap and Slim Buttes and would have been noticed long before January 1, 1743, if the explorers had followed the route Robinson described.

It took the brothers 21 days to travel 300 miles from Fort La Reine to the Mandans, averaging more than 14 miles per day. They must have walked almost as far in 20 days going out from the Mandan village, eager to get as far as possible during the good weather. Walking west-southwest at 14 miles per day for 20 days would have put them in the vicinity of what is now the little town of Volborg, Montana.

Though this was a very remote place in Robinson's day—about 40 miles from the nearest railroad—modern highways make Volborg an easy drive. From there, one can drive dirt roads to Liscom Butte, the highest point in that vicinity. There is a low range of mountains here. In good weather, a traveler willing to open barbed wire gates and navigate the rutted road twisting up the hillside can drive to the Forest Service fire lookout station at the top of Liscom Butte and be rewarded with a fantastic 360-degree view of eastern Montana and Wyoming. The vegetation is alpine in appearance, a marked change from the rolling prairies to the east. The scrub pine becomes pine forest.

If these are the Mountains of the Horse People, then the Tongue River of southern Montana would have to be "la belle riviere." Stretches of this river still can be described as beautiful, and there are still luxurious grasslands between the Tongue River and the Bighorn Mountains that match the journal descriptions of "magnificent prairies where wild animals were in abundance."59

This route corresponds to compass directions recorded in the journal. The area south and west from Liscom Butte is now the Custer National Forest, a much more likely area to have attracted the various Indian hunting parties the brothers encountered in the fall of 1742 than the gumbo prairies of northwestern South Dakota.

There is evidence that the French traveled on the east side of the Missouri River on their return trip to the Mandan villages after depositing the lead tablet near present-day Pierre, South Dakota. The Chevalier evidently did not include everything in his report, for their father gave additional details in an interview with Peter Kalm, the Swedish naturalist. Kalm met with La Vérendrye in 1749 in Quebec and wrote about the interview in a book on his North American travels.

Looking east from Liscom Butte.

In two or three places, at a considerable distance from each other, our travelers met with the impressions of the feet of grown people and children in a rock, but this seems to have been no more than a Lusus Naturae.50

There is such a rock with enormous footprints in it now on display at Gettysburg, South Dakota.51 It was moved there from a nearby spot, near the river. It would have been on the brothers' route between Pierre and Bismarck. United States army officers Henry Atkinson and Benjamin O'Fallon, on a trip up the Missouri River in 1825, mentioned this same rock.

Kalm's account of his interview with La Vérendrye was an interesting mixture of confusion and fact. He reported that the explorers set out "from Montreal on horseback" and traveled past lakes, rivers and mountains until they came to an area "covered with a kind of very tall grass, for the space of some days' journey." To the west they found "pillars of stone. Sometimes they found such stones leaning upon one another, and, as it were, formed into a wall."52

Anyone who has traveled over southeastern Montana and the western Dakotas would find this to be a fairly accurate description of some of the rock formations in this area. Then there is this, "At last they met with a large stone, like a pillar, and in it a smaller stone fixed, which was covered on both sides with unknown characters."53

It is possible that the brothers passed near Devil's Tower in northeastern Wyoming and that this is a description of this landmark as told first by the explorers to their father and then by him to Peter Kalm.
Another scrap of evidence may have been uncovered at Dunseith, North Dakota, when in 1973 a couple who lived there found a rock on their property with French words on it. The scribblings were said to contain a date from the 1730s. This could conceivably have been left during the trip to the Mandans in 1739 and may indicate the route of the French between Fort La Reine and the Mandan villages.

1744 – 1749
THE END OF THE ROAD

In July 1743, La Vérendrye’s sons returned to tell him that they had not found the Western Sea. La Vérendrye wrote to Governor Beauharnois asking, for health reasons, to be relieved of his command.

He returned east during the summer of 1744. That October, living in a boarding house in Quebec, he wrote to Minister Maurepas, trying to salvage whatever was left of his name and his life. He asked for some reward for his 39 years of service to France, in particular the “difficulties and fatigues that I have endured during the last thirteen years in order to create the establishments which I have made in places where no person before myself has ever penetrated, which will effect a considerable augmentation in the trade of the colony, even if no one fully succeeds in discovering the Western Sea…”

Two years later, Governor Beauharnois wrote to Minister Maurepas concerning the still unfinished exploration for the Western Sea. Nicholas Joseph de Noyelles, Sieur de Fleurimont, had replaced La Vérendrye as Commandant of the Western Posts but had made no further progress. By 1749, Beauharnois had convinced Maurepas to give La Vérendrye another chance.

La Vérendrye spent the autumn of 1749 collecting supplies, hiring men and mapping routes for the following spring. The Chevalier, still in the West, had ascended the Saskatchewan River as far as the fork where north and south branches united to form the main river. The Crees had told him this river began in high mountains, near a great lake. La Vérendrye found this new route promising, but died in Quebec in December 1749, before he could resume his explorations.

La Vérendrye’s sons never resumed their western exploration, either. La Vérendrye’s successor refused to hire them. Both Louis-Joseph and Pierre wrote bitter letters to the French court, imploring redress. But a larger force was at work against them and all the French in Canada. A new outbreak of war with the British claimed Pierre, who died in Quebec in 1755.

Fate continued to treat the family harshly. Louis-Joseph, who married in 1755, lost his first wife and baby daughter a few weeks after her birth. He married again in 1758. In 1760, Montreal fell to the British. Louis-Joseph and two of his sisters, along with their families, booked passage to France aboard L’Auguste. The ship wrecked in a violent storm shortly after it set sail from Nova Scotia in November 1761. Almost all its 120 passengers perished, including all La Vérendrye family members on board.

In 1763, France ceded Canada to England at the Peace of Paris. Future journeys west would be made under other flags. François outlived the rest of his family, dying in 1794 at a retirement home in Montreal at the age of 79. He left no descendants.

Marion Erickson Veraldi, a lifelong Montanan, was born on a homestead south of Barber and has lived in Billings for more than 60 years. Her daughter Lorna, who was born and raised in Billings, now lives in Miami, Florida, where she is an associate professor in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Florida International University.
NOTES


3 Burpee, p. 356.


5 Ibid., pp. 18-23.

6 The authors use the names that appeared in the Chevalier’s report to refer to the various native people encountered on the journey. There is speculation, but no conclusive evidence, about which tribes they were. Francis Parkman thought the Horse People were Cheyennes (Burpee, p. 13). Douglas R. Parks disagrees, but has no alternative theory. Parks, “Enigmatic Groups,” Raymond J. DeMaillie, ed., Handbook of North American Indians, William C. Sturtevant, ed. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 2001), vol. 13, part 2, p. 967.

7 “Journal of the Expedition of the Chevalier de la Vérendrye and one of his brothers to reach the Western Sea, addressed to M. the Marquis de Beauharnois, 1742-43,” annexed to “Letter from Beauharnois to Maurepas, Quebec, October 27, 1744.” Burpee, p. 408.

8 Probably Crows, according to Parks. Parks, p. 967. See also Burpee, p. 14.

9 Burpee, p. 414. The Chevalier later noted that the Bows took good care of the brothers’ horses, but he does not mention where they acquired the horses.

10 Parks, p. 967. Parks believes these were Tuhkiwakus.

11 Ibid. Parks notes Reuben Gold Thwaites and G. H. White thought this might be a “mistranscription” of Kiowas. See also Burpee, p. 14.

12 Burpee, p. 14. Burpee notes five different theories about who the Snakes were: Parkman (western Sioux); Granville Stuart (Sans Arcs); Thwaites (Cheyenne or Arapahos); Doane Robinson (Pawnee-Arikaras); and Judge Prudhome (Bow Indians of South Saskatchewan). “This warlike tribe—variously identified as the Shoshone and the Kiowa—seems to have borne much the same relation to its neighbors as the Sioux or the Iroquois. Their hand was against everybody, and, so far as the terror of their name permitted, everybody’s hand was against them.” Parks believes they were Eastern Shoshones. Parks, p. 967.

13 Speculation about the Bows, notes Parks, has “ranged widely,” but he believes they were most likely Arikaras or Pawnees. Parks, pp. 967-968. Burpee wrote, “this interesting tribe, of which the explorers give a fairly full account, has been the subject of more bewildering identification than any other visited on this journey.” Burpee, p. 15.

14 Arikaras, according to Parks, p. 968.

15 Burpee, p. 418.

16 Ibid., p. 421.

17 Ibid., pp. 416-417.

18 Probably Arikaras, according to Parks, p. 968.

19 Burpee, p. 17.


23 Burpee, p. 408.

24 Ibid., p. 410.

25 Ibid., p. 420.

26 Burpee, “Journal in the form of a letter covering the period from the 20th of July 1738,” pp. 333-338. La Vérendrye described the activities of December 6, 1738, on which the Assiniboons left the Mandan village, writing, “On the sixth day after the departure of the Assiniboins, I sent my son the Chevalier . . . to the nearest fort . . . ” (p. 338). The context makes it clear that La Vérendrye is using “the sixth day” to refer to the events of December 6, the day of the Assiniboons’ departure, rather than December 12, the sixth day after the Assiniboons left.


28 Ibid., p. 429.

29 Burpee, p. 418.

30 Peter Kalm, Travels into North America, J. H. Forster, trans., 2 volumes (London, 1772), vol. 2, pp. 278-281. Cited in Burpee, p. 28. The dictionary defines Lusus Naturae as “freak of nature.” The authors believe Kalm meant that the patterns on the stone simply looked like human prints, and were not footprints made by human beings or fossils.


32 Kalm, cited in Burpee, pp. 28-29.

33 Ibid., p. 29.


When Winter Comes

Untold stories of the Lewis and Clark Expedition

By Frank X. Walker

Where Buffalo Dance: the Journey of York was faithful to the side of the story put forth in the journals of Captains Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, its sequel, When Winter Comes, relies more heavily on other journals, Native American transcribed oral histories, and African cultural traditions and religious belief systems. This account of the Lewis and Clark Expedition and its impact seeks to challenge the traditional versions that paint Lewis and Clark as lone, almost super, heroes.

Most Americans are not aware of potentially controversial issues and questions regarding members of the party (including Clark and his servant York) fathering children and trafficking in venereal diseases with native women, nor of Clark's inability to understand York's desire to be with his wife and family, Lewis's odd behavior and suicide and Clark's inability to recognize York's humanity.

These fictional poems, though grounded in history, seek to capture the spirit and power of the narrative that lives in oral tradition and place the burden of truth on the primary storyteller, York, and the minor storytellers themselves.

Watkuweis Speaks

We knew they were coming.
Our Medicine men have been telling of their arrival since before I was born.

When our warriors saw their small herd their first thoughts were to kill them all and with it the destruction they carried.

This I also believed they should do until I saw the black one standing off to the side

a small mountain pretending to be a man
a man pretending to be on a leash.

To the unlearned eye he looked to be all alone but when I stared at him with my spirit eye I could see a great long woman standing behind him with her arms crossed and a herd of strange looking buffalo large black lions, striped horses

and other wild beasts like I'd never even seen in my dreams stretching to where the sun rises.

I did not know what destruction his death would earn us, so I counseled against it and talked of the white men who were kind to me when I was young and lost which caused the warriors to put away their weapons and welcome them with open arms.
PROPHESY

Our people will be herded like buffalo and walked backwards from their own lands until they fall off a great cliff.

Coyote will pretend to fall with them and offer fire water and guns and beads in exchange for their tongues and wisdom.

Young warriors will trade their best ponies for white man clothes and iron horses. Many will forget the hunt and the sweat.

Our storytellers will stop the winter count. The rivers will turn to stone. The white man will write down our truths.

But when they gather in great numbers to celebrate their long trip to the ocean many tribes will open their eyes and speak as one.

Before our feet touch the ground we will grow eagle wings and buffalo horns fly back to our homelands and rescue our stories.

The mountains will see us coming and weep. The rivers will see us coming and sing. The salmon will see us coming and dance with joy.

|

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER

Them call the old guide that led us through the mountains, Toby Sacagawea, Janey her lil' Jean Baptiste, Pomp an me boy, an worse if it cross they minds.

Them call the beautiful Nimipuu Nez Perce though we never seen a pierced nose in the mountains or plains.

Them give a name to ever stream an place we come 'cross even named a group a small islands after me without ever thinking to ask the people who lived there if they already had names.

What is it, I wonder gets in a white man's head so that when he look in the mirror him always see God.

But when he look at people with hair like lambs wool or feet a burnt brass he see only beasts an chil'ren.
THE RIVER SPEAKS

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

-Langston Hughes

call me the ohio, the mississippi or the missoura
call me wood, teton, yellowstone, milk, judith, marias
jefferson, madison, beaverhead, snake, clearwater or pallouse
call me the wide-toothed mouth of the columbia river
call me after my many creeks
my great falls
my hot springs

i am the snow atop mt. adams
i am the salty hope in the air
at cape disappointment
i am she who is the deep and the shallows
a thundering water fall and a quiet storm
i am always present in the air, on every tongue
in every drop of milk and blood and tear
you will find me in every thorn and flower seed and fruit
there is no life without me

i am libation and baptismal
i am your sprinkle of holy water
i am older than man and light
i am of god not god
but like god, i am also inside of every man
for all are born in me and form there until
they are flushed naked into the world
and i remain there in them like god
until they depart and return to dust

captain clark saw me
as simply a great wet road that could be conquered
with the rowing and paddling of men
under his command
so i showed him
my many rapids and waterfalls
made his men carry their own boats
and supplies around me for miles at a time
these were the good years
white men had not yet studied the beaver
and learned how to redirect my paths
manage my flow harness it for their own use
attempt to enslave me too

captain lewis was different.
to him i was a piece of art
he marveled at the natural

16 — We Proceeded On January 2007
falling of my waterlocks and felt humbled
by the beautifully carved rock masterpieces
that adorn my canyons and walls

while i have been at most an open way
for the white man
to the red man
i have been viewed as a helpmate
considered a wife
carrying their salmon and trout
providing for their
transportation and nourishment
surrounding them
moving through them
in the heat of the sweat lodge
raining answers to their prayers
when they dance

but the black one was the only one
taught to both fear and respect me
and though i was the road
that carried the ships of death
to and from africa’s shores
i became the waiting outstretched arms
for those who refused
to be enslaved
for those who trusted me
to rock their babies off to sleep

my ocean floors are covered with his people’s resistance
i carry their spirit in every splash i make

their mournful humming
their lost voices
their last words
have become a part
of my sweetest songs

when he is whole
again
when york knows
what he is worth
I will well up inside of him
and he will hear them
sing.
ART OF SEDUCTION

I knows a hungry man's eye
can undress a woman
from 'cross a smoldering fire
'cause, I done it.

She grew warm to my advances
then give me permission
an invite me over without ever
opening her mouth.

She look away, then back, then away
then back, so slow
that when her eyes return
to meet mine, it make my nostrils flare
an my heart
beat like two drums in my chest.

I didn't have no courting flute
so, the first music we makes between us
was a way a looking in each others eyes
an exchanging naked promises
so full a heat
that passers by would swear
we was already man an wife.

These hands is big an rough
from a life full a hard work
but, when they finally fill themselves up
with her
its like each one become a party a men
depth in the wilderness
bent on exploring ev'ry mound
an knowing all a the hollowed out
an sacred places.

Lovers Moon

After Capt. Clark bed is made
an his stomach full a meat

he give me the slice a daylight left
to do as I please.

Pretending not to rush back to her
I make like I'm just passing by an nod.

After she track me down in the dark

jumps on my back an wrestles me to the ground
we wanders laughing towards the horses
then follows the riverbank upstream
looking for a private place to celebrate
the way the moon dance in the face a the water.

We find a rock to hold all our clothes
an play in the shallows like chill'en
but after our bodies kiss, we stops to weigh
the gift a privacy, an grows up real fast.

PRAYING FEETS

I ordered my boy York to dance. The Indians
seem amazed that a man so large is so light on
his feet.

-William Clark

Something like leaving happens
when I be ordered to dance.
Not the pack up camp an go kinda leave
but the how things might be in my mind
if there weren't no slavery kinda going.
Like dreaming but not being asleep.

I might take a puff a tobacco, tie on
a piece a red cloth or wave my hatchet
round my head to get my mind right.
An once I gets good an loose, I starts
to feel lighter an lighter 'til soon
I hardly weighs nothing at all.

I spends as much time in the air
as on my feet an after a while its like
my soul be dancing to drums that thunder
an I be a small child on the ground watching
my body follow the music, catch it
then leave it to make its own.

My Capt. think it make him look more
powerful to order a man such as me to dance
but the Indians see my body move
by its own spirit an not by a white man's hand
raise them voices, sing nothing but praises
an join me in the air.
Murmuration

I seen a flock a birds change directions at the same time as if they be a the same mind or listens to the same drum like dancers waiting for the break.

I seen more buffalo then trees run full out cross a valley shoulder to shoulder hoof to hoof trample everything under foot somehow spare a newborn deer frozen in a wet ball alone an hidden among the high weeds.

Africans and Indians believe even the animals share a master drummer but the Captains think wild animals don't know how to dance.

Eye of the Beholder

Most a the men be more interested in watching turtles or frogs or insects mate then drinking in the pleasing sites all 'round us

Something 'bout a hard climb up finally getting to the top ova high place looking out over a whole herd a mountains an even bigger sky or a smooth open space like the Clearwater Valley an her winding rivers that look like pretty white ribbons from up high take the sting right out a my legs an make a honest man stop asking why an how much longer an just give thanks

Capt. Lewis be so eaten up by beauty he spend hours an hours sitting an staring at water fall fields a wildflowers or the color a separate grains a sand

I thinks by the end a the journey an after the Indians make such a fuss he even look at me an see something more

I catch myself hoping he write down my face scratch out a small York on paper just after a hunt wild game strung over my shoulders so somebody knows I was here an I matters so somebody knows I be black an beautiful too.
**PRIMER II**

I can read the heart of a woman in her eyes as easy as a lie in a man's face.

The direction an power ova storm speaks clearly to me from low flying bird wings.

I can dip my fingers into muddy hoof or toe print an tell how many a what I'm gone have for dinner.

The thickness a tree bark, walnut hulls an tobacco worms tell me how ugly winter gone be.

I knows the seasons like a book. I can read moss, sunsets, the moon, an a mare's foaling time with a touch.

Would I trade all a this know how to be able to scratch out my name as more than a X to have my stories leap off the page as easy as they roll off my tongue,

to listen to my own eyes make the words on the parchment say

*This man here be York.*
*He can come an go as be please,*

*work for hiself, own land, learn his books, live an die free?*

What do you think?

---

**UNWELCOME GUEST**

I don't think he knowed
I could see hur too.
Da furst time was in da corna a his eye while he look far off but stare at da plate right in front a him.

He didn't say nothin' bout hur but da way his lips turnt up at da ends said plenny.

I ain't one t'sass. His growl help me to know a slave woman's place so I sits up all night wit both my hands an ears open, waitin' t'catch hur name on his lips.

Afta dat, no matta how much he talk a grizzlies, buffalos, big fish mountains or ochions she become all I can see all I wants t'know

It gets so crowded in our lil' place
I swears I can almost smell hur.
An by den I knows one a us will have t'go.

---

**FIELD UP**

*He who learns teaches.*
_-African Proverb_

When Brotha come back from da journey colored folk come from miles 'round an sits on da porch all night just t'hear stories'bout da indians 'n da ochion

some a da things he say gets us yung bucks mighty excited 'n stirred up 'n scares off da olda ones 'specially when he talk a tastin' freedom

what it mean t'be a man 'n how out west they worship our blackness 'n live married to da lan' like our people do back in Africa

He have us all struttin' like roostas backs straight 'n chins up 'n not rushin' t'grin 'n fetch it when called boys or children or uncle or less for a long time.
**REAL COSTS**

*The north star has a deep love for marriage. She is always in the sky waiting for the return of the moon, her husband.*

-African Proverb

I just kiss him soft t’sleep
an stare at him long enough
t’call up his face
when I gets old ‘n thankful
he still be breathing
somewhere
when winta come.

---

**TO HAVE AND TO HOLD**

It do more harm then good
to be enslaved an agree to love forever
when there be folks over us with
even more power then death
to do us part.

Being another man’s property
alls I can promise is
when we in the same quarters
no one will hold you closer
or with more tenderness then me.

If ever I have to choose between
another day a service an death
I will always choose life.

Even if Massa sell me down
the Mississippi tomorrow
or pair me up with another woman
to breed
I will only think on what we had
an chase away thoughts
a what we had not.

I aims to see you ev’ry Sunday an Christmas
but, if ever I’m away more then two whole
seasons without sending back word.

Untie the ribbons from that broom
we just jump, mourn for me but a little
then set your mind to figuring
on how you gone stay warm
when winter come.

---

Frank X. Walker was a presenter at the Foundation’s 2006 annual meeting in St. Louis. He is the author of Buffalo Dance: The Journey of York (University of Kentucky Press, 2003) and When Winter Comes, which has yet to be released.
THE MYSTERY OF THE BONES

Exploring the relationship between time the Corps of Discovery spent with the Arikaras and medical events that followed

BY Thomas P. Lowry and P. Willey

The Corps of Discovery left us well over a million words, recorded in journals, and edited and reprinted many times over the intervening centuries. Most of the journalists' entries are crystal clear even today, but some passages, through ambiguity, awkward phrasing, or even deliberate omission, remain as mysteries. A whole industry has sprung up, a beehive of diligent researchers, pursuing such elusive questions as: "Where was the exact location of Fort Clatsop? And its possibly revelatory latrine? A mystery not yet explored is the relationship between the days spent with the Arikaras and medical events in the winter of 1804-1805.

The journals strongly suggest sexual activity between corps members and the Arikara women. The journals also describe the appearance of venereal disease among corps members two months later, well within the usual length of time for the incubation period of *Treponema pallidum* in the victim, and its first physical appearance as the lesions of primary syphilis.

Syphilis often marks the bones of its victims, both syphilis acquired in adulthood and syphilis present in newborn babies, affected by their own diseased mothers, at or by the time of birth. While the bones of the explorers are widely scattered, the Arikaras left behind massive grave sites. Anthropologists have excavated those sites and have carefully studied the bones therein. No signs of syphilis were found. There is the mystery. The bones that we would expect to confirm the accounts of the corps' journalists do no such thing. What could explain this apparent paradox?

We begin with syphilis itself. Whatever its ancient origins, its recorded birth was in Naples in 1498, and it swept across the eastern hemisphere within a decade. The dreaded infection arrived in the upper Missouri River basin between 1766 and 1801, brought by French-Canadian traders. In adult victims, it can manifest itself in any of dozens of symptoms and in any organ of the body, but its time sequence is fairly uniform. Although the incubation period may be as short as one week or as long as 13 weeks, commonly three or four weeks after exposure to an infected partner, a painless ulcer, the "chancrè, appears on the genitals. The lesion persists about four weeks, gradually fading but leaving a small scar.

Eight to fifteen weeks after the original sexual contact, the secondary symptoms arrive, with fever, skin eruptions and headache, and these symptoms persist from two to six weeks. The third (tertiary) stage may appear months, years or even decades later, with insanity and paralysis, plus characteristic bone changes. The variations on these themes fill, literally, volumes.

The Lewis and Clark expedition visited the Arikaras in mid-October. On November 12th, Clark wrote: "3 men Sick with the [blank]," a word apparently crossed out by editor Nicholas Biddle. January 14, 1805, Clark noted, "Several men with the Venereal caught from the Mandan women." A week later he wrote again: "one ban [man] very bad with the <pox>." (In 1805, "pox" invariably meant syphilis.) Since Clark did not specify the shape or anatomic location of the lesions we cannot be sure, but it is very probable that these notes described secondary syphilis caught from the Arikaras rather than primary lesions acquired from the Mandans. Certainly, the timing is right.
The Corps of Discovery spent time with the Arikaras in October 1804. The authors argue that members of the corps contracted syphilis from Arikara women.
Jean Baptiste Trudeau was a St. Louis schoolmaster and trader who had spent time with the Arikaras in 1795. He wrote, “The girls and young women who seem to be common property among them, living in full liberty, are so dissolute and debauched that ... there is not one whose modesty is proof against a bit of vermilion or a few strands of blue glass beads.” Trudeau also noted that the Arikara men were quick to trade their women to “white men” in exchange for “a few trifles,” and further described how sexual exchanges could be part of a barter—arranged by Arikara business women. As for the willingness of the white men, Trudeau wrote, “Our young Canadians and Creoles who come here are seen everywhere running at full speed, like escaped horses, into Venus’ country.” He concluded, “The consequence of these libertine manners is the venereal disease.”

Pierre Antoine Tabeau was living with the Arikaras when Lewis and Clark arrived. (A biographer described Tabeau as an “infamous rascal,” but how this might influence his judgments is unclear.) Tabeau wrote, “This politeness [sexual activity] is carried out every day among the Ricaras, and always the more readily in the case of the whites.”

John Bradbury, a Scottish botanist, visited the Arikara villages in 1811. He tells us this: “In this species of liberality [sexual availability] no nation can exceed the Arikaras, who flock down every evening with their wives, sisters and daughters, anxious to meet with a market for them.”

These reports should be balanced against the reports of two other observers. Trader John C. Luttig, in 1812, noted sexual availability, but also reported an Arikara woman who insisted on marriage, rather than concubination. Henry Marie Brackenridge, an 1811 visitor, reported a public rite in which virginal Arikara women could claim a prize. However, Brackenridge also expressed shock at Arikara men who brought their wives and daughters “to be offered for sale at this market of indecency and shame.”

What was the Arikara view of these activities? We have only one sliver of information. An Arikara chief asked Brackenridge, “Why is it that your people are so fond of our women, one might suppose that they had never seen any before?”

The historical record is certainly incomplete. The vast majority of the white visitors left no written record. We have one second-hand comment by an Indian chief, and not a word by any woman or white. Further, Lewis and Clark knew that their journals were

A timeline of the expected onset of symptoms of syphilis is compared with the Lewis and Clark Expedition's visit with the Arikaras.

In brief, in the three months since leaving Arikara territory, there are three journal notes that almost certainly describe syphilis.

How do we know that there was sexual contact between the Arikaras and the Corps of Discovery? Both Lewis and Clark wrote of the Arikara custom of offering “handsome Squaws” to honored guests. Clark described the women as “lech[er]ous,” wrote that his men found no difficulty in getting women, and later told Biddle about York, his black slave, being invited to convey his spiritual “magic” to the wife of an Arikara man.

Are the observations of the expedition confirmed by other travelers? It should first be noted that the Corps of Discovery was like a tour bus; they were just passing through. They stayed a few days, attended ceremonial functions, gave a few speeches and then moved on, without having an opportunity to learn the language or understand the culture. The Arikaras were at the nexus of a vast trading network; they were used to visitors who stayed a while, visitors who had a purpose beyond the symbolic and the ceremonial. The Arikaras were business people. Non-expedition travelers were often traders, more patient in learning the language and customs of their hosts, more likely to stay for weeks or months, and therefore more likely to understand the workings of the local culture.
government property, open to scrutiny by important people into the distant future. It would be strange, indeed, if they did not omit personal events that might reflect poorly on themselves and on other members of the party.

It must be noted that the meaning of sexual behavior is shaped by culture. Euro-American Christians might (and did) apply such terms as promiscuous, immoral and shameful to Indian ways, and viewed the Indian men and their women as we view pimps and prostitutes today. *Au contraire*, the Arikara husband who offered his wife, or another woman, to a traveler viewed himself as a good host, honoring his guest. In commerce, Arikara business women might offer themselves as part of the bargain, without any sense of doing wrong. Added to this great cultural divide was the issue of language. It seems a fair assumption that the subtleties so dear to linguists and psychologists were lacking in the translations available to the Corps of Discovery.

The evidence certainly points to sexual contact between the Arikaras and their visitors, and to the emergence of venereal disease in the ensuing months. This returns us to the issue of archaeological evidence for syphilis in the skeletal remains of the early nineteenth century Arikaras.

What would a researcher look for in these bones?

In children born of infected mothers, common stig mata include inflammation of the tibial bones (saber shins), notched incisors (Hutchinson's teeth), misshapen back teeth (mulberry molars), collapsed nasal bones and malformed jawbones, giving a "bulldog" look. In roughly one-third of victims who contract syphilis in adult life, the disease will progress to the final (tertiary) stage. The bones will show inflammation of the outer layers and of the membranes adherent to the bone (periostitis), degeneration of one or more joints, and erosion of the outer layer of the skull, causing a worm-eaten appearance (caries sica).

The excavated Arikara gravesites were adjacent to a cluster of Arikara villages by the Missouri River, near today's border between North and South Dakota. These villages were occupied between about 1802 and 1832. The area is known collectively as the Leavenworth site. Between 1900 and 1966 there were numerous archaeological expeditions to this site, unearthing and studying a total of nearly 300 skeletons. The two most relevant expeditions were those of William Bass and Stewart Shermis. The former unearthed and cataloged hundreds of Arikara skeletons, while the latter studied the bones for tumors, injuries, arthritis and infections. Douglas H. Ubelaker carefully examined the teeth of the same skeletons. The detailed examination of the bones gave evidence of disease, but none of the classic signs of syphilis: no saber shins; no "worm-eaten" skulls; no Hutchinson's teeth.

Recent excavations elsewhere on the Great Plains have found some bone signs of treponemal disease, but all were distant either in time or in location. The Arikara bones of the early 1800s do not speak to us of syphilis. How do we explain this discrepancy between the journal entries and the Arikara skeletons?

There are at least four possible explanations. The first might be that the captains were mistaken in their diagnoses. Is this likely? The first military surgeons to describe syphilis were Doctors Cumano and Benedetto, who wrote in 1499. In the late 1700s, Jean Keyser made a fortune selling syphilis cures to the French army. George Washington's surgeons used Gerhard van Swieten's textbook on venereal disease. Lewis and Clark were experienced military men. It seems unlikely that they could not identify syphilis.
Another possibility is that the Arikaras succeeded in curing their syphilis, thus preventing the bone lesions seen in the latter stages of that disease. Arikara medicine men, in addition to songs, chants, sleight of hand and incantations, used herbal remedies. There is little data on the ethnobotany of the Arikaras; Melvin R. Gilmore's extensive inventory of Omaha, Ponca, Pawnee and Teton Dakota remedies makes no mention of venereal disease, in itself an interesting omission.18

Trudeau claimed that the Arikaras, “Cure themselves of it [venereal disease] very easily. They showed me some who six months ago were rotting away who are now perfectly cured.” The botanist Bradbury, shortly after his visit to the Arikaras, noted during his stay with the Mandans that the “Canadians” with venereal disease treated themselves with “the roots of Rudbeckia purpurea [Eastern purple coneflower] and sometimes those of Houstonia longiflora [Longleaf summer bluet].” The Arikaras lived at a focus of extensive trade routes and it seems likely that they would know of the same remedies. However, the ever-acerbic Tabeau wrote of the Arikaras, “These savages are too ignorant and too lazy to ... find in plants remedies for their ailments.”

These fragmentary and sometimes contradictory accounts raise the possibility that the Arikara could cure syphilis. If so, they were in advance of modern medicine which, until the advent of penicillin around 1945, had little to offer the afflicted lover.

A third possible factor is that of the missing bones. The Arikaras lived at the Leavenworth site for 28 years. The usual village population was around 2,500. One would expect approximately 3,000 deaths in 28 years. Yet there were only 350 skeletons found. Where are the other 90 percent? Could these be the syphilitics, whose bodies were disposed of in other places or by other means? Were they excluded from the socially acceptable burial grounds? Could nine out of ten Arikaras have formed a community of the shunned and the diseased? Could they have been in a burial site closer to the river, a burial site washed away by the ever-shifting river? No one knows.

A fourth possible explanation for a few of the missing skeletons is the tradition of The Scalped Man.20 People who survived scalping tended to be shunned and became “outsiders.” If those with syphilitic skull lesions were also held to be “outsiders,” that might account for a few of the missing remains.

Thomas P. Lowry had his medical training at the dawn of the penicillin era, when Stanford Hospital still maintained an active syphilis clinic, and skin doctors were certified by the American Board of Dermatology and Syphilology. He is the author of a dozen books. He received the Foundation’s Meritorious Achievement Award in 2006. P. Willey is a professor of anthropology at Chico State University and personally has examined the bones of hundreds of Arikaras, as well as the remains of U.S. Navy pilots from Vietnam and the mass graves of Saddam Hussein’s victims.

NOTES
1 Thomas P. Lowry, Venereal Disease and the Lewis and Clark Expedition (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), p. 29.
2 Ibid., pp. 7-10.
5 Ibid., p. 277.
6 Ibid., p. 163.
8 Jean Baptiste Trudeau, Trudeau’s Journal (South Dakota Historical Collections, 1914), Vol. 7, pp. 403-474, especially 457, 460-461.
17 Lowry, p. 30.
19 Bradbury, p. 180.
Focus on Doctrine of Discovery offers insight into the Lewis & Clark Expedition

Native America, Discovered and Conquered
Robert Miller
Praeger Publishers
214 pages / $49.95 cloth

The telling and retelling of the history of Euro-American settlement of the United States has for too long come from the “How-the-West-Was-Won” perspective, as told through the eyes of the conquering, dominant society. This story, after two hundred years of having its edges smoothed by various historical and cultural treatments, can end up taking on a sort of winking, tacit understanding among teachers, students and consumers of history alike: settlement of the West had to happen just as it did, right? People needed a place to live, right?

Robert Miller, in his voluminous work Native America, Discovered and Conquered, very ably and methodically deconstructs the winking inexorableness that permeates narrative history of the American West. In a wholly new and focused voice, Miller traces the Doctrine of Discovery from its European roots through to its present-day ramifications on the land tenure of Native American tribes and resource scarcity issues in the West. Native America establishes that the settlement of the United States was first and foremost an expression of supposed religious sanctification—the European Doctrine of Discovery permeated colonial, state and federal governmental law and policy from the dawning of America. Thomas Jefferson eventually sent Lewis and Clark westward under his belief in this doctrine of the divine European right to own “discovered” lands, whether occupied or not. Miller traces the doctrine through papal decrees, the Crusades, and broader Christian concepts of what constituted infidels, a concept not foreign to Lewis, Clark or Jefferson.

What makes Miller’s Native America such a compelling read is not only his unique style but also his commitment to original scholarly legal research. From the first Supreme Court applying the Doctrine of Discovery in the seminal Indian land title case Johnson v. M’Intosh, to the coining of the phrase “manifest destiny” by a mid-nineteenth century journalist, Miller pulls us through time along a common, and heretofore not well understood thread of history. We come to understand how the doctrine shapes every aspect of our contemporary experience as Americans, from the landscapes we look out upon, to the socio-economic conditions on Indian reservations, to the very water we drink.

To say this book is required reading for those wishing to understand American history is an understatement. Robert Miller has provided an opportunity for readers with varying interests—from constitutional law professor to tribal advocate to public lands users of all types—to gain valuable insight into the interconnected web of religion, conquest, human rights, land and equity. One comes away from reading this book with a meaningful sense of how irresponsible and illusory it is to allow a sense of providence to blindly guide such things as constitutionally protected rights, domestic and foreign policy with other nations, and the relationship and domination over nature and other non-believers. This is an important time for this book to be published, and one can hope that it will be well read.

-Robert Miller has provided an opportunity for readers with varying interests—from constitutional law professor to tribal advocate to public lands users of all types—to gain valuable insight into the interconnected web of religion, conquest, human rights, land and equity.

-Craig Jacobson

Three #3 Bronzes: Sacagawea, Lewis and Clark by Jim Brousseau
Lewis and Clark Gallery
701.875.4278

January 2007 We Proceeded On — 27
Reviews (cont.)

Biography explores the life of Nathaniel Pryor after the L&C Expedition

The Life and Times of Nathaniel Hale Pryor
Larry Reno
Turkey Creek Publishing
238 pages/$24.95 paper

At the close of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial, most of the individuals who were once the unsung heroes of the famous continental crossing have been thoroughly sung, to the point that some are on the verge of becoming pop icons. One exception, until now, has been the Kentucky-bred sergeant, Nathaniel Hale Pryor, whose lost journals are among the pieces that remain missing from the larger puzzle of expedition history. His adventures with Clark and Lewis were only the beginning of a challenging career amid the frontier conflicts of the early nineteenth century. Though Pryor’s name crops up quite often in the expedition journals, his activities along the trail were more dutiful than colorful. Hence, he has not attracted much attention up to this point.

Larry Reno, a Colorado attorney and collateral descendant of Pryor, has attempted to correct this oversight with a full-length biography, The Life and Times of Nathaniel Hale Pryor. Along the way, he also gives considerable attention to another of his kinsmen who traveled with Lewis and Clark, Sergeant Charles Floyd, Pryor’s first cousin and the only member of the expedition to die on the epic journey.

In the effort to weave a coherent, informative narrative of Pryor’s life, Reno has drawn on many sources, from family genealogies and oral traditions to the Internet. He gives special attention to the Floyd-Pryor kinship and the related families’ first years in what is now Kentucky. He brings forth some insights on the relations between the Osage tribe and the white settlers that illuminate not only Pryor’s life, but also the broader story of the fur-trading period that preceded the Mexican War. Of particular interest is the description of the Osage tribal rules for intermarriage between themselves and outsiders, including whites. Reno clearly put serious energy into his research.

The result is an account that is much more readable than many products of self-taught historians in the Lewis and Clark orbit. A Yale graduate, Reno is well able to manage English syntax, and has an accurate understanding of all the terms he employs. This makes reading The Life and Times more pleasurable.

Yet, even with his obvious strengths, the self-published Reno would have benefited from an editor. Along these lines, one wonders why the word “fort” is used exclusively to mention forts, up to six times in a single paragraph, when common synonyms such as “post” or “installation” were available, or why the author didn’t hold to one spelling for various Osage words and names. Worse, to this reader, is the inclusion of dubious citations from the Internet, that great unfiltered torrent of information.

The book’s more than 30 illustrations are another weak point. Aside from a few nicely executed copies of historical portraits by J. Courtney Ralston and some maps and charts, most of the illustrations in this book add little to the reader’s experience or understanding.

On the whole, however, The Life and Times is a sincere, thoughtfully researched attempt to give the reader an appreciation for a hitherto obscure character in our national epic. Reno’s book tries hard to be, and largely succeeds in being, a contribution to our understanding of the Lewis and Clark Expedition’s place in the broader story of the United States’ western expansion.

- Mark Chalkley

By His Own Hand? The Mysterious Death of Meriwether Lewis
John D.W. Guice, ed.
University of Oklahoma Press
178 pages/$14.95 cloth

Among all the issues debated by Lewis and Clark enthusiasts, none is more contentious than the death of Meriwether Lewis. No one disputes the basic facts that the famed explorer died of two gunshot wounds, to the head and body, on the morning of October 11, 1809, at a rude wayside inn on the Natchez Trace called Grinder’s Stand, in Tennessee. Friends of Lewis, including William Clark and Thomas Jefferson, were unanimous in judging his death a suicide. Claims that he was murdered surfaced forty years later. This became the dominant view and remained so for more than a century. Today, however, most
Evidence supporting suicide and murder presented for review and judgement

historians accept the probability that Lewis, just 36 years old and barely three years after his triumphal return from the Pacific, killed himself.

How could a man so celebrated, and with such a seemingly bright future, take his own life? Readers of who are familiar with most of the arguments for and against suicide.

A case can be made that Lewis was a manic-depressive and alcoholic unable to adjust to his return to civilization and his desk-bound duties as governor of Louisiana, a master of wilderness rivers who floundered in the backwaters of frontier politics, a man staring at bankruptcy and driven crazy by malaria or syphilis. One also can marshal a case that Lewis was the victim of a robbery-murder or a political conspiracy involving the nefarious General James Wilkinson, Aaron Burr and perhaps even Jefferson.

There are those of us who wish this controversy would simply go away, but it won't, so we might as well learn to live with it, and maybe even to embrace it. Lewis’s death—"the Rashomon story of American history," as William Clark’s biographer Landon Y. Jones puts it—will forever intrigue.

To help sort through the maze of conflicting claims and counterclaims, John D.W. Guice, an emeritus professor of history at the University of Southern Mississippi and the most persistent advocate in the homicide camp, has put together a comprehensive volume that lays out, in an even-handed way, the arguments for and against suicide. By His Own Hand: The Mysterious Death of Meriwether Lewis summarizes all the evidence and theories laid out over the last 195 years. Assisting him are three distinguished scholars. An introduction by Clay S. Jenkinson sets the stage with a succinct account of the events surrounding Lewis’s death and a critique of some of the strengths and weaknesses of the pro- and anti-suicide briefs. James J. Holmberg follows with a chapter making the case for suicide, followed by Guice’s chapter arguing for homicide. Jay H. Buckley wraps things up with an exhaustive analysis framed as a sort of postmortem trial of Lewis for the crime of “self-murder,” but without reaching any definitive conclusion. A penultimate section reproduces either transcripts or facsimiles of some key contemporary documents, and an appendix provides a useful timeline of the debate from 1809 to the present.

I should state for the record that I have been, and remain, skeptical of the notion that Lewis died by anyone’s hand other than his own. There is a scientific concept called Occam’s razor, which in a nutshell states that the simplest theory to explain a set of facts is usually correct. By that standard, most of what we know about Lewis’s death points to suicide. As Holmberg says, “it is where the evidence leads us.”

Yet ambiguity in the record makes it impossible to rule out murder. Jenkinson, a murder advocate, believes that the “bulk of the available evidence seems to point overwhelmingly toward suicide.” The operative word here is “seems,” and Jenkinson is careful to further qualify his remarks: “There are enough perplexities in the documentary record to invite doubt and to suggest that humility, rather than certainty, is the proper response to what remains one of the principal mysteries of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.”

Buckley presents the evidence, summarizes the prosecution and defense cases, then leaves the verdict to the “jury” (i.e., the reader). If I were a juror in this hypothetical trial I would vote for acquittal, for by the legal standard of proof beyond a reasonable doubt, Lewis can only be judged innocent. Of course, if reasonable doubt were the required standard for historians, not much history would get written. Hypothesis and speculation and the acceptance of hearsay evidence—some of it third-hand and recorded long after the fact—are inevitably the historian’s stock in trade, and proponents on both sides of this debate depend on them to one degree or another.

Countering the view that a man of Lewis’s character and accomplishment could not have killed himself, Holmberg cites the example of Peter W. Grayson, a Kentucky lawyer, soldier, and politician and one of the founding fathers of the Texas Republic. In 1838, Grayson shot himself under conditions eerily similar to Lewis’s. Grayson, too, was a man of action who, like Lewis (if we are to believe the suicide camp), had long suffered from melancholy, and during a period of great personal stress his demons at last overcame him. But Grayson’s story cuts both ways. Unlike Lewis, he left a suicide note.

—J.J. Merritt
Why the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial was not a bust

A few days from now, on Sept. 23, a small group of Lewis and Clark reenactors will pull their canoes up on the levee in St. Louis to the sound of cheers from a waiting crowd. Fireworks later will light up the sky near the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri rivers. Thus the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial will come to an end—45 months, and thousands of speeches, books, festivals and powwows after it all began at Monticello in January 2003. Was it worth it?

According to some recent reports in the national media, the bicentennial was something of a flop, at least from a tourism standpoint. The Wall Street Journal reported that anonymous “tourism experts” were underwhelmed by event turnouts anticipated to be in the millions. The Journal cited disappointing merchandise sales and went on to ridicule cities like Fort Benton, Montana, for holding crowd-control drills for throngs that never materialized.

But to say that the bicentennial was a bust because of below-budget sales of souvenir T-shirts is like arguing that the Louisiana Purchase was a flop because sales of beaver pelts have died down. It misunderstands both the purposes of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial and the reality of what really happened.

Start with the numbers. Unlike some national anniversaries, the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial was decentralized, a moving target flung across hundreds of events in communities large and small in more than a dozen states. Twenty-five million people did not hit the trail on the same weekend, but more than that number participated in some form or another over the full 45 months.

Consider that the U.S. Mint sold nearly 500,000 copies of its hugely successful Lewis and Clark commemorative silver dollar. Those coin sales generated nearly $5 million to establish trusts for language preservation for encounter tribes and for preservation of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail.

The National Ad Council’s multimedia Lewis and Clark campaign (“Walk with them and see what you discover”) became one of its most successful public-service efforts, receiving $35 million in donated media in 2005.

The National Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Exhibition, a traveling exhibit of more than 60 artifacts organized by the Missouri Historical Society, drew more than 400,000 visitors in its first four stops.

In North Dakota alone, nearly four million people visited 22 Lewis and Clark sites between 2002 and 2005.

What about Montana? Some 50,000 visitors attended July’s signature event in Billings, despite a stiflingly hot weekend. According to the University of Montana’s Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research, the number of visitors to Montana increased 4 percent in 2005, despite rising gas prices and even while visitation to the state’s two national parks was decreasing and visitation to the national forests was down almost 18 percent. What was driving the overall increase? Lewis and Clark.

Numbers tell only part of the story. The No. 1 priority set by the Bicentennial Council was not to boost souvenir sales but rather to change the national conversation about the expedition of Lewis and Clark. This was accomplished by fostering new school curriculums around the country, by financing new and renovated interpretive centers and, most importantly, by inviting Native Americans to tell their side of the story for the first time.

The majority of the Indian peoples encountered by Lewis and Clark 200 years ago participated fully in the bicentennial. Three of the 15 signature events were organized and hosted by tribes—the Sioux, Nez Perce, and Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation. Since 2003, the National Bicentennial Council has awarded more than sixty grants to different tribes and tribally supported organizations. Tribal speakers made more than four hundred presentations for Corps of Discovery II, the traveling exhibit sponsored by the National Park Service.

The idea that Lewis and Clark traveled through an empty wilderness has finally been put to rest. They were helped by not just Sacagawea but by hundreds of Indian people all along the way. One way to think of the impact of tribal participation in the bicentennial is this: If Meriwether Lewis and William Clark were to return to the United States in 2006, they would surely be most surprised not by the march of cities through the West—they expected and even planned for that—but rather by the simple fact that Indian people are still here and their cultures have survived.

During the bicentennial, Indians have reclaimed their place in the world of Lewis and Clark.

Landon Y. Jones

Landon Y. Jones is a board member of the National Council of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial and the author of William Clark and the Shaping of the West. This article appeared in the Bozeman Daily Chronicle on September 18, 2006, and is reprinted here with the newspaper’s permission.
Bicentennial: Look past the numbers

From the journal of William Clark, September 23, 1806:
"We rose early ... descended to the Mississippi and down that river to St. Louis at which place we arrived 12 o'Clock. we suffered the party to fire off their pieces as a Salute to the Town. we were met by all the village and received a harty welcome from it's inhabitants." After a night of partying, the next day William Clark and Meriwether Lewis "Commenced wrighting." With those words the journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition come to a close, and so now too has the bicentennial of their exploits.

As the final days of the commemoration wound down this summer, critics have had a field day. Somewhat uncharacteristically, The Wall Street Journal, that bastion of American exceptionalism, precipitated a veritable torrent of commentary with its first-out-of-the-gate post-bicentennial critique, which effectively characterized the event as a failure. Since then, editorialists in St. Louis, Missoula, Great Falls and elsewhere along the trail have been piling on.

The most tendentious observation appeared in late August in the Willamette Week of Portland, Oregon. The key line in an article with the clever title of "The Great White Hype" contends that "the 200-year-old story of dead white guys who persevered into Oregon hasn't really ignited imaginations."

Here we must now return to an old theme: How do we measure success?

In regard to the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial, unquestionably the great faux pas was that of Stephen Ambrose. His book about the Lewis and Clark Expedition, "Undaunted Courage," was wildly successful and made him a wealthy man. (People may question his scholarship, but he was quite generous with his royalties.) As a member of the governing board for the commemoration, the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Council, I was present at that pregnant moment during a planning meeting in Great Falls, Montana, back in 1998 when, flush with authorial success, Ambrose predicted upwards of 35 million people were going to travel the beloved trail during the commemoration.

Extrapolating from the success of his book, Ambrose never meant to be taken literally—as if any one place would see hundreds of thousands of tourists on a particular day. Nevertheless, who can say that after factoring in the Ken Burns documentary on PBS and the torrent of books published in its wake, to say nothing of the hundreds of bicentennial events, symposia and conferences that were held, that since 1998, 35 million people haven't engaged in the Lewis and Clark story?

The U.S. Mint alone sold 500,000 Lewis and Clark bicentennial commemorative coins.

Some of us who heard Ambrose float that number immediately sensed trouble ahead. The only public endeavor where management of expectations is more vital than tourism is politics. The very day Ambrose voiced his prediction, I asked a fellow board member, an executive in an outdoor recreation-based business, what he thought of that projection.

He noted that the key to any enterprise is long-term sustainable growth, and if the tourism sector saw a 3 percent to 5 percent growth in circulation. I know I would be ecstatic if I could grow my organization's membership or attendance by that rate.

As is usually the case in regard to evaluating success, the question is not so much about metrics, per se, but perspective. The flurry of Lewis and Clark Bicentennial post-mortems seem to emphasize the tribulations of T-shirt and lapel-pin marketers disappointed that their share of the 35 million did not buy enough trinkets.

I'm sorry for them, but then they have the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver, British Columbia, to look forward to.
Bicentennial Reflections (cont.)

Alternatively, consider certain qualitative measures of success. Just here in the state of Washington, the bicentennial seems to have spawned and made permanent two Lewis and Clark-related festivals, one in the Tri-Cities area at Sacajawea State Park, and the other in Pacific County.

More substantively, how do we really measure the values to be derived from the creation of the Lewis and Clark National Historical Park, which renames the Fort Clatsop National Memorial in Oregon and includes sites in economically beleaguered Pacific County?

I'm not referring to the slow growth rate of tourism but to the permanent protection of those remarkable and thickly forested headlands near the mouth of the Columbia River, worth every bit as much protection against the ravages of growth as the river's more celebrated gorge.

When the tercentennial of Lewis and Clark's journey comes around and the green slopes from Scarborough Hill forming the backdrop for Fort Columbia State Park and Station Camp eastward to Point Ellice (where the bridge from Astoria lands) and Dismal Nitch still look as they do today, enlightened souls will look back to this bicentennial with gratitude.

I offer this as only one example of the many steps toward landscape preservation that have occurred as a result of the bicentennial in Washington and other western states, including notable projects on the Lolo Trail in Idaho and Montana and on the Missouri River in Montana.

Lastly, we need to come to grips with the "white guys" slander, because when it comes to the Lewis and Clark bicentennial, that's what it is.

Everyone involved with the commemoration knew from the beginning that the observance was going to be successful only if it avoided the trap that befell the Columbus Quincentennial, the 500th anniversary observance. Planners for the bicentennial were determined that tribal issues and voices should be paramount.

Anyone who has actually been to Lewis and Clark Bicentennial events or exhibitions will readily attest that this goal has been achieved.

Properly, we have not been able to celebrate the bicentennial because of the portentousness of Lewis and Clark as an imperial vanguard heading into Native American homelands, but we can celebrate the commemoration's multicultural tone and substance.

The many tribal leaders who have participated in bicentennial planning will tell you that issues of concern in Indian Country in the northern West have had great exposure. Remarkably enough, it has also resulted in certain inter-tribal networking that didn't exist before the bicentennial. Tribes in Idaho, North Dakota and Montana organized their own observances.

To use a phrase the captains were fond of, it is worthy of remark that the two lasting legacies of the $5 million in proceeds derived from the mint's Lewis and Clark silver dollars are endowments for landscape and tribal language preservation.

Jane Jacobsen, the estimable mastermind behind sculptor Maya Lin's "Confluences Project," was once asked what that venture's landscape sculptures might look like. She averred, "Well, probably not two guys pointing west."

In truth, the bicentennial observance was never imagined in that manner nor was it in practice, caricatures like that in Willamette Week notwithstanding.

It's time to set the record straight. Tribal representatives have a special obligation in this regard. Having helped fashion the commemoration that was congenial to their worldview, they should be among the bicentennial's staunchest defenders.

-David L. Nicandri

David L. Nicandri is director of the Washington State History Museum in Tacoma. This article appeared in The Tacoma News Tribune on September 24, 2006, and is reprinted here with the newspaper's permission.
Foundation receives $1.6 million for trail stewardship; past-president honored

The Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, the National Council of the Lewis & Clark Bicentennial and the Missouri Historical Society have announced the creation of a critical Lewis and Clark Bicentennial legacy established by the foundation. The Bicentennial Lewis & Clark Trail Stewardship Endowment: A Missouri Historical Society funded National Council of the Lewis & Clark Bicentennial Historic Trail.

The National Council of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial and the Missouri Historical Society announced the creation of a critical Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Legacy, a $1.6 million endowment fund established for the purposes of preservation, protection and interpretation of the natural, historic, educational and cultural resources of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail.

The National Council of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial and the Missouri Historical Society funded this endowment with surcharge proceeds from the 2004 Lewis and Clark Expedition Bicentennial Commemorative Silver Dollar coined by the U.S. Mint. The foundation will use the proceeds for trail stewardship activities associated with commemorating the bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

Trail stewardship is defined as preserving, protecting and interpreting the natural, historical, educational and cultural resources of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail. Examples of trail stewardship include heritage site monitoring, protection of cultural resources, coordination and sponsorship of stewardship projects and programs, archiving and documenting bicentennial stewardship projects and providing interpretive programming and information along the trail. Projects funded by the endowment will acknowledge the support.

The assets of the endowment will be permanently restricted. The foundation will draw 5 percent out of the fund for the foundation's trail stewardship programs. The foundation will consult with its Bicentennial Trail Stewardship Advisory Committee before making any charitable distribution from the trail stewardship endowment. Members of the Missouri Historical Society and National Council of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial board of directors, trustees, officers and employees are not eligible to serve on the advisory committee.

Robert Archibald, president of the Missouri Historical Society and the National Council of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial, shared his thoughts on the bicentennial and on the planned trail stewardship endowment with the LCTHF board of directors in St. Louis a year ago.

The endowment will allow the foundation to pursue goals and objectives outlined in its strategic plan, particularly its goals to provide national leadership for stewardship of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail and to build and enhance partnerships, including those forged during the bicentennial.

The National Council and the Missouri Historical Society also created The Native Voices Endowment: A Lewis & Clark Expedition Bicentennial Legacy, a $1.6 million endowment fund to advance education and revitalization of endangered languages for tribes along the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail. This program is a coast-to-coast partnership with the Endangered Language Fund of New Haven, Conn., and the Oregon Community Foundation.

LCTHF Past-president David Borlaug in December 2006 received the North Dakota Chamber of Commerce Tourism and Recreational Development Award.

The award is one of the state chamber's eight prestigious statewide awards. It was presented in acknowledgment of the tourism revenue and recognition Borlaug has brought to western North Dakota.

Borlaug served as a member of the founding committee of the Lewis and Clark Fort Mandan Foundation in 1991. Since that time, he has secured state and federal funding to construct the North Dakota Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center, which opened June 1, 1997. In its first year alone, the center welcomed nearly 25,000 visitors from all 50 states, every Canadian province and 22 countries.

Following the opening, Borlaug helped to secure another $2 million in 2000 and 2001 to double the center’s size to 11,000 square feet. The funding also provided for furnishing rooms at Fort Mandan, establishing an endowment trust and beginning new programming at both the interpretive center and Fort Mandan.

He was integral in the construction process of the $1 million “Headwaters Fort Mandan Visitor Center,” which opened in June 2002.

Borlaug is president of the Lewis & Clark Fort Mandan Foundation. He served as president of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation in 1998-99. He also is a past-president of the National Council of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial.
Enhance your Lewis & Clark Library with valuable back issues!

LAST CHANCE!!!
Order NOW

Lewis & Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, Inc.
P.O. Box 3434
Great Falls, MT 59403
888.701.3434
www.lewisandclark.org

Keepers of the story, stewards of the trail

More than thirty years of back issues of our quarterly historical journal We Proceeded On are available for a limited time to complete your collection. We’ve run out of room to store them, so all remaining issues left after April 1, 2007 will be recycled.

Some of the older issues are photocopy reproductions and are available for just $5 each. Original issues are $10 each.*

Get a hefty discount if you order the entire collection. That’s more than 120 issues for just $400! Plus, we’ll include free ground shipping!

Call us toll-free: 888.701.3434 or order online at www.lewisandclark.org.

*Please include $2 for shipping and handling.
LCTHF regional meetings, monument dedication Locust Grove homecoming

April 21, 2007, the foundation will co-host regional meetings in Kansas City, Missouri, and Helena, Montana, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Both meetings will begin with a social hour and registration in the morning. Foundation board members will make presentations on the current activities and priorities of the foundation, and chapters from the region will discuss their projects and programs.

The Missouri-Kansas River Bend Chapter will co-host a meeting at the Missouri Department of Conservation Discovery Center, at 48th and Troost. Gary Moulton will be the keynote speaker. For more information contact River Bend Chapter member Jennifer Scott at Jennifer.Scott@meckc.edu.

The Gates of the Mountains Chapter will co-host a meeting at the Lewis and Clark Library, 120 East Chance Mall in Helena. The keynote speaker will be author and editor Barbara Fifer. A tour of Montana’s recently restored Capitol will be offered. For more information contact Dal Sessions at ses@earthlink.net.

Please see the calendar on the foundation’s Web site at www.lewisandclark.org for more information as it becomes available.

Natchez Trace monument dedicated

The Tennessee Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution held a historical monument dedication ceremony at the Meriwether Lewis Site on the Natchez Trace November 10, 2006. A large granite monument with engraved text was dedicated near Grinders Cabin. The text of the monument gives tribute to the Natchez Trace and its many travelers through the ages, with special emphasis on Meriwether Lewis, who met his untimely death near the location of the DAR monument.

More than 200 people attended the ceremony including forty Daughters of the Mississippi Society of DAR.

Locust Grove arrival commemorated

November 5, 2006, was cool and overcast, but nothing dimmed the spirits as a crowd of more than 1,000 people including 30 costumed interpreters waited for Lewis, Clark, York and a Mandan representative to make their way to Locust Grove in Louisville, Kentucky, after their three-year sojourn to the West.

Locust Grove, built circa 1790 was the home of Lucy Clark Croghan and her husband, William, as well as the last home of Revolutionary War hero, General George Rogers Clark, founder of the city of Louisville. This National Historic Landmark also has the distinction of being the only home west of the Appalachians to have sheltered both Lewis and Clark.

To learn more about Historic Locust Grove, visit its Web site at www.locustgrove.org.
We Proceeded On readers may be interested in an article in the December 2006 issue of *Atlantic*, which ranks the 100 most influential Americans of all time. Lewis and Clark made the cut. As you might expect, the top 10 are recognizable and fairly predictable figures from American history: Lincoln, Washington, Jefferson, Roosevelt, Hamilton, Franklin, Marshall (John, not George), King, Edison and Wilson. Heavy on the Founders, white males, and political figures, the nation's women, minorities, capitalists, scientists, poets, playwrights, artists, architects and cultural icons don't appear until later or not at all.

There are few living Americans on the list, who include, Bill Gates (54), James D. Watson (68) and Ralph Nader (96). The first woman, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, comes in at number 30, joined by her sister-in-arms, Susan B. Anthony, at number 38; there are 10 women altogether. Eight African Americans appear, but there are no Hispanics, Asian Americans or Native Americans.

One has to understand the criteria by which the people were selected and the nature of the panel who made the decisions. Without spelling it out explicitly, it appears that the panel considered that a person's influence had to have an impact over time and across the country, that it needed to be fundamental and long term. Thus, an American Indian, even with significant regional or tribal influence, would not qualify. The same would be true for Hispanics. There seems to be no Red or Brown Martin Luther King, Jr., at least to the panel's estimation. The panel was composed of 10 distinguished American historians. Doris Kearns Goodwin is probably the only name familiar to most Americans, and she's written on many of the figures in the list (Lincoln, most recently).

So how did our explorers fare? Lewis and Clark, one of only two teams on the list (the Wright brothers at number 23 are the other), came in at number 70. We remain a nation of rugged individualists. They were preceded by the usual suspects: Rockefeller, Grant, T.R., Carnegie, Eisenhowe, Jonas Salk, Rachel Carson, Lee and Faulkner among others. What may surprise Lewis and Clark enthusiasts are two people who beat out the captains: Elvis Presley (66) and P.T. Barnum (67). I can only point to their connection to the captains as a way to explain their prominence over them. From boyhood, Presley called Memphis, Tennessee, his home. The town's location at Chickasaw Bluffs on the Mississippi River was also the site of historic Fort Pickering. There, Lewis arrived on September 15, 1809, and quickly was taken under care of Captain Gilbert Russell, the post's commander, who learned of the explorer's attempts at suicide. Lewis left two weeks later and within another two was dead.

Barnum's connection to the expedition is more direct. After the expedition, many of the artifacts from the trip found permanent homes in established repositories, principally at the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia. Other items went on display in Charles Willson Peale's museum in that city in the building we now know as Independence Hall. After Peale's death, the museum's collections moved from place to place in the city but apparently remained intact until some items were sold at auction in the 1840s. In 1850, Barnum bought half the remaining items for his American Museum in New York City, but those were lost in a fire in 1865. Some of the items from the other half of Peale's collection eventually went to the Peabody Museum at Harvard, among them a few expedition pieces.

Share in our mission.
Your planned gift can truly make a difference as we work to protect and preserve the Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail and its stories.
Leave a lasting legacy for your children and future generations.

The trail belongs to us all.

To learn more, please contact Carol Bronson by email: cbronson@lewisandclark.org or call toll-free: 888.701.3434.

Lewis & Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, Inc.
P.O. Box 3434
Great Falls, MT 59403
888.701.3434
www.lewisandclark.org

Keepers of the Story - Stewards of the Trail