



Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation

May 2015 Volume 41, No. 2

## FOSSILS AND THE FUR TRADE



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THE INTIMATE JOURNEY OF LEWIS AND CLARK, PART TWO



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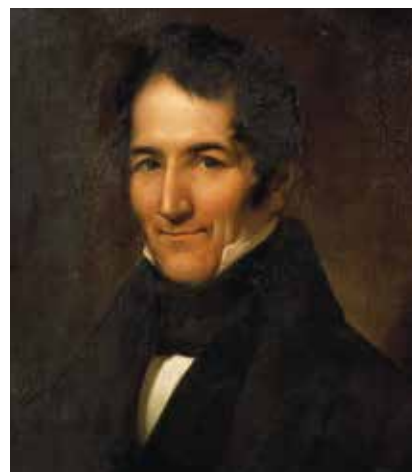
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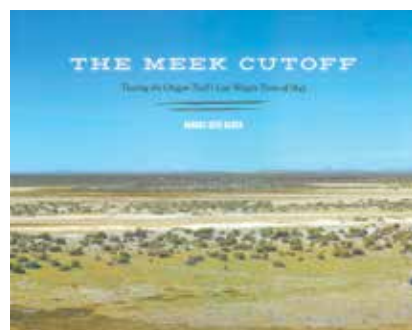
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**On the cover:** Frederick Hayden collects fossils in the Black Hills, summer 1859. Watercolor by Anton Schonborn from the William Franklin Reynolds papers, 1859–1860. WA MSS 393. *Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library*

*We Proceeded On* welcomes submissions of articles, proposals, inquiries, and letters. Writer's guidelines are available by request and can be found on our website ([www.lewisandclark.org](http://www.lewisandclark.org)). Submissions may be sent to Robert Clark, WSU Press, P.O. Box 645910, Pullman, WA 99164-5910, or by email to [robert.clark@wsu.edu](mailto:robert.clark@wsu.edu).



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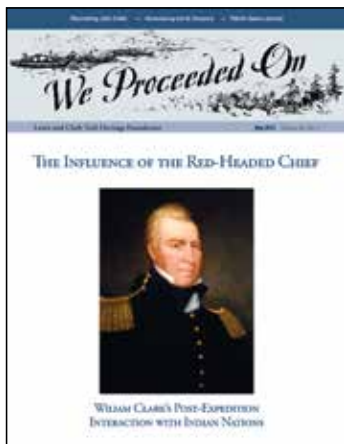
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## A Message from the President



Spring has sprung and many of us are excited about the things we plan to do this summer. Plant our garden, travel the trail, and see friends and family. Spring is a time of renewal and a time to look forward to what we want to accomplish during the summer months. During the winter our Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation chapters across the country made plans for summer activities, bringing people together for presentations and picnics, participating in summer festivals, putting out new interpretive signs along the trail, working on projects to restore trail sites, helping our agency partners take care of sections of important trail, and talking to business leaders and congressmen about the importance of urging the National Park Service to release the Eastern Legacy study so we can get on with drafting legislation to extend the trail to the East.

When I look at the work of our chapters, I am always impressed with

how much is being done to promote Lewis and Clark and further our mission. Some people question if sharing Lewis and Clark stories is old news. Well, I can tell you it is still alive and well. The fact that HBO is shooting and releasing a mini-series this fall is testimony to the durability of the story.

I believe, however, we could be doing much more if we thought strategically about building alliances with other organizations with whom we share overlapping missions. Think about why you are a member or why you are active in your local chapter. Some people are hooked on using living history to share the story. Some are hooked on using the story to educate our young people about history or about how to use primitive outdoor skills to survive. Some are hooked on preserving important historic places or working with Native Americans to help them save some of their culture and life ways. Whatever brings you to the story, ask yourself what other organizations do you know whose mission overlaps ours, doing much the same thing we are. Those organizations are where we will find new members.

I live in Montana and spent a career in land management, and am very aware of other environmental organizations working hard to protect wildlife habitat and wildlands on sections of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail. What perfect partners with whom to share our mutual goals. I know of other educational organizations that teach young people about

the importance of clean water for people and fish. What a perfect alliance through which we can tell the story of the Corps of Discovery. I know of some Native American tribes that have committees trying to connect elders with their youngsters. We could facilitate opportunities to provide resources, organizers, or venues to help make that happen. Those are just a few examples. If we reach out to other organizations, share our members' knowledge and passion about the story with new audiences, we could build our membership. I am convinced the only way we will grow our membership is through partners and alliances. I challenge each of you to think of one other organization and offer to make a presentation to them about Lewis and Clark and how they could use this story to help them meet their mission.

Before I close this message, I want to acknowledge the many emails, letters, and phone calls we have received about William Benemann's article in the last edition of *We Proceeded On*. You will find a sampling of the letters we received and a note from Bob Clark, our editor, in this edition. I know our members are critical thinkers and will continue this dialogue. It is my hope that others will review Mr. Benemann's article and point out where you think he has been speculative and whether the evidence makes his case or not. We have cussed and discussed many unsolvable mysteries in *WPO* over the years. I expect no less with this one.



## President's Message

Since some of you expressed concern that the subject matter “crossed over the line,” I have convened a committee to review the submission guidelines for our journal and submit suggested changes to the Board to strengthen them and make sure they accurately reflect our mission. I also have asked the committee to review and submit new guidelines that will help us solicit other historical subjects or timeframes that may help broaden our audience or potential pool of authors. You will

see the lead article in this edition is not specifically focused on Lewis and Clark, but related. I hope you find it interesting.

Thank you for sharing your thoughts.

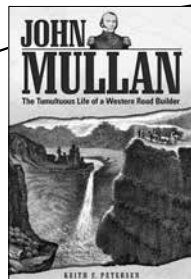
I look forward to seeing all of you at our annual meeting. You may be saying, “I’ve been there already.” Well, it’s not only about seeing the sites. For me it’s about seeing old friends. There are a lot of interesting projects happening in the Kansas City area, the cross-

roads of the Santa Fe National Historic Trail, the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail, and the California-Oregon National Historic Trail. There is more history to learn than just Lewis and Clark. Look for the registration packet in the February edition and a one-page description and reminder in this edition.

See you there!

Margaret Gorski

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## Turnbow response to “The Real James Neelly”

Dear Editor,

Mr. Thomas Danisi, in his article “The Real James Neelly” (*WPO*, November 2014) sets out to challenge my conclusion that the Chickasaw Agent James Neelly was in court on October 11, 1809, the date Meriwether Lewis died, according to a letter Agent Neelly supposedly wrote (“signed”) to Thomas Jefferson. (“The Man Who Abandoned Meriwether Lewis,” *WPO*, May 2012). Mr. Danisi’s primary challenges are based upon a misunderstanding of Tennessee law in 1809. He incorrectly assumes that in 1809 Tennessee law always treated a lawsuit over a debt as a civil action rather than a quasi-criminal action, as I stated in my article. Based on that misunderstanding, Mr. Danisi quickly glosses over some of the most significant court documents in describing them as merely “some pre-trial papers” that Agent Neelly signed. When Tennessee law in 1809 is properly applied, an examination of those documents in the *Thomas Masterson and Company v. James Neelly* court file helps establish Chickasaw Agent Neelly’s whereabouts on October 11, 1809.

Until the Tennessee legislature abolished the remnants of British debtor prison laws in 1831, Tennessee law permitted a creditor to have a debtor arrested and held in jail or under bail to assure appearance at trial.<sup>1</sup> That process could be employed if a debtor was about to go or take assets beyond the jurisdiction of the court (such as the Chickasaw Nation) or if the debtor had committed fraud upon his creditors. Rather than issuing a civil summons as today, the court could issue an order commonly called a “body execution” in which the court ordered the sheriff to take the body of the debtor and hold him until trial, unless the debtor posted bail. I cannot speak to Missouri law, which Mr. Danisi con-

sulted, but though some states grew sympathetic in the application of the law, it appears from Tennessee Supreme Court cases that Tennessee still strictly applied the law to allow creditors to coerce payment. Tennessee law would have applied in Agent Neelly’s case.

With an understanding of the law in effect in Tennessee in 1809, the pre-trial documents in the Neelly court file become significant. The document formally known as a *capias ad respon-*

*dendum* (interpreted as “You take or capture to respond”) was an arrest warrant. As I quoted from the document in my article, the sheriff was ordered to take the “body of James Neelly” and hold him to appear in court. A second document in the court file bearing Agent Neelly’s signature promised that the same James Neelly who signed the document would make a “personal appearance” at trial. That pre-trial document served as the bail that allowed Agent Neelly to go free until

Promissory note bearing only the signature that matches the signature of the Chickasaw Agent James Neelly. This note from the court file was the sole basis of the lawsuit.

The “body execution” order from the court file. The court ordered the sheriff to take the body of James Neelly to assure his appearance at trial on the note signed solely by the Chickasaw Agent.

trial, when he was bound to the court to make his personal appearance. If he failed to make his personal appearance, the court would have ordered his bail bond forfeited.

Both the appearance bond and the original note from the court file bear Agent James Neelly's signature and establish that he was the James Neelly who was to appear in court on October 11, 1809.<sup>2</sup> Agent Neelly was not just "intrinsically linked" to the case as Mr. Danisi states, Agent Neelly signed the note that was the basis of the lawsuit. The note and complaint in the court file make it clear that Agent Neelly was the sole defendant. Having failed to establish that the defendant was anyone other than Agent Neelly, Mr. Danisi finally asks the reader to speculate that George Neelly who co-signed the appearance bond could have appeared in Agent Neelly's place as defendant. That is not how the law worked. There was no person other than Agent Neelly whose presence would have satisfied the *capias* and appearance bond. Because Mr. Danisi admits that the James Neelly associated with the case was Chickasaw Agent Neelly, I do not understand why he argues that I identified the wrong James Neelly. If Agent Neelly's birthdate is determined to be different than I concluded when I wrote the article, the fact remains that Chickasaw Agent James Neelly who supposedly wrote the October 18, 1809, letter to Jefferson was the James Neelly in the lawsuit and who was obligated to make a "personal" appearance in court.

The statement in Mr. Danisi's article that the court minutes reproduced in the article are the "sole record" of what occurred must have been an error. The note, complaint, *capias*, and bond are also part of that record.

There has been no dispute that Agent Neelly was represented by counsel in the case. Mr. Danisi suggests that Agent Neelly's personal appearance was not required at his jury trial

if his attorney was present in court to represent him. A trial in the absence of a defendant on a *capias ad respondendum* would have defeated the purpose of the body execution. Moreover, an attorney did not and does not stand in the shoes of his client in a trial based on an arrest warrant. If Agent Neelly had not appeared, the minutes would have reflected that his bond had been forfeited and there would have been no need to seat a jury.

The official court minutes in the *Masterson* case identify members of Agent Neelly's jury, and Mr. Danisi concedes that a jury was seated. As was common at the time, the court minutes reflect the larger jury pool was the same for the entire day, but the persons who served on individual cases varied by case. The jury selection process can be lengthy as lawyers for each side are given the opportunity to challenge and disqualify individual jury members. It is unlikely the court would have taken the time to empanel a specific jury for the Neelly case on an arrest warrant unless Agent Neelly had been present.

I based my conclusion that the jury rendered a verdict against Agent Neelly upon the form of the clerk's recital in the court's minute book. Additional case reports in the same court and session similarly list an amount and end with the phrase "the jury do say," and in some cases, when the same clerk made the same brief notation, the court file contains a separate judgment document. (Some case reports, however, were specific as to the jury's verdict.) I concluded that the clerk did not take the time to write the verdict separately if the jury awarded the exact amount sought.

It would require more than a full article to respond to all Mr. Danisi's assertions, particularly those relating to conflicting Neelly family history records. A full response will have to wait until a future publication, but permit me to respond to a few in the limited space available:

**The Leonard Estate Lawsuits:** Mr. Danisi also attempts to bolster Agent Neelly's reputation by misstating the law as to Agent Neelly's obligations for Isaac Leonard's debts. Agent Neelly clearly stated the law in the petition he filed in the *Schroeder* case that Mr. Danisi found. There was no archaic law holding an administrator in Tennessee personally liable for the debts of the deceased person simply by agreeing to serve as administrator, as Mr. Danisi argues. The 1831 *Tennessee Justice's Manual and Civil Officer's Guide* states, "Although the executor or administrator is not bound by the debts of his testator, or intestate, beyond the assets which have come into his hands, yet, in many instances, he may very innocently and ignorantly render himself liable out of his own estate for such debts..."<sup>3</sup> And as shown in the 1831 Tennessee statutes Mr. Danisi cites, an administrator became liable for the decedent's debts only if he committed misfeasance or malfeasance and thereby deprived creditors of their property.<sup>4</sup> If the administrator spent the decedent's funds that came into his hands rather than saving them for the creditor, he could be found liable from his own funds. Mr. Danisi devotes much space to details of the *Schroeder* lawsuit, but he fails to mention the most significant portion: Agent Neelly admitted that he had exposed himself to liability only because he inappropriately spent funds from the Leonard estate. If the estate did not have sufficient funds to pay a debt, the administrator could plead a defense that the estate had already been fully administered or that there were no funds to pay the debt, and the administrator would not be personally liable. Agent Neelly admitted that he did neither in the estate lawsuits. Agent Neelly claimed that he had committed misfeasance rather than malfeasance. My article concluded from the circumstances of the lawsuits that Agent Neelly spent funds inappropriately from the Leon-



ard estate. The *Schroeder* case Mr. Danisi discovered contains Agent Neelly's admission confirming that conclusion.

**Grinder's Stand:** From Dawson Phelps's conclusion that Grinder's Stand "was opened sometime between January 18, 1808 and October 11, 1809," Mr. Danisi represents in footnote 44 that Mr. Phelps stated "Grinder's Stand had been a thriving business before Neelly's appointment." Phelps's statement is not inconsistent with the conclusion that Robert Grinder began operation of the stand in 1809.

**The October 18, 1809, Jefferson letter:** Mr. Danisi sets up a "straw man" argument over whether Neelly would have used a scribe for the letter to Jefferson. When I stated Neelly would not have delegated the writing of such a significant letter to someone else, I used "writing" to mean dictating or taking responsibility for by signing. I acknowledged in the article that John Brahan was the scribe. The Neelly signature on the October 18, 1809, Jefferson letter is a different signature from every other known letter Agent Neelly signed. Moreover, the National Archives preserves a separate October 18, 1809, letter with a signature that matches Agent Neelly's. That is the letter in which Neelly seeks reimbursement for funds he paid to have a prisoner escorted to Nashville during his journey with Lewis. The October 18, 1809, Agent Neelly letter in the National Archives was written 150 miles south of the location where the letter to Jefferson was written. Neelly could not have been in both places on the same date.

The primary source evidence gives reason to question any statement from Agent Neelly about Lewis's death: Neelly took Lewis's dirk and pistols as confirmed by Lewis Marks and Major Russell; Russell said Lewis would not have died if he had accompanied him; James Brown (possibly a Chickasaw

chief) claimed Agent Neelly committed numerous offences including attempted murder; and Neelly was involved in several lawsuits over his mishandling of funds from a relative's estate. There may be explanations for all those incidents, but the primary source evidence does not give a statement from Neelly unquestioned credibility.

Even if one accepts that the October 18, 1809, letter to Jefferson is Agent Neelly's, there is good reason to question whether the federal agent who admits to agreeing to accompany Lewis, who admits to being absent when Lewis died, and who admits to being "ruined" if he lost his job, would be forthright about the circumstances of Lewis's death during the agent's absence from duty. The acknowledged absence of Neelly from Grinder's Stand when Lewis died gives further plausibility to the conclusion that Neelly was in court when his jury was seated.

But the letter to Jefferson was not Agent Neelly's. Therefore, my conclusion that "the man who abandoned Meriwether Lewis has no credibility as the author of the conclusion of Lewis's biography" ultimately is not because Agent James Neelly was a bad man or that he abandoned Lewis; it is because the description of the Agent Neelly in the Jefferson letter is a fiction created by someone other than Agent Neelly. That account is not from the real James Neelly, the Chickasaw Agent who was in court in Franklin, Tennessee, rather than Grinder's Stand on October 11, 1809.

Tony Turnbow  
Hohenwald, Tennessee

1. For references to the *capias ad respondendum* procedure that was abolished by the Tennessee legislature for non-criminal cases in 1831, see Tennessee Supreme Court cases *Woolfen v. Hooper*, 23 Tenn. 13 (Tenn. 1843); *Lester v. Cummings*, 27 Tenn. 385 (Tenn. 1847) and for general discussion see 33 C.J.S. Executions, Section 407(1938); 12

C.J.S. Capias (1938); 6 C.J.S. Arrest, Section 57 (1938).

2. An image of the note from the court file was reproduced in my article, but the editor misidentified it as the appearance bond.

3. P. 76.

4. The particular section of the 1831 statute Mr. Danisi cites is unrelated to his argument. It deals specifically with administrator bonds for which administrators were liable if they stole money from the estate.

## Praise for John Jengo

To the editor:

What a TREASURE you are, John Jengo! Little did I know about stones; they were hard things found on trails for picking up and pitching into the nearest body of water, hardly enough to fill an empty peanut shell. But your series of articles in *WPO* has changed all that! Now I'm tempted to dig Rose's home-sewn Explorer tent out of retirement and hit the L/C trail as we did in 1971 with eight-year-old daughter Linda when we tent-camped from Philadelphia to Ft. Clatsop in our VW Bug. (Being 94, you know I'm just kidding!) At any rate, I'd wager that some *WPO* reader will do that soon with your articles in hand. Keep 'em coming, John. Both you and they are terrific!

Frank Muhly

## Regarding Benemann's "My Friend and Companion"

From the editor of *We Proceeded On*:

In publishing William Benemann's two-part article on the relationship between Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, I was quite aware that it was in many respects speculative. That was its intent. I also recognized it might offend some readers. Why then publish it?

Reinterpretation and speculation is part and parcel of the study of history. Viewpoints that are counter to our

understanding of people and events can serve us in at least two ways: they can provide a springboard for reevaluation of our personal biases and preconceptions, and they can offer an opportunity for us to strengthen and support convictions that may previously have been held without question.

The article by Mr. Benemann is timely. It addresses issues currently in the public forum. Sexual orientation and behavior are under debate in our legislatures, our courts, the press, churches, and dinner tables. The study of gender and sexuality is also very much a part of contemporary historical scholarship and research.

The decision to include this article in *We Proceeded On* was mine. I asked two scholars, one on our editorial board and one with no connection to our foundation, to review and comment on the manuscript. Both agreed that the manuscript was highly speculative, but that the opinions were based on the sources. I discussed the manuscript with folks in and outside the foundation prior to publication, and the general consensus was that this article would cause heated discussion, but was appropriate for publication in our journal.

My hope is that an article like "My Friend and Companion" will spark discussion, and promote further research and increased focus on the story of the captains and the Corps of Discovery. My personal opinion is that such a discussion does not demean the men in question. To me they remain remarkable and brave, men who inspire us in many, many ways.

We welcome your letters and comments on this or any other article. Permission of the letter's author is needed before publication in this journal. The following letters were received shortly after the publication of part 1 of the article. Part 2 appears in this issue.

Robert Clark

Dear Mr. Clark,

I must tell you up front that I look forward to each and every publication that comes out. *WPO* is my favorite read! By now, we've all had a chance to review the Feb. 2015 edition. The "Intimate Journey" article by Benemann has caused quite a stir with many of the local Corps of Discovery buffs.

I wonder if the captains' sexual orientation is the only thing we have left to talk about? Lewis's instability and moodiness certainly lends itself to theory and conjecture on plenty of topics. But now we drag Clark into this because the captains shared a tent and spent time with each other in a pirogue? Et Tu, Drouillard? There must be so many other subjects about the corps that we can write about that are based on true facts.

Unfortunately, unfounded stories like this get woven into the fabric of history. I personally do interpretation tours at Travelers' Rest State Park in Lolo. I'm trying to figure out how I respond to a 5th grader who asks if Lewis was gay? We all know "sex sells," but wouldn't we rather see Tom Hanks and Brad Pitt promote a more honest story on HBO?

Happy Trails!

Bruce Mihelish  
President, Travelers' Rest Preservation  
and Heritage Association

Mr. Clark,

As you are the editor of the *WPO*, and your phone is constantly busy, I am taking this opportunity to express my outrage and disappointment about the article that besmirched the good character of Captains Lewis and Clark. That you and the editorial board found this subject matter worthy of space in *We Proceeded On* is beyond comprehension. These two men are American heroes and are deserving

of better treatment than to be disparaged thus, based solely on pure biased speculation.

You should be aware that the individual who proffered this rubbish seems to be on a campaign to dishonor many of our American heroes, in a not-so-veiled attempt to legitimize his chosen lifestyle. The *WPO* has aided in that attempt.

The background of this "historical scholar" is easily found with the least bit of research.

Why did the *WPO* feel it was necessary to publish such a contentious article? How in the world did you believe this to be a story worthy of the two captains? Especially when it comes from a skewed viewpoint.

You should be ashamed. The captains deserve better.

Richard Hennings  
Charlotte, Michigan

Dear Mr. Clark:

Having read the above mentioned article, I was amazed that this type article would be printed in *WPO*. This, in my estimation, is not in keeping with the story of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. It is a speculative guess on the sexuality of the two captains and doesn't belong in a family magazine.

The school children who read this magazine look upon Lewis and Clark as heroes and not about their sexuality. This article is degrading to the story of the expedition. It is suggested that the second part be dropped from publication in *WPO*.

Sincerely,  
Jack Puckett  
Missoula, Montana

Dear Editor,

Like many of our members I was stunned to read "Mr" Brennen's [*sic*] conjecture on the relationship between



Captains Lewis and Clark. As a veteran I am confident that Brennen never served his country. If he had he would not have had to struggle to define the bond between the captains. He does not and will not ever understand the relationship that is forged between individuals who depend on each other for their very lives. He can not conceptualize what it is like to have your left ear deafened by the muzzle blast of a comrade knowing that with every squeeze of his trigger finger he is saving your life. He will never understand the fervent desire to give your life so that guy beside you can go home to his family. He will never truly understand what Steven Ambrose termed "the band of brothers." So in a pathetic attempt to rationalize who he is not, he instead fantasizes about the relationship between great men of our nation's history.

I understand why so many of our members were disgusted, if it was for these reasons. If it was because you thought he was a "pervert," then I do not understand you. My brothers in arms died to defend all Americans, even Mr Brennen. And it will always be so in America.

Dick Fichtler

Proud Lifetime Member of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation  
Florence, Montana

To the editor:

I can't believe the article in the latest *WPO* "My Friend and Companion: The Intimate Journey of Lewis and Clark" was actually published. *WPO* is supposed to be a scholarly journal.

This piece appears to be a thinly disguised propaganda piece for the gay rights movement. Benemann really had to stretch the facts and most of his so-called references are hardly facts to back up his unfounded theory. Vacant periods in journal keeping and where

they slept is a very long stretch. Using the reference "friends" as a gay term is an affront to me and other males. I have several good male friends and there is nothing sexual in these relationships, even when we refer to each other as "friends."

If Benemann wants to live and promote the gay lifestyle, that is his business and I will not judge him, but I object to his shoving his propaganda in my face, especially when I am paying dues that supports *WPO*. If *WPO* is to accept this level of propaganda, I guess we can expect to see similar articles by people who have an agenda to promote, such as their religious faith, etc. Where do you draw the line?

In 1902, Eva Dye wrote "The True Story of the Lewis & Clark Expedition" in which she invented unfounded stories to promote Sacajawea as a great native American mother of the West. Dye built Sacajawea up to promote the suffragette movement. In 1932 Grace Hebard did the same thing in her book "Sacajawea." She made Sacajawea the poster woman for the suffragette movement by inventing all kinds of stories that she could not provide references for. As a result of the books published by these two women, we now have schools and teachers passing on the myth of Sacajawea as fact. When something gets published it takes on a life of its own and historical facts don't matter. I see Benemann's article falling into this same category.

It is my hope that you will not publish part 2.

Tom Schenarts

Board member, Travelers' Rest  
Preservation and Heritage Ass'n.  
Missoula, Montana

Dear Editor,

I wish to preface my remarks regarding Mr. Benemann's *WPO* article with the following:

- William Benemann is an openly gay author; he came out of the closet at UC Berkeley's first gay dance in 1971. (Reference: Stories from the Campus Closet, Debra Levi, UC Berkeley Chronical Staff Writer, Sept 6, 2000) His credentials can be found in *WPO* at the close of his article.
- I am by no means homophobic, anti-gay or anti-Lesbian, or anti any form of sexual orientation. My wife Mary and I are heterosexual; we have friends, both male and female, whose sexual orientation is quite different from ours. They are kind, generous and fun loving people. Sexual orientation has never been an issue; they do not impose their sexuality on us, and we do not push ours on them.
- My big problem with Mr. Benemann is not the fact that he is gay, but rather that he has imposed his own agenda on LCTHF; he has done so with total disregard for the Foundation's Mission Statement and *WPO* guidelines. His article is void of scholarly research; Benemann builds a foundation for his arguments solely on conjecture and speculation. Though his writing is often beclouding, it is painfully obvious his assertions and the spin he puts on historical facts and events are driven by his personal agenda.
- I am admittedly not a scholarly writer, nor am I an author. When I prepare a talk or presentation I research diligently for accuracy and often reference my sources in the body of my paper; however, my papers are for my own oral presentations and seldom if ever footnoted in a scholarly manner... I guess that makes me "the pot calling the kettle black"!
- I have elected to direct my remarks to the author; when I deviate from that format I will try to make it obvious to the reader.

To Mr. Benemann: It appears you have an inability to discern between what is appropriate vs. inappropriate for the WPO audience. What is your message? What is your “scholarly contribution” to the L&C fraternity? I find you have taxed the intelligence of the L&C community by overreaching to tell the reader their hero’s sexuality *might have been*, or in some cases your message is *probably were*, other than heterosexual. In today’s world, where gender and sexuality is frequently the topic, most people are acutely aware that any American hero might possibly have had sexuality other than heterosexual. That is the only message your article delivers and WPO is not the appropriate place for your unfounded assertions!

WPO is not a platform for *anyone to promote their own personal agenda regardless of subject matter*. The mission of the LCTHF and WPO is very clear to all those who choose to recognize and honor it. (*Our Mission: We preserve, promote and teach the diverse heritage of Lewis and Clark for the benefit of all people.*)

The Foundation has long encouraged “Family Membership” and participation. LCTHF has a MOU with the National Boy Scouts of America, and many of our members have worked very hard to foster that relationship. I think you and the WPO “Crew” should have considered all the ramifications and concerns of the members before printing your article. Perhaps a much more appropriate platform would be a presentation at the annual meeting with time allotted for discussion; meeting attendees could then choose to attend or not attend.

As for historical accuracy, you could have solicited any 5<sup>th</sup> grade class across Montana to correct your blatant errors regarding elementary facts such as the duration of the Expedition (pg. 13, paragraph 3). After reading your assertion: “The expedition undertaken by Lewis and Clark and their Corps of Discovery was first and foremost a sci-

entific one” (pg. 8, last paragraph), the students might wish to acquaint you with the fabled “Northwest Passage” and names like “Ledyard,” “Michaux” and “George Rogers Clark.” They might also suggest you read Jefferson’s instructions to Lewis which reads in part, “*The object of your mission is to explore the Missouri River, and such principal stream of it, as, by its course and communication with the waters of the Pacific Ocean, whether the Columbia, Oregon, Colorado or any other river may offer the most direct & practicable water communication across the continent for the purpose of commerce.*” (Reference your incorrect statement pg. 8, last paragraph.)

On another note, no credible author has ever stated Clark was engaged to Julia Hancock prior to the expedition; it is a once popular romantic myth... you might want to try reading a Clark bio.

It is interesting to note that you spent an inordinate amount of time and WPO space critiquing the Captains’ sleeping arrangements. Minimal research on your part would acquaint you with the elementary aspects of *Military Protocol* of the day and camp layout as mandated by Baron Von Steuben’s manual and practiced by L&C. In addition, elementary research regarding life and travel on the frontier would afford you an understanding of normal behavior and sleeping arrangements of the day, born of necessity and practicality. You chose to promote your own far reaching ideas, putting a homosexual spin on normal everyday events.

You also went to great lengths to make a case for the “missing Lewis Journals.” Your exercise in futility becomes tedious, and in my opinion, is far better suited for the pages of historical fiction.

Mr. Benemann, you exclaim on page 8, that there is no explanation for the lifetime friendship and devotion shared by Lewis and Clark after

only six months together serving on the frontier. Your remarks lead me to believe you have never been in the Military; that you have no conception of how or why two or more men might form a lasting bond in the course of a wilderness adventure, a work assignment, a team effort, on any other set of circumstances that necessitate depending on your partners.

I, and the members of The Discovery Expedition of St. Charles, find it quite easy to understand how men could learn to respect and admire one another, and in so doing, enjoy each other’s company and cherish the friendship. I fail to see the mystery here. Based on my own experiences, I submit it is not strange or uncommon human behavior for two people to form a lifelong friendship in far less than six months’ time. In the case of Lewis and Clark, to help you better understand their lifelong friendship, please consider following:

Historians have often pointed out how different Lewis and Clark were and certainly the journals support this. However, I would like to make a case for how much alike they were, in terms of their upbringing and the values and principles they lived by. I would like to suggest that in fact the very moral fabric that made up the heart and soul of these two American heroes was woven from the same thread.

The Clark and Lewis families had their roots set deep in Virginia soil and were counted among the social elite. Their life style was consistent with that of Virginia gentry; plantation owners, where the foundation for prosperity was built firmly on the long standing institution of slavery. It was an aristocratic world where the “code duello” still prevailed and differences were sometimes settled with pistols on the “field of honor.” Among the elite, a man’s honor was paramount and his word was his bond. “Death before dishonor” was not just a catchy phrase etched in your sword blade, but rather



the code that Virginians like Lewis and Clark lived by. Lewis and Clark were “Sons of the Revolution”; raised in military tradition, they were fiercely patriotic and shared a lifelong hatred for the British.

Military Protocol mandated that “gentry” enter the military as officers; protocol also dictated that the officers enjoy a certain status and life style dramatically different from the enlisted men. I find it quite natural that two young officers from the same neck of the woods, products of the same Virginia gentry culture, would form a lifelong bond. (Wm Clark, Steffen; Clark bio, Jones)

There is no question that Lewis and Clark were courageous and honorable men with uncompromising integrity; men who embraced the “code duello” and would rather face death than dishonor. Had you published this article in 1808, I can assure you, Mr. Benemann, you would have received an invitation for a firsthand tour of “Bloody Island.” (Clark bio, Jones; “St. Louis,” Ravenswaay)

I am not advocating that the “code duel” is the way we should settle our differences, but I will tell you Sir without reservation: In my opinion your article is distasteful, unprofessional, and inappropriate for *WPO*, with a glaring lack of scholarship. Consider page 14, second paragraph: “*It would certainly be of sufficient size (the Pirogue) to allow two men to engage quietly in the most common male-male sexual practices of the period: mutual masturbation and frottage.*” Footnote, NONE. Scholarly references to substantiate your “over the top” assertions, NONE. (*WPO Guidelines*: Articles must include footnotes citing principal sources, in endnote style...) Here we find another unfounded example of what appears to be an obsession with the study of sexuality, and compulsion to further your personal homosexual agenda.

I wish to assert that *WPO* is not the appropriate platform for discussion about “mutual masturbation and frottage”. (“*Frottage*” is an all new word for me and I suspect many of our members; speaking for myself, I do not feel the need to learn to use this new word in a sentence!)

Mr. Benemann, I find your spin on Lewis’s facetious “tongue in cheek” description of Charbonneau making sausage to once again be far reaching, if not ridiculous. (Page 10 & 11). This disgusting “Benemann spin” does not warrant discussion.

Mr. Benemann, I adamantly disagree with your many unfounded suppositions, speculations, and assertions that lack any creditable documentation or evidence. However, I will go to the wall defending your right under the laws of this great country, to say and write whatever you choose. *Like-wise, I will go to the wall defending the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation’s right to determine what is appropriate for their periodical and beneficial to their readers, and what is not.*

I find your article personally insulting to myself and my family. I submit to you Sir that your apparent obsession with sexuality and your own homosexual agenda, has rendered you incapable of Lewis and Clark audience. Should you take offense to my remarks, be assured I will avail myself to debate my position at the venue of your choice.

To the Crew of *WPO*: I suggest it is time for a “Mea culpa” and then proceed on with a resolve to never deviate from the *WPO* standard of excellence and appropriateness in the future. I recognize it is easy for those who do not have to do the work, to criticize those who do. Rather than dwell on the past, it would behoove us to look to the future and continue on a course that will best serve the Lewis & Clark Family.

Consistent with the aforementioned, I respectfully suggest it is a bad practice to ignore a mistake in the hope that it will go away. Accordingly, I strongly recommend *WPO* not publish phase 2 of Benemann’s article. It is time to step up and have the intestinal fortitude to acknowledge mistakes, and vow to honor the Corps and our beloved Captains as they so justly deserve. To publish part 2 is to condone part 1, and in essence, make a declaration that Benemann’s article rightfully belongs in *WPO*; *clearly it does not!*

Mr. Benemann: I wish you well and hope you find a path in life agreeable to you. With all sincerity, I wish to remind you that respect is not given because you publish 5, 10 or a thousand books and articles; respect can only be *earned* through the quality of what you write and/or the contributions you make to mankind.

To *WPO* Editor and Reviewers: I can honestly say this article is the worst abomination I have read in 35 years of Lewis and Clark study... It is even worse than the infamous “Sacajawea” fairy tale! Can someone, *anyone*, send me a note and explain why this article belongs in *WPO*? I would sincerely appreciate the response. I contend that to be appropriate for *WPO*, an article must be “*all appropriate*”; not “*mostly appropriate*.” Rest assured that this will be a topic of discussion at the upcoming business meeting.

Mr. Clark, in the unfortunate event you do elect to publish part 2, I would sincerely appreciate sharing your rationale at your earliest convenience.

With fondest regards, I remain your friend and brother in the L&C Family,

Peyton C. “Bud” Clark  
Portland, Oregon

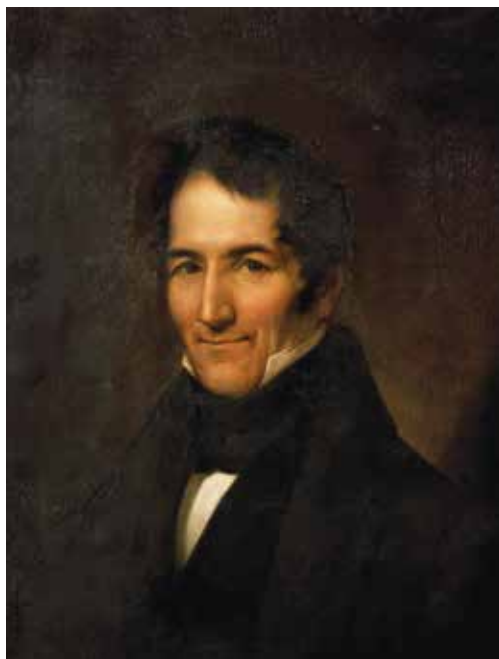
# FOSSILS AND THE FUR TRADE

## *The Chouteaus as Patrons of Paleontology*

BY DOREEN CHAKY

Without the help of the Chouteau family of St. Louis, initially the brothers Pierre and Auguste, but also their relatives, and later their progeny, the spectacular fossils from the Upper Missouri River country that astounded the scientific world in the nineteenth century might not have been discovered and identified until much later. Beginning with specimens the Corps of Discovery collected, the Chouteau family and its St. Louis-based fur company, variously named over the years but commonly referred to as the American Fur Company (AFC), facilitated the discovery, collection, and transport east for study of hundreds of new species of fossilized prehistoric plants and animals, including the first dinosaur remains found in the western United States.<sup>1</sup>

The Chouteaus played an important part in the success of the first American expedition up the Missouri, helping to outfit the Corps of Discovery and providing its leaders with much-needed information. William Clark's relationship with the family preceded the expedition. In September 1797 he was visiting some of the French settlements while representing his famous brother George Rogers Clark in a lawsuit. In St. Louis he met Auguste and Pierre Chouteau and their brother-in-law Charles Gratiot, who translated



Pierre Chouteau, Jr.

MISSOURI HISTORY MUSEUM, ST. LOUIS

for him. Clark did not speak French; the Chouteau brothers were not fluent in English, but bonds formed. Clark attended a ball at Pierre's home then, and later, during their stay at Camp Dubois in 1803-1804, both Clark and Lewis stayed occasionally at the Chouteaus' homes or attended their balls.<sup>2</sup>

Two months before the American envoys signed the Louisiana Purchase agreement in France on April 30, 1803, Indiana Territory governor William Henry Harrison answered an inquiry from Jefferson. In it he commended Auguste Chouteau of St. Louis

as "a gentleman justly considered not only for his large fortune & superior information, but from the amiableness of his character...the first citizen of Upper Louisiana." Harrison assured Jefferson he would take "great pleasure from his conversation as his knowledge of this country is certainly superior to what is possessed by any other person & every thing that comes from him may be relied upon with the utmost confidence." That confidence was manifest when, only thirteen days after he announced the Louisiana Purchase agreement on July 4, President Jefferson appointed Auguste's brother, Jean Pierre (known as Pierre) Chouteau, Indian Affairs agent for tribes west of the Mississippi River and charged Auguste with making treaties with certain



tribes. President Jefferson also appointed Pierre's oldest son Auguste Pierre (and other St. Louis youths) to the U.S. Military Academy in 1804. In return, Auguste and Pierre Chouteau advanced money to finance the explorers' trip and helped in other ways.<sup>3</sup>

In 1804, as the Corp of Discovery was beginning its Missouri River odyssey, Clark led the expedition out from their Illinois camp on May 14, but Lewis waited in St. Louis to see Pierre's expedition off to escort Omaha chiefs to Washington. Afterward, Auguste Chouteau and his relatives Sylvester Labbadie and Charles Gratiot were among those who accompanied Lewis through a thunderstorm to catch up to Clark and the others at St. Charles on May 20.<sup>4</sup>

For decades the Chouteaus held a near monopoly of the Missouri River fur trade and virtually controlled access to the upper reaches of the river.<sup>5</sup> Any of their contemporaries traveling beyond St. Louis to explore were fortunate the Chouteaus were inquisitive about the larger world. Although neither Pierre nor Auguste had formal educations, their libraries contained a significant number of books about science. Also, among their friends was Dr. Antoine Saugrain, called the "First Scientist in the Mississippi Valley." President Jefferson had known Saugrain, Paris-born and educated in physics, chemistry, and mineralogy, when he was minister to France and had introduced him, by letter, to George Rogers Clark. Since moving to St. Louis, Saugrain had been physician for the Spanish troops and would continue, at President Jefferson's behest, as surgeon to American troops there. Dr. Saugrain was among those who accompanied Lewis through the rainstorm to catch up with the expedition; it is likely he was a close advisor to the Corps leaders regarding minerals and fossils.<sup>6</sup>

Living plants and animals had been of far greater interest to almost everyone who ascended the river before the Louisiana Purchase, though a few naturalists connected with Spanish and French expeditions did notice fossils in the Upper Missouri country. James Mackay, exploring for Spain in 1796, for example, mentioned them in his journal.<sup>7</sup>

President Thomas Jefferson had instructed Meriwether Lewis and William Clark to take note of "the animals of the country generally, & especially those not known in the U.S. the remains or accounts of any

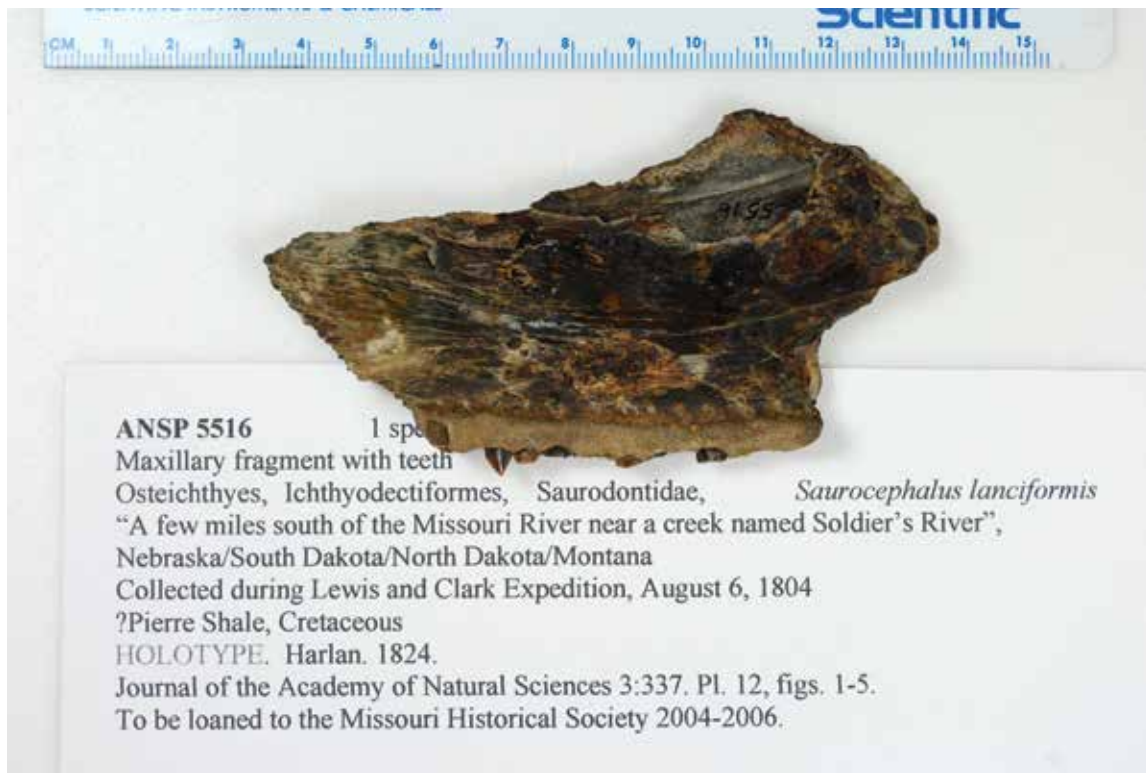
which may be deemed rare or extinct."<sup>8</sup> Caspar Wistar, one of Lewis's Philadelphia teachers, had identified some giant-clawed animal bones Virginia saltpeter cave miners had sent to Jefferson as a giant ground sloth. Jefferson read a paper on his *Megalonyx*, as he called it, to the American Philosophical Society on March 10, 1797. The *Megalonyx* would acquire its species name *jeffersoni* years later.<sup>9</sup> As far as anyone knew, the expedition might find these animals, along with mastodons and mammoths, living somewhere in the vast region it would traverse.

Lewis and Clark's own first paleontological discovery came on September 10, 1804, on top of a hill in what is now Gregory County, South Dakota. What the expedition came across was something both rare and extinct—a spectacular fossil Clark described as "the back bone of a fish, 45 feet long tapering to the tale, (Some teeth) &c. those joints were Seperated and all petrefied."<sup>10</sup>

The specimen is lost, but what they discovered might have been the fossil remains of a plesiosaur, an extinct long-necked aquatic carnivorous reptile, or the vertebral column of a mosasaur, another giant marine reptile. Both roamed the inland sea that blanketed the continent more than 65 million years ago in Upper Cretaceous time.<sup>11</sup>

In April 1805 before continuing west from the Mandan villages, Lewis sent a large shipment of natural history specimens back to St. Louis for the Chouteaus to forward to President Jefferson.<sup>12</sup> These included a fragment of a fish fossil, *Saurocephalus lanciformis*, collected on August 6, 1804, and donated on November 16, 1805, to the American Philosophical Society in Meriwether Lewis's name. The society's record books indicate the expedition's Sergeant Patrick Gass collected this specimen, which is now among the type fossils at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia.<sup>13</sup> Type fossils, representing the first examples of plants or animals new to science, are often the most important specimens in a museum's collection. The American paleontologist George Gaylord Simpson, who examined it in 1942, believed it came from either what is now Harrison County, Iowa, or Washington County, Nebraska.<sup>14</sup>

Clark, while coming down the Yellowstone River, extracted pieces of what he called the rib of a fish from a



The only existing fossil specimen from the Lewis and Clark Expedition was this fish fossil, *Saurocephalus lanciformis*, collected on August 6, 1804, by Patrick Gass and donated on November 16, 1805, to the American Philosophical Society in Meriwether Lewis's name. It is considered a type fossil, representing the first example of a plant or animal new to science. The American paleontologist George Gaylord Simpson believed it came from either what is now Harrison County, Iowa, or Washington County, Nebraska.

COURTESY, TED DAESCHLER, ACADEMY OF NATURAL SCIENCES OF DREXEL UNIVERSITY.

cliff near Pompey's Pillar on July 25, 1806. In his journal he described it as "3 feet in length tho a part of the end appears to have been broken off I have Several peces of this rib the bone is neither decayed nor petrified but very rotten. the part which I culd not get out may be Seen, it is about 6 or 7 Miles below Pompys Tower in the face of the Lard. Clift about 20 feet above the water." The specimens he collected crumbled, but Pompeys Pillar itself is made up of Hell Creek Formation sandstone. When Clark found his specimen, neither the concept of, nor the word for, creatures later called dinosaurs existed, but the Hell Creek's clays, mudstones, and sandstones have famously produced many specimens of *Tyrannosaurus* and *Triceratops* dinosaurs. Fossilized fish have emerged from it, too, as well as Upper Cretaceous and lower Paleocene reptile, amphibian, and a few mammal, bird, and pterosaur specimens.<sup>15</sup>

Returning downriver together on September 3, 2006, the Corps of Discovery met some traders who brought them news of the wider world, including a fire which had destroyed Pierre Chouteau's house and fur-

niture in St. Louis. "For this misfortune of our friend Chouteau, I feel myself very much concerned, &c.," Clark wrote. When they reached St. Louis on their return in 1806, Lewis and Clark rented a room at Pierre Chouteau's (presumably new) home and "commenced wrighting."<sup>16</sup> Pierre Chouteau, bringing more Omaha chiefs to Washington, was among the dignitaries invited to a gala on January 14, 1807, to celebrate the Corps' return. As Indian Agent and Missouri territorial governor, William Clark, and for his short time as Louisiana territorial governor, Meriwether Lewis, too, continued to work with the Chouteaus on Indian matters.<sup>17</sup>

St. Louis businessmen like the Chouteaus welcomed the next government-sponsored expedition to the Upper Missouri because one of its aims was to extend American fur trade high up the Missouri. Colonel Henry Atkinson and Stephen Long led the Yellowstone Expedition of 1819, with Long heading the scientific party that collected natural history specimens including "fossils of many kinds."<sup>18</sup>

By 1822 Pierre Chouteau's astute second son, Pierre, Jr., was in charge of the AFC's Western Department based in St. Louis. Like his father, he was an enthusiastic friend to scientists and artists. "To the politeness of this gentleman I am indebted for my passage from St. Louis to this place," the artist George Catlin wrote in 1832 after arriving safely at Fort Union, the AFC's new post at the confluence of the Yellowstone and Missouri Rivers. Catlin was an amateur naturalist with a keen interest in geology. On his return to St. Louis, he stored his "packages of paintings and Indian articles, minerals, fossils, &c.," and undertook further travels, everywhere noting the geology and collecting mineral specimens and fossils.<sup>19</sup> Years later, Catlin published a geology book entitled *The Lifted and Subsided Rocks of America, with Their Influences on the Oceanic, Atmospheric, and Land Currents*. A contemporary review in the *American Journal of Science* was dismissive.<sup>20</sup>

A year after Catlin's trip, the world-renowned naturalist Prince Maximilian of Wied came to explore the upper reaches of the Missouri River. "[A]s no white settlers have yet penetrated to those remote and desolate regions," he wrote, "the American [Fur] Company rules there alone, by its commercial stations and its numerous servants...; for this reason foreign travellers cannot expect to succeed in their enterprises without the consent and assistance of this company."<sup>21</sup>

To that end, the Prince "endeavored to become acquainted with Mr. Pierre Chouteau, who directed the affairs of the company at St. Louis, and with Mr. [Kenneth] McKenzie, who usually lived on the Upper Missouri, and was now on the point of proceeding on board the steamer to Fort Union.... Both gentlemen received me with great politeness, and readily acceded to my request."

On the way to the AFC's Fort Union, Maximilian noticed limestone outcroppings that, as he had learned from reading Long's report of his 1819 expedition, almost all contained "organic remains, encrinites, &c." While the boat awaited inspection at Fort Leavenworth, Prince Maximilian saw that "near the bank, where the vessel lay, the beds of limestone were full of shells, of which we kept some specimens."

Maximilian also observed the remains of a mosasaur that a second Yellowstone Expedition, commonly

known as the Atkinson-O'Fallon Expedition, had noticed in 1825.<sup>22</sup>

The Chouteau firm extended every courtesy to Maximilian during his stay of nearly a year at the company's upriver posts. Kenneth McKenzie worried he might offend the Prince by charging him too much. A St. Louis company ledger entry for June 25, 1834, shows a total bill for Maximilian of \$2,132.70.<sup>23</sup> Regrettably, in the spring of 1835 the company's steamer *Assiniboine*, carrying Maximilian's natural history and ethnographic collections, sank near present-day Bismarck, North Dakota.<sup>24</sup>

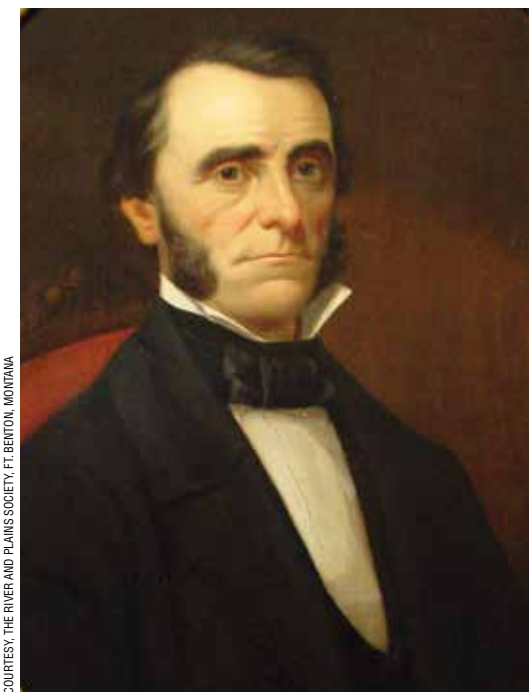
Fossils continued to come from upriver. In 1839 fur traders showed the French explorer Joseph Nicollet remains of what he called "the larger mammiferae." In his 1843 report to Congress, Nicollet, whose first expedition up the Mississippi in 1835 Pierre Chouteau had backed, noted "limestone beds 6 or 7 feet thick containing marine fossils in a very good state of preservation, remarkable as well for their size . . ." He also found some "frail shells" of oysters.<sup>25</sup> He appended a list of fossils to his report.<sup>26</sup>

Chouteau gave Nicollet credit for expenses at all company posts, for which the government would reimburse the AFC. The editors of Nicollet's journals comment that "Pierre Chouteau, Jr.,...was well known as a friend of any traveler who wished to contribute through art or science to the understanding of the West."<sup>27</sup>

Sometime later, the St. Louis physician and mineralogist, Dr. Hiram A. Prout, acquired a fossil jawbone of a gigantic pachyderm. In a December 1846 letter he wrote: "The Paleotherial bone here described, was sent to me sometime ago by a friend residing at one of the trading posts of the St. Louis Fur Company on the Missouri River. From information since obtained from him, I have learned that it was discovered in the Mauvais Terre on the White River." These White River drainage system's badlands are in today's Nebraska, South Dakota, and Wyoming.<sup>28</sup>

In 1847 Prout's article about his "Fossil Maxillary Bone of a Paleotherium" was published in *The American Journal of Science and Arts*.<sup>29</sup> The following year, Dr. Joseph Leidy of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, published an important memoir on a fossil horse from the Badlands.<sup>30</sup> Gradually, scientists





COURTESY, THE RIVER AND PLAINS SOCIETY, FT. BENTON, MONTANA

Alexander Culbertson, as painted by John Mix Stanley, c. 1854. Culbertson generally wore a full beard, and may be clean-shaven because he was in Washington, D.C., lobbying Congress.

were becoming aware that there were wonderful fossils to be studied in the Upper Missouri country.

#### ALEXANDER CULBERTSON

Traveling upriver with Prince Maximilian in 1833 was a young man who was to have a huge influence on the study of paleontology in the Upper Missouri region. Alexander Culbertson was on his way to Fort Union to begin a long and successful career working for the Chouteaus. Over the years he would meet and aid some of the leading scientists of his day.

In the summer of 1843 Culbertson, by then bourgeois (manager) at the AFC's Fort Union, hosted the famous artist and naturalist John James Audubon. Chouteau had provided free passage to Fort Union for Audubon's party

Among the Culbertson family's important contributions to paleontology were these specimens from an extinct pig-like beast. The *Merycoidodon culbertsoniorum* was among the first fossils found and described from the badlands' rich store of vertebrate fossils.

on the company steamboat and had encouraged the boat's Captain Joseph Sire to give the party special treatment. Culbertson pledged to Audubon "all means of the establishment" while he researched his book *Viviparous Quadrupeds of North America*.<sup>31</sup>

Audubon's friend and traveling companion, Edward Harris, a member of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, had been charged by a committee of that body to report on the geology of the Upper Missouri. In his journal and his geology report to the Academy, Harris mentioned few fossils, but among them were leaf impressions in sandstone near Fort Union and near the present North and South Dakota border.<sup>32</sup>

When Audubon left Fort Union in August 1843, Culbertson traveled with him as far as Fort Pierre in present-day South Dakota and then set out overland to another Chouteau company trading post, Fort John, better known as Fort Laramie. The Fort Pierre-Fort Laramie Trail took Culbertson through the Badlands.

Culbertson and his traveling companion, army captain Stewart Van Vliet, each collected fossils along the way.<sup>33</sup> Among the fossils Culbertson later brought east were some that Dr. Leidy described in two papers published in 1848: "On a new genus and species of fossil Ruminata: *Poebrotherium Wilsonii*," and "On a new fossil genus and species of ruminantoid Pachydermata: *Merycoidodon Culbertsoniorum*."<sup>34</sup> These specimens, Leidy wrote, "were obtained through Dr. John H. B. McClellan, a friend of Dr. Culbertson[.]..." He noted



COURTESY, TED DAESCHLER, ACADEMY OF NATURAL SCIENCES OF PHILADELPHIA

the fossils were “afterwards presented by Alexander Culbertson to the Academy.”

The Academy’s *Proceedings* for 1850 record that “Mr. Joseph Culbertson [father of Alexander], of Carlisle, Pennsylvania, presented the specimens of *Merycoidodon* and *Poebrotherium*, and also other (undetermined) mammalian fragments formerly deposited by him in the Academy.”<sup>35</sup>

#### THE WHITE RIVER BADLANDS

In 1849, as part of a government survey of what was then known as the Northwest, a professional geologist would finally investigate the source of these fossils.

Geologist David Dale Owen wrote in his 1852 report to Congress that his “subagent” Dr. John Evans was able to explore the remote White River Badlands in 1849 “in consequence of facilities afforded him by Pierre Chouteau, Jr., & Company,” still known as the AFC. Help came “both in passing rapidly from point to point, on the river, and afterwards in procuring the means of land travel, which he otherwise could not have obtained, and by which he finally reached that most curious unexplored region, the country of the ‘Bad Land’ (Mauvaises Terres), lying high up on White River...”<sup>36</sup>

Among fossils Evans found in the Fox Hills between the Cheyenne and Moreau Rivers were ammonites (extinct relatives of modern-day octopus, squid and nautilus) “the size of a small carriage-wheel.” On Sage

Creek, a small tributary of the Cheyenne, were bones of a strange pig-like beast later named *Oreodon* that ate both flesh and vegetables and chewed its cud.<sup>37</sup>

Traveling in his wagon some thirteen or fifteen miles from the Sage Creek locality, Evans came suddenly upon the famed Mauvaises Terres. Here, he wrote, “fossil treasures” presented themselves “at every step. Embedded in debris, lie strewn, in the greatest profusion, organic relics of extinct animals” which “disclose the former existence of most remarkable races that roamed about in bygone ages high up in the Valley of the Missouri.”

Owen’s 1852 report incorporated Joseph Leidy’s paper describing several of Evans’s White River Badlands finds. According to George P. Merrill, writing in 1924 when he was head curator of the National Museum, Leidy’s was not only the “first systematic account published of the Bad Lands fossils,” it also “might not unjustly be considered as marking the beginning in America of studies in vertebrate paleontology.”<sup>38</sup>

Evans’s work and Owen’s report excited professional and amateur paleontologists alike, and Alexander Culbertson’s half-brother Thaddeus, an amateur naturalist and Princeton divinity student, was next to explore the White River deposits. Through his brother, Thaddeus Culbertson had the promise of support from the Chouteaus. Therefore, Spencer F. Baird, the Assistant Secretary of the new Smithsonian Institution, decided to help sponsor the trip if Thaddeus would collect some natural history specimens for the institution.

Baird explained: “For several years I have been receiving



The Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia’s *Proceedings* for 1850 record that Joseph Culbertson, father of Alexander Culbertson of the Chouteau firm, presented this specimen of *Poebrotherium*, representing a new genus and species of a camel-like mammal, to Dr. Joseph Leidy for study. Leidy described it in an 1848 paper.

valuable specimens from different friends, in the Upper Missouri, whose other duties, however, prevented them from collecting as much as could be wished. Mr. Culbertson being about to visit this region for the benefit of his health, offered to make for the Smithsonian Institution such collections in Natural History, as might be indicated to him as desirable; I accordingly prepared a list of desired data, and among others, directed his attention to the eocene [that is, Oligocene] deposits of White River, known as the Mauvais Terres or bad lands.”<sup>39</sup> Baird traveled to Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, on February 16, 1850, to see Thaddeus off.<sup>40</sup>

Baird had persuaded the Smithsonian to appropriate \$200 to help defray Thaddeus’s expenses, but Alexander Culbertson “bore the entire expense of the trip from Fort Pierre to the Mauvais Terres, besides paying a considerable sum to hunters and others for many of the specimens sent.”<sup>41</sup>

The party took an AFC steamboat to St. Joseph, then went by carriage to Fort Pierre, which must have been an arduous trip for Thaddeus, who suffered from tuberculosis. Only a day or two after arriving there, he nevertheless proceeded to the Badlands with Owen McKenzie, mixed blood son of Fort Union’s first bourgeois, and a man from the fort. “We are well furnished with provisions for about two weeks,” Thaddeus wrote, “and have three mules all of which are the worse for wear, but they are the best we could get as the Indians have bought up all their best horses and mules and are clamorous [sic] for more.”

After several days of travel, they reached the place where Alexander Culbertson had found the specimens presented to the Academy of Natural Sciences.<sup>42</sup> Thaddeus was disappointed in the first fossils he saw: “I was shown a number of ugly dark red unshapen masses, these my guide told me are petrified turtles, their shells being destroyed by the action of the sun and they are crumbling to pieces.” Better ones soon turned up.<sup>43</sup>

On returning to his buggy, Thaddeus found that “one of the men had brought an excellently preserved head of an animal; it is about the size of a large bear’s head; he had found also several other good specimens.” By evening of that broiling hot day, “we had made quite a good examination of this immediate locality; we had about ½ a bushel of small things, a number of excellent teeth and jaw bones, several good heads and

a couple of pretty good small turtles and the large one. These I thought as many as my means of transportation would allow; I have since found them to be more, for they are very heavy. I then filled a small bag with the clay, and the crumbs of petrified turtle, and started with M’Kenzie for the top of one of the highest hills.”

Thaddeus knew his limitations: “I had already done enough to excite inquiry and further exploration must be made by scientific men with a corps of assistants.” All the same, he “feared greatly that Prof. Baird would be disappointed.” Leaving their heavy load of fossils to be picked up later, they returned to Fort Pierre.

Baird was far from disappointed in Thaddeus Culbertson’s collection. He wrote his brother in September: “The greatest treasures of the summer...were embraced in 7 boxes of specimens collected by Mr. Culbertson on the Upper Missouri.... Best of all were some fossil teeth, skulls and bones of vertebrate animals from the Mauvaise Terres.... These were embedded in a calcareous marl and belonged to genera allied to Tapir, *Anoplotherium*, *Palaeotherium* & other extinct forms. Most are entirely new, all are completely petrified, the cavities of the long bones being entirely filled with quartz. There are turtle shells over an inch thick, and I have three nearly perfect, one weighing about 150 lbs.” Dr. Evans had seen turtle fossils there in 1849. He and Thaddeus compared notes on them in June of 1850 at Fort Pierre when Evans had come to do more collecting. Evans would return to the Badlands again in 1851.<sup>44</sup>

The trip west had seemed to improve Thaddeus’s health, but shortly after arriving home he had an attack of bilious dysentery and, at age 27, died a few weeks later. Thus it remained for Baird to edit Thaddeus’s journals into a paper.<sup>45</sup>

Baird asked Leidy to write about Thaddeus’s “collection of perhaps twenty species of Mammalia and reptiles,” and this paper was appended to the report. “Many specimens brought back by Mr. Culbertson were presented to the Institution through him, by members of the American Fur Company,” Baird acknowledged. Among these he listed Alexander Culbertson, by then in charge of all the Upper Missouri forts; his cousin Ferdinand Culbertson, employed by the AFC at Fort Union; Edward T. Denig, Fort Union bourgeois who was known for preparing natural history specimens



for scientists and museums at Alexander Culbertson's request; Schlagel, a trader at the company's Vermillion post, and Charles E. Galpin, trader at Fort Pierre.<sup>46</sup>

Leidy drew on a sizable collection of Badlands fossils in writing his report for Baird. Besides Evans's offerings, Leidy now had access to fossils at the Academy collected by Alexander Culbertson; at the Smithsonian collected by Thaddeus Culbertson; those owned by Dr. Prout of St. Louis and by Captain Stewart Van Vliet; and a collection owned by Professor O'Loghland of St. Louis.<sup>47</sup>

But this growing assortment of fossils only whetted appetites. At a time when the Chouteaus were grappling with rival fur and hide traders, they found themselves in the midst of a fierce rivalry between two camps of scientists.

#### A FRACAS OVER FOSSILS

In the spring of 1853, Dr. John Evans was once again in the field, this time with Benjamin Franklin Shumard, assistant geologist with the new Missouri Geological Survey. They were attached to Isaac I. Stevens's government railroad survey, and planned to collect more Badlands fossils for the Smithsonian on their way to Oregon by way of the Missouri River. As they waited in St. Louis for the AFC steamboat, they learned the famous geologist James Hall of Albany, New York, had also sent two geologists to collect White River Badlands fossils. Hall was interested in proving his theory that fossils could be used for correlating rock formations over great distances.

Ferdinand V. Hayden and F. B. Meek had letters of introduction to the leading men of St. Louis from Hall, and Chouteau's company agreed to provide transportation for them and their supplies. Alexander Culbertson, in St. Louis when Meek and Hayden arrived there that spring, helped outfit them. Stevens, Shumard, and Evans strenuously objected to sharing the Badlands with another party of geologists; Hayden and Meek were equally incensed.

Hall's friend, St. Louis scientist George Englemann, and the famed geologist Louis Agassiz, who happened to be in town giving a lecture, mediated their rivalries, and the combatants finally agreed there were enough fossils for all to collect in the Badlands. The boat left St. Louis with both parties aboard. At Fort Pierre the

AFC outfitted Hayden and Meek with horses, carts and guides.

Their total expenses after this trip were \$1,500, \$300 more than Hayden's highest estimate. Three years later in a letter to Leidy, Meek claimed that the AFC had taken advantage of them. Their bill at Fort Pierre was twice what they had been led to believe it would be, and personnel at Fort Pierre, according to Meek, had treated them rather like "intruders on ground belonging to others and consequently charged us unheard of prices."<sup>48</sup>

The AFC stood to profit enormously from Stevens's expedition and, by playing a part in a well-publicized national project, it would benefit politically as well. This was important in garnering government contracts to deliver supplies upriver. It is little wonder the company did not pamper Meek and Hayden.<sup>49</sup>

Having quit his job with Hall, Hayden went west again in 1854 with no prospects for any financial help with expenses. In St. Louis he found a patron in Indian Agent Colonel A. J. Vaughan. While Vaughan conducted business at the various agencies, Hayden collected fossils and other natural history specimens.

Near the mouth of the Knife River in what is now North Dakota he gathered "three good sized boxes" of fossils including some shells new to science. He went up the Yellowstone with Vaughan to Fort Sarpy near the mouth of the Bighorn River, accumulating along the way nearly three tons of fossil plants and shells. By the time he returned to Fort Pierre to spend the winter, Hayden had a natural history collection that filled "a good sized room."

From Fort Pierre Hayden made several winter collecting expeditions, picking up more new shells and large bones in the Fox Hills area. In February 1855 he took two men, four horses, and a cart to Sage Creek where, in twenty below zero weather and deep snow, he collected for a week before going on to the Bad River's north fork and farther west to the Black Hills.

On a trip to the White River in May 1855, he gathered fossil turtle shells, bones of giant rhinoceros-like mammals called titanotheres and more remains of the hog-like *Oreodon*.

During the twenty months Hayden was in the Upper Missouri country, Vaughan and Chouteau covered his ordinary expenses; he was also supported by



Frederick Hayden collecting fossils in the Black Hills while working for Captain W. F. Reynolds in the summer 1859. Watercolor by Anton Schonborn from the William Franklin Reynolds papers, 1859-1860. WA MSS 393.

YALE COLLECTION OF WESTERN AMERICANA: BEINECKE RARE BOOK AND MANUSCRIPT LIBRARY

donations of money from his naturalist friends. The AFC trader Charles Galpin paid for two trips he and Hayden took together. Alexander Culbertson invited him to spend the summer of 1855 at Fort Benton, the company's westernmost post. Other AFC personnel also helped Hayden.<sup>50</sup>

It was in 1855, near the confluence of the Judith River with the Missouri, that Hayden found teeth that would be the first dinosaur specimens ever found in the United States. He found more dinosaurs and dinosaur-like aquatic reptiles that year including some within ten miles of Fort Union and others forty miles from the mouth of the Yellowstone. He collected similar remains along the Milk, Musselshell, and Little Missouri tributaries of the Missouri River.<sup>51</sup>

Montana was truly dinosaur country. Princeton paleontologist Glenn Jepsen found dinosaur egg fragments in the Hell Creek Formation in Montana in 1930, but when Jack Horner of The Museum of the Rockies in Bozeman, Montana, found the first baby dinosaur fossils in nests with eggs, it was in the Two Medicine Formation near Choteau, Montana, a town named for Pierre Chouteau, Jr. (but misspelled).<sup>52</sup>

Hayden expected to earn something back for his work in 1855 but poor preservation cost him some of his six-ton shipment. In St. Louis Charles P. Chouteau,

(son of Pierre, Jr.) set up a room in his home to store a large part of Hayden's collection, which he had purchased from Vaughan. Chouteau's natural history specimens were the best he had left.

Hayden went east to write his reports but, in March of the following year, Shumard published a catalog of new fossils from the Upper Missouri, using descriptions of some of Chouteau's specimens. This angered Hayden, but his own reports, written with Meek, were published that same month and were well received.

Meek and Hayden together described the invertebrate fossils while Leidy worked on the vertebrates. Leidy read memoirs about Hayden's fossils at the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia and, in 1856, under his and Baird's sponsorship, Hayden was elected a corresponding member.<sup>53</sup> In that same year, the Academy of Science in St. Louis voted him a member.<sup>54</sup>

Meek was tremendously excited about Hayden's "grand" and "magnificent" shells. "The contribution we will be able to make to geology and palaeontology is, I think, of such importance that if I possessed the means, I would be willing and much prefer to publish [our report] at our own expense."

In 1854, when Kansas and Nebraska became territories, everything between the present Kansas and Canadian borders and west to the mountains became

Nebraska Territory. The government ordered Lieutenant G. K. Warren to conduct an extensive survey of the Yellowstone and Missouri River area of this vast region.<sup>55</sup>

From April to November of 1856 and again in 1857 Hayden worked under Warren, with all of his collection earmarked for the Smithsonian.<sup>56</sup> Among his notable finds were fossils of two new mammal genera, three new mammal species, eighty new shells of various kinds, and more than twice as many fossil plants as he had found before.

Leidy, again called upon to describe the vertebrates, wrote Hayden: "You have discovered more than half the species brought from the Upper Missouri country, including all explorers back to the time of Major Long." Hayden had also collected fossils of 251 mollusks (the phylum to which snails and slugs, squids, mussels, and scallops, to name just a few, belong) and 70 plants for the Smithsonian.<sup>57</sup>

Meanwhile, Charles P. Chouteau had taken over management of what was still known as the American Fur Company and, like his father and grandfather, he continued the tradition of helping scientific expeditions that passed through St. Louis. As a founding member of the Academy of Sciences of St. Louis and its first corresponding secretary, he offered free trips on company steamboats to naturalists who wanted to collect for the society's museum,<sup>58</sup> and he later turned over to the Academy a quarter interest in his "celebrated and valuable Hayden natural History Collection."<sup>59</sup>


In the papers Hayden published either alone or with Meek about his explorations in the Upper Missouri, he made it a point to acknowledge the help he received from his friends of the American Fur Company.<sup>60</sup>

Soon after the Civil War broke out, Hayden enlisted as a military surgeon. Afterward, he would go on to greater glory as head of one of the great national geological surveys of the late nineteenth century.<sup>61</sup>

#### A TIME OF TRANSITION

The 1860s were bad years for the fur and robe trade: A Montana gold rush and the Civil War disrupted river travel; the Chouteaus were suspected of having Confederate leanings; the Sioux were restive and resentful of trespassers and broken treaty promises. When the war ended in 1865, so did the family's involvement in the

fur trade. Charles Chouteau sold all his trading posts and turned to other business and personal interests.

The Chouteaus of St. Louis had an enormous influence in shaping a fast-developing portion of the United States. Three Chouteau family generations and the people who worked for them provided indispensable help to explorers from Lewis and Clark through to Hayden and the others who gave birth to an American paleontology which would play an important role in the new age of Darwin soon to begin.<sup>62</sup> 

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#### NOTES

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3. William E. Foley and C. David Rice, *The First Chouteaus: River Barons of Early St. Louis* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 189; Cunningham, Mary B., and Jeanne C. Blythe, *The Founding Family of St. Louis* (St. Louis, Missouri: Midwest Technical Publications, 1977), 5, 15; and John Francis McDermott's introduction to it, iii-iv; Jennifer Louise Turner, *From Savagery to Slavery: Upper Louisiana and the American Nation* (Madison, University of Wisconsin, 2008), 241, 241n38; "Excerpt from President Jefferson's Private Letter to William Henry Harrison, Governor of the Indiana Territory February 27, 1803," [http://archive.adl.org/education/curriculum\\_connections/excerpt\\_jefferson1803.html](http://archive.adl.org/education/curriculum_connections/excerpt_jefferson1803.html). Accessed 3/15/2015.
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7. Aubry Diller, "James Mackay's Journey in Nebraska in 1796," *Nebraska History* 36 (June 1955), 123-28. Mackay's journey is covered in A. P. Nasatir, ed., *Before Lewis and Clark: Documents Illustrating the History of the Missouri, 1785-1804*, 2 vols. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 2:485-95.
8. Donald Jackson, ed., *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition with Related Documents 1783-1854*, 2 vols. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 1:63.
9. Earle E. Spamer and Richard M. McCourt, "Jefferson's Magalonyx," created Aug. 2006, on the *Discovering Lewis & Clark*, <http://www.lewis-clark.org/article/2742>. Accessed 3/15/2015.
10. Gary Moulton, ed., *The Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition*, 13 vols. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), 2:62-63. Moulton locates this hill near Mulehead Point.
11. Ibid, 2:63n2. Moulton writes: "They had found the fossil remains of a plesiosaur, an aquatic dinosaur of the Mesozoic era." Dinosaurs were terrestrial fossil reptiles; they had (now extinct) aquatic relatives. According to Moulton's research, some of those vertebrae might still be in the Smithsonian; if so, they could not have been deposited there until 1846 when the Institution was founded. Edward Daeschler, personal communication with the author (2/10/1997).
12. Earle E. Spamer, Edward Daeschler, L. Gay Vostreys-Shapiro, *A Study of Fossil Vertebrate Types in the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, Taxonomic, Systematic and Historical Perspectives* (Philadelphia: The Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, 1996), Special Publication 16. The mosasaur is referred to on pages 109, 128-29, 138, 150, 155, 156; the plesiosaur on pages 136, 139, 145-47, 156-57, 273-74. For contents of the shipment see Moulton, ed., *Journals* 3:329-31, 472-78. See also Jackson, *Letters*, 1:231-43.
13. Spamer, Daeschler, Vostreys-Shapiro, *Study*, 5, 20, 91. The *Saurocephalus lanciformis* specimen is on permanent loan at the Academy of Natural Sciences from the American Philosophical Society. The authors discuss this fossil at length on pages 91-92 and mention it on pages 20, 51, 54, 56, 69, 72 and 106.
14. Ibid, 7, 91-92.
15. Earle E. Spamer and Richard M. McCourt, "Lewis and Clark as Geologists and Fossil Collectors," created Aug. 2006, on the *Discovering Lewis & Clark* <http://www.lewis-clark.org> website; Robert Moore, "Lewis & Clark and Dinosaurs," *We Proceeded On* (May 1998), 28. The quote is from Moulton, ed., *Journals*, 8:226, 228-29n7.
16. Bernard DeVoto, ed. *The Journals of Lewis and Clark* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1953), 469, 478; James P. Ronda, *Voyages of Discovery: Essays on the Lewis and Clark Expedition* (Helena: Montana Historical Society Press, 1998), 236, 298-99n7.
17. Turner, *From Savagery to Slavery*, 282.
18. Bernard Jaffe, *Men of Science in America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1958), 138-39. William H. Goetzmann, *Army Exploration in the American West, 1803-1863* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1991), 40-41.
- Goetzmann lists, besides Long, the other members of the scientific party: Major John Biddle; Dr. William Baldwin, physician and botanist; Dr. Thomas Say, zoologist; Augustus E. Jessup, geologist; Titian R. Peale, assistant naturalist, artist; Samuel Seymour, also an artist; and Lt. James Duncan Graham and Cadet William H. Swift, assistant topographers. For more about the Long Expedition see Edwin James, *Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains, Performed in the Years 1819-20...* in Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *Early Western Travels* 32 vols. (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1906), vols. 14-17; and William H. Keating, *Narrative of an Expedition to the Source of the St. Peter's River...* 2 vols. (Philadelphia: 1824).
19. George Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Conditions of North American Indians*, 2 vols (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1973, reprint of the original work published in London in 1844), 1:14; 2:30, 85.
20. George Perkins Merrill, *The First One Hundred Years of American Geology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1924), 462-63. Merrill at the time was head curator of geology at the United States National Museum. Merrill also wrote: "One can forgive any amount of ignorance relating to the subject of geology in a man of Catlin's profession, but it is not so easy to forgive him for putting before an indiscriminating public opinions which are founded on wholly insufficient, and in many cases visionary, data."
21. Thwaites, ed., *Travels in the Interior of North America by Maximilian, Prince of Wied*, in *Early Western Travels*, 23:234.
22. Ibid, 22:14-15, 234-36; vol. 23:242; 23:125-26. For Maximilian's Missouri River trip, illustrated by Catlin's art, see vol. 2 of Maximilian Wied (author), Stephen S. Witte and Marsha V. Gallagher (eds.), William J. Orr and Paul Schach (tr.), *The North American Journals of Prince Maximilian of Wied: April-September 1833*, 3 vols (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010). See also Davis Thomas and Karin Ronnefeldt, eds., *People of the First Man, Life Among the Plains Indians in Their Final Days of Glory* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1981). Maximilian's papers are at the Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska.
23. *Fort Union Letter Book for 1833-1835 (October 29, 1833-December 10, 1835)*, "Excerpts from the Manuscript Collections of the Missouri Historical Society," 41, at Fort Union National Historic Site near Williston, ND. From the Drips, Chouteau, Culbertson Collections at the Missouri Historical Society microfilmed for study August 26, 1964.
- A series of letters discuss the charges to be made to Maximilian: McKenzie to James Kipp, October 29, 1833; McKenzie to the "Baron" March 20, 1834; McKenzie to William Laidlaw, March 17, 1834; McKenzie to Chouteau, April 7, 1834; McKenzie to Kipp, April 7, 1834; McKenzie to Picotte, April 7, 1834. Taken together they seem to indicate a fear of overcharging and offending the Prince and little or no concern for making a profit from him. See also "Ledger AFC Western Post accounts current for Ft. Union, Ft. McK[enzie] and others 1831-1836, entered St. Louis" on microfilm Reel 6 for Maximilian's bills. Settlement, 580, details 138, 155, 304, 401. The originals and microfilm copies (indexed on Reel 23) of this and other Chouteau company letter books, ledgers, account books, etc., are in the Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis. Fort Union National Historic Site also has a set of microfilm copies.
24. McKenzie to Maximilian, December 10, 1835, in *Fort Union Letter Book*, MHS microfilm reel 27, at Fort Union National Historic Site.
25. Edmund C. Bray and Martha Coleman Bray, trans. and eds., *Joseph N. Nicollet On the Plains and Prairies, The Expeditions of 1838-39 with Journals, Letters, and Notes on the Dakota Indians* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1993), 4, 5, 235. For mentions of fossils, see p. 139-42, 155n, 157n, 163-65, 168. See also "Report to Illustrate a Map of

the Upper Mississippi,” 28 Congress, 2nd session, House Documents, No. 52, p. 41. Nicolle’s accounts with the Sioux Outfit of the AFC are in English in the Brays’ appendix, 240-41. The original accounts, in French, are in the Chouteau Collection at the Missouri Historical Society.

26. Goetzmann, *Army Exploration*, 69, 74.

27. Bray and Bray, *Joseph N. Nicolle*, 4, 10.

28. Chouteau descendant John Francis McDermott notes in his introduction to Thaddeus Culbertson’s report (cited below) that Prout could not have meant the St. Louis Fur Company (Harvey, Primeau, & Co.) since the firm of that name had not yet been organized. The St. Louis Fur Company, (Harvey, Primeau and Co.), made up of former AFC employees, took out a trading license July 6, 1846. See John E. Sunder, *The Fur Trade on the Upper Missouri, 1840-1865* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965), 87, 87n. See Mary B. Cunningham and Jeanne C. Blythe, *The Founding Family of St. Louis* (St. Louis: Midwest Technical Publications, 1977) to trace Chouteau genealogy.

29. Hiram A. Prout, “Description of a Fossil Maxillary Bone of a Paleotherium, from near White River,” *The American Journal of Science and Arts*, vol. 3, ser. 2, 1847, 248.

30. Spamer, Daeschler, Vostreys-Shapiro, 353, cite: “On the fossil horse of America,” in the *Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia*, 3 (11): 262-66, pl. 2. (7 January). The name of this horse is *Equus Americanus*.

31. Shirley Streshinsky, *Audubon, Life and Art in the American Wilderness* (New York: Villard Books, Random House, 1993), 345. For more discussion of Chouteau’s help to Audubon, see Edward Harris, *Up the Missouri with Audubon, The Journal of Edward Harris*, ed. John Francis McDermott (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1951), 6-7, 9-13.

32. Harris, *Up the Missouri*, 10-11, 180. Harris’s report appears as Appendix I, 193-99. For a short biographical sketch of Harris see McDermott’s introduction, 3n4.

33. Thaddeus Culbertson, *Journal of an Expedition to the Mauvais Terres and the Upper Missouri in 1850*, ed. John Francis McDermott, Smithsonian Institution’s Bureau of Ethnology Bulletin 147 (Washington: United States Printing Office, 1852), McDermott’s introduction, 1. The author used *Reprints In Anthropology* Vol. 22 (Lincoln, Neb.: J&L Reprint Company, 1981).

34. Spamer, Daeschler and Vostreys-Shapiro, 353, cite *Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia*, 3 (12) 322-26; and *Proceedings*, 4 (2), 47-50 for these two papers, respectively.

35. Spamer, Daeschler and Vostreys-Shapiro, *A Study*, 24. Leidy discussed the Culbertson family’s donation of fossils in the *Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia* for 1847 and 1848. See also Culbertson, *Journal*, McDermott’s introduction, 3. He cites the Smithsonian’s 5th Annual Report, 1850, 44. Joseph Culbertson lived in Chambersburg, not Carlisle.

36. David Dale Owen, *Report of a Geological Survey of Wisconsin, Iowa, and Minnesota; and Incidentally of a Portion of Nebraska Territory*, 2 vols (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo and Co., 1852), 1:194-95. This report is remarkable for Owen’s illustrations of the fossils in the second volume.

37. Merrill, *First One Hundred Years*, 276.

38. Spamer, Daeschler and Vostreys-Shapiro, *A Study*, 24, call another of Leidy’s reports “the first synthesis of the remarkable Badlands fossil fauna” and say that it “stands even today as a useful and reliable

reference”: “The ancient fauna of Nebraska: or, a description of the remains of extinct Mammalia and Chelonia, from the Mauvais Terres of Nebraska,” *Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge*, June 1853.

39. Culbertson, *Journal*, McDermott’s introduction, 1-3.

40. Ibid, 3. McDermott’s note 8 explains that Baird’s biographer mistakenly wrote that Baird was seeing Joseph Culbertson off instead of Thaddeus.

41. Ibid. McDermott cites the Smithsonian’s 5th Annual Report, 45.

42. Ibid, McDermott’s introduction, 3, citing the Smithsonian’s 5th Annual Report, 1850, 44.

43. Ibid, McDermott’s introduction, 5. Turtle fossils were discussed in Owens’ report, but that would not be published until 1852.

44. Ibid, 86-87.

45. Ibid, McDermott’s introduction, 3, 4, citing Smithsonian’s 5th Annual Report, 44.

46. Ibid, McDermott’s introduction, 4, note 9.

47. Ibid, 5. McDermott cites an 1854 paper in which Leidy credited individual collections in discussing each specimen.

48. Mike Foster, *Strange Genius, The Life of Ferdinand Vandeveer Hayden* (New York: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 1994), 53. Foster summarizes this episode, 39-53, as does Sunder, *The Fur Trade*, 151-55.

49. Sunder, *The Fur Trade*, 157.

50. Ferdinand V. Hayden, *Geological Report of the Exploration of the Yellowstone and Missouri Rivers, 1859-60* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1869), viii; Foster, *Strange Genius*, 59, 62, 63.

51. Foster, *Strange Genius*, 66-67.

52. The babies were hadrosaurs, commonly known as duckbill dinosaurs. John R. Horner and James Gorman, *Digging Dinosaurs: The Search that Unraveled the Mystery of Baby Dinosaurs* (New York: Workman Publishing, 1988), 72, 192.

53. Foster, *Strange Genius*, “Significant Events Concerning F. V. Hayden,” xi-xiii.

54. Foster, *Strange Genius*, 68, 71, 76.

55. Sunder, *The Fur Trade*, 159-61.

56. Foster, *Strange Genius*, “Significant Events,” xii.

57. Foster, *Strange Genius*, 75. Viola, *Exploring*, 143, writes: “All the specimens, Hayden reported, had been deposited in the Smithsonian Institution.” During this trip east Hayden also, with Warren’s help, sold some of the fossils he had collected as an independent during 1854-55 to the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia.

58. Sunder, *The Fur Trade*, 185-6, 189. “Minutes of the Academy of Science of St. Louis” in Chouteau Collection, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis. For more about the Academy and its precursor, the Academy of Natural Sciences, see “Act of Incorporation Constitution and By Laws of the Western Academy of Natural Sciences at St. Louis,” (St. Louis: William Weber, 1837) at MHS. See also “The Academy of Science of St. Louis,” *Appleton’s Popular Science Monthly*, March 1898.

59. “Celebration of the 50th Anniversary,” a pamphlet in the MHS, xxiv, (9St.L 506 aclw).

60. Ibid, ix.

61. Foster, *Strange Genius*, 149.

62. For more on the Chouteau family, see Foley and Rice, *The First Chouteaus*, and Stan Hoig, *The Chouteaus: First Family of the Fur Trade* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008).

# 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation Convention Kansas City, MO – August 1 - 5, 2015

*"The Countrey about the mouth of this  
[Kansas] river is very fine on each side as  
well as the North of the Missouries . . ."*

William Clark, June 27, 1804



Bud Clark, Descendant of William  
Clark with Lewis and Clark friends

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# KANSAS CITY

## *Rivers and Trails*

BY ROSS MARSHALL

*A*s you arrive in Kansas City for the 2015 Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation Convention in August, a wonderful national historic trails story will begin to unfold in front of you.

The Greater Kansas City area is a national focal point for trails because four National Historic Trails course through the city: the Lewis and Clark, Santa Fe, Oregon, and California. The reasons for this confluence are geography and politics.

Geographically, Kansas City is not only located on the Missouri River, but also at the confluence of the Missouri and Kansas Rivers. In those days, large rivers served travelers as the “superhighways”—in fact, they were the only passageways until trails and roads began to open up.

Politically, the western border of Missouri passes through this confluence. That western border also became the eastern boundary of the Permanent Indian Frontier when the Indian Removal Act was passed by the U.S. Congress in 1830 and signed into law by President Andrew Jackson. Most of the eastern tribes of American Indians were moved to that frontier and



March 14, 2014—A bus tour during the Kansas City Trails Conference stops at Strang Park on the Westport Route in Overland Park, Kansas.



One of many of the driving routes, signs now being installed along the Independence Route of our historic trails.

non-tribal people could not settle or establish towns west of that border. The small towns of Independence (1827), Westport (1834), and the town of Kansas (1838) blossomed near that border.

Those villages grew in part because they served as starting points and outfitting sites for the Santa Fe Trail, which opened up from central Missouri to Santa Fe in 1821 and became a “Highway Between Nations.” It was a trade route between the new state of Missouri and the



On September 19, 2012, Dan Sturdevant, then LCTHF President, addresses the crowd at the dedication of nine wayside exhibits about the historic trails at the Town of Kansas site on the Missouri River in downtown Kansas City.



Swale at the Wieduwilt Park site in Raytown, Missouri, on the Independence Route of the trail during the dedication of a wayside exhibit on October 14, 2014.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

new nation of Mexico, both of which were established in 1821. It quickly became a two-way trade route carrying goods between the United States and Mexico. By the early 1830s trade goods and freight moved farther west on the Missouri River to these new landing points and towns.

The three towns also served as trading points for the “removed” tribes west of the border. They received annuities and needed places to spend that money. They received the annuities at the Indian Agency office just west of the state line border near today’s 45th Street, but the closest stores were in Independence, about twelve miles away. In 1834 John McCoy opened a trading post near the agency to intercept the trade and provide the tribes a closer location. This post was called Westport.

By the time the Oregon and California wagon trails opened in the early 1840s, most of the emigrants would come west up the Missouri River as far as the steamboats would carry them. Basically, two landings locally served as destinations for the boats: the Upper Independence Landing (c. 1830) and Westport Landing, the latter opened by John McCoy in 1835 so that his new trading post in Westport could receive trading goods.

The emigrants had to purchase wagons, teams of oxen or mules, food and supplies of all kinds for the nearly two thousand mile trip on the Oregon or California Trails. All of those goods had to be purchased in these river settlements before “jumping off” because there were no towns to the west of the state line. The three villages grew rapidly into prosperous towns due to the tribal trade and outfitting the wagon trains. After 1854, when the Kansas-Nebraska Act was passed



March 14, 2014—A bus tour during the Kansas City Trails Conference stops at Upper Independence Landing overlooking the Missouri River in Independence, Missouri. All four of our trails passed this point.

opening up the “Permanent” Indian Frontier for settlement, most of the tribal trade moved away and so did much of the wagon train outfitting.

The Corps of Discovery used the only available “trail,” the Missouri River, in 1804 as they went west. Arriving in the Greater Kansas City area, they camped at the future site of Fort Osage on June 23, 1804. They stayed in the

area for a total of eight nights, including three nights at Kaw Point, June 26-28. We will have a splendid Sunday evening event during the annual meeting at that location.

Returning in 1806, they landed briefly at mid-day and climbed the large hill now called Lewis and Clark Point, camping in the area that evening, September 15.

In March 2014, a very successful and well-attended Kansas City Trails Conference was held in Independence, Missouri, involving the mid-year board meetings of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, the Santa Fe Trail Association, and the Oregon-California Trails Association, plus many other guests. Bus tours along our trails and strategic planning for the development of “trail corridors” involving both historic trails and hiking-biking recreational trails were also included.

We hope this background on our “Rivers and Trails” in the Kansas City area will serve as an introduction as you anticipate your visit with us in August. During the convention we will have two bus tours following the Lewis and Clark route along the Missouri River from Fort Osage to St. Joseph. During those tours we will see trail sites and provide more details on all four of our national historic trails.

We look forward to your visit to the Kansas City Convention to see our Rivers and Trails! 🌿



Park near Gardner, Kansas, where the Independence and Westport Routes of the Santa Fe, Oregon, and California National Historic Trails merge and the Oregon and California Trails leave the older Santa Fe Trail.

*Ross Marshall is the past president of the Oregon-California Trails Association, the Santa Fe Trail Association, the Partnership for the National Trails System, and The Native Sons and Daughters of Greater Kansas City. He is also on the board of the Missouri-Kansas River Bend Chapter of LCTHF and is on the planning committee for our 2015 Annual Meeting in Kansas City. He and his wife Shirley live in Overland Park, Kansas.*

# MY FRIEND AND COMPANION

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## *The Intimate Journey of Lewis and Clark*

BY WILLIAM BENEMANN

### PART TWO

*I*n one of his early letters to William Clark, Meriwether Lewis wrote, “I could neither hope, wish, or expect from a union with any man on earth, more perfect support...than that, which I am confident I shall derive from being associated with yourself.”<sup>1</sup> Now that that union with another man was at an end—signaled by Clark’s marriage and Lewis’s forced departure from the household—Meriwether Lewis’s life began to collapse around him. The responsibility of administering the fractious Louisiana Territory began to overwhelm him. The Secretary of the Territory, Frederick Bates, plotted behind his back, undercutting his authority and making sure that Lewis’s best-laid plans went astray. Lewis’s land speculation schemes and investments in fur trading operations were questionably legal and financially ruinous, a house of cards destined to tumble. Thomas Jefferson was replaced in the President’s House by James Madison, and with his mentor’s retirement to Monticello the federal government began to question Lewis’s expenses and to withhold reimbursement. Assaulted on all sides and separated from Clark’s household, Lewis began to drink heavily, and to take doses of opium three times a day.<sup>2</sup>

St. Louis was a rambunctious, violent town periodically invaded by rough rivermen and untamed trappers come to blow off steam after their months in the wilderness. Most of the rowdy taverns and sordid brothels were clustered near the riverfront, and it was to

this dangerous, louche neighborhood that Meriwether Lewis, Governor of the Territory, was irresistibly drawn to find solace.

The person most intimate with Lewis during this last period of dissolution was a young man named John Pernier (Pirney, Pernia, Pernea), variously described as a Creole, Frenchman, Spaniard, mulatto, or “furiner.” In 1934 Charles Morrow Wilson asserted that Lewis had picked up Pernier on one of his nocturnal sorties to the red-light district. With a profound naiveté typical of historians of his generation, Wilson describes the encounter with “a half-starved and wandering Creole named Pernea, whom Meriwether Lewis had found homeless and hungry along the river front.”

Pernea was a gaunt, sad ne’er-do-well who had followed the muddy Mississippi since birth. He gave his trade as “voyageur or waterman,” and in years past he had floated raft-loads of fur down river for the Choteaus. He had been shot in a saloon brawl, and flogged half to death at Natchez, by a band of Spanish vigilantes who had accused him of stealing a colt. The torture had left him a bit deranged of mind, and so he had taken to wandering from port to port, from saloon to saloon, hoping for the best and never finding it.

He had begged from Meriwether Lewis, never dreaming that so plainly dressed a gentleman could possibly be the great Governor. But the Virginian formed an instant interest in the wistful, beseeching fellow, this son of humanity that was downtrodden and outcast, and gave him a room in which to sleep and a steady allowance for food and drink.<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, Wilson gave no source for his information about this encounter, and subsequent historians have raised serious doubts about its accuracy. Donald Jackson documented that Pernier was a servant in Thomas Jefferson's household in 1804 and 1805,<sup>4</sup> and that he accompanied Lewis to the Louisiana Territory in 1807, so the dockside encounter either did not happen at all or it happened to someone else whom Wilson mistook for Pernier. It is instructive, in any case, to observe the potency of the heterosexual presumption for historical figures. Without a hint of sexual impropriety implied by the biographer (or, apparently, taken by his contemporary readers), Wilson was able to assert that a major political figure (a lifelong bachelor) had picked up a mentally unstable young man from the streets of a seedy part of town, had brought him into his home and had provided him with regular pocket money. One wonders if Wilson could have written with such obtuseness if Lewis had instead taken in a young girl of the streets.

Though John Pernier was at first employed as a servant or valet, he eventually took on personal custodial responsibility for the Governor, as Lewis seemed bent on self-destruction and became increasingly incapable of taking care of himself. In one of his happier moments at Fort Clatsop, Lewis had written of his indifference to the type of meat available to him—elk, horse, dog, wolf. He was content as long as there was something to nourish and sustain him. “I have learned,” he wrote, “to think that if the chord be sufficiently strong, which binds the soul and boddy together, it dose not so much matter about the materials which compose it.”<sup>5</sup> As his troubles mounted in St. Louis and as the association with Clark diminished, Lewis began to feel that vital cord weaken. He entered into a punishing downward spiral of work, drink, and drugs. Always disdainful of his own body, he began an inexorable campaign to destroy it, to cut the cord and set his soul free.

In 1994 Reimart Ravenholt published an article in the medical journal *Epidemiology* which theorized that Meriwether Lewis during this period suffered from neurosyphilis paresis.<sup>6</sup> The case he makes is a persuasive one. The disease, an advanced stage of syphilis in which the brain is affected, is of comparatively modern

origin (it is not mentioned in medical writings before the nineteenth century), but until the widespread use of penicillin in the 1940s it accounted for twenty percent of admissions to psychiatric hospitals. Writing in 1928, Charles Dennie provided a detailed analysis that is almost a road map to Lewis's mental and physical deterioration:

The most noticeable change is in [the patient's] character. We will take for instance, a man who is known for his acuity in business, who is a pillar of the church, foremost in all activities to better the civic conditions, somewhat austere and full of pride so that most people, excepting intimate friends, stand just a little in awe of him. The banker, lawyer, doctor, merchant—a man with an irreproachable reputation, the finest in his dealings with other people—suddenly begins to develop carelessness of dress, allows grease spots to show on his waistcoat, leaves his trousers unbuttoned, becomes fond of loose jokes (especially a man who has not been very fond of this kind of joke before), will make immodest remarks in mixed company, is not averse to flirting with his best friend's wife, and would even allow that flirtation to develop into other things.<sup>7</sup>

Among the most common victims of neurosyphilis paresis are “the depressed or introspective type” who pose no danger to society, but who are “quite often successful in doing damage to themselves.”<sup>8</sup> Lewis, of course, had been described as withdrawn and introspective at least from his teenage years, but other symptoms listed by Dennie—erratic behavior, lapses in judgment, vulgar humor, uninhibited sexual responses, and suicidal impulses—all describe Lewis's behavior with amazing exactness.

Ravenholt undercuts his case, though, by asserting that Lewis contracted syphilis from a Native American woman while on his trip to the Pacific. He even goes so far as to identify the exact night that Lewis was infected: 13 August 1805. Ravenholt quotes extensively from the many journal passages that describe the practice of loaning Indian wives, as well as those that mention the venereal diseases acquired by some of the members of the Corps as a result of this exchange. He then jumps to a description of Lewis's extended period of illness in September 1805, and implies that it too was venereal in origin. It definitely was not.

At that point in the journey William Clark had gone on ahead scouting for food, and when he rejoined



Lewis and the others he found them “much fatigued & hungry.” He supplied them with roots and dried fish but (since he had himself just recovered from a bad bout of gastrointestinal distress), “cautioned them of the Consequences of eating too much &c.” His warning went unheeded, and the starving men gorged themselves. Two days later Clark wrote, “several 8 or 9 men Sick, Capt Lewis Sick all Complain of a *Lax* [diarrhea] & heaviness at the Stomack.” For over a week the men suffered from the effects of the unfamiliar and possibly tainted food. “Several men bad, Capt Lewis Sick I gave Pukes Salts &c to Several, I am a little unwell. hot day.”<sup>9</sup> Meriwether Lewis’s vomiting, diarrhea and bloating were certainly serious, but they had nothing at all to do with sexual contact.

The night Ravenholt suggests that Lewis was infected with syphilis was certainly a pleasant one for the captain. On 13 August 1805 he finally made contact with the Shoshones (including Sacagawea’s brother, Cameahwait) and the prospect of acquiring horses to carry them over the Rockies brightened considerably. He and a few of the men had gone ahead on a scouting party, and Ravenholt argues that this separation from Clark and the rest of the Corps gave Lewis license to let down his reserve and actually accept an Indian woman as his bed partner, though he had resisted the temptation up to that point.

Lewis himself writes that the Shoshones entertained them that evening with songs and dancing, but at midnight he grew sleepy and withdrew, leaving the other men to amuse themselves with their hosts. “I was several times awoke in the course of the night by their yells,” Lewis writes, “but was too much fortieged to be deprived of a tolerable sound night’s repose.”<sup>10</sup> Lewis took the opportunity presented by this pause in the journey to write several long descriptive entries in his journal. To Ravenholt those entries are proof that a guilt-stricken Lewis felt the need to account for his activities and to conceal that (after months of enforced celibacy) he had yielded to “a compelling need for sexual intercourse.”<sup>11</sup> Ravenholt implies that intercourse with a Native American woman was by this point in the journey an irresistible temptation for Lewis.

In a subsequent issue of *Epidemiology* two physicians, Joseph P. Pollard and Donald W. MacCorquodale, both published letters challenging Ravenholt’s article. Both men doubted the accuracy of the diagnosis, suggesting that the four years between Lewis’s infection by a Shoshone woman and his death in Tennessee was simply too short a time to develop the symptoms that were described. “As a rule,” writes MacCorquodale, “general paresis has its onset about 10-20 years after the initial infection.”<sup>12</sup> Their primary objection to Ravenholt can be waived, of course, if we assume that Lewis did not contract syphilis during the trip to the Pacific, but rather much earlier. Using MacCorquodale’s time scale, this would place the time of infection during Lewis’s tenure in the Army, or perhaps even during the White House years. Given the undeniable presence of strong contributing factors—alcoholism, mental exertion, and emotional stress—Lewis’s symptoms would have presented themselves towards the early end of the time line.

Upon his return from the expedition, Lewis may have sought treatment. As was noted in Part 1 of this article (*We Proceeded On*, vol. 41, no. 1 [February 2015]), during the months between reporting to Jefferson at the President’s House in December of 1806 and taking up his post in St. Louis as Governor of the Louisiana Territory in March of 1808, Lewis disappears from the historical record for long periods of time. He may have been in Philadelphia being treated for the disease, or he may have withdrawn to self-medicate. An amateur physician, Lewis may have chosen to give himself a course of mercury treatments, a regimen similar to those he had administered to his men while on the expedition. His use of opium also may have started as a treatment for venereal disease, as opium was recommended in many contemporary medical texts.

Whether or not Lewis suffered from venereal disease, he was certainly an alcoholic and a drug addict, and by 1809 his troubles were becoming insurmountable. He had made no progress in editing the expedition journals. His investments in land and trading schemes soured. Even Jefferson began to question his policies in treating the Indians in the Louisiana Territory. The Department of War refused to pay some of

the bills he submitted for reimbursement, causing his personal finances to collapse. Finally in September he set off for Washington, D.C., via New Orleans to try to straighten out the mess.

On a boat traveling down the Mississippi he twice tried to kill himself; both times he was restrained by the crew. He wrote his last will and testament, leaving all his possessions to his mother. He decided not to go to New Orleans, but to instead ride overland through Tennessee. At Chickasaw Bluffs (Memphis) his host Captain Gilbert Russell of Fort Pickering found him in a state of “mental derangement” and resolved “to take possession of him and his papers, and detain them there until he recovered, or some friend might arrive in whose hands he could depart in safety.”<sup>13</sup> Russell maintained a twenty-four hour suicide watch, but when after a week Lewis seemed to regain his senses completely, the captain felt he could no longer detain him.

Lewis set out once again, accompanied by Major James Neelly, the U.S. agent to the Chickasaw Nation. Lewis brought Pernier with him, and Neelly brought a slave named Tom. Pernier later said that on the journey Lewis suffered hallucinations, hearing William Clark’s horse on the trail behind them. Clark, Lewis assured them, was coming to find him; Clark would come to his relief. On the evening of October 9 two of their horses strayed and Neelly volunteered to go after them. Lewis and the two servants would continue on and meet up with Neelly at the first house on the Natchez Trace inhabited by white people. That house turned out to be Grinder’s Stand.

There is no way of knowing for sure what transpired during Meriwether Lewis’s last hours. None of the people present at Grinder’s Stand that evening left a written description of the events, so our knowledge is based solely on second- and third-hand accounts, mostly from what Mrs. Grinder is reported to have said. Unfortunately the various reports are contradictory, either because she changed her story over time or because the men who later put the story in print elaborated or censored it. Historians have sifted over the varying accounts, trying to apply a complex algorithm that calculates the reliability of the story-teller while factoring in how far removed he or she was from the

actual events. Vardis Fisher (and others) weighed the evidence and definitely resolved that Lewis was murdered. Dawson A. Phelps (and others) weighed the very same evidence and definitely resolved that Lewis committed suicide.<sup>14</sup>

Almost without exception, the writers who maintain that Lewis was murdered begin their argument with the assertion that he was not the type of person who would ever take his own life. (“If there is such a person as the anti-suicide type, it was Meriwether Lewis.”<sup>15</sup>) He was rugged, fearless, tough, a survivor. An annoying disagreement with some minor government accountants would not have driven him to such a desperate act. If he did not commit suicide, he must have been murdered—and so they set off to find a likely suspect. But of course Lewis *was* the type of person who would commit suicide. He was a loner, subject to crippling bouts of depression, in poor health, and addicted to alcohol and opium. He had for a brief period found a cherished companion in William Clark, but Clark had moved on with his life leaving Lewis alone and unhappy. That he forged on by himself as long as he did is a tribute to his strength of character and to his belief that happiness might once again be his. But in October 1809 in a desolate cabin off the Natchez Trace, the enormity of his loss simply overwhelmed him and he could not go on.

Anyone writing about the death of Meriwether Lewis is forced either to choose what to believe among the differing accounts, or to become hopelessly tangled up trying to present a balanced and complete description of all the numerous contradictions. Anyone familiar with the details of Lewis’s death has, no doubt, already sifted and weighed the evidence and has come to some conclusion. The following account will describe the events as they are generally agreed upon by those who believe he committed suicide, but will factor in the theory that Lewis was intimately, emotionally attached to William Clark, and that this loss was the event that weighed heaviest is his decision to end his life.<sup>16</sup>

On the evening of October 10 Lewis arrived at a clearing called Grinder’s Stand, where there were rough accommodations for travelers. Mr. Grinder was away

from the compound, but his wife greeted Lewis and asked him if he was traveling alone. He replied that two servants would be arriving shortly. The innkeeper prepared dinner for him, but he ate little and drank sparingly. Mrs. Grinder later reported that she was frightened by his moods shifts: he glowered in silence, sullen and withdrawn, and then raved incoherently (“as if it had come on him in a fit” as she described it), alternately fiercely manic and eerily calm.

Lewis lit his pipe and sat on the front porch gazing wistfully towards the west. “Madam,” he said to Mrs. Grinder, “this is a very pleasant evening,” then he lapsed into a sad silence. He seemed to be lost in thought, and profoundly alone. At one point Lewis asked Pernier to bring him some gunpowder but, afraid that he might be contemplating another suicide attempt, Pernier protectively put him off and changed the subject. When Mrs. Grinder, concerned about Lewis’s erratic behavior, asked Pernier to take the Governor’s pistols away from him, Pernier replied, “He has no ammunition, and if he does any mischief it will be to himself, and not to you or anybody else.”

As it grew dark Mrs. Grinder began to prepare his bed in one of the cabins, but Lewis told her he would rather rough it on the floor, the way he used to sleep when traveling out West. Pernier brought out bear skins and a buffalo robe and spread them out for him, and when he expressed concern for Lewis’s state of mind the explorer assured him there was nothing to worry about—Captain Clark had heard of his troubles and was coming to help him. (William Clark on that evening was climbing into bed with Julia in a wayside inn outside of Louisville described as “a good little house”; they were on a pleasure trip to see family and friends in Virginia.<sup>17</sup>) Still concerned for her safety, Mrs. Grinder retired to her kitchen to sleep; Pernier and the slave Tom found a place in the stable loft.

But Lewis could not sleep. Mrs. Grinder could hear him pacing back and forth, talking loudly to himself “like a lawyer.” Sometime in the night Pernier came over to check on him, and for unknown reasons the servant undressed and put on the clothes that Lewis himself had been wearing during the day. When Pernier approached in the darkness did Lewis think it

was at last his dear friend Clark come to rescue him? Did Lewis ask Pernier to put on his own discarded clothes so that he looked less like a servant and more like Clark? The young man found that he could not comfort Lewis that evening, and returned to the stable. The next morning Mrs. Grinder told Pernier she had overheard him talking with Lewis during the night, and asked him what they had been talking about. He abruptly denied having gone to Lewis’s cabin at all. She asked him how then he could now be wearing his master’s clothes, but all he would say was, “He gave them to me.”

After Pernier’s departure that night, Lewis continued to pace and rant. He could not sleep and panic began to wash over him. He began to harm himself. All accounts of Lewis’s injuries say that he first shot himself twice, and when the gun shots failed to kill him he tried to finish the job using a knife or a razor. There were, however, no eye-witnesses to the actual events, and it is much more likely that the gun shots represent not a failed attempt, but instead an escalation. Throughout his life Lewis had put his body through a punishing regimen of painful trials. As a boy he would roam barefoot in the dead of winter until his feet cracked and bled, leaving crimson footprints in the snow. Given his history of self-inflicted pain, there is a good possibility that Lewis was what today would be called a “cutter”—a person who intentionally mutilates himself, using physical pain to relieve emotional distress. One contemporary report says that Pernier found Lewis sitting up in bed “busily engaged in cutting himself from head to foot.”<sup>18</sup>

Benjamin Rush, who had tutored Lewis in the fundamentals of medicine during his preparatory visit to Philadelphia, described the cutter phenomenon in his 1812 pioneering treatise on mental illness. “Where counteracting pains of the body are not induced by nature or accident, to relieve anguish of mind, patients often inflict it upon themselves.... The same degree of pain, and for the same purpose, is often inflicted upon the body, by cutting and mangling its parts not intimately connected with life.”<sup>19</sup> While he does not mention Meriwether Lewis by name, Rush would no doubt have been aware of the circumstances surrounding Lewis’s death only three years earlier.

Another (perhaps related) impulse may have prompted the self-mutilation. Lewis might also have been subjecting himself to a Native American ritual of expiation. In the notes that Clark sent back from Fort Mandan he recorded the means through which an Indian accused of a crime might earn readmittance to the tribe: "The man so treated proves his deturmination to reform by penance, runing arrows through the flesh, Cutting themselves in Different places, going into the Plains necked & Starveing maney Days, and returns, this being a prooffe of his determination to reform, they after much Serimony take him into favour."<sup>20</sup> This is nearly an exact catalogue of the abuse Lewis inflicted upon himself. Unfortunately for Lewis, there was no "serimony" through which he could be readmitted to his tribe.

Alone, ill, chronically drunk, addicted to opium, harassed by the government and feeling abandoned by both Clark and Jefferson, Lewis that evening took up his knife in an attempt to ease his mental suffering. When cutting himself did not bring release, he reached for his gun. Even if he was profoundly drunk, he would not need to be an expert marksman in order to put a bullet through his brain at close range, if that was his intention. That he shot himself twice, with neither shot being immediately fatal, is a strong indication that he did not intend to end his life at once; he was instead gradually ratcheting up his suffering until he reached a point where his body could no longer recover. In his last moments he surprised even himself with his capacity to endure pain, and his tenacious will to live brought to mind something he had seen on his journey to the Pacific. He and Clark were among the first white men to shoot a grizzly bear, and they were amazed at how many direct hits a grizzly could take and still continue to charge forward, snarling and determined to fight to the very end. In his journal at the time Lewis wrote that "these bear being so hard to die reather intimatedates us all."<sup>21</sup> Meriwether Lewis's final words are reported to have been, "I am no coward, but I am so strong—so hard to die."

Pernier, Tom, and Mrs. Grinder heard two gun shots around three o'clock in the morning and ran to the cabin where Lewis lay bleeding, near death.

He begged Pernier to take his rifle and "blow out his brains." They asked him why he had shot himself, and he replied that such an ending was to be expected: "If I had not done it, some one else would." He lingered for a few hours, and then finally died just as the sun was coming over the trees. They buried him in a shallow grave, without a marker of any kind.

Pernier told Neelly that he wanted to continue on to see Lewis's mother and President Jefferson, so Neelly gave him fifteen dollars to defray expenses. It has been suggested that Pernier came to Locust Hill in order to confront the grieving Lucy Marks and demand that she repay the money Lewis owed him. It is more likely that he viewed himself as a member of the Lewis/Marks family and was seeking to join them in their time of mourning. Perhaps he felt he could bring comfort to the grieving mother by bringing her more information about her son's last moments. He was stunned when Lucy Marks met him on the steps of Locust Hill and, instead of welcoming him as Meriwether's bereaved companion, turned him away. Jefferson agreed to meet with him and gave him money and a letter to President Madison, but declined to allow him even to spend the night at Monticello. Desolate, Pernier continued on to Washington, D.C., where he, too, killed himself.

We can trace Pernier's last moments through the letters of John Christopher Sueverman, the former servant in the Jefferson White House who took Pernier under his care following his return to Washington. On 5 May 1810 Sueverman wrote to Jefferson seeking reimbursement for his expenses:

Respectfully I wish to inform you of the Unhappy exit of Mr. Pirny. He boarded, and lodged, with us ever since his return from the Western Country. The principal part of the time he has been confined by Sickness, I believe arising from uneasyness of mind, not having recd. anything for his late services to Govr. Lewis. He was wretchedly poor and destitute. Every service in our power was rendered him to make him comfortable, not doubting but the moment he had it in his power he would thankfully and honestly pay us.

Last Week the poor Man appeared considerably better, I believe in some respects contrary to his wishes, for unfortunately on Saturday last he procured himself a quantity of Laudenum. On Sunday Morning under the pretence of not being so well went upstairs to lay on the



bed, in which situation he was found dead, with the bottle by his Side that had contained the Laudanum.<sup>22</sup>

Sueverman explained that he made sure Pernier was buried “neat and decent,” but the expense of the funeral and of the servant’s final illness “fall very heavy on us, whose circumstances you are well acquainted with, cannot bear it without suffering considerably, and hope you will be so obliging as [to] assist us as Soon as it is possible to recover anything on behalf of the poor Man.”

Jefferson was well aware of the severe financial burden Sueverman had taken on. He wrote of him, “Suverman was a servant of mine, a very honest man. He has since become blind, and gets his living by keeping a few groceries which he buys and sells from hand to mouth. He is miserably poor.”<sup>23</sup> Despite his awareness of the dire circumstances, Jefferson chose not to acknowledge Sueverman’s plea for help. Three months later Sueverman wrote to Jefferson again, this time enclosing a copy of an invoice Pernier had prepared detailing the money owed to him by Lewis, a total of \$271.50. Sueverman again pleaded, “Our situation at present is so pressing that anything you can possibly do for us, will always be gratefully and thankfully Acknowledged.”<sup>24</sup>

Jefferson responded only by forwarding both of Sueverman’s letters to William D. Meriwether, one of the executors of Lewis’s estate. It was September before Jefferson received a response from the executor and finally responded to Sueverman’s plea for help. He explained that William Meriwether declined to “meddle” in Lewis’s estate, and had therefore forwarded the request to William Clark in St. Louis. Clark denied that Pernier had any claim on Lewis’s money and refused to make any reimbursement for the illness or burial. Jefferson then washed his hands of the entire matter, suggesting that Sueverman write to Clark directly. He closed the letter to his elderly, blind, miserably poor former servant with a jaunty, “My best wishes attend you in this and every other pursuit.”<sup>25</sup>

Jefferson’s and Clark’s cold refusal to pay for Pernier’s final expenses is unconscionable—and uncharacteristic. While they might well refuse to acknowledge the full debt of \$271.50, they certainly could have (together or singly) offered Sueverman *something*

for his kindness and care, particularly since they fully believed that the blind man had in fact incurred inordinate expenses in nursing Pernier and they knew that he could ill afford them. Their lack of compassion can be explained only by assuming that they had an overwhelming distaste for Pernier himself, or that they were reluctant to add to the paper trail linking Pernier to Meriwether Lewis.



William Clark heard of Lewis’s suicide by reading an article in the Frankfort, Kentucky, *Argus of Western America*. He immediately wrote to his brother Jonathan, “I fear O! I fear the waight of his mind has overcome him, what will be the consequence?” Clark had little doubt that Lewis had died by his own hand, explaining to his brother, “my reasons for thinking it [suicide] possible is founded on the letter which I recved from him at your house...”<sup>26</sup>

Lewis had evidently written a letter to Clark pouring out his unhappiness, and perhaps threatening to kill himself. Whatever Lewis said in that letter—whatever he revealed about his desperation, whatever he may have said to his former companion—the letter weighed heavily on Clark’s mind. Two days later he wrote to Jonathan again, eager to have the letter back under his control. “I wish much to get the letter I receved of Govr. Lewis from N[ew] madrid, which you Saw it will be of great Service to me. prey send it to Fincastle as Soon as possible.”<sup>27</sup> Clark had by then received independent confirmation of Lewis’s death, and he told his brother that the news “gives us much uneasiness.”<sup>28</sup>

What Lewis had written to Clark may never be known, but the fate of the letter is uncertain. The packet of William Clark’s letters to his brother Jonathan was not discovered until 1988 (among some family papers stored in an attic), so there is a possibility that this critical letter may have survived and may yet surface. It could tell us much about Lewis and Clark’s emotional bond.

It appears that in the end Clark too struggled to understand the relationship, to label it, to give it a name, and to explain his own status. A week after hearing of Lewis’s suicide he wrote to Jonathan helplessly,

"I am at a loss to know what to be at his death [it] is a turble Stroke to me, in every respect."<sup>29</sup>

After much difficulty Clark succeeded where Lewis had failed, and shepherded their journals into print so that the world could read the story of their shared journey. He out-lived his partner by nearly thirty years, dying at the age of sixty-eight. William Clark's niece recalled that every time he talked about Meriwether Lewis he cried. 🌿

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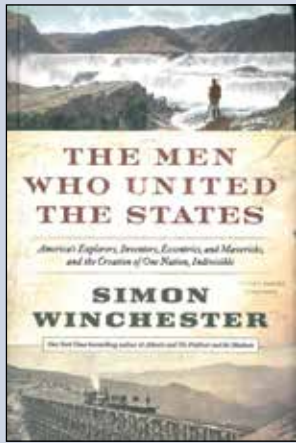
*William Benemann is the author of A Year of Mud and Gold: San Francisco in Letters and Diaries, 1849-1850 (Lincoln: U of Nebraska Press, 1999), Male-Male Intimacy in Early America: Beyond Romantic Friendships (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2006), and Men In Eden: William Drummond Stewart and Same-sex Desire in the Rocky Mountain Fur Trade (Lincoln: U of Nebraska Press, 2012). He is the Archivist for the School of Law, and Adjunct Curator of the Sexuality and Gender Collection at The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.*

#### NOTES

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18. Quoted in Fisher, *Suicide or Murder?*, 144.
19. Benjamin Rush, *Medical Inquiries and Observations, Upon the Diseases of the Mind* (Philadelphia: Kimber & Richardson, 1812), 92-93.
20. Moulton, ed., *Journals*, 3:485-86.
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22. Quoted in Donald Jackson, "On the Death of Meriwether Lewis's Servant," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, vol. 21, no. 3, 446.
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25. Quoted in Jackson, "On the Death of Meriwether Lewis's Servant," 448.
26. James J. Holmberg, ed., *Dear Brother: Letters of William Clark to Jonathan Clark*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 218.
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**FURTHER READING:** For a documentary history, see Jonathan Ned Katz, *Gay American History*; for a discussion of whether homosexuality is innate or merely a social construct, see John Boswell, "Revolutions, Universals, and Sexual Categories," and for the problems of research see Martin Bauml Duberman, "'Writhing Bedfellows' in Antebellum South Carolina" both of which have been reprinted in *Hidden From History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*; for early history see Thomas Foster, ed., *Long Before Stonewall: Histories of Same-sex Sexuality in Early America*; for the various meanings of cross-dressing on the American frontier, see Peter Boag, *Re-Dressing America's Frontier Past*; for a conservative interpretation of the evidence see Richard Godbeer, *The Overflowing of Friendship*.



Simon Winchester, *The Men Who United the States: America's Explorers, Inventors, Eccentrics, and Mavericks, and the Creation of One Nation, Indivisible* (New York: HarperCollins, 2013). \$29.99

British-born author Simon Winchester is a story-teller. His words flow easily off his pen, and enchant us with the stories of men—explorers, inventors, eccentrics, and mavericks. According to Winchester, each of these men, in their own way, contributed to the unification of that one, that indivisible United States of America. These are the stories of the often-great, -powerful, and -wealthy men who blazed the trails and roads, waterways and railways, and communication lines “from sea to shining sea” that would eventually unite the nation, and then hold it together.

Winchester chose to interweave his stories of this nation’s unification with the five elements of Chinese culture—wood, earth, water, fire, and metal, in that order. His use of these five elements as the tie that binds us is creative and insightful, and the book is a pleasant read.

But Winchester tells the stories of these men with a certain naiveté, and certainly with the lack of balance and

insight readers of *We Proceeded On* have come to expect in books about the Corps of Discovery, the nation’s West, and the tribes. Winchester’s lack of historical accuracy is equally disconcerting; his errors about the Corps of Discovery sat on my shoulder like one of Captain Meriwether Lewis’s “evil genii,” asking the constant and nagging question, “is this accurate?” as I read each chapter devoted to one of the five Chinese elements—wood [exploration], earth [mapping and geology], water [rivers and canals], fire [railroads and roads], and metal [communication].

We know, for example, the Corps of Discovery did not start their journey from “scratch.” We know that prior to, and during, the journey, French, Spanish, British, and native peoples generously provided the corps with journals, maps, oral histories and other information that would be of help to them. Many of them took time from business and civic obligations to translate written works into English, to copy maps, and to respond to questionnaires. The western lands were neither unknown, untamed, nor an unimaginable wilderness.

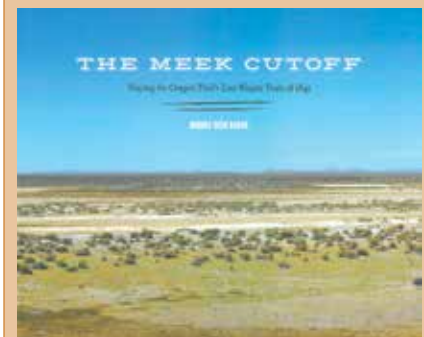
According to Winchester, “some twenty-nine men, including Clark’s slave, York, were sworn in...” [p. 21]; additionally, there with “French trappers who traveled with them as hired interpreters.” Errors abound in Winchester’s story of exploration, from the “big iron boat,” [the corps’ barge, or keelboat] to the men’s “gentle upriver paddle” on the Missouri River, to the proximity of Prineville, Oregon, to both the route of the Corps of Discovery and that of the Oregon Trail.

The errors may seem small, but they accumulate, and they will leave the reader wondering how many more

there are, as Winchester writes of mapping and mining, roads and railroads, rivers and canals, the telegraph and the telephone...the lines that cross the nation, binding us together as “one nation, indivisible.”

As any reader of *We Proceeded On* knows, the Corps of Discovery was made up of men both wealthy and poor, educated and illiterate, free and slave, as well as one woman and one child. So too is this nation made up of such diversity. Any author or historian who chooses to deliberately ignore the contributions of each and every member of any journey, of any exploration, or of any invention, and their colleagues along the way, is missing the larger and more important piece of this nation’s successes and failures.

Barb Kubik  
Board, LCTHF



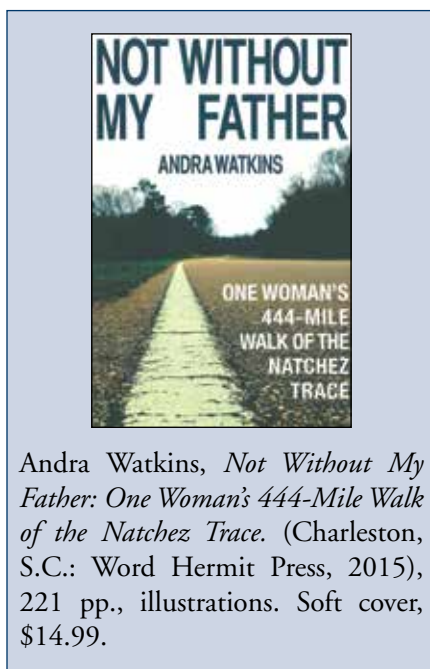
Brooks Greer Ragen, *The Meek Cutoff: Tracing the Oregon Trail's Lost Wagon Train of 1845* (Seattle, Washington: The University of Washington Press, 2013). 176 pp., hardcover, \$39.95.

Those of us who find great excitement and fulfillment in following the trail of the Lewis and Clark Expedition owe a great debt to those who have stud-

ied the journals and attempted to find the precise locations mentioned by the members of the Corps of Discovery. Many publications recount their results, ranging from Olin Wheeler's 1904 *The Trail of Lewis and Clark* to Martin Plamondon's exhaustive 2000-2004 three-volume collection of *Lewis and Clark Trail Maps*.

Followers of the Oregon Trail now have available a recent book that adds to the documentation of a portion of that long journey in Brooks Ragen's beautifully illustrated volume recounting the research expedition he led. Ragen and his team succeeded in finding much of the path of the infamous and disastrous "shortcut" pioneered by guide Stephen Meek in 1845 across the high desert of Oregon, a shortcut that caused such added hardship and loss to many of the some 1,200 men, women, and children who followed the old fur trapper. The book includes diary entries from some of the sufferers on the month-long bypass of the main trail, and excellent maps and photos of the daily paths of the pioneers. No easy "Meek Cutoff Trail" exists; modern travelers must cross miles of rangeland in private hands to see the old ruts and graves. Ragen and his field team of metal detectors, GPS experts, historians, geographers, and photographers have accomplished a remarkable retracing and documenting of the pathways followed by those hardy travelers.

Bob Gatten  
Past President, LCTHF



Andra Watkins, *Not Without My Father: One Woman's 444-Mile Walk of the Natchez Trace*. (Charleston, S.C.: Word Hermit Press, 2015), 221 pp., illustrations. Soft cover, \$14.99.

Andra Watkins had an agenda. Her book—*To Live Forever: An Afterlife Journey of Meriwether Lewis*—would launch on March 1, 2014, the day she would begin an epic walk over the full 444-mile length of the Natchez Trace. Surely the world would stop and notice, and her book would fly off the shelves of stores coast to coast. But there was more—this trek would serve as a new starting point in life, a way of shedding past failures, and of challenging herself with a walk of Olympian proportions. At age 43, she asked her father to be her wingman, perhaps the biggest challenge of all.

Andra is enamored of Meriwether Lewis, who died tragically and mysteriously on the Natchez Trace in 1809:

"Meriwether Lewis's haunting of my life was mythic in our household. When I woke my husband one night, claiming to have heard a man in our

bedroom chanting, 'You have the complete story,' Michael didn't question my sanity. He tolerated my tears for a man long dead, my talks with a ghost I couldn't love, my stalking of a spirit I'd never contain." (p. 137)

And so on March 1 she began a thirty-four-day hike north from Natchez, Mississippi, to Nashville, Tennessee, along the historic parkway, her father serving as ebullient companion, talking up the locals and selling Andra's new book to anyone he could find.

*Not Without My Father: One Woman's 444-Mile Walk of the Natchez Trace* recounts her journey in prose both inspired and compelling—the adventures, challenges, and inner turmoil, interwoven with stories drawn from her father's memories. Blistered feet, frigid weather, and crushing pain fuse with a dysfunctional family's baggage, and the journey nearly dies aborning. But the path brings revelation, understanding, and healing in a tale both humorous and heartbreaking. It resurveys the ghostly voices of 10,000 years of traveling history: "The closer I crept to the Meriwether Lewis [grave] site, the louder the voices grew. On sunny days, I heard them in my footsteps. They chattered in raindrops and rode the coattails of a gale." (p. 146)

This is not a book about the Corps of Discovery, or even its lost captain, but it is a book that evokes Meriwether Lewis in broad swaths and momentary revelations. And it is a welcome addition to my Lewis and Clark bookshelf.

Robert Clark  
Editor, *We Proceeded On*



# 1815 Battle of New Orleans Reenacted at Bicentennial Commemoration



Jackson and Livingston



PHOTOS BY LOU RITTEN

Jackson Surveys the Battle

Before the War of 1812, most citizens thought of themselves as residents of whatever their home state happened to be. But Andrew Jackson's stunning victory at the Battle of New Orleans on January 8, 1815, with soldiers who wore mismatched uniforms or none at all, had varying ethnic backgrounds, and spoke several different languages, forged these men into a single entity. For the first time, the citizenry of the United States identified themselves as "Americans."

The National Park Service (NPS) and the Louisiana Living History Foundation (LLHF) sponsored a full schedule of activities in New Orleans to commemorate the bicentennial of the Battle of New Orleans. The NPS held its events at the Chalmette Battlefield unit of the Jean Lafitte National Historical Park (NHP) and at Jackson Square. The LLHF battle reenactments were staged on sixty-two acres of land owned by the Meraux Foundation about two miles from the actual battlefield.

The NPS celebration began January 7, 2015, at Jackson Square in the French Quarter before more than five hundred with a reenactment of

General Jackson's December 18, 1814, speech rallying the inhabitants of New Orleans in support of their city's defense. On January 8, the 200th anniversary of the battle itself, dignitaries laid wreaths to honor soldiers on both sides. The NPS concluded its activities on January 10

with a reenactment of the January 23, 1815, victory celebration. NPS personnel estimated that ten thousand people attended the NPS events, about one-quarter of whom were school-aged children.

But at the heart of the commemoration were the reenactments of the five separate battles fought during the British campaign to seize New Orleans. The first, held on January 9, 2015, reenacted the December 23, 1814, nighttime battle in which Jackson's men attacked the newly arrived British forces. Amplified narration and artificial illumination rendered the action more comprehensible for the one- to

two-thousand spectators. Three subsequent battles were reenacted on January 10: the British reconnaissance in force of December 28, 1814; the cacophonous artillery duel of January 1, 1815; and the British victory on the west bank of the Mississippi River on January 8, 1815.

The last battle reenactment on January 11, 2015, was a marvelous demonstration by 1,500 reenactors, the largest collection of War of 1812 reenactors ever assembled, of the sweeping American victory on the east bank of the river on January 8, 1815. A motley group of three- to four-thousand Americans, including former Corps of Discovery member Lt. Nathaniel Pryor, turned back an attacking British force of about eight thousand in the original battle. During the 200th anniversary commemoration, both military and civilian reenactors brought the devastating action to life. The spectators could hear the small arms fire, feel the cannon blasts, smell the gunpowder, see the smoke, thrill to the sight of the flags as they fluttered in the breeze, and, in so doing, got a real taste of what that battle must have been like.

For those who missed this event, the good news is that LCTHF and Natchez Trace Parkway Association member Tony Turnbow posted a Youtube link with dozens of pictures: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YPzf0oi7ue8>. The better news is that the sponsors of the commemoration said they hope to make the reenactment an annual event.



Sutlers

*Submitted by Lou Ritten with the assistance of Tony Turnbow and Lorna Hainesworth*