Updating Clark's "Error of the Southwest"

Plus The Curious Afterlife of Clark's 1798–1801 Notebook
The Rocky Mountain Fur Trade Journal

Volume 9 - 2015

The Mystery of Alfred Jacob Miller’s Portrait of Captain Joseph Reddeford Walker
by Vic Nathan Barkin
Questioning the identity of the person whose portrait Miller painted, the image of Joe Walker may not be him at all.

Wolverines in the Fur Trade
by Fred Poyner IV
Though the beaver was the most sought after animal during the fur trade era, many other creatures were trapped.

The 1808 Murder Trial of George Drouillard
by Melissa Tiffie
An in-depth look at an early St. Louis legal case, examining frontier justice using actual court documents.

Exploring Rocky Mountain Trapper Productivity
by Jim Hardee
Attempts to quantify beaver trapping, searching to discover how many pelts a mountaineer might reasonably expect to harvest in a twelve month period.

Blackfeet Peacemaker: The Search for Nicholas Small Robe
by George Capps
The search for the Piegan man who urged peaceful trade with neighboring tribes as well as with trappers.

Jim Bridger Challenges the HBC in the post-Rendezvous Era
by Jerry Enzler
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On the cover: Carol Grende’s bronze statue titled “Sacajawea’s Arduous Journey” is framed by aspens at the U.S. District Court Building in Great Falls, Montana, in this photo by incoming president of the Lewis and Clark Foundation Steve Lee.

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). 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.
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As Keepers of the Story—Stewards of the Trail, the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, Inc. provides national leadership in maintaining the integrity of the Trail and its story through stewardship, scholarship, education, partnership, and cultural inclusiveness.

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This is my last President’s Message to my friends and colleagues of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation. As I reflected on what I should say, I couldn’t help but wonder what our esteemed captains and their loyal corps might have been thinking in 1806 as they quickly floated down the Missouri, back to their homes and loved ones. I’m sure they experienced a flood of emotions thinking about their journey of a lifetime and what lay ahead—a mix of elation that the journey was over, gratitude for the good memories, relief they had survived, and excitement for new adventures to come.

Although my tenure piloting the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation was not nearly as dramatic or death defying, it certainly was an enjoyable experience. I wish to thank all of you who journeyed with me. I met interesting new people in the Lewis and Clark family and gained many good memories to add to my library of Lewis and Clark stories. As I look back on my two years as president, I am proud of what our active members, staff, and board have accomplished.

To name a few highlights: the William P. Sherman Library and Archives have been well tended by staff Shelly Kath and outgoing board member Sue Buchel; thanks go to Kris Townsend and Dan Sturdevant for making our website robust and populated with many new nuggets like chapter events and all the past editions of We Proceeded On; our Trail Stewardship Grant program is stronger than ever because of the very thoughtful committee of Mike Loesch, Steve Lee, Jane Henley, Rob Heacock, and Dee Roche; and Lynn Davis has been an inspiration as our membership watchdog, always thinking about how to recruit and provide better service to our members. With Barb Kubik’s leadership, we now have an educational grant program about to be launched for the Burroughs’s Fund; Philippa Newfield has worked wonders with our annual meeting committee, lining up an exciting pipeline of annual meetings; and Executive Director Lindy Hatcher and loyal office greeter Don Peterson have been ever diligent in efforts to improve communications and relationships with our chapters, our federal agency partners, and the Partnership for the National Trails System. Running an office in Great Falls, Montana, for a national organization with such diverse views, opinions, and membership needs is very challenging indeed. As always, I had hoped to accomplish more, but I am pleased with the progress we have made in important aspects of our organization and feel confident that we are stronger than ever.

With that said, there remains much to be done to address changing times and changing membership needs. We continue to be challenged by new member recruitment. We need to develop programs to target new demographics and mission-similar organizations in order to grow the next generation of members to actively carry out our mission. We need to better share the Lewis and Clark story around the world by expanding our presence on the Internet and in social media. We need to strengthen our partnership with the National Park Service and the Partnership for the National Trail System. What can we do collaboratively to expand our capacity to help each other accomplish our respective missions? How can we get “more boots on the ground” across the trail to continue the work of implementing the direction spelled out so clearly in the Trails Act that established the National Historic Trail in 1978? How can we build more capacity to be a better advocate to protect the Trail from increasing threats so future generations can have the same opportunities we have enjoyed walking in the footsteps of Lewis and Clark and the Corps of Discovery? How can we distribute We Proceeded On to a global audience?

These are some of the questions foremost in my mind as I leave the president’s post and that I pose to you, our loyal members as we plan for our Fiftieth Anniversary. I have challenged our Fiftieth Anniversary Committee to think of ways we can celebrate our watershed year, address some of these questions, and lay the groundwork to build a solid footing for the next fifty years.

In closing, my appreciation goes out to all who have helped me in these last two years. I am humbled to have been given this opportunity to stand in a long line of dedicated Lewis and Clark enthusiasts who have led this organization. Thank you and I look forward to many more adventures with you in the years to come.

Margaret Gorski
Clackamas, Oregon, Cabin Could Predate Lewis and Clark Expedition

The Portland Oregonian of April 6, 2015, included a report on a mysterious log dwelling some believe may prompt a rewrite of Oregon’s long-held history. The article, by Janet Eastman, tells of a structure now protected inside a workshop hidden among Clackamas County farmland.

If experts’ theories pan out, the 18-foot-wide structure—called the Molalla Log House—predates the start of Lewis and Clark’s 1804 expedition by a decade. The current thinking is that the large, innovative log building could have been handmade by Russian farmers and craftsmen sent by Catherine the Great to settle in the Willamette Valley. Growing wheat and gathering beaver and elk pelts in Oregon could have aided the tsarina’s struggling Alaskan fur trade.

That the log cabin was made by foreigners is clear. It is unlike pioneer construction seen in Oregon. Some doubters conjecture the structure is a mid-nineteenth century fort, a smoke house, or even a sauna, with building characteristics similar to other Finnish structures in the American Midwest.

The 25-foot-long Douglas fir logs, stacked 17 high, originally fit together so tightly there was no need to add chinking to fill in gaps. Fine woodworking, similar to making a cabinet rather than a settler’s cabin, joined the floor, walls, and roof so well that no nails were needed until a century later. In 1892 the whole building was taken apart, moved on a wagon from its original site, and reconstructed by craftsmen perhaps with lesser skills than the original builders.

In 2008 the deteriorating structure, which had been a house, animal shelter, machine shed, and the Fox Granary, was disassembled and moved again to a storage facility. Here, it has been analyzed, preserved, and restored.

Gregg Olson of Historic Building Repair, who has saved several of Oregon’s oldest log buildings, has been using antique hand tools to recreate pieces too fragile to reuse in the rebuilt structure. Each original piece has been carefully saved and documented.

“It’s interesting, whatever it is and whoever built it,” says Olson, who has been working painstakingly for seven years with architectural historian Pam Hayden to unearth the origins of the dwelling.

Renegade Russian fur trappers? Optimistic colonists? Adventurous Europeans allowed to briefly stake a small claim in the western foothills of the Cascade Mountains where Native Americans had lived for centuries? Olson and Hayden don’t know.

But they do have theories, stacks of research, and dating methods that lead them to believe the structure may have been built between 1795 and 1810.


Restore Oregon, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Clackamas County Cultural Coalition, and Molalla Area Historical Society have supported the restoration and preservation efforts. The Kinsman Foundation’s grants funded much of the work.

“The unique construction and extraordinary craftsmanship of the Molalla Log House offer fascinating clues to a mystery that we didn’t even know existed about the earliest white exploration and settlement of the Pacific Northwest,” says Peggy Moretti, executive director of Restore Oregon, a nonprofit organization with preservation efforts that span from the pioneer-era to midcentury modern buildings.

The project team needs help to find out the complete story of what could be Oregon’s oldest structure: Who built it and why? Anyone with knowledge of eighteenth-century European construction and Oregon history who has information should contact Hayden at pamelahayden@gmail.com.
The Story of Two Sacajaweas

By Stephanie Pettit
Reprinted from the Spokesman Review, May 7, 2015

This is a story about the two Sacajaweas at Eastern Washington University in Cheney, Washington—one being the larger-than-life plaster statue that came to Eastern in 1916; the other a smaller bronze statue that arrived in 1960, only to be stolen in the dark of night in 1997.

When the state Normal School at Cheney, which would later become EWU, opened in 1882, its mission was to prepare people—mostly women—for careers in the classroom, one of the few professions available to women in those days. When a new administration building was built in 1915, the graduating class of 1916 chose to give a gift to the school—a statue of Sacajawea.

Sacajawea was chosen because the Lemhi Shoshone woman who served as a guide and interpreter for the Corps of Discovery expedition in 1805–06 appealed to the class as an ideal representation of what they themselves were embarking to do—be leaders and teachers of others, reported Charles Mutschler, university archivist.

They purchased a six-foot-tall statue created by American sculptor Cyrus Edwin Dallin, noted for creating statues of American Indians and other historic American figures. His “Appeal to the Great Spirit” statue of a Native American on horseback with arms raised to the sky remains today at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and his Angel Moroni sits atop the Mormon Temple in Salt Lake City. The Cheney Normal School students couldn’t afford the bronze version of Sacajawea, so they opted for the plaster statue.

The image of the Shoshone woman heroically pointing the way forward was supposed to be installed on the main floor of the administration building in time for commencement ceremonies, but it arrived late; installation was held later, on June 9, 1916. Over the years, Mutschler said, people came to pose for pictures with Sacajawea in the administration building, which in 1940 had been renamed Showalter Hall, and the statue began to look weathered. And that outstretched arm also proved too tempting to resist—luring many to hang from it or do chin-ups.

Plaster is soft and fragile, Mutschler said, so sometime in the 1950s, the arm broke off. In 1960 a student fund drive raised enough money for Spokane sculptor Harold Balasz to create a copper and brass version of a smaller and more subdued Sacajawea, which was placed in Showalter Hall. The battered plaster statue was moved into storage in the basement of nearby Hargreaves Hall. The Balasz statue was later relocated outdoors to the rose garden in front of Senior Hall, in 1986, where it was firmly fixed to a stone base.

But then one night in March 1997, Sacajawea vanished from the garden. The statue was so solidly attached to the base that the thieves had to saw through it just above the feet in order to remove it. A campus police officer came upon the site while on patrol—there was the statue’s base and the statue’s feet, but no statue.

An investigation began into what appeared to be a prank. University police were sure that someone would brag about the deed and word would get out—but that never happened.

When Stephen M. Jordan became president of Eastern in 1998, he encouraged the institution to examine as well as embrace its own past and took interest in the old Sacajawea statue. A conservator was hired to repair and refurbish the statue—with particular attention to strengthening the outstretched arm—and the original Dallin figure of Sacajawea was returned to Showalter Hall in 2001.

To ensure Sacajawea would remain safe, two years ago it was surrounded by a Plexiglas case.

There is a postscript to the tale of the two Sacajaweas. In 2006, when the university’s alumni magazine ran a little story about the stolen statue, Tom McGill, EWU police chief at the time, offered amnesty for information leading to its recovery, and tips came in—many suggesting that the statue was dumped off the dock into Fish Lake.

Volunteer Spokane County Sheriff divers even went in to look, but no statue was found—then or ever. Its whereabouts remain a mystery.
An Airport’s Secret

In 2011 the Headwaters Chapter of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation prepared a seventy-four-year “Plan of Work.” The plan outlines an ongoing commemoration of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, including a series of fifteen parties scheduled every five years, beginning August 2, 2015, and ending August 2, 2085, the hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Headwaters Chapter. A different aspect of the expedition will be emphasized at each party.

In seventy years, on August 2, 2085, those who gather at the Bozeman Yellowstone International Airport will open a large cache of Lewis and Clark memorabilia—over four thousand items—that have been stored and sealed in preparation for the Tercentennial of the Lewis and Clark Expedition in 2103-2106.

Members and friends of Headwaters Chapter sealed the cache in 2011 with the hope that future lovers of history and the Corps of Discovery will use the memorabilia to learn, have fun, and appreciate this important part of our nation’s history.

Included are small items, like pins and badges, as well as larger, unique individual items such as costumes, plaques, and rare books.

Special efforts were made to protect the cache articles in case a sprinkler system comes on sometime over the next seventy years. Arrangement and cataloging of the items have been done to help explain context and usefulness of the items to those in 2085. Luckily, Headwaters Chapter member Beth Merrick had training and experience with this need. The list is near the opening area.

Every five years a party will be held. For example, Party #2 will be held in Bozeman, Montana, in February 2020. The theme is “Clark’s Return though the Bozeman area on his way to the Yellowstone River in 1806.”

A small book has been written to call continuing attention to the cache. It is called An Airport’s Secret: A Surprise for August 2, 2085, by Jim Sargent and beautifully illustrated by his nephew, Gary Little. Consisting of three parts, it offers highlight incidents from the expedition, the story of a family traveling the Lewis and Clark Trail during the Bicentennial, and a concluding section that explains the 2085 cache. Books are available from the author. Cost is $10 plus $5 for shipping and handling. Write him at 222 S. 14th, Bozeman, MT 59715. Phone 406.586.6198. Email: jfs19@bresnan.net.

In memory of…

Fay Fortin
Mr. and Mrs. George McCabe, Great Falls, Montana
G.R. Sam and Rosalie McCormick, Three Forks, Montana

Darlene Fassler
Jerry B. Garrett, St. Louis, Missouri

Jane Randol Jackson
George Drouillard Chapter of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation

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Photograph of Weippe Prairie courtesy of Steve Lee
Dear editor and Editorial Advisory Board,

My sincere hope was to be submitting a thoroughly-researched, well-written article (as I comb through resources from the Sherman Library and elsewhere) to you and the editorial advisory board instead of an assertively-toned “Letter to the Editor.” As was the case of the Iron Boat on the Expedition, plans change...

Being an avid reader of *We Proceeded On* and someone who makes a career out of interpreting the world of Lewis & Clark, I was *exceedingly* dismayed and disappointed in reading the February 2015 feature article, *My Friend and Companion: The Intimate Journey of Lewis and Clark*. How this could pass as something to be printed nationally in a highly-regarded, scholarly publication as *We Proceeded On* defies comprehension. The first time I read it, I almost thought I might be reading some tabloid exposé that luridly beckoned from the supermarket check-out line. Then I read it again to see if I was missing a larger picture. I believe not.

Putting the controversial subject matter aside for a moment, the unsubstantiated claims the author repeatedly puts forth should have outright ruled the article out of publication. Here we find the somewhat benign assertions heaped upon Lewis such as “black spells of clinical depression,” “a lifelong struggle to separate himself from his domineering mother” and his overwhelming life-long obsession to define his “friendship” with Clark without further reference.

This morphs into a series of outrageous theories anybody (L & C buff or not) could validly and rationally explain a dozen other ways. In explaining Lewis's missing journals, I reason that he was either too busy with other daily duties or they are simply lost to history. A photocopy of the quill-trading letter to Jefferson from Fort Mandan would have helped the author illustrate how this contrived narrative played out. Furthermore, I believe Jefferson could have cared less about Clark's grammar and spelling. Subsequent correspondence between the two after the Expedition expound on this. I use this tamest of examples from the many other bizarre and outlandish theories stated by the author to show what constitutes enjoyable sensible reading and what should be relegated to the shelf next to the fictional novel, *Sacajawea*.

On the subject matter itself, I pose one question for the author and readership of WPO at large. How could homosexuality between Lewis and Clark be kept a secret for 200 plus years? Granted, one could keep the official military rank of Clark a secret just by not writing or talking about it, but to try and carry out physical intimacy within a close-knit group of young men for over two years in the wilderness without getting caught is absurd. Then, not have a single surviving anecdote within the past centuries to draw from? It seems beyond farfetched to me. Besides, however intriguing the sexual situations are within the Lewis and Clark Expedition, there is a line as to what is too personal and what context it *could* be published. The line was crossed by having this article printed in *We Proceeded On*.

In closing, I will (with full knowledge) erroneously quote Dr. Sigmund Freud: “sometimes a cigar is just a cigar.”

Your humble and obedient servant,

Darian Kath

Great Falls, MT

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Dear Editor;

Just received my copy of the February issue of *We Proceeded On*.

I find the article “My Friend and Companion: The Intimate Journey of Lewis and Clark” by William Benemann, to be something one would find in some sensational type tabloid at the checkout line at a grocery store...pure crap and BS!

*WPO* is no place for such writings. While I go along with free speech, there's a time and place for such theories as Mr. Benemann proclaims—theories by the way that he hasn't provided any proof to back them up.

In my opinion *WPO* has hit rock bottom with the publishing of this piece of junk. If you intend to print the second half next time around then you can kiss my membership in the *WPO* goodbye!

John L. Stoner
Townsend, Montana

---

To the editor:

As a member of the editorial advisory committee and a past editor of *WPO*, I strongly urged Bob Clark to publish this article—knowing that it would generate controversy, not to say backlash, on the part of some of our members. We live in the 21st century, not the 19th, and the subject of sexuality shouldn't be off limits. Those who complain that the article is largely speculative have a valid point, but *WPO* has published many articles over the years that could be similarly characterized—e.g., those concerning the mind-set of Meriwether Lewis in 1809 and how depression may have led to his probable suicide. As for Benemann's bona fides, he is in fact a credentialed scholar with several books to his credit exploring homoeroticism in early...
American history, most notably *Men in Eden: William Drummond Stewart and Same-Sex Desire in the Rocky Mountain Fur Trade* (University of Nebraska Press, 2012), in which, among other subjects, he argues that Jean-Baptiste Charbonneau, Sacagawea’s son, may have been gay. Personally, based on everything I know about Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, it’s hard for me to imagine them being anything other than robustly heterosexual, but that shouldn’t preclude discussion to the contrary.

Jim Merritt
Past editor, *WPO*

To: Robert Clark, editor, and Editorial Advisory Board

The author of “*My Friend and Companion,*” has credentials for male-male sexual studies, and meets *WPO*’s qualifications for new subject matter. However, I feel the article does not meet high standards for using facts that support speculation for dissecting fellow humans, who are not here to help set the record straight. No facts from the journal quotes told us that Lewis or Clark did what was suggested. The other sources in the article are taken from other authors, and do not reveal if they are facts or speculation.

Bennemann’s point was made early in this unusually long article. It became boring with situation after situation taken from the journals that seemed to be often stretched to fit his expert views of sexual behavior that occur in some males. I was surprised *WPO* felt there is more new data for us. If there are solid documents to be revealed, that could give unquestionable reason for another issue that will end speculating, we may learn something new from a second article.

I oppose blatant censorship or discrimination. I expect the same qualifications for articles of accuracy from *WPO* be given the lay contributor as one by a trained professional. And, I ask that we be sensitive with known truths, and avoid non truths when dealing with the personal ‘heart and soul’ of another fellow human.

The author is not the first modern historian fascinated with the amazing personality and accomplishments of Meriwether Lewis, who does not seem to understand his character. They appear to me to feel they must dissect and interpret every word he uttered, and every deed he did to create their own Lewis to satisfy an apparent frustration for not being able to understanding him to fit their expectations.

Respectfully Submitted,
Evelyn Orr
Omaha Nebraska.
Mouth of the Platte Chapter, LCTHF

Dear Editor:
I am heterosexual (why do I feel compelled to say that?), a veteran (honorably discharged), and am NOT convinced by Mr. Benemann’s reasoning. However, I applaud Editor Clark’s courage in publishing an article he knew would be controversial. And I am grateful for the perspective Mr. Benemann brings to the topic—however he has gained his point of view. He asks a question worth asking, if for no other reason than the thought and discussion it invokes. But I hope that response is carefully considered, reasoned, and made public without emotion.

Thank you, *WPO*, for publishing the second half of the article. I wanted to read it, even if I do not agree with Mr. Benemann’s conclusion.

Cheers,
Harlan Seyfer
Plattsmouth National Historic District Historian
Plattsmouth, Nebraska 68048

Dear editor,
Please do not publish Part Two of William Benemann’s article, “*My Friend and Companion.*”

After glancing at Part One I saw words, phrases, and explicit details rarely used in polite conversation and did not read it. From what I could ascertain, there was some conjecture, insinuation and speculation about an *historic* adventure happening two hundred years ago (subtext in the Journals?).

This article was entirely inappropriate for *WPO*. Perhaps one should read the “profile” of the author before reading any article. It is a certainty for William Benemann.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Mary Jo Havlicek
Member, Mouth of the Platte Chapter

Dear editor,
Congratulations for the courage and broad mindedness you showed in publishing the Benemann article.

Why is it that we want our heroes to be PERFECT? To be exactly what our personal standards, personal and social, dictate for our lives. Isn’t it much more interesting and encouraging of the human condition to know that someone with a seriously flawed nature, horrible childhood, genetic proclivities, traumatic experiences, sexual leanings that we can’t encompass, has done something as monumental as be one of the leaders of the geographical awakening that was the Expedition of Lewis and Clark? And isn’t it even MORE reason to admire
this—or any other—tortured individual for doing something for which we celebrate him or her as a HERO?

As I read, especially the second segment of Dr. Benneman’s article, I feel great sadness for Meriwether Lewis, and huge admiration that Lewis recognized his need for a strong partner to keep him on task, to help his confidence, to just BE. And he DID.

What a shame that things fell apart when, once more his supportive father figure went on with his life...which is, I believe, what happened.

Do I have caveats with the article? Yes. I believe that starting off with Clark and Lewis as “intimates” of a sexual kind, is speculative, and not necessary. No one can tell, at this point in time, the exact nature of their relationship, but to intimate that it was ALSO sexual in nature is really beside the point. Clearly Lewis depended on Clark, needed him, loved him.

Clark came back and married, started a family, and did the best he could to get the journals published and to manage, while being appalled at what was happening to them, the growing incursion that the expedition brought forth into Indian lands. They were good friends. Real friends. Clark cried at his loss. Have any of you lost a very dear friend? It is often worse than losing a partner.

I have been a member of WPO for many years, being the instigator and first editor of our middle school curriculum guide as education director on the board. I’ve written three books for young people on the Expedition, and presented all over the East coast. Lewis and Clark DID what they did. And they were who they were. To deny them the humanity they deserve, and not feel even more admiration for the addictions and tortures of self that Lewis obviously went through, is simply absurd.

Sincerely yours,
Judith Edwards LICSW

Dear editor,

A few years ago I spent a delightful winter reading the Lewis and Clark Journals from beginning to end, and I remember thinking then “I bet Capt. L. was gay.” All I can say now is “So?”

Instead of recoiling in horror at the thought of these two “Heroes” having sex with each other, let’s stop for a moment and consider Capt. Lewis. He was a man who loved and hated intensely. This can be rather scary to others who also love and hate, but not with every fiber of their being.

I think Capt. Clark loved Lewis in his own way, but not as much as Lewis loved him. If they actually did have sex on the expedition, again, So? It’s taken for granted now by most historians that Melville probably had sex with men when he was a sailor, and that he might have made a pass at Hawthorne when they summered together in the Berkshires. Does this make him a degenerate? Of course not. Melville when he was a sailor, and that Melville probably had sex with men when he was a sailor, and that he might have made a pass at Hawthorne when they summered together in the Berkshires. Does this make him a degenerate? Of course not. Melville was a man with deep emotional needs no one seemed to be able to meet, but it didn’t stop him from trying to find that one person who could.

Let’s have some pity for both Lewis and Clark: for Lewis who was so emotionally dependent upon Clark he couldn’t function without him; for Clark who did the best he could, but was unable to give Lewis everything he needed. And let’s remember the sad picture of Lewis sitting on the porch at Grinder’s Station, waiting for his dearest friend, who never came.

Thank you.

Yvonne P. Divak
Johnstown, NY

Dear editor,

Margaret Gorski’s column in the May 2015 issue of We Proceeded On was right on target. It is the responsibility of academic journals to publish thoughtful, well-researched articles that fall within their lines of inquiry, even if the interpretation is controversial. I’m reminded of the uproar that ensued in geology when Wegener proposed continental drift theory. He was virtually banished from the profession and his theory was scorned for years—until, of course, it was proved to be true.

I must admit that the letters to the editor were slightly disappointing. Although I tried to give the writers the benefit of the doubt, most of them came across as curmudgeonly diatribes from people whose preferred perception of the captains (manly heroes adventuring into the unknown, bravely facing perils to help the young nation reach its manifest destiny—all of which is true) brooks no reimagining. And while I finished the articles undecided about the captains’ sexuality, the research made them human in a way that is important for realistic understanding. No hero fits the admirer’s expectations perfectly. Just ask Odysseus.

Hats off to WPO for these articles. At least one L&C enthusiast is thrilled to see boundary-pushing interpretations being published in the preeminent journal of Lewis and Clark scholarship.

Lauren Danner
Olympia, Washington

Dear editor,

Lauren Danner
Olympia, Washington

Sincerely yours,
Judith Edwards LICSW

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By all accounts, William Clark was a loving husband and a devoted father. He was also a prolific writer. Most of his journals, letters, and records stand as models of objectivity, relating the bare facts of his experiences, yet seldom conveying his own feelings or impressions. Late in life he executed his last will and testament; through it he would leave to his children (wives Julia Hancock Clark and Harriet Kennerly Radford Clark having predeceased him) what he termed his “worldly estate.” Nine days after his death on September 1, 1838, the probate court of St. Louis filed his will. Remarkably equitable to Clark’s heirs—four sons, one of whom would die in 1840—the will was his last public record.1

Through painstaking detail, the will achieves an impartial division of assets such as slaves, land, and cash, yet it fails to mention any of Clark’s journals or papers; certainly neither he nor his heirs could have foreseen the tremendous upsurge of interest that, more than a century later, would cause the value of such things to soar. Although the surviving correspondence of Clark’s children says little about his logbooks or documents, letters of his grandchildren prove that at least some of those items eventually came into the possession of his sons Meriwether Lewis Clark, George Rog-ers Hancock Clark, and Jefferson Kearny Clark. We can only surmise how those brothers divided their father’s writings among themselves; there seems to be no clear evidence on that point.2

Some of William Clark’s journals and papers later turned up in unexpected places:
• In 1883, twenty-nine volumes of St. Louis Indian superintendency records, most of them kept by Clark, were offered for sale as scrap paper in Lawrence, Kansas. A friend of the Kansas State Historical Society promptly paid pulp value—thirty-three dollars—for the books, to prevent their destruction and moved them to the society in Topeka where they remain today, one of its most valued collections.3
• In 1903, Reuben Gold Thwaites of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, while searching for the journal of Sergeant John Ordway of the 1804–1806 Corps of Discovery, learned of five logbooks Clark had kept for himself after relinquishing to the federal government his other chronicles of the western expedition. Finding the journals in the keeping of Clark’s granddaughter, Julia Clark Voorhis, Thwaites drew national
attention to them in his eight-volume Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition published in 1904 and 1905. After Julia's death in 1922, her executor donated those Clark journals and hundreds of other documents and artifacts of William Clark and his brother George Rogers Clark to the Missouri Historical Society (now the Missouri History Museum) in St. Louis. Named in honor of Julia's late daughter, Eleanor Glasgow Voorhis, the collection is surely the most comprehensive aggregation of Clark documents and artifacts anywhere. 

- In 1953, field notes Clark had scrawled from 1803 to 1805 on dozens of sheets of paper were discovered in St. Paul, Minnesota, tucked inside an antique desk in a house once belonging to General John Henry Hammond. As a post-Civil War inspector of western Indian Bureau agencies, he may have acquired the documents in the course of his duties. Edited by Ernest S. Osgood and published as The Field Notes of Captain William Clark, 1803–1805, those writings were sold to collector Frederick W. Beinecke who, in 1960, donated them to his alma mater, Yale University. They now are in the Beinecke Library on the Yale campus.

- In 1988, forty-seven of Clark's letters to his brother Jonathan and other relatives were found in a trunk kept in the attic of a Louisville, Kentucky, house once owned by the widow of Temple Bodley, Jonathan Clark's great-grandson. Edited by James Holmberg and published in his Dear Brother: Letters of William Clark to Jonathan Clark, those missives—and four later ones discovered in the same trunk—comprise one of The Filson Historical Society's most significant collections.

The instances noted above are only four of a larger number; the Newberry Library in Chicago and the Cincinnati Museum Center also possess Clark's writings which at some point after his death were apparently forgotten until they passed to those institutions. In addition, there is no telling how many Clark journals or documents are privately owned, nor any way to know how many were considered worthless and destroyed. In Dear Brother, Holmberg describes such an occurrence; it took place in the 1930s, when "Minoma"—a once-stately St. Louis County mansion Jefferson Kearny Clark had built in the early 1850s on acreage inherited from his father—was cleared of what a subsequent owner considered "junk."

How did it happen that one of William Clark's most distinctive journals, one nearly forgotten for almost a century, came to light as if out of nowhere, and was passed to a venerable historical society that confirms its authenticity? For several decades thereafter this journal detailing Clark's activities between 1798 and 1801, remained all but unknown, and until now has been less than poorly understood. How could a vivid, first-hand account of Clark's pre-Corps of Discovery formative journey lie virtually undisturbed and ignored for so many years?

Such has been the peculiar fate of William Clark's 1798–1801 Notebook, the primary source of information for a new book, The Unknown Travels and Dubious Pursuits of William Clark. This and a succeeding article in We Proceeded On call attention to that crucially important resource, one arguably more revealing of Clark as a three-dimensional individual than anything else he ever wrote. First we will examine why this logbook remained in the shadows for so long.

On Tuesday, May 15, 1923, William Clark Breckenridge (no relation to William Clark), a tall, balding, sixty-year-old widower who lived in St. Louis and who had for the previous decade immersed himself in researching and collecting historical items,
purchased five journals more than a century old. Those books—which would become the rarest, most valuable components of his already impressive collection—consisted of:

- a volume bearing on the cover a hand-drawn image of a hunting scene but consisting inside of thirty-two pages of astronomical data prepared for Meriwether Lewis by Robert Patterson—professor of mathematics and a friend of Thomas Jefferson—before the great western expedition;
- a slim journal of public accounts dating from 1819 to 1825 kept by William Clark;
- a handwritten book containing rules for Indian agents and 134 drafts for payment compiled from 1826 to 1831 by William Clark. “W. CLARK” is tooled on the front cover;
- a seventy-four-page volume William Clark wrote in 1809. Among the many entries between its marbled boards are his notes concerning the death that October of Meriwether Lewis;
- A half-leather, eighty-eight-page logbook William Clark kept, mainly in 1798 and 1801. With blotting sheets sewn between writing sheets, most of this journal concerns his 1798 travels to Spanish New Orleans, his ocean voyage from there to the Delaware River, and his overland journey back to Kentucky by way of Virginia. This logbook is the subject of the previously mentioned new book on Clark.

As William Clark Breckenridge must have noticed, affixed to each cover of four of these volumes is an old-style gummed label filled with minute, nearly illegible writing in pencil. The cover of the 1826-1831 book, however, bears a discolored patch the size of the other labels that appears to have carried a now-lost label. Scattered within the four journals of Clark—but not in Lewis’s Astronomy Notebook—are meticulously penciled notes, some of them signed “MLC,” the initials both of Clark’s eldest son, Meriwether Lewis Clark, and one of his sons. Clearly, these books had spent time with at least one of his descendants.

Breckenridge was a retired business manager of a St. Louis sawmill. He was also an honorary member of the Missouri Historical Society (in St. Louis), a trustee of the State Historical Society of Missouri (in Columbia), and a man determined to preserve as many worthy documents concerning the history of Missouri as he could find. No record identifying the seller has yet been discovered. Even so, Breckenridge was renowned for his methodical record-keeping. Not long after pur-
chasing the five books, he prepared for each of them an index card describing its contents and noting the price he’d paid.

By twenty-first century standards those amounts are astonishing: The Astronomy Notebook cost him a nickel. The two journals covering the years from 1819 to 1831 set him back twenty-five cents apiece, and the 1809 journal cost fifty cents. So did the 1798–1801 Notebook—arguably the journal more important to an understanding of William Clark than any other. For that same half dollar, Breckenridge could have purchased a pound of coffee or a gallon of milk. 

Despite being aware of the importance of Lewis and Clark to American exploration and expansion, Breckenridge, it seems, nevertheless believed he’d bought little of real worth. Therefore he gave scant attention to the five volumes, apparently valuing them according to what he paid for them. They evidently joined the five thousand other books and pamphlets on the shelves of his residence at 4123 Enright Avenue (a point roughly midway between the city residence and the country acres of William Clark, land that would become the site of Minoma). Breckenridge steadfastly maintained, as did his colleagues at the State Historical Society, that the gems of his collection were his scrapbooks of newspaper clippings, and ephemera such as play tickets and programs, and sheet music dating from the 1850s.

Shortly after a tornado destroyed a portion of Breckenridge's residence in September 1927, he moved an unspecified portion of his historical items to at least two other locations in St. Louis. He died on December 23, 1927. His will directed the executor to sell his “remaining books, autographs, manuscripts and journals” for the benefit his heirs.

In January 1928, Floyd Shoemaker, secretary of the State Historical Society of Missouri, traveled from Columbia to St. Louis to see the Breckenridge collection. Describing the entire lot as possessed of a “wonderful character,” Shoemaker offered two thousand dollars for it. He was refused; the heirs insisted on five thousand dollars. After extensive negotiations, Shoemaker bought for the society 1,031 items—the four Clark journals and Lewis’s Astronomy Notebook among them—for an average price of $1.04 apiece. Later that year the collection moved to Columbia, to a portion of the main library of the University of Missouri, as the Breckenridge heirs had forbidden any media attention before the transfer took place. Few people realized the importance of those resources.

Through Shoemaker the society thereafter acquired Breckenridge's accession records of the collection but was still unable to afford the rest of his historic items. Due at least in part to financial constraints caused by the Great Depression and then by the Second World War, the society delayed giving attention to many of the 1,031 items in the Breckenridge collection, including the five Clark and Lewis journals. After the war ended, few people, even in Missouri, were aware of those books.

It is therefore not surprising that in 1953, when graduate student John Louis Loos presented his dissertation, “A Biography of William Clark, 1770–1813,” to the history department at Washington University in St. Louis, he cited local sources and ones beyond Missouri while failing to mention the Clark records 125 miles away in Columbia. Apparently unaware of the 1798–1801 Notebook, Loos had little to say about Clark’s activities during those crucial years.

In 1964, the National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections (NUCMC) (at that time an annual, printed publication of the Library of Congress) introduced the five journals in the Breckenridge collection to the scholarly world. For unknown reasons, however, the NUCMC says little about the 1798–1801 Notebook beyond giving a deceptively bare description of its contents. Even so, that information, combined with more accurate descriptions of the other four journals, began to attract limited scholarly interest.

John Logan Allen was among the first authors to draw on those resources. In 1975, his Passage Through the Garden: Lewis and Clark and the Image of the American Northwest included a reproduction of a map Meriwether Lewis sketched in the Astronomy Notebook. In 1977, Jerome Steffen’s biography of Clark first drew published attention to the 1798-1801 Notebook by quoting from some of Clark’s undated philosophical observations. In 1978, Donald Jackson’s second edition of the Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition alerted readers to Clark’s 1809 journal (a subject Jackson initially wrote about in 1972), and also to Lewis’s Astronomy Notebook. Jay Buckley’s William Clark: Indian Diplomat (2008) made use of all four Breckenridge
We Proceeded On...
The "Passage through the Garden" of the Corps of Discovery commanded by Captain Meriwether Lewis and 2nd Lieutenant William Clark yielded a great map of the West which Clark turned over for copying and engraving in December 1810. Sometime later, the cartographer Samuel Lewis made a copy that was engraved by Samuel Harrison. Because this map was not published until 1814, someone had time to make additions, which included traces of travelers' trails in 1811 that had not been noted when it was first submitted. The 27⅝" x 11⅞" map was published as a foldout tipped into the first edited version of the trip journals. Printers solved the problem of dealing with a large, almost square map by truncating the southern portion at approximately 38 degrees north latitude, a shape that fitted handily inside the covers of the 9.05" x 5.51" (23 x 14 centimeters) book. This somewhat abbreviated map became the standard reference for armchair geographers and western visionaries. Despite the additions made between 1810 and 1814, which should have improved the accuracy of the map, the published version contained a monumental error which misled at least a generation of those interested in the American West.¹

The geographical information the two leaders had relied on to get as far up the Missouri as their wintering place near the Mandan/Hidatsa villages was not entirely new. In ascending from St. Louis they had the prior experience of several French citizens of Spanish Louisiana who traveled upstream as Indian traders and explorers, and left descriptions or maps. They also had published observations and maps of British traders who pushed their business to the headwaters of the Saskatchewan River and who were planning to extend trade to the Pacific Slope.²

A continental vision had always interested former Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson, and it took on new importance when he became president. Three years later the Jefferson administration shouldered into continental politics by acquiring the Louisiana Territory and the potential of enlarging prior claims of discovery to the drainage of the Columbia River.

The vast new acquisition certainly required definition. President Jefferson affirmed this in his instructions to his secretary Captain Meriwether Lewis, when he stated that Lewis was "to explore the Missouri River & such principal stream of it as by its course and communication with the waters of the Pacific ocean, whether the Columbia, Oregan, Colorado or any other river may offer the most direct & practicable water communication across this continent for the purposes of commerce."³

Following the suggestion of Secretary of State James Madison, commerce was the operative justification President Jefferson used to obtain congressional funding. Additionally, the leaders would make observations of latitude and longitude to be entered on a map to be

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¹ The history of the map began in April 1805 as the Corps of Discovery prepared to leave the area of the Mandan/Hidatsa river villages where they had spent the winter. To assure sponsors progress was being made, the two leaders of the expedition submitted their first cooperative attempt to foresee the western geographical questions they hoped to resolve. They planned to follow the Missouri River to its source and to find a westward-draining water connection to the Pacific Ocean.
prepared for the war department, along with supporting notes. Ever the tinkerer, Jefferson suggested both should be written “on the paper of the birch, as less liable to injury from damp than common paper.”

During the howling cold of an upper Missouri winter, William Clark found birch in short supply. As an aid to the explorers, Secretary of the Treasury Albert Gallatin arranged for the Washington City surveyor Nicholas King to provide a template of the known geography, one that left most of the interior continent blank and labeled conjecturally. It was up to Lewis and Clark to fill in the blank area on the map to the best of their abilities.

According to speculative notions of the era that subscribed to the theory of “symmetrical geography,” the central continent was like a great blanket with a high point somewhere in the central mountains from which all North American waters descended. When geographer John Logan Allen examined the King template, he noted the suggestion of several major streams: the Rio Norte or Rio Grande, the mythical Rio des los Apostolos, and the Rio Colorado flowing southward: the Kansas and two branches of the Platte flowing eastward. The River Oregon (which fur trader Peter Pond’s Indian informants told him twenty years before was known as the Naberiskagon) flowed west to the Pacific Ocean.

As the Corps of Discovery prepared to continue up the Missouri River in the spring of 1805, the leaders sent back their first “unrefined” reports. Clark used King’s template to make a composite describing their observations thus far. For what lay ahead he might have benefited from an interview with “old Menard,” the Frenchman who had resided with the Hidatsa for many years and traveled far enough up the Yellowstone with them to be aware of the falls near its head. But Assiniboine had recently rubbed out Menard as he traveled between the Missouri and the Assiniboine Rivers on behalf of the Hudson’s Bay Company.

In guessing what lay ahead, Clark had John Evans’s map of 1796–97 and descriptions from Indians, but the information provided by the Mandan chief Sheheke only carried a bit beyond the mouth of the Big Horn. They also relied on a description “in his own way” from a remarkable Hidatsa traveler who had raided as far west as the headwaters of the Jefferson branch of the Missouri. Their informant may have been the twenty-seven-year-old Hidatsa war leader, Seeing (Fearing) Snake who described the “Stinking Cabbin Creek” as about 175 miles from the mouth of the Yellowstone. If he was trying to locate the later Stinking Water (Shoshone River) hot springs near present Cody, Wyoming, it was an indication the Hidatsa ranged in the Big Horn Country. There is pure wonder in the description of the divide separating (in Lewis’s words, not the Hidatsa’s) the waters of the Atlantic from the Pacific and proof in the picture of “an open & level plains…with a number of barren knobs.” Seeing Snake described the Snake River plain with landmark barren knobs, the Three Buttes, rising eighty miles away.

In a “Summary view of the River and Creeks” that accompanied the map, Meriwether Lewis explained where their direct observations stopped and where the descriptions of Indians began. After comparing Indian statements, the two captains only used data in which there was a general agreement. Lewis wrote that the Yellowstone “takes its rise in the Rocky Mountains with the waters of a river on which the Spaniards reside: but whether this stream be the N. River or the waters of the Gulph of California our information does not enable us to determine.” He wrote a lengthy description of the Mee-ah-zah as the Mandans called the Yellowstone, including its navigability at all seasons of the year for boats or pirogues to the foot of the Rocky Mountains, near which place it is said to be no more than twenty miles distant from the most southerly of the three forks of the Missouri “which last is also navigable to that point.”

In their summary of the rivers and creeks above the mouth of Knife River, Lewis and Clark based estimates of distances on the average daily travel of a moving tribe, which Clark believed to be about twenty-five miles. An experienced historian and horseman once told me that on the average overland travelers made about twenty miles a day, whether walking, riding, or driving a wagon. But a moving Indian camp with families might only travel ten. When the British clerk Francois Antoine Larocque traveled with the Crow in 1805, there were eleven days when he mentioned distances only averaging 9.3 miles a day, and it took them a month to reach the Tongue River.
Problems crept into Lewis and Clark’s speculations when resetting the expedition chronometer by celestial observation resulted in an error later calculated to make a difference of an hour. A visiting North West Company clerk noted the Americans calculated the longitude of Fort Mandan too westerly when compared to the previous observations of David Thompson.\textsuperscript{15}

But it is problems of speculative latitude that concern this study. According to President Jefferson’s instructions, the thrust of the exploration was to be longitudinal in the search for a passage across the continent to the Pacific. That narrowed lateral geographic questions to speculation instead of observation, and the map Clark drew during the winter of 1804–05 depended upon information extracted from Mandan and Hidatsa western travelers. What they knew about the geography ahead depended on descriptions or diagrams drawn in the sand by obliging tribesmen who traveled west by way of the Yellowstone River rather than the upper Missouri.\textsuperscript{16}

When Clark transcribed those descriptions on the map he sent back to the president in the spring of 1805, he overextended the southern drainage of the Yellowstone and its major tributary the Grosse Horn (Big Horn) by three hundred miles. In his speculative geography, those streams rose so far south that the headwaters seemed to interlock with those of the Platte, Rio Grande, Colorado, and Snake Rivers, all descending from what seemed to be the mythic high fountain of western waters. His map included the north and south branches of the Platte River but had the North Branch “nearly 70 miles too far north and 200 miles too far west.”\textsuperscript{17}

Clark drew the Yellowstone gradually bending south until the imagined headwaters of the Big Horn fell between 38 and 39 degrees north latitude, almost intermingled with the heads of a river believed to pass near Santa Fe. Even after descending the Yellowstone in 1806 William Clark had not changed his mind. Sitting among mosquitoes while waiting for Lewis to catch up, Clark ended his Yellowstone River journal with a summation of the geography.

This delightfull river from indian information has it’s extreem sources with the North river [Rio Grande] in the Rocky mountains on the confines of New Mexico. it also most probably has it’s westerly sources connected with the Multnomah and those the main Southerly branch of Lewis’s river while it’s Easterly branches head with those of Clark’s R. the bighorn and River Platte and may be said to water the middle portion of the Rocky Mountains from NW to SE. for several hundred miles. the indians inform us, that a good road passes up this river to it’s extreem source from whence it is but a short distance to the Spanish settlements.\textsuperscript{18}

Even after descending the Yellowstone, Clark continued to believe his old guess about the close relation of the Yellowstone to more southern streams. As the Corps of Discovery proceeded west, they met a Shoshone on the upper Jefferson Fork of the Missouri River who told Captain Lewis that his people “could pass to the Spaniards by the way of the Yellowstone River in 10 days.”\textsuperscript{19}

The latitudinal error seemed reinforced by the two explorations during the winter 1807–08 by George Drouillard, the former hunter for the Corps of Discovery. He first followed the Yellowstone to its confluence with the Big Horn, the location of Manuel Lisa’s Fort Remon, and turned south on Clark’s River, where Drouillard found a winter camp of the Crow. Cutting overland he came to the Shoshone (Stinking Water) River in the vicinity of the Spirit Mountain near present Cody, Wyoming. Crow Indians told him that they could follow the Salt Fork to a Salt Cave at its head in fourteen days and from there travel eight days to the Spanish settlements.\textsuperscript{20} Carefully noting his nightly camping places, Drouillard then followed the Shoshone to the Big Horn. He must have heard about the geography higher on the Big Horn because it seems almost certain that he would have commented on the thermal mineral springs at present Thermopolis or the spectacular canyon through the Owl Creek Mountains. His informants described the Mule River and beyond, outposts of the Spanish settlements that they traveled to with families in eighteen days.\textsuperscript{21} An upper tributary of the Platte known as Wolf Chief River was just to the east. It took Drouillard about three days to return to the Yellowstone by following Pryor’s River downstream.

The observations of Drouillard were a remarkable addition to vaguely understood geography. Unfortunately they were badly distorted on Clark’s great map in order to fit into his persistent concept of distances. That data should have recalculated three-year-old guesswork. Instead Clark seems to have dismissed this
information and relied on a less trustworthy source. As National Park Service historian Bob Moore suggests, Clark stubbornly refused to accept an eyewitness and verifiable account in order to conform to his preformed notion of what the West looked like.22

The difficult year 1810 was wearing on William Clark. The previous October he had lost his best friend Meriwether Lewis and inherited the responsibility for administrating that tangled estate.23 Those duties included completing the narrative describing their trans-continental exploration that Lewis failed to write. The best Clark could do was to assign the writing to a hired editor and provide a map. As the book moved toward publication, Clark had to come up with a final version of his comprehensive manuscript map of the West for inclusion in the narrative.

By late spring 1810 Clark received another description of the same region from the recently returned for-
mer corpsman John Colter, who had been in the mountains for the past four years. Colter returned from the Three Forks of the Missouri River with a report that the St. Louis Missouri Fur Company had suffered attacks by hostile Blackfeet. Actually it was Kainaa (Bloods) and Assina (Gros Ventre) who struck the Missouri Fur Company hunters when they began trapping along the Jefferson Fork.

These were dark times for William Clark who was on tender terms with Osage Indian Agent Pierre Chouteau and had no confidence in acting governor Frederick Bates, who tried to discredit Governor Lewis and Indian Agent Clark behind their backs. Given the Missouri Fur Company casualty list and what appeared to be a bad investment, it is possible to imagine that the cartographer of the West was losing his enthusiasm for that part of the world.

...the unfavorable prospects of the Missouri Company is a little discouraging, they have sent down no fur and I am called on for money for the goods purchased of Manuel $2400 my share. It is too late to repint of my bargain when things are going on badly. It is then time to Scuffle and try to get out of the difficulty.

To revise his map for publication, Clark had his own observations descending the Yellowstone, Drouillard's verbal information converted into two sketch maps, and what John Colter added during their interviews. During the same winter of 1807-08 that
Drouillard made his explorations, Colter professed to have explored five hundred miles or more from the post at the mouth of the Big Horn, perhaps even crossing the Owl Creek and Wind River Ranges to the headwaters of a tributary of the Rio Grande, which Clark gave Colter's name. Drouillard's Mule River and Wolf Chief River dropped off the map. When Clark incorporated this new geographical data into his great map, Drouillard was dead and there was no way of checking Colter's veracity.

To fill in the geography south of the Big Horn, Clark resorted to Lt. Zebulon Pike's recently published account of his explorations on the upper Arkansas River. Pike's report on his southwest expedition was published in 1810. The 509-page book may have been as turgid as its lengthy title but it was accompanied by a map that had been reconstructed from Pike's battered traverse table field notes. When Lt. Pike was having the maps of his southwest expedition prepared in 1809–1810, he relied on General James Wilkinson's favorite cartographer, Sergeant Antoine Nau. Nau previously made a surreptitious copy of Baron Alexander von Humboldt's map of "the interior provinces of New Spain," which Wilkinson brought with him to St. Louis and used to prepare Pike for his southwest expedition. Because Nau helped prepare the maps of Pike's earlier exploration of the upper Mississippi, he was just the man to devise a second set of maps. That was not easy because Spanish authorities had confiscated much of Pike's field notes. For the second sheet of "A Chart of the Internal Part of Louisiana, including all the hitherto unexplored Countries lying between the River La
Platte of the Missouri on the North and the Red River of the Mississippi,” Nau had to interpret Pike’s traverse tables.31

From a height near the head of the Arkansas River, Pike believed he had seen the Platte River, and distantly beyond, the Yellowstone.32 So Nau drew a “stylized and imaginary Platte…based on no data whatever” and placed the Yellowstone near the sources of the Arkansas to confirm Pike’s claim he had seen the Yellowstone.33 Exact courses were lacking but the creative Nau invented a distinctive “squiggle” on the upper Platte.

When Clark expanded his great map of the West by incorporating Pike’s findings from Nau’s less than trustworthy published map, he carefully reproduced Nau’s conjectural placement of the Yellowstone. This “creative” addition represented the great rift where unknowns came together, where William Clark’s over-estimate of the length of the Yellowstone drainage meshed with Zebulon Pike’s faith in the “fountain of waters” myth of symmetrical geography. But what Pike actually saw was the South Branch of the Platte. In failing to realize that from Pike’s “hill in Darien,” he had actually seen the South Platte, Clark dropped seventy miles of lateral distance that added to what became known as “the error of the southwest.” That was a deliberate omission because Clark had shown two streams on his 1805 map. The dedicated historian of the Zackery Perch enigma, J. Neilson Barry, wrote…

the map of 1814 is not “a” map. It is a mosaic. Samuel Lewis [who prepared the finished copy] …copied the square sheets sent by Clark in spaces between the lines for all degrees. He had inadequate data for latitudes and longitudes, or for the areas of the sheets. Consequently he put too large areas into too small spaces and too small areas in too large spaces. Therefore EVERY spot west of modern Dakota is misplaced.34

William Clark, the theoretical cartographer, and Zebulon Pike, the explorer of the Spanish borderlands, were locked in the theory of a continental fountain of waters, which the maps they produced seemed to prove. All Pike had to go on to believe he had seen the Yellowstone in the distance was the probability that he had seen a copy of Clark’s 1805 map. But that showed two forks of the Platte, which should have precluded imagining the distant Yellowstone just across from what was taken as the North Platte.35

It was Lieutenant Pike, blundering around in the canyons and crags at the head of the Arkansas River, who compressed nearly six hundred miles between the Yellowstone and Santa Fe.36 But that fit nicely with William Clark’s outdated guesses about the location of the headwaters of the Big Horn tributary of the Yellowstone. Clark appropriated the northwest corner of Pike’s map and the puzzle fitted together. Both men still failed to grasp the missing distance and the “error of the southwest” would continue to misdirect thinking about the central continent for another quarter of a century.37

They were two explorers trying to fill in the “conjectural” parts of Nicholas King’s 1803 map. On the speculative map Clark drew two years later, he took a pretty good shot at filling in those blanks. King must have taken some satisfaction in making four copies of Clark’s 1805 map for the edification of Congress, the war department, and the president.

After the adventure-filled journals of the Corps of Discovery were finally published in 1814, readers failed to grasp that the lateral distance had been eliminated on the foldout map that accompanied the book. Years later, that omission became yet another burr under the desk chair of the curmudgeonly western historian Bernard Devoto and others who labeled it “Clark’s Error of the Southwest”:

...Lewis presently wrote a summary from Clark’s notes [of his descent of the Yellowstone]. It could be called The Error of the Southwest. The Yellowstone, said the summary, rise on the border of New Mexico, whence a short, good road led to the Spanish settlements. (These unseen settlements were always Santa Fe.) Its source was adjacent to those of the Willamette, the Snake, the Platte, the Bitterroot (!), and the Big Horn. Pirogues would be the best craft for the Yellowstone but even “bateaux,” big boats, could go all the way to the mountains. (There must have been a lot of water in the river that year too.) The Big Horn and Clark’s Fork must be navigable for a considerable distance. (Entirely wrong.) Besides the Big Horn, the mouth of Clark’s Fork would be a good site for a trading post, for it would be fairly safe from the Blackfeet. This last suggestion seems, temporarily, to undercut the promise to the Snakes, the Nez Perces, and various Columbia River tribes that the American trade would seek them out. But only temporarily.38

In time this cartographical hiccup was corrected by others who developed greater familiarity with western realities. William Clark’s rightfully earned reputation as the primary map maker of the West remained...
intact. But the acceptance of the map without too much question allowed interesting parallel narratives to be overlooked and generally ignored. In an intriguing coincidence, the contributions of another military explorer fell out of what should be a panoramic account of the years between 1805 and 1810.

Actually the error may have been detected as early as July 1807 when the enigmatic entrepreneur, former Captain of Artillery John McClallen, was frustrated in his attempt to open an overland trade to Santa Fe. Captain McClallen had a typical company grade officer’s career in the tiny army of the United States until 1805 when he was reassigned to defend the new Louisiana frontier. His association with General James Wilkinson led him to resign his commission, obtain an outfit of trade goods specific to the New Mexican market and set out in August 1806 to open an overland trail to Santa Fe. This private enterprise closely followed and was meant to parallel the exploration of Pike.

As McClallen’s boat party proceeded toward a planned jumping off point at the mouth of the Platte River, they encountered the returning Corps of Discovery. Pleased to meet a brother officer, the explorers shared a good deal of their western explorations with McClallen. In return it is very possible the entrepreneur showed them the thick copy of the reports they had sent back from Fort Mandan in spring 1805, which had been published by Congress. He may have shared his impressions of one of the four copies of Clark’s map, which he had been privileged to inspect while in the East preparing for his mercantile adventure. All this was exciting stuff on the leading edge of exploration.

Unfortunately McClallen’s plan was soon frustrated. Upon reaching the camps of the Pawnee on the Republican Branch of the Kansas River, Pike learned that a large Spanish expedition had visited the tribe and intimidated them into denying Americans passage southward. In early October, Pike warned McClallen he could not depend on the assistance of the Pawnee who were essential to his plan. Instead of returning to St. Louis and potential bankruptcy, McClallen wintered with cooperative Indians and continued up the Missouri in the spring. By following the Yellowstone to a convenient river leading southward, he could sidestep the Spanish blockade and enter Santa Fe by the backdoor.

Bypassing the Big Horn as unnavigable, McClallen reached the mouth of the Clark River by July 1807. He was more fortunate than his predecessor in meeting Crow Indians who revealed the lateral distance between there and Santa Fe was considerably longer than he believed. Needing pack horses and reliable guides, the frustrated entrepreneur made another major revision of his deteriorating scheme and headed west of the Rocky Mountains to obtain the livestock he needed to continue the mercantile adventure next spring. McClallen disproved Clark’s miscalculation of lateral distance before the cartographer inked in his Yellowstone discoveries. He was the only western traveler who might have suffered from the error of the Southwest, but an unkind fate and unforgiving Bloods and Atsiina ended his life before he could return with that geographical insight.

Clark cannot be faulted for wanting to make his magnum opus more complete. He had extended longitudinal understanding of the continent. But that was from the narrow perspective of an explorer bound to rivers and dependent upon poorly translated hearsay to extend lateral horizons. Modern travelers like to think that we know the country by whizzing along the interstate, but that is only a fleeting glance of a few miles on either side.

Cartographic errors were nothing new as the new world was revealed through sometimes preposterous guesses. Clark and Pike tried to add lateral depth to what developed as a longitudinal western thrust. Their errors did not inconvenience the beaver trappers and traders who were soon wandering around in the mountains and did not need maps to follow (as they liked to say) by the way “their stick floated.”

By the end of December 1810 when Clark shipped his manuscript map to the publisher, men actually on the ground had already disproved his theorizing. After being driven away from the Three Forks by hostile Indians, Clark’s partner Andrew Henry led determined trappers up the Madison Fork that former corps member Peter Weiser had explored, and across the divide to what would thereafter be known as Henry’s Fork of the Snake. During the winter of 1810–1811 Andrew Henry’s men appear to have ranged as far as the headwaters of the Green River, which was believed to be a tributary of the “real Spanish River” (Rio Grande) but turned out to be the Colorado.
Clark continued to tinker with the map even after it was in the hands of the engraver. The 1811 overland expedition of Astor’s Pacific Fur Company followed the Wind River to the south branch of the Snake. In 1812–13, Robert Stuart’s party followed the Platte back to the Missouri. A digitally re-mastered edition of Clark’s great map shows Robert Stuart crossed South Pass from west to east.45 How did that information get into Clark’s map? As Stuart returned from the Columbia River, he kept a detailed narrative of his travels as well as an understanding of Wilson Price Hunt’s route west. Stuart arrived in St. Louis on May 8, 1813, gave interviews to the Missouri Gazette, and rode on to report to Astor in New York.46 Clark left St. Louis before May 4 so there was no opportunity to compare findings.45

Clark returned to St. Louis on the first of July after spending some time at his brother’s home near Louisville. It is uncertain when Stuart delivered his dispatches to Astor but it was reported on October 18 that he had given his journals to President Madison. It is possible Clark and Stuart met somewhere on the trail but the only clue is the Astorian’s belief that the Platte “takes its rise in the Big Horn Mountains,” a geographical error his own travels disproved, but which Clark continued to maintain on his great map.46

Before Clark left Washington he reclaimed his great map from cartographer Samuel Lewis who made “sundry alterations” to the plates at some point before the end of March 1813, which Clark inspected and approved before leaving for St. Louis.47 Clark retained his great map through his tenure as Governor of Missouri Territory and later as Superintendent of Indian Affairs, a post he held until his death in 1838 when the map or maps passed to his son George Rogers Hancock Clark.48

The aura that history wrapped around William Clark, and to a lesser degree Zebulon Pike, created an iconic image of two men who were just trying to fathom the mysteries of western geography. They were doing their best to unravel the unknown, using tools of the time and vague instructions. The interlocking mosaic they produced brought together mistakes that compounded an error of conjectural geography without doing harm to those who were infiltrating the West river by river, beaver pond by beaver pond, and who had no real need for a map. Once a frontiersman had been there (wherever there might be) he could remember the landmarks he needed to get back again.

Exploring is putting one foot in front of the other and seeing where it takes you. William Clark became stuck with the idea of a central fountain of waters based on what Meriwether Lewis told him of President Jefferson’s expectations. He tried to reconcile that speculative geography with what the two captains learned from Indian informants during the winter 1804–05. They had been no farther west than the Mandan villages but Clark set the template he could never, even in the face of contradictory evidence, change. That obstinate refusal to give up a belief became a dogmatic rationalization that bent corrective data to fit.

The tribes of the northern plains and central mountains knew how long it took in sleeps to travel to the frontier outposts and poorly guarded corrals of the Spanish Interior Provinces, but, through the veils of language and culture, they could not communicate it clearly. Maps are easy, going places can be confusing. The gullibility and later indignation of armchair geographers over “Clark’s Error of the Southwest” needs to be tempered by the notion that understanding North America was a learning process and the good men who blundered around trying to sort it out did the best they could. ☝

For most of his 84 years John C. Jackson of Olympia, Washington, has been spinning a wide history loop; from cowboys and Indians to fur traders and explorers, from great men to neglected heroes, while trying to stay out of the bight. He still believes it is possible to get at the one true thing that happened, no matter how many others saw it otherwise.

Notes
2. In 1793 an ambitious fur trader, Alexander Mackenzie, reached salt water at Bella Coola in present British Columbia, but that route was a barren discovery of no value to his company. The businessmen of the North West Company had only token obligations to the British Empire when the ambitious Mackenzie published a narrative of his journey in 1801. See Alexander Mackenzie, Voyages from Montreal on the River St. Laurence through the Continent of North America to the Frozen and Pacific Oceans in the years 1789 and 1793 with a preliminary account of the Rise, Progress and Present State of the Fur Trade of That Country. (London: R. Noble, 1801; facsimile reprint Readex Microprint, 1966).

4. Ibid.

5. The very best geographical data known to the Americans at that time was included in the maps brought along by the expedition. This included data from Captain James Cook’s charts of the Pacific coast, the map illustrating Alexander Mackenzie’s 1793 northern track to the Pacific and David Thompson’s 1798 survey of the Mandan villages. The best by far was London cartographer Aaron Arrowsmith’s 1802 revision of his 1795 map of the northern continent.

6. Allen, Passage Through the Garden, 97-103. The Pond map is on pages 24-25. Although he had read the book by Jonathan Carver that used the name “Ouragan,” Pond relied on what northern Plains tribesmen told him.

7. Entries of 14 September, October 20 and November 14, 1804, Brandon House Journal 1804/05, Hudson Bay Company Archives (hereafter HBCA), B22/12, 5d, 7, 7d.


11. Fort Mandan Miscellany, near the end of Lewis’s summary. But Lewis was wrong in believing there were no buffalo west of the mountains or that Flatheads (Salish) lived principally on large fish. In scattered references in the expedition journals he also observed that salmon were unable to ascend the Clark Fork where the Salish lived.


17. Allen, Passage Through the Garden, 237, 239, 244.


19. Lewis’s entry for August 14, 1805 relayed information he heard regarding a description of the Snake and Owyhee Rivers to the south, which he guessed ran into the “gulph of California,” corrected by the editor in note 13. Also included was the information that Shoshones could pass from the Yellowstone to the Spaniards in ten days but could not obtain firearms from them. See note 14 in Moulton, ed., Journals. From the vicinity of the upper Salmon River, the distance is around 975 miles. In his retelling of The Journals of Lewis and Clark, Bernard DeVoto transposed this information to August 20.

20. On the Lewis and Clark sketch maps of Drouillard’s description, following the Big Horn from the mouth of the Shoshone to the Spanish settlements was initially recorded as a trip of eight days, but this was later amended to eighteen days.

21. Governor Meriwether Lewis made a note on George Drouillard’s sketch map of the Big Horn basin that from a trading post at the mouth of the Big Horn River, “a man on horseback can travel to the Spanish country in 8 days.” On another copy of Drouillard’s map in the Library of Congress, John Logan Allen noticed that someone altered the figure “8” by adding a “1” before it, making the trip 18 days. Both copies are in Carl I. Wheat, Mapping the Trans-Mississippi West, 5 vols (San Francisco: Institute of Historical Geography, 1957-67), 2: maps 189 and 190.


23. Clark returned to St. Louis on July 7, 1810, after being away from his duties as United States Agent of Western Indians for nine months.


27. In a letter to his brothers John H. and Edmund Clark, William added a postscript that he had sent “Sundry packs of Beaver to be delivered to Mr. Smith of Lexington,” which must have represented returns of the MFCo., although they traveled up the Ohio with those of the Indian Trade Factory system. Clark to Dear Brother, St. Louis, 3 September 1810, in Holmberg, Dear Brother, 288, n. 5.

28. Z. M. Pike, An Account of Expeditions to the Sources of the Mississippi, and Through the Western Parts of Louisiana, to the Sources of the Arkansas, Kans, La Platte, and Pierre Jaun Rivers; Performed by Order of the Government of the United States during the Years 1805, 1806, and 1807, and a Tour through the Interior Parts of New Spain, when Conducted through These Provinces, by Order of the Captain General, in the Year 1807 (Philadelphia: Published by C. & A. Conrad, & Co.; Somervell & Conrad; Bonsal, Conrad and Co.; and Fielding Lucas, Jr., 1810).


30. Secretary of the Treasury Albert Gallatin had Baron Von Humboldt’s map of Mexico from June 9, 1804, until it was returned on June 27. During that time General Wilkinson had Nau make a copy of the northern provinces adjoining Louisiana, which he carried to St. Louis in mid-1805 and reported a correction to Secretary of War Henry Dearborn on August 23. The distance of a direct route from the Platte to Santa Fe was 690 miles based on the experience of three traders who made the trip in 1797. The copy of Humboldt’s map must have been available to Pike as he prepared for his second expedition. Jackson, ed., Pike’s Journals, 2:368-69, 452.

31. “A chart of the internal part of Louisiana including all the hitherto unexplored Countries, lying between the River La Platte of the Missouri on the N. and the Red River on the S. the Mississippi East.
and the Mountains of Mexico West; with a Part of New Mexico & the Province of Texas by Z.M. Pike, Capt. U.S.I. (Plate II) Reduced and laid down on a Scale of 40 miles to the Inch by Anthony Nau.” From enclosures in Elliott Coues, ed., The Expeditions of Zebulon Montgomery Pike, 2 volumes (1895: Reprinted, New York: Dover Publications, 1987), in volume 2.

33. Ibid. 452-58.
34. Mss 1, Box 26, Folder 22, J. Neilson Barry Collection, Boise State University Library. After evidence was uncovered in British archives of the presence of a party of forty-two Americans west of the Rocky Mountains during the winter 1807–08, Rev. Barry and others made efforts to determine the identity of the leader who signed his letters with the alias, Captain Zackery Perch.
35. Allen, Passage Through the Garden, 237-39, 244. Allen states that Clark’s version of the headwaters of the North Platte and its relationship to “other western rivers verged on the fantastic.” Clark had the North Platte 200 miles too long and 70 miles too far north. The extension of the Yellowstone drainage pushed nearly 300 miles too far south on Clark’s map.
38. DeVoto, Course of Empire, 519-20. DeVoto repeated the statement the following year in his publication of The Journals of Lewis and Clark.
39. Smith to Jefferson, Baltimore, January 20, 1806, Thomas Jefferson Papers, Series 1, General Correspondence. 1651-1827, Image 315, Library of Congress American Memory. Smith was president pro tempore of the Senate.
40. This was carried by the courier Charlo who started on 6 October. There is the suggestion that McClallen received Pike’s dispatches, and lacking the means of forwarding them, held the packet until he sent his boat back the following spring. After assuming charge of western Indian affairs at St. Louis in May 1807, about the time boats were arriving from upriver, William Clark paid $20 to “Charlo, an express” sent by Pike from the Pawnee village, per Pike’s certificate dated 6 October 1806. Jackson, ed., Pike’s Journals, 2:143 n.2.
41. Assina and Blood Indian statements to James Bird, January 22, 1808, HBCA B60/a/7, fol.22; Lt. The only copy of the letter is in the Edmonton House Journal, January 22, 1808, HBCA B60/a/7, fol.
42. A fuller investigation of Capt. John McClallen’s plunge into western development close on the heels of Lewis and Clark is examined in John C. Jackson, By Honor and Right: How One Man Boldly Defined the Destiny of a Nation (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 2010).
43. The Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Lewis & Clark’s West: William Clark’s 1810 Master Map of the American West (New Haven: Yale University, 2004).
45. The date of Clark’s departure before May 4, 1813, can be approximated in a letter from Pierre Chouteau to the Secretary of War. Clark was in Louisville on May 19, apparently visiting his brother, and back in St. Louis by the end of July.
46. Rollins, Discovery of the Oregon Trail, 256.
48. Introductory notes to William Clark’s 1810 Master Map of the American West give the provenance of Clark’s map.
Sex and the Single Explorer

A Response to William Benemann’s “My Friend and Companion: The Intimate Journey of Lewis and Clark”

by Alicia DeMaio

At a glance, one sentence buried in the final chapter of David Freeman Hawke’s narrative of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, These Tremendous Mountains, may seem inconsequential. It reads, “There is no reason to imagine sexual overtones in the close bond between them, yet the relationship did resemble that of a successful marriage where the partners accommodated themselves without attempting to change one another.”¹ Clay Jenkinson quotes this sentence in the final chapter of his character study of Meriwether Lewis and adds:

Lewis and Clark had literally slept in close proximity for many years: in their quarters at Fort Mandan, in the tipi that Charbonneau sold to them, in their quarters at Fort Clatsop, and under the stars at innumerable campsites up and down the Missouri and Columbia Rivers…. No responsible historian has ever suggested that Lewis and Clark were lovers, but they clearly loved each other and had developed a deep intimacy, born of friendship and a magnificent shared adventure. Through their shared sense of mission and sustained physical proximity, they had developed a familiarity that few modern unmarried Americans ever achieve…. In some genuine sense of the term, Lewis and Clark broke up when Clark married Julia Hancock.²

My question is, why “no responsible historian has ever suggested that Lewis and Clark were lovers”? Indeed, the suggestion seems to be the “elephant in the room,” if these quotes are any indication. Why did Hawke feel the need to make the disclaimer that there was “no reason to imagine sexual overtones in the close bond”? Clearly he had thought about it before dismissing the idea out of hand. Similarly, Jenkinson presents a very romantic picture of the two sleeping under the stars before rejecting the notion of the two being physically intimate.

William Benemann takes a stab at addressing this issue in his two-part article “My Friend and Companion: The Intimate Journey of Lewis and Clark,” published in the February and May 2015 issues of We Proceeded On. Benemann does not embed his argument in historical context, and instead restricts himself to using the slim archival record surrounding Lewis and Clark, searching for fragments on which to build his case. He has chosen an arduous path, since there is no “smoking gun” that will decisively answer the question of the nuances of Lewis and Clark’s relationship. The question of proof and evidence is a fraught one in the field of history in general, but especially so in the history of sexuality. Writing the history of something that is usually relegated to the most private part of one’s private life can be difficult; people tend to leave very few written records detailing their sex lives. Because there are many evidentiary gaps in the historical record, historians have developed techniques to uphold empiricism as best we can while also trying to understand aspects of the past that have left slimmer bases of evidence. One of the ways we do this is by using what we do know to establish context for our historical question.

There are three aspects of Benemann’s argument in particular that I find puzzling, all of which I think can be addressed by the use of historical context. First, Benemann has undertaken the difficult task of reading an archival silence—Lewis’s lack of journals from May 14, 1804 to April 6, 1805—as proof for his argument. It is, of course, possible to interpret archival silences, but the use of historical context is crucial for doing so. Benemann attempts to argue that Lewis and Clark destroyed Lewis’s journal because it contained some sort of information about the men’s relationship Clark did not want read by other people. Far from being the universal solution Benemann suggests, this explanation is unsatisfactory considering what we know about the nature of the texts Lewis, Clark, and the other members of the expedition were producing. These journals were not private diaries, keepers of the men’s innermost thoughts. They were government documents, intended to record objective scientific observations (there is, of course, the question of whether scientific observations in the eighteenth century were really “objective,” but that is a debate for another time). The journals also contain a performative element, particularly Lewis’s, in which he writes to fill the character of the explorer as dictated to him by the precedent of eighteenth century travel narratives.³ Interpreting both historical texts and historical silences are the
most meaningful and most impactful when couched in the context of the time in which they were produced. Benemann's argument could have been strengthened had he considered this wider context.

Second, I find Benemann's use of terms discomfiting at times. He frequently uses “heterosexual” or “sexual orientation” despite the fact that these terms are anachronistic to the time in which Lewis and Clark lived. In the first decade of the nineteenth century, there were no “homosexual” people. There were no “heterosexual” people, for that matter. The concept of a sexual orientation, of sexual attraction being part of one’s identity, only begins to emerge in the 1890s, in the writings of sexologists Havelock Ellis and Richard von Krafft-Ebing. Because the heterosexual vs. homosexual binary has become so entrenched in our society, it is hard to imagine a society that could exist without this divide. In the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, performing a sexual act with someone of the same gender was just that—an act, and not a declaration of personhood. In a society organized around the establishment of patriarchal households that would govern the members of the households (and which mirrored the government of the state in the colonial era), marriage was not only expected but also necessary for society to properly function. Marriage did not necessarily correlate to personal desire—and there were people who recognized (or were recognized by their society as having) a propensity to desire the same gender. A seventeenth-century example of this is Nicholas Sension, whose neighbors acknowledged his predilection for men in the midst of his frequent trials for sodomy. Contemporary to Lewis and Clark is Anne Lister, an English gentlewoman who kept a diary recording her love specifically and only for women. Yet, I would still hesitate to refer to these people with concepts that did not exist during their time, despite the fact that their behavior may resemble what we would today call “gay” or “lesbian.”

Third, Benemann has problematically based his case on the fact that Lewis had trouble defining his relationship with Clark. He writes, “In a society that held back from discussing male-male intimacy, there was no way of labeling this thing that had so intensely developed between them during the brief six months they had served together.” On the contrary, Meriwether Lewis lived in a society that did have a category that perfectly described his relationship with Clark—a type of relationship that scholars today refer to as a “romantic friendship,” but what Lewis would have merely called a “friendship.” Benemann is certainly familiar with this concept, as he’s written a book entitled Male-Male Intimacy in Early America: Beyond Romantic Friendships. Men and women tended to live gender-segregated lives in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and would form close, intimate bonds with a member of the same gender, often expressed in very erotic ways, or ways that read erotically to our modern eyes. Scholars today call these relationships “romantic friendships” to distinguish them from what we think of as the typical “friendship” bond; in the eighteenth century, the term “friendship” encompassed all types of friendships, from the casual acquaintance to a much closer relationship. Because the concept of homosexuality did not exist, scholars such as E. Anthony Rotundo have argued that men and women felt freer to express their affections and emotions to one another. Romantic friendships were not necessarily limited to two people. Richard Godbeer has written about John Mifflin, a Philadelphian in the early republic who had at least two friends with whom he was especially close: Isaac Norris and, after Norris went to Europe, a Prince-ton student named James Gibson. In his diary, Mifflin recorded intimately embracing his friends, sleeping repeatedly in the same bed with them—and his pointed references to these times, I would argue, signifies that they were different from sharing a bed out of necessity, as was often done in the eighteenth century—swearing fealty to them, and referring to their bond as one of love. Therefore, when Lewis and Clark referred to one another as “my friend” and “my companion,” they could have easily been expressing the same kind of bond that Mifflin felt with his intimate friends, a bond that was not only socially accepted, but also encouraged.

If there is anything that Lewis and Clark’s written archival record is unequivocal about, it is the fact that Meriwether Lewis and William Clark loved each other very much. “If there is anything under those circumstances, in this enterprise, which would induce you to participate with me in it’s fatigues, it’s dangers, and it’s honors, believe me there is no man on earth with whom I should feel equal pleasure in sharing them as with yourself,” Lewis wrote to Clark when he invited him to join him on the adventure of a lifetime. “I should be extremely happy in your company.” Clark drafted two letters in response. In one, he wrote, “This is an undertaking fraught with many difficulties, but My friend I do assure you that no man on earth lives with whom I would perfur to undertake Such a Trip &c. as your self.” In the other, he wrote, “My friend I join you with hand & Heart.” That line, and the paragraph it is in, has been crossed out—perhaps Clark thought it was too effusive, or perhaps a later hand censored the letter. When contemplating his impending separation from his “worthy friend and companion,” Lewis wrote on July 3, 1806, “I could not avoid feeling much concern on this occasion although I hoped this separation was
Clark named his first child after Meriwether Lewis, an act that, according to Clay Jenkinson, indicated that Clark “wanted to perpetuate Lewis in his own DNA somehow.” People do not want to perpetuate people they do not love in their bloodstream.

Lewis and Clark, like John Mifflin and his friends, loved each other very much. The question is how they loved one another. Did these intimate friendships have a sexual component? That is something we cannot possibly answer. Considering the erotically charged ways in which men and women wrote to their friends of the same gender, it is not impossible that some of these couples expressed their intimacy in a sexual way. There were certainly opportunities to do so; there are plenty of instances of men forming sexual relationships with one another in exclusively male spaces such as long ship voyages, as well as the beds people commonly shared. If such sexual expressions were not going to throw one into an identity crisis, as it might for someone today, what was stopping these couples from taking their erotic effusions from a rhetorical to a physical level? Citing religious beliefs is an ineffective argument—religious restrictions against premarital sex did not stop one-third of late eighteenth century brides from being pregnant, not to mention the horrible restrictions against premarital sex did not yet have the homosexual connotation that it did in later periods). Lewis has an odd track record when it comes to his comments about women. He famously said of the Indian women who lived on the Pacific coast, “I think the most disgusting sight I have ever beheld is these dirty naked wenches,” but this could be out of some sort of prejudice against Indian women specifically and not women in general. After the expedition, Lewis wrote to his friend Mahlon Dickerson and cheerfully gossiped about “the girls” in their acquaintance. When reflecting on his failure “to get a wife,” he wrote to Dickerson—a fellow bachelor who never married—“I feel all that restlessness, that inquietude, that certain indescribable something common to old bachelors, which I cannot avoid thinking my dear fellow, proceeds, from that void in our hearts, which might, or ought to be better filled.”

What did Lewis mean by “the void in our hearts…ought to be better filled”? Lewis is clearly expecting marriage to fill some sort of void that both he and Dickerson as single men felt (bachelor did not yet have the homosexual connotations that it did in later periods). But Lewis’s use of the phrase “ought to” implies that something is there, in his heart—perhaps he is speaking of the friendship bonds he has formed with Clark and Dickerson. Even more puzzling, he continued with, “You see already from certain innate workings of the spirit, the changes which have taken place in my dispositions, and that I am now so much unlike my former self, that I speak of those bewitching gipsies as a secondary consideration.” What “changes…have taken place” in Lewis’s “dispositions”? Presumably he is referring to the expedition—what else could have caused such changes to Lewis’s “former self,” who Dickerson knew in Philadelphia prior to the journey?

We must remember that, in a culture where sexual orientation did not exist, Lewis could easily have been emotionally attached to his relationship with Clark while also being attracted to women. Despite this attraction, his failure to marry could still be attributed to intense residual feelings for Clark. Perhaps he did not want to legally commit himself to someone else while still holding such feelings. Perhaps his other personal problems crowded out any desire to get married. Perhaps his personal problems, in part, stemmed from seeing someone he cared for so much be happy with someone who was not him. Perhaps. There are a number of possible interpretations, which is the beauty of history. All we know for sure is that Lewis wanted to live with Clark and Julia after they married, that Lewis never married himself, and that he wrote a mysterious letter to Clark that somehow explained his death for Clark. Finally, we know that in the last hours of his life, Lewis thought Clark was coming to help him in his time of need. Lewis clearly still loved Clark at the end of his life, as Clark loved Lewis. Whether that love interfered with his ability to live his life is something we will never be able to say for sure.

If—and I cannot stress enough the tentative nature of my claim—Lewis and Clark were, at some point, lovers in a sexual sense, one question remains: why do we care? What does it matter? On the one hand, it
does not really matter. The fact that Lewis and Clark may or may not have had sex does not make them any less “manly” or “heroic.” It does not make them “proto-gay” in any sense. While some scholars believe that looking for examples of same-sex expression in the past helps to establish a history that validates the existence and identity of homosexual people today, I think that tracing a “homosexual” past prior to the 1890s, when the concept originates, is meaningless. There have always been people who have engaged in sex with people of the same gender. There is evidence for this in erotica stretching back to the ancient world, among other places. Whether Lewis and Clark had sex or not does not add anything meaningful to this knowledge. On the other hand, a debate over the sexual lives of Lewis and Clark is meaningful because it reminds us that, as L.P. Hartley once quipped, “the past is a foreign country; they do things differently there.”

Everything has a history, and it is important to remember that social constructs that we take for granted have not always been in place. Remembering where they came from helps us better understand how our society is ordered today, and helps us to better understand the world in which Lewis and Clark lived, which in turn enriches our understanding of the Corps of Discovery.

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NOTE


11. Clark to Lewis, July 18, 1803, LLCE, 110.

12. Clark to Lewis, July 24, 1803, LLCE, 112.


14. Landon Y. Jones, William Clark and the Shaping of the West (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), 171; The Thomas Jefferson Hour, Show 966, “Lewis Book Part 1,” aired April 8, 2012. While people in early America frequently named babies after political leaders (such as George Washington), I would argue that this situation—in which Clark named his child not after a leader but after his best friend—is somewhat different.

15. For more information on such relationships and their erotic potential, particularly in early America, see Godbeer, The Overflowing of Friendship and Rachel Hope Cleves, Charity and Sylvia: A Same-Sex Marriage in Early America (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).


The main title derives from a quote by Washington Irving, author of *Astoria* (1836) and *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville* (1837). These books were based on contemporary fur hunters’ accounts, documents, and interviews largely arranged for Irving by fur trade magnate John Jacob Astor, and by Captain Bonneville as well. These widely popular books first presented the Far West’s fur-trade story and some of John Colter’s adventures to a broad American and European audience. Irving’s “gloomy terrors, its hidden fires” in describing “Colter’s Hell” near today’s Cody, Wyoming, are just two of the notable quotes Irving left to later generations, including among others, “spirit of the west,” and “fearless class of men.”

Anglin and Morris’ revelations and conclusions are many and often ground breaking. Here are some of the most prominent and thought provoking:

- Colter’s birth date, parents’ names, and early location of residence remain undetermined. This despite decades-long efforts by capable investigators, historians, and modern-day Colter descendants, who have tried to unveil these facts in courthouse vaults, regional archives, government documents, probate proceedings, land records, promissory notes, journals, letters, and reminiscences. There is no confirmation that Colter was born and raised in Virginia, as many have stated, or that he served with Simon Kenton’s rangers. When Colter first walked into recorded history by enlisting in the Lewis and Clark Expedition on October 15, 1803, all that is known for sure is that he obviously was a capable Kentucky frontiersman, and perhaps his young son, Hiram, had been born by this date (mother’s name unknown). The claim that Colter already accompanied Meriwether Lewis’s keelboat party when they arrived at Louisville cannot be substantiated.

- Colter’s initial exploration of the Yellowstone Park area likely occurred in fall 1806 and/or spring 1807, while a solitary free trapper. This was months before he attached himself to Manuel Lisa’s fur trading venture to the Yellowstone River in the summer of 1807. Thus, Colter’s Yellowstone Park exploration occurred earlier than assumed by nearly all previous researchers and authors (who concluded that Lisa sent him there in late 1807). On this excursion, it appears that Colter never saw the Teton Valley, Jackson Hole, or Jackson Lake. Rather, he traversed the Wind River area and the Two Ocean Plateau of the southeast Yellowstone Park locality. He definitely visited the park’s Yellowstone Lake (“Lake Eustis”) and Lamar Valley. On the other hand, Colter’s “Lake Biddle,” which many have assumed was Jackson Lake, almost certainly is the much smaller Brooks Lake at the Wind River headwaters. His first exploration of the Greater Yellowstone country (as depicted on William Clark’s maps) may have been in a counter-clockwise direction, rather than clockwise as most previous researchers have assumed.

- Speculation that Colter utilized snowshoes, as stated by many authors and even appearing in artwork, cannot be substantiated and is unlikely. The primary documents give no indication whatsoever that Colter utilized snowshoes, as stated by many authors and even appearing in artwork, cannot be substantiated and is unlikely. The primary documents give no indication whatsoever that Colter utilized snowshoes, as stated by many authors and even appearing in artwork, cannot be substantiated and is unlikely. The primary documents give no indication whatsoever that Colter utilized snowshoes, as stated by many authors and even appearing in artwork, cannot be substantiated and is unlikely. The primary documents give no indication whatsoever that Colter utilized snowshoes, as stated by many authors and even appearing in artwork, cannot be substantiated and is unlikely. 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probably trekked through the northern part of the park at least another five times, when traveling singly or guiding pelt-hunting companions between Manuel Lisa’s post at the Yellowstone/Big Horn junction and the fur hunters’ goal, the Three Forks of the Missouri. From east to west, this route crossed safer Crow Indian country in the upper Clarks Fork area, passed through Yellowstone Park’s Lamar Valley and near Mammoth Hot Springs, and crossed over the Gallatin Range toward Three Forks. It avoided the more dangerous Bozeman Pass area, located 50-miles to the north and frequented by hostile Blackfeet raiders. Following his famous “Race for Life” from the Blackfeet at Three Forks in 1808, it appears Colter escaped via this practicable northern Yellowstone Park route to Lisa’s fort on the Great Plains.

Colter’s death occurred on May 7, 1812, and not in 1813 as many have previously stated. Anglin and Morris, of course, do confirm a number of substantiated conclusions made by reliable previous researchers. For example: Colter’s reports (and George Drouillard’s, too) of the existence of Colter’s Hell and the Stinking Water River (Shoshone River) were not ridiculed by their fur trade contemporaries. Early on, in fact, the fur hunters became quite familiar with Colter’s Hell. Also, its locality was never confused with Yellowstone Park’s thermal features, located sixty miles and more to the west of Cody, Wyoming. Also, Anglin and Morris confirm that the “Colter Stone,” found in the Teton Valley in 1931, almost certainly is a hoax.

The authors are highly commended for bringing the greatest amount of clarity as possible to the Colter story, for which a number of mysteries will always remain. In addition to their valuable main text, Anglin and Morris include a concise Chronology (four pages), and a unique and thorough Documents History (sixteen pages), of Colter’s life.

Glen W. Lindeman
Retired Editor-in-Chief, WSU Press

Timothy Egan, Short Nights of the Shadow Catcher: The Epic Life and Immortal Photographs of Edward Curtis (Boston, Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012), 370 pp., illus., sources, index. $28.00, hardcover.

The Indians he photographed called him “Shadow Catcher.” We remember him mostly for his iconic, haunting images of Native Americans living a century ago, photos of a people then believed to be turning to shadows themselves. But Edward Sheriff Curtis (1868-1952) was much more than photographer of American Indians: he lived with them, gained their trust, viewed and participated in their sacred ceremonies, and recorded their ways of life.

Curtis spent thirty years almost solely devoted to his obsessive drive to create a representation, in photographs and words, of people who “still retained to a considerable degree their primitive customs and traditions” (Curtis’s words). With the backing of Theodore Roosevelt and the partial financial support of J. P. Morgan, Curtis produced a masterwork of twenty large volumes, The North American Indian (1907-1930).

Egan’s book is a lively, engaging account of Curtis’s life and work. The reader comes to understand how a person can become obsessed with an idea, and how he or she can pursue it to the detriment of his family (Curtis’s wife divorced him) and financial well being (Curtis never made a cent from his work, and died in poverty). But Egan makes clear how Curtis created a remarkable record of the Indians of the West, living mostly as they had for ages, before dramatic change dissolved the old ways.

Robert Gatten
Past President LC THF (1994-1996)

1. Full title: The North American Indian: being a series of volumes picturing and describing the Indians of the United States, and Alaska / written, illustrated, and published by Edward S. Curtis; edited by Frederick Webb Hodge; foreword by Theodore Roosevelt; field research conducted under the patronage of J. Pierpont Morgan.
“Imaginative historical detection and good writing will make this a widely read and much discussed book. Trogdon’s surprising discoveries point to Clark’s apparent involvement in a tangled web of conspiracy involving a foreign power. This thought-provoking book illustrates the potential rewards of curiosity and painstaking research in out-of-the-way places.”—William E. Foley, author of Wilderness Journey: The Life of William Clark

In this vivid history, Jo Ann Trogdon reveals William Clark’s highly questionable activities during the years before his famous journey west of the Mississippi. Delving into the details of Clark’s diary and ledger entries, Trogdon investigates evidence linking Clark to a series of plots—often called the Spanish Conspiracy—in which corrupt officials sought to line their pockets with Spanish money and to separate Kentucky from the United States. The Unknown Travels and Dubious Pursuits of William Clark gives readers a more complex portrait of the American icon than has been previously written.

Attorney Jo Ann Trogdon lives in Columbia, Missouri, the same city where the 1798-1801 journal of William Clark has been housed, virtually overlooked, in the State Historical Society of Missouri since 1928. She was led to the journal by her research in Spanish archives for her book, St. Charles Borromeo: 200 Years of Faith. Her articles on history have appeared in publications including Arizona Highways and We Proceed On, a publication of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation.
The Natchez Trace and Andrew Jackson, 1815

The ancient pathway known as the Natchez Trace runs between today's Natchez, Mississippi, and Nashville, Tennessee. In 1809 Meriwether Lewis died at Grinder's Stand on the Trace while traveling to the nation's capital. Originally a Native American path connecting indigenous settlements in the area, by the early nineteenth century it was increasingly used by Euro-Americans, and saw improvements sponsored, in part, by the new United States government. During the War of 1812 it was used by troops under General Andrew Jackson.

In April 2015 the Natchez Trace Parkway Association (NTPA) sponsored a reenactment of Jackson's return via the Natchez Trace to his home in Tennessee after his decisive victory at the Battle of New Orleans on January 8, 1815. Historic Jefferson College in Washington, Mississippi, the territorial capital located a few miles up the Trace from its terminus in Natchez, served as home base for a living history encampment. Led by Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation (LCTHF) member Bryant Boswell, some twenty-four costumed reenactors encamped for three nights, interacting with school groups and visitors.

On the first day, NTPA members visited Meadvilla Plantation House, called Washington Tavern in 1815. Here Jackson and his men held a victory party on their way home. The current owners invited the NTPA to hold a picnic on the lawn and tour the interior. Grant Hardin, portraying Jackson, spoke to the participants two hundred years to the day after the general's oration on the site.

Local historian and raconteur Smokye Joe Frank guided participants on a bus ride along historic trails, retelling old tales as they wended their way through the woods toward downtown Natchez. There the group toured the Texada House (c.1792), the oldest extant brick house in Natchez. The group waited out a rain shower in the King's Tavern, the oldest structure in Natchez (1789).

After this brief respite, the NTPA drummer and accompanying fifer kept time as the reenactors marched through the streets and assembled to hear General Jackson address the Natchez citizenry, including newspaper and TV camera-men, from a gazebo in Bluff Park. The group then dispersed, most heading into Bowie's Tavern across the street. Once a cotton warehouse, the tavern boasts that its relocated mahogany bar, dating from around 1880 and signed by Kit Carson, was once “the largest bar west of the Mississippi.”

The next morning, in the West Wing Parlor of Jefferson College, Chickasaw Elder Robert Perry talked about his tribe and the role his ancestors played at the college. Event organizer and LCTHF member Tony Turnbow introduced several speakers who addressed the theme, “The Role of Adams and Jefferson Counties in the Celebration of the American Spirit.” The closing event took place in the West Wing Dining Hall of Jefferson College. General Jackson and his wife Rachel, portrayed by LCTHF member Jeanne Anderson, arrived by carriage and invited those in attendance to join in the Grand Ball. Men and women in period dress danced by candlelight to music performed by the Booneslick Strings. Martin Aubuchon called the dances and assisted participants in keeping the proper steps. Exhausting but exhilarating, the dancing proved a fitting conclusion to the NTPA's whirlwind Natchez Trace commemorative activities.

Lou Ritten
“This book offers an original perspective on two of the best-known, least-understood women in American history.”

Landon Y. Jones
author of William Clark and the Shaping of the West

Pocahontas and Sacagawea

Author Cyndi Berck offers a 21st century interpretation of the exploration and settlement of America.

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A Non-Fiction Narrative
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