More on the War of 1812:
• Larry Morris on the Fate of the Corps in 1812
• Tracy Potter on the War on the Northern Plains
• An Interview with the Late Joe Mussulman
• Reviews, Letters, News from the Trail
1812 was a momentous year in history. On June 19, James Madison finally declared war on Great Britain after five years of almost unbearable frustration in the Jefferson and Madison administrations. Madison fought the second war of American independence without ever violating the Bill of Rights—an achievement unprecedented in history. The war dominated every other story of the year. As Theodore Roosevelt later argued, the United States was woefully ill-prepared to fight a war against the most powerful naval force on earth, but somehow managed to win startling victories on the Great Lakes and eventually fought the old mother country to a draw, made more satisfying by Andrew Jackson’s stunning victory at New Orleans in December-January, 1814-15.

Louisiana was admitted as the 18th state on April 30, 1812. Two giants of English literature were born that year, and one of the great English scholars of the 18th century died. Charles Dickens was born on February 12. Robert Browning was born on May 7. Dickens visited the United States twice between 1840-1870. On the first tour he ventured as far west as St. Louis. He was more universally beloved in America before his visit than after. He was unsparing in his criticism of American vulgarity, American social pretensions, and American slavery in his American Notes for General Circulation (1842). He also annoyed his American audiences with his persistent complaints about the weakness of the American copyright laws, which had resulted in the proliferation of pirated editions of his novels.

In music, Gioachino Rossini released four operas. Thomas Jefferson knew Pierre Beaumarchais’ French comedy Le Barbier de Séville (1775), on which the Italian composer Rossini’s opera buffa The Barber of Seville was based.

Across the English Channel in Britain, the emerging industrial revolution triggered a terrorist reaction in Yorkshire. On March 15, 1812, disgruntled and displaced cloth workers attacked the wool-processing factory of Frank Vickersman at Taylor Hill in Yorkshire. The word “luddite” comes apparently from an English worker named Ned Ludd, who is said to have smashed two mechanical stocking frames in 1779.

The word “gerrymander” entered the English language on March 26, 1812, in the Boston Gazette. A Gazette cartoon depicted an uncouth and distended state senate district drawn by the Massachusetts legislature during the governorship of Elbridge Gerry. The bizarre new district was drawn to favor the political interests of the Democratic-Republican Party.

Back home in Virginia, Thomas Jefferson worked himself into a righteous froth over British war depredations, and called for the invasion of Canada. It galled Jefferson all of his long life that the British maintained a presence in North America above the border of the United States. Native American collaboration with the British enemy during the war caused him to express his darkest thoughts about White-Indian relations. To Alexander von Humboldt, Jefferson wrote in 1813 that further Native American attacks on border settlements “will oblige us now to pursue them to extermination, or drive them to new seats beyond our reach.”

In January Jefferson received a careful and tentative letter from his old friend and antagonist John Adams after a silence of eleven years. The medical adviser to the Lewis and Clark Expedition, Dr. Benjamin Rush, engineered the reconciliation between the two great patriarchs. The following year Adams would write, “You and I, ought not to die, before We have explained ourselves to each other.” The Jefferson-Adams retirement letters are considered by many the finest epistolary exchange in American history.

In 1812 Meriwether Lewis had been dead for more than two years. Clark was still seeing the expedition’s journals through the press, six years after the Corps of Discovery’s successful return to St. Louis. The Shoshone-Hidatsa woman Sacagawea was temporarily living at windswept Fort Manuel on today’s North Dakota-South Dakota border. She died there of putrid fever on December 20, 1812.
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, lewisandclark.org. Submissions should be sent to Clay S. Jenkinson, 1324 Golden Eagle Lane, Bismarck, North Dakota 58503, or by email to Clayjenkinson2010@gmail.com. 701-202-6751.

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Future Issues: WPO intends to publish themed issues on the forts of the Lewis and Clark Trail; filmic treatments of Lewis & Clark, including documentaries; the fate of other explorers; Sacagawea; the Nine Young Men from Kentucky. If you are interested in contributing on these subjects, please let editor Clay Jenkinson know.

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Editor
Clay S. Jenkinson
Bismarck, North Dakota

Assistant Editor
Catherine Jenkinson
New York, New York

Volunteer Proofreaders
H. Carl Camp, Jerry Garrett, and C. O. Patterson

Publisher
Washington State University Press
Pullman, Washington

Editorial Advisory Board
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Pullman, WA

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St. Louis, MO

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Washington, DC

Gary E. Moulton
Lincoln, NE

James Holmberg
Louisville, KY

Philippa Newfield
San Francisco, CA

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A Message from the President

The Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation (LCTHF) has, since its inception, recognized the achievements of its members through a robust program of awards including those for distinguished service, meritorious achievement, and appreciation. The extraordinary contributions of one member of the LCTHF, however, called for something completely different.

To recognize the work of Dr. Gary E. Moulton, Thomas C. Sorensen Professor Emeritus of American History at the University of Nebraska, the LCTHF had to proceed on along a different path. In response to the suggestion of LCTHF Member Margaret Anne Payne and Past President Bob Gatten that the LCTHF honor Dr. Moulton, we decided to institute the Moulton Lecture to be given annually either at the LCTHF’s Annual Meeting or at a site in the country of significance to the Lewis and Clark story.

The 2018 Moulton Lecture will be given on Saturday May 12, 2018, at 2:00 pm CDT by Dr. Jay Buckley, Associate Professor of American History at Brigham Young University and Dr. Moulton’s former graduate student at the University of Nebraska. Superintendent Mark Weekley has graciously agreed to host the lecture at the headquarters of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail (LCNHT) at 601 Riverfront Drive in Omaha, Nebraska.

How Dr. Moulton came to edit the *Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* is an interesting part of the larger story. When asked by David Borlaug and Clay Jenkinson to name the topic of his talk at a meeting in Bismarck, North Dakota, some years ago, he replied, “I’ll talk about myself!” Dr. Moulton took us back to the late 1970s. He had just completed the collecting, editing, and publishing of *The Papers of Chief John Ross*, the Cherokee chief who led his people along the Trail of Tears. As Dr. Moulton put it, “I was married, had three children, and was now unemployed.”

Dr. Moulton described how he would read American history publications from the front where the articles appeared and his wife Faye would turn immediately to the back where the job opportunities were listed. One such perusal of the *Chronicle of Higher Education* yielded a notice that Faye drew to her husband’s attention: the University of Nebraska was seeking someone to edit the journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

Dr. Moulton applied for the position. The search for an editor of the journals began in 1977, wrote Bob Lange in an article in *We Proceeded On*
A Message from the President

two captains, three sergeants, and a private was no small undertaking.

Later Dr. Moulton wrote to the editor of *We Proceeded On*, “I saw an ad for the job as editor of the Lewis and Clark project in a trade journal and, having completed the Ross project, hoped to be able to continue in the field of historical editing. I had no special knowledge of Lewis and Clark but did have a fair background in the American West and particular interest in the American Indian, with the professional credentials to gain expertise in the Expedition. My greatest assets were my abilities as a historical editor.”

The work was projected by the University of Nebraska Press to result in the publication of ten volumes over the course of nine years. Dr. Moulton detailed the *modus operandi* of his editing. When he had a question about something in a particular journal entry, he would write by “snail mail” via the United States Postal Service (USPS) to an expert in that area, wait to receive a response, write back to the expert for clarification, await receipt of a further response, etc. You get the picture of the reality of correspondence in the days before the instantaneousness of internet communication. Between Dr. Moulton’s detail-oriented approach to historic editing and the pace of the USPS, the completed work ran to 13 volumes, an atlas, and an herbarium. Those nine years turned into a two-decade endeavor.

Now that we are in the age of the internet, the University of Nebraska’s goal of getting the journals to the public has been further realized by making *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* available and searchable on the internet. The back issues of *We Proceeded On*, which contain many articles by Dr. Moulton, are similarly available and searchable online thanks to the work of Kris Townsend and Dan Sturdevant. In addition to publishing in *We Proceeded On*, Dr. Moulton has served the LCTHF as a member of the journal’s Editorial Advisory Board and the LCTHF’s Board of Directors.

As it says in *The Ethics of Our Fathers*, “Who is honored? He who honors others.” The LCTHF is pleased to recognize Dr. Moulton with this lecture in his honor. Please join the LCTHF on the momentous occasion of the first Moulton Lecture on May 12, 2018, at the headquarters of the LCNHT in Omaha, Nebraska.

* * *

The LCTHF’s three-year celebratory continuum will also have its inception in 2018. Larry McClure and members of the Oregon and Washington State Chapters are planning the first of these celebrations, our foundation’s 50th Annual Meeting in Astoria, Oregon, from October 7–10, 2018. The theme is “Arrival at the Pacific: Object Achieved.” Larry advises everyone to come early and stay late in order to see all the sites important to the four months the Corps of Discovery spent in the area. Registration materials and information are included in this issue. Please take advantage of the early-bird savings by either mailing your registration form and check to the address indicated or registering online at www.or-lcthf.org.

The second significant milestone in 2018 will be the 40th anniversary celebration of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail, one of the nation’s first four historic trails. The LCTHF will be observing this event at our Astoria meeting as will the Partnership for the National Trails System at the Trails50 Meeting marking the 50th anniversary of the paired legislation that created the national trails system and the wild and scenic rivers. The meeting will be held in Vancouver, Washington, from October 22 to 25, 2018, at the Hilton Vancouver Washington. Registration materials and information are available at www.pnts.org.

The many events at which to meet, learn, and celebrate the trails offer the members of the LCTHF community the opportunity to do what we enjoy most. The Officers and Board of the LCTHF hope to be able to greet you at all of them.

Philippa Newfield
President
Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation

Attention Lewis and Clark Trail Stewards!

The LCTHF has three Grant Programs:

- The Lewis and Clark Trail Stewardship Endowment
- The Burroughs-Holland/Bicentennial Education Fund
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Additional info: call (888)701-3434, e-mail Lindy Hatcher at grants@lewisandclark.org, or ask any LCTHF board member
The American Prairie Reserve has announced that artist, architect, and environmentalist Maya Lin has been awarded the 2018 Ken Burns American Heritage Prize. Named in honor of one of America’s most creative visual historians and documentary filmmakers, the Ken Burns American Heritage Prize is intended to recognize visionary artists, authors, educators, filmmakers, historians, and scientists whose body of work has advanced our collective understanding of the indomitable American spirit.

Known for her work in sculpture and land art, Lin is familiar to the members of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation as the creator of the Confluence Project, conceptual landscapes incorporating plants and sculpture at the confluences of the Clearwater and Snake Rivers, the Snake and the Columbia Rivers, and at the mouth of the Columbia River.

“Not only am I proud to be considered an individual who has advanced the understanding of the indomitable American spirit, I am honored to be named the recipient of the 2018 Ken Burns American Heritage Prize,” Ms. Lin said. “It is a gift to be given this platform to share my work and to shed light on the ways American Prairie Reserve is making strides to preserve and restore what is vanishing and how we can advance this bold mission.”

Artist Maya Lin—recognized for her work on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and her Confluence Project in the Pacific Northwest.
Editor’s Note: WPO asked historian Larry Morris to provide a status report for each member of the Lewis and Clark Expedition at the time of the War of 1812. For any expedition member known to have participated in the war, Morris has provided pertinent details, where available. According to Morris’ meticulous research, ten members of the expedition were dead by 1812, including Captain Meriwether Lewis. Nineteen members were certainly alive. The status of five members—Cruzatte, Goodrich, Hall, Howard, and McNeal—is uncertain. A number of members of the expedition participated in the War of 1812. No expedition member died in War of 1812 fighting, though John Colter’s death by jaundice may have been related to his war service. By the end of 1812, Colter, Floyd, Sacagawea, and (apparently) Gibson had died of natural causes. Lewis, Drouillard, and Potts had died by acts of violence. No certain details are known of the deaths of Lepage and Shields. Morris’ report follows.

William Bratton (1778-1841) Alive

In August of 1812, Bratton enlisted in the Kentucky volunteer militia as a private in Captain Paschal Hickman’s Company of Riflemen under Lieutenant Colonel John Allen. On January 22, 1813, Allen’s 110 men, including Bratton, along with several hundred volunteers commanded by Colonel Will Lewis and General James Winchester, were attacked at Frenchtown (now Monroe, Michigan) by British colonel Henry Procter and a combined force of 500 soldiers and 600 Native Americans from the Wyandot, Potawatomi, Ottawa, Chippewa, Delaware, and several other nations. The US force was virtually annihilated, with approximately 300 killed and more than 600, including Bratton, taken prisoner.

One of those taken prisoner with Bratton was John O’Fallon, William Clark’s nephew. “The Indians were so unrestrained in acts of barbarity that they were let loose upon the wounded who had been placed in houses and after butchering them consumed their houses reducing to ashes them all,” O’Fallon wrote in a letter to his mother (Clark’s sister, Fanny).

The details of Bratton’s imprisonment are not known, but he was held for two months at most. He was apparently released after pledging not to participate in the war for its duration. (The British often paroled American prisoners on this stipulation.) He was honorably discharged from military service on March 27, 1813.1

Jean-Baptiste Charbonneau (1805-1866) Alive

Baptiste, or “Pomp,” as Clark called him, was nine years old when the war ended. Clark had become Pomp’s informal guardian in the spring of 1811, taking care of him after Toussaint and Sacagawea (who had been in St. Louis since late in 1809) went back up the Missouri with Manuel Lisa. In 1813, after Sacagawea died and Toussaint was presumed dead, John Luttig, apparently acting for Clark, took legal guardianship of Pomp and Toussaint’s (and presumably Sacagawea’s) one-year-old daughter, Lisette. Sometime later, Luttig’s name on the court record was crossed out and replaced with Clark’s. Although Clark had told Toussaint and Sacagawea he would raise Pomp as his own child, there is no evidence that Pomp ever lived in Clark’s home. Clark maintained a good relationship with Pomp, however, and provided for his room, board, and education throughout his youth.2

Toussaint Charbonneau (1767-ca. 1840) Alive

In the spring of 1811, Toussaint and Sacagawea went up the Missouri with Lisa, who was on his mad chase to catch Wilson Price Hunt’s overland Astorians. Lisa caught up with Hunt early in June, and their combined groups made it safely through Lakota Sioux country. The Astorians stopped at the Arikara villages, from which they would go west by an overland route. Lisa continued on to Fort Mandan, where Toussaint and Sacagawea remained, with Toussaint working as an interpreter. (This was Lisa’s “Fort Mandan,” several miles north of the mouth of the Knife River. Lewis and Clark’s Fort Mandan was a few miles downstream from the Knife.) By the fall of 1812, Toussaint and Sacagawea had relocated to Lisa’s Fort Manuel, just south of what would later become the North Dakota/South Dakota border. John C. Luttig was the fort clerk. He made several entries about
Toussaint’s various missions as a scout, interpreter, and negotiator as Cheyenne, Mandan, Hidatsa, Lakota, and Arikara warriors in the area bickered and sometimes fought among themselves. In October, Luttig recorded the death of “the Big white”—Sheheke, the Mandan chief who had befriended Lewis and Clark and accompanied them east in 1806—in one of these conflicts.

By winter, hostilities had broken out between Native Americans and trappers. On February 26, 1813, Luttig wrote that “Charbonneau and Leclair set off for their Stations at the Bigbellies”—the Hidatsa villages near Lisa’s “Fort Mandan.” Within weeks, Lisa and his men fled south—whether because of an attack or an impending attack is not clear, but the post was burned to the ground. There had been no sign of Toussaint, and Luttig presumed he had been killed. Toussaint was alive, however, and apparently remained near Fort Mandan for the next three years. (Because of the war, no trapping parties went that far north during that period.) The next record of Toussaint came in July of 1816, when he signed on with the ill-fated trading party of Auguste P. Chouteau and Jules de Mun. Charbonneau would live until 1843, 39 years after he first met Lewis and Clark.3

William Clark (1770–1838) Alive

When William Clark reached St. Louis early in July of 1813, after having been away on business for most of the previous year, he was greeted as the governor of the new Missouri Territory, formed on June 4, 1812, two weeks before President James Madison declared war on Britain. As William Foley writes, however, “Clark assumed office during what he later termed to have been the worst of times. Bands of hostile Indians roamed along the territory’s northern and eastern borders, held in check only by the rangers, militia units, and armed gunboats patrolling the countryside and the rivers.”

One of Clark’s major difficulties was illustrated by the rising prominence of one of his contemporaries—Robert Dickson. For years, Clark had been aware of Dickson, a British fur trader operating out of Mackinac Island, Michigan, who had been quite successful in the area of modern Minnesota, Iowa, part of Wisconsin, and eastern South Dakota. Dickson had achieved such standing as an “Indian diplomat” that in February of 1812, British general Isaac Brock had asked Dickson if his “friends” could help the British cause. Dickson soon responded by saying he had gathered 250 to 300 Native American allies and would lead them to the nearest British post immediately. The upshot was that the Indians recruited by Dickson played a crucial role in the British victories at Mackinac and Detroit during the summer of 1812.

Clark no doubt considered Dickson a hostile enemy, but the irony was that this foe was in many ways Clark’s counterpart. A nineteenth-century historian described Dickson as an intelligent, patriotic, red-haired man with great influence among the Native Americans, a description that fit Clark perfectly. Still, Illinois Territory governor Ninian Edwards’ warning about Dickson could have been spoken by Clark himself: “Dickson hopes to engage all the Indians in opposition to the United States by making peace between the Chippewas and Sioux and having them declare war against us.”4

John Collins (?–1823) Alive

Collins apparently served as a private in Captain James B. Moore’s Illinois company of rangers. Other details are not known.

When the elusive John McClallen (or McClellan), whom Lewis and Clark met on the Missouri River on September 17, 1806, reached northwestern Montana in August of 1807, he reportedly had two Lewis and Clark veterans with him. If that were true, two possible candidates would be John Collins and Francois Rivet, a temporary recruit who went as far as the Mandan villages in 1804. Collins was a good hunter whose whereabouts during the few years immediately after the expedition cannot be determined. Rivet is known to have been in western Montana by “about 1809.” In December of 1810, somewhere between Three Forks and Great Falls, Blackfoot warriors killed McClallen and eight of his men, with three men escaping. Speculation that Pierre Cruzatte was one of those killed and that Collins was one who escaped must remain speculation but is consistent with what is known about McClallen, Collins, and Cruzatte.

In any case, Collins went up the Missouri as a fur trader with William Ashley in 1823 and was killed, along with twelve others, in the Arikara ambush of June 2.5

John Colter (ca. 1775–1812) Died 1812

Colter enlisted as a private in Captain Nathan Boone’s company of US Mounted Rangers on March 3, 1812. Boone and his father, Daniel, were neighbors of Colter’s and lived just across the Missouri from where Colter had settled with his wife and son and daughter—about halfway between the present towns of Washington and New Haven, Missouri.
This document produced by William Clark in March 1807 lists the members of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, their ranks, dates of service, and pay. Credit: From the Lewis & Clark Expedition Maps and Receipt, Courtesy of the Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library.
Colter was scheduled to serve until June 7, 1812, but he was released on May 6, presumably because of poor health. He died the next day. Thomas James, an old trapping friend of Colter, said he died of jaundice, a yellowish discoloration of the skin that can be caused by anything from pancreatic cancer, malaria, or kidney disease to liver disease caused by alcoholism or hepatitis.

One of the most famous descriptions of Colter came from Henry Marie Brackenridge, who interviewed him in 1811: “This man, with a pack of thirty pounds weight, his gun and some ammunition, went upwards of five hundred miles to the Crow nation; gave them information, and proceeded from thence to several other tribes.” For two centuries, scholars and buffs alike have debated what route Colter took through the wilderness. A breakthrough in that endless round of arguments and counter-arguments came in 2003 when Yale University released a digitally remastered version of William Clark's master map of the American West (produced from 1807 to 1813).

Prominent geographer and Lewis and Clark expert John Logan Allen writes that the new map answers several questions that have long nagged at Colter researchers. Some of the key questions are listed below, along with Allen's short answers:
1. Did Colter enter present Yellowstone National Park? Yes
2. Is Colter's Hell located in Yellowstone? No
3. Did Colter see Jackson Hole and the Tetons? No
4. Did Colter carve his name on a rhyolite stone in Idaho? No
5. Did Colter find the sources of the Wind and Yellowstone Rivers? Yes

George Drouillard (1773-1810) Dead

Drouillard, the master hunter and trailsman of the expedition and sign language expert, was killed by Blackfoot Indians in the spring of 1810 near the Three Forks of the Missouri River.

Joseph Field (ca. 1780- ca. 1807) Dead

Joseph Field was the first expedition member to die after Lewis and Clark's return to St. Louis. As James Holmberg points out, Field's family learned of his death by October 20, 1807, and Clark learned of Pryor and Chouteau's defeat at the hands of the Arikara by October 24. Because of the proximity of these dates, it is quite possible that, given his good record as an expedition member, Field was recruited by Chouteau and was one of four of Chouteau's men killed in the encounter.

Reuben Field (ca. 1781-ca. 1822) Alive

Joseph Field's brother was apparently living in Kentucky in 1812. There is no evidence that he served in the war.

Charles Floyd (1782-1804) Dead

Floyd, who died of what medical historians regard as appendicitis on August 20, 1804, was the only member to die during the expedition itself.

Robert Frazer (1782-ca. 1837) Alive

Frazer apparently lived in Missouri during the war and thus was probably not the Robert Frazier who served in the Mounted Kentucky Volunteers. Our Frazer was charged with murder in 1812 in St. Charles County, Missouri, but there is no record of a trial. On March 26, 1814, he ran a notice in the Missouri Gazette that a stray cow had been found on his plantation. Two years later, he ran an ad in the same paper looking for a journeyman cabinet-maker.

Patrick McLene Gass (1771-1870) Alive

Gass served the entire war, even though he lost the sight in his left eye in September of 1813. He was assisting with the construction of Fort Independence when he was struck by a fragment from a falling tree. In an 1829 letter, Gass

Pierre Cruzatte (dates unknown) ???

Although Cruzatte went up the Missouri River in 1807—as shown by later legal documents discussing the voyage—no subsequent record of him has been found. Furthermore, in his 1825-28 accounting of expedition members, Clark listed Cruzatte as “killed.” We know Manuel Lisa and his men interacted with the mysterious John McClallen because Lisa bought a watch from McClallen in 1808. Cruzatte, who was never heard from again in St. Louis, therefore had the opportunity to join McClallen's band of traders and may have been one of those killed with McClallen in 1810. If Collins was one of those who escaped, he could have informed Clark of Cruzatte's death upon his return to St. Louis.

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The War and the Corps

summed up his war experience:

I enlisted with Captain Kingsley at Nashville in the Year 1812 in the 1st regmt. Infantry—in March 1813 moved to Fort Massack—thence to Belle-fontaine on the Missouri—then assisted in building a small fort on the Mississippi, called ‘Independence.’ In 1814 descended the Mississippi and ascended the Ohio River to Pittsburgh, under the command of Col. Nichols—thence marched to Presque-isle—Fort Erie—Chipewa—and was in the battle at Lundays lane, under Captn. Symmes—after that battle returned to Fort Erie—where we were canonaded by the British for about seven weeks, and was finally marched to Sackets harbor, and discharged in June 1815, having obtained from the Surgeon general a certificate of total disability on account of the loss of the sight of my left eye, whilst in service.

On April 2, 1870, five years after the driving of a golden spike that linked Lewis and Clark's West with the rest of the nation, Patrick Gass died at age 98, the last surviving member of the Corps of Discovery. His daughter Annie reported that “up until the very end, he was accustomed to walking the four miles to the town of Wellsburg [West Virginia] for the mail; that on those walks he carried a hickory cane which he had made himself.”

George Gibson (?-1809) Dead

Gibson died no later than July 10, 1809, in today’s Missouri. He is one of the few members of the Corps of Discovery known to have contracted syphilis (during the North Dakota winter). He also received one of the worst injuries of the Corps on July 18, 1806, when he fell from a horse onto an inch-wide wooden snag that penetrated two inches into his thigh. His early death may have been related to his STD.

Silas Goodrich (dates unknown) ???

Goodrich is listed as “dead” in Clark’s 1825-28 list. Little else is known about the post-expedition life of the Corps’ best fisherman.

Hugh Hall (ca. 1772-?) ???

Clark’s 1825-28 list includes Hall’s name but nothing else, an indication that Clark did not know if Hall was still alive. Since Hall was born in Pennsylvania, however, he was quite likely the Hugh Hall, a farmer living alone, included in the 1820 census for Washington County, Pennsylvania. No further trace of him has been found. Collateral descendent John F. Hall, however, reported receiving Hugh Hall’s journal of the expedition as a youth from a great aunt. Before any record could be made of this priceless artifact, however, it was lost in a fire.

Thomas Proctor Howard (1779-?) ???

There is no record of Howard serving in the war. He died before March 23, 1814, when probate proceedings for his estate were opened. Thomas’s son Joseph is listed among William Ashley’s employees in 1827, and reportedly spent most of the next twenty years on the Missouri.

Francois (William) Labiche (dates unknown) Alive

Labiche was apparently living in St. Louis during the war. There is no evidence he served in the military during that time (although a Francis Labiche from Louisiana is listed on war rolls). Labiche married Genevieve Flore about 1810. They reportedly had seven children baptized between 1811 and 1834.

Jean-Baptiste Lepage (1761-1809) Dead

Recruited at the Fort Mandan construction site on November 2, 1804, Lepage may have been the first white person to descend the Little Missouri River from the “black hills” to its confluence a short distance above the Mandan and Hidatsa villages. He appears to have died in 1809, perhaps at or near the confluence of the Bighorn and Yellowstone Rivers in today’s Montana.

Meriwether Lewis (1774-1809) Dead

Ever since newspapers published conflicting accounts of the events at Grinder’s Inn in October 1809, controversy has raged over Lewis’s death. Did he perish by his own hand or by homicide? Many—but not all—twenty-first century Lewis and Clark scholars conclude that his wounds were self-inflicted—and even that could mean anything from a deliberate suicide to accidentally harming himself while in the stupor of a malarial haze. For a good introduction to the voluminous literature on the controversy, see (in order of publication) Vardis Fisher, Suicide or Murder: The Strange Death of Governor Meriwether Lewis; John D. W. Guice, ed., By His Own Hand? The Mysterious Death of Meriwether Lewis; James E.

**Hugh McNeal (ca. 1776-?) ??**

This may have been the same Hugh McNeal who served in the army until 1811. Clark said McNeal was dead by 1825-28, but nothing else is known. It was McNeal who strode the mighty and heretofore deemed endless Missouri River at its “source” on August 12, 1805.20

**John Ordway (ca. 1775-ca. 1817) Alive**

Ordway was apparently living near New Madrid, Missouri, with his family and attempting to recover from the major earthquakes that devastated the area between December of 1811 and February of 1812.

By 1807, Ordway had married and taken up farming near New Madrid, where he had “two plantations under good cultivation peach and apple orchards, good buildings &c &c.” His activities over the next few years are well-chronicled, but, like many others in the area, he likely lost everything in the earthquakes. Over the next six years, his name appears in the public record just twice—in June of 1813, when he conveyed property to his sister-in-law, and in February of 1816, when Frederick Bates extended his land warrant. On February 5, 1818, Ordway’s widow and two step-children appointed an attorney to handle the affairs of “John Ordway, Deceased.”21

**John Potts (ca. 1776-1808) Dead**

Potts and Colter were trapping near Three Forks during the late summer of 1808, when Potts was killed and Colter was captured by Blackfoot warriors. Colter was allowed a head start before Indians chased him, and he made his renowned “run” back to Fort Raymond at the mouth of the Bighorn River.22

**Nathaniel Pryor (ca. 1772-1831) Alive**

At the time of the Battle of Tippecanoe (November 7, 1811), Nathaniel Pryor had obtained a license from William Clark to trade with Winnebago Indians at a mine near today’s Galena, Illinois. On January 1, 1812, with Pryor still unaware of the battle, Winnebagos who had traded peacefully days earlier stormed his post and took him hostage. “About sun-down of the same day,” according to an 1826 account, “sixty arrived, shooting down the oxen in the yard and killing two of his men. They rushed on him, and was in the act of putting him to death, when by the politic dissimulation of a female in the house, there were averted for the moment from their intention. They then placed him in the house with a sentinel over him, intending to burn him in it.” With help from a Sac Indian woman and the fur trader Maurice Blondeau, Pryor escaped, eventually reaching St. Louis.

On August 30, 1813, Pryor reenlisted in the army as a first lieutenant in the 44th Infantry Regiment. During the summer of 1814, the 44th was assigned to Andrew Jackson’s army, and on October 1, Pryor was promoted to captain. He thus fought in Jackson’s victories at the Battle of Pensacola in November 1814 and the Battle of New Orleans, waged from December 1814 to January 1815, with both sides unaware that the Treaty of Ghent had been signed in Belgium on Christmas Eve, 1814.

In 1830, while recommending Pryor as an Indian agent, Sam Houston, who had served as a young lieutenant under Jackson, described Pryor as a “man of amiable character and disposition—of fine sense and strict honor,” and reminded the president that Pryor “was a Captain in the 44th Regt. under you at New Orleans, and a braver man never fought under the wings of your Eagles.”23

**Sacagawea (ca. 1788-1812) Died 1812**

After almost a year and a half in St. Louis, Toussaint Charbonneau and Sacagawea went back up the Missouri with Manuel Lisa in the spring of 1811, leaving five-year-old Pomp in Clark’s care. Henry M. Brackenridge, also a passenger on Lisa’s keelboat, wrote: “We have on board a Frenchman named Charbonet, with his wife, an Indian woman of the Snake nation, both of whom accompanied Lewis and Clark to the Pacific, and were of great service. The woman, a good creature, of a mild and gentle disposition, was greatly attached to the whites, whose manners and airs she tries to imitate; but she had become sickly and longed to revisit her native country; her husband also, who had spent many years amongst the Indians, was become weary of civilized life.”

In December of 1812, Sacagawea and Toussaint were at Fort Manuel on today’s North Dakota-South Dakota border. John Luttig wrote: “Sunday the 20th, clear and moderate ... this Evening the Wife of Charbonneau a Snake Indian Squaw, died of a putrid fever she was a good and the best Women in the fort, aged about 25 years she left a fine infant girl.”

“Putrid fever” was a nineteenth-century term for typhus.
(as opposed to typhoid fever), a bacterial infection often caused by crowded, unsanitary conditions and characterized by fever, chills, cough, headache, rash, and delirium and dehydration in its later stages.

Sometime between 1825 and 1828, when William Clark made his list of members of the expedition—and what had become of them—he confirmed Sacagawea’s death: “Se car ja we au Dead.” Clark’s phonetics are a potentially important clue in the controversy about the pronunciation of her name.

Despite solid evidence for Sacagawea’s death in 1812, in the early twentieth century, writers Grace Raymond Hebard and Charles A. Eastman independently concluded that an old Native American woman named Porivo, who died on Wyoming’s Wind River Reservation in 1884, was actually Sacagawea of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Without any primary documents to back up the theory, Hebard speculated that the woman who went up the Missouri with Toussaint in 1811 and died at Fort Manuel in 1812 was not Sacagawea but another of Toussaint’s wives.

In this regard, it is important to note that Clark’s roster, with its note about Sacagawea’s death, was not discovered (by Dale Morgan) until 1955, after Hebard and Eastman had both died.

“I have had a great deal of correspondence and some talk with Miss Hebard within the last ten years,” wrote historian W. J. Ghent in 1933, “and I cannot do else than reject her theory utterly. There is no human possibility that the Indian woman who died at Fort Washakie in 1884 could have been the woman of the expedition.”

As James P. Ronda has written, most scholars now believe Sacagawea died in 1812.24

George Shannon (1785-1836) Alive

Shannon was in Philadelphia for much of 1810 and 1811, assisting Nicholas Biddle in compiling and editing the paraphrase history of the expedition. He was back in Lexington, Kentucky, in 1812 and spent the remainder of the war years there. In December of 1812 he was appointed “messenger for the Kentucky electors,” and on September 18, 1813, he was married to Ruth Price. In February of 1814, he spoke at a remembrance of George Washington’s birthday.

Shannon was part of Nathaniel Pryor’s 1807 contingent that attempted to return Mandan chief Sheheke and his wife and son to their home in present North Dakota. When they were attacked by Arikara Indians, Shannon was seriously wounded in the leg, which was subsequently amputated.25

John Shields (1769-1809) Dead

The blacksmith and gunsmith of the expedition died in 1809. No details are known.26

John B. Thompson (?-ca. 1815) Alive

Thompson could be the same John B. Thompson.
who served in the war as a ranger, United States Volunteers. He died by summer of 1815, when probate proceedings began, and Clark noted that he had been killed.27

Peter M. Weiser (1781-?) Alive

Peter Weiser, under the spelling “Wiser,” enlisted as a private in the Missouri Militia on April 22, 1813, and was discharged on May 21, 1813. He served under Colonel Alexander McNair and Captain Charles Lucas. McNair defeated territorial governor William Clark in 1820 in the first gubernatorial election for the new state of Missouri. Lucas was the man killed in a duel—at age twenty-five—by Thomas Hart Benton in 1817.28

William Werner (?-1839) Alive

He may have been the William Warner who served in several different regiments of the Virginia militia.

Werner married around 1807, moved to Virginia (where Clark said he was in 1825-28), and lived and farmed there with his wife and large family until his death around 1839.29

Joseph Whitehouse (ca. 1776-?) Alive

Whitehouse served in the 1st US Infantry Regiment both during and after the war but sadly ended his tenure by deserting, as this record shows:

Private Reenlisted June 30,1812 at Belle Fontaine by Capt. Clemson
Corporal Appointed July 1,1812
Reduced August 8,1813
Battle of Lundy's Lane, July 25,1814
Sortie of Fort Erie September 17,1814
Private Enlisted in Artillery Aug. 31,1816 for 5 years
Artificer Appointed Sept. 1, 1816
Deserted Feb.1, 1817 (MC233/NA)

Since Whitehouse and Patrick Gass both served under Captain John Cleves Symmes, Jr., at the Battle of Lundy's Lane in 1814, they likely interacted, but no details are known.30

Alexander Hamilton Willard (1778-1865) Alive

Late in 1811, after William Clark received word of the Battle of Tippecanoe, he realized that certain Winnebago Indians might retaliate against American posts on the upper Mississippi to avenge the losses at Tippecanoe. Clark sent Willard, who was working as a government blacksmith for the Sauk and Fox Indians on the west side of the Mississippi, opposite the site of present Nauvoo, Illinois, to warn Americans at those posts, one of whom was Nathaniel Pryor. When Willard received Clark’s message, he hurried north, navigating the frozen Mississippi with a horse-drawn sleigh in an attempt to cover the 200 miles as quickly as possible. When he reached Pryor’s station, however, he found nothing but the burned-out shells of the buildings and concluded that Pryor had been killed. Willard rode farther north to warn others and keep himself out of harm’s way. When he came south again a few weeks later, however, he found new hazards. “The Winnebagoes are Determined for War,” Clark wrote to Secretary of War William Eustis in February of 1812. “On the 8th [of this month] a party of that nation (some of whom were known) fired on my Express [Willard] about 40 miles above the Settlements, who was on his return from Prairie de Chien, the Mines & Fort Madison.” Clark added that the next day Willard discovered the bodies of nine members of an O’Neal family, most of them women and children, just minutes after they had been murdered by Winnebago warriors.

According to Willard’s obituary, “He also fought under arms against Tecumseh’s Indian confederation in the War of 1812, which service entitled him later to claim a soldier’s homestead of 160 acres with a warrant good on any plot of unclaimed government land.”31

Richard Windsor (dates unknown) Alive

Windsor served with Captain James B. Moore’s Illinois company of mounted rangers. Other details are not known.

A John Collins also served in this same company of mounted rangers. Although primary documents confirming that these two men were the Windsor and Collins of the expedition have not been found, a strong case of circumstantial evidence can be made that they were indeed the same individuals. In his 1825-28 list, Clark listed Windsor as being in Illinois, the same state where the Collins and Windsor of Moore’s company enlisted. Windsor and Collins both went up the Missouri River as traders after the expedition and therefore may have had contact with each other. Neither is known to have been elsewhere during the War of 1812. The odds of two men not associated with the expedition but having the same exact names as two expedition members and serving in the same company seem astronomical.32
The War and the Corps

York (1772–?) Alive

A letter written by Clark’s nephew John O’Fallon in May of 1811 indicates that York had been hired out to a landowner near Louisville, Kentucky. The letter also stated that York was married and that one possible reason for his being in Louisville was to be near his wife. A second reason implied by O’Fallon was that Clark had become disgusted with York’s behavior for one reason or another.

The few documents that mention York after 1811, notes James J. Holmberg, “do not indicate a reconciliation between slave and master.” In December of 1814, Clark wrote to his brother Edmund, “What have you done with . . . my negrow man York?” In November of 1815, Clark and his nephew John H. Clark “formed a drayage business in Louisville . . . with a single wagon and team, and one driver” —York. Holmberg has written, “Almost ten years after the return of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, York was still a slave; possibly separated from his wife, and held in low esteem by his master.”

The final word on York came from Washington Irving, who visited Clark in 1832 and wrote that York had been set free and tried his hand as a wagoner working between Nashville and Richmond. Unhappy with his life, York “determined to go back to his old master—and set off for St. Louis, but was taken with the cholera in Tennesse & died.”

NOTES

Foundation member Larry E. Morris has published articles on John Ordway and John Colter in WPO and is the author of The Fate of the Corps: What Became of the Lewis and Clark Explorers After the Expedition, and co-author, with Ronald M. Anglin, of The Mystery of John Colter: The Man Who Discovered Yellowstone. Larry and his wife, Deborah, live in Salt Lake City.

14 We Proceeded On ◆ Volume 44, Number 1

Status of Expedition Members During the War of 1812

William Bradtton ............................................. Alive
Jean-Baptiste Charbonneau ................................ Alive
Toussaint Charbonneau ...................................... Alive
William Clark .................................................. Alive
John Collins .................................................... Alive
Pierre Cruzatte ................................................ Alive
George Drouillard .......................................... Dead
Joseph Field ...................................................... Dead
Reuben Field ................................................... Alive
Charles Floyd ................................................... Dead
Robert Frazer .................................................. Alive
Patrick McLene Gass ........................................ Alive
George Gibson .................................................. Dead
Silas Goodrich ................................................ ???
Hugh Hall ......................................................... ???
Thomas Proctor Howard ..................................... ???
Francois (William) .......................................... Alive
Jean-Baptiste Lepage ....................................... Dead
Meriwether Lewis ............................................. Dead
Hugh McNeal ................................................... ???
John Ordway ................................................... Alive
John Potts ......................................................... Dead
Nathaniel Pryor ............................................... Alive
Sacagawea ...................................................... Dead
George Shannon ............................................... Alive
John Shields ..................................................... Dead
John B. Thompson .......................................... Alive
Peter M. Weiser ............................................... Alive
William Werner ............................................... Alive
Joseph Whitehouse .......................................... Alive
Alexander Hamilton Willard ................................ Alive
Richard Windsor ............................................. Alive
York ............................................................... Alive


9. Morris, Fate of the Corps, 199, 77-81.

10. Morris, Fate of the Corps, 199, 152-53; Ancestry.com database of War of 1812 Service Records, with original data from the National Archives and Records Administration.

11. Morris, Fate of the Corps, 200, 158; Ancestry.com database of War of 1812 Service Records, with original data from the National Archives and Records Administration.


26. Morris, Fate of the Corps, 199, 77-81.

27. Morris, Fate of the Corps, 199, 152-53; Ancestry.com database of War of 1812 Service Records, with original data from the National Archives and Records Administration.

28. Morris, Fate of the Corps, 199-200, 153; Ancestry.com database of War of 1812 Service Records, with original data from the National Archives and Records Administration.

29. Morris, Fate of the Corps, 200, 158; Ancestry.com database of War of 1812 Service Records, with original data from the National Archives and Records Administration.


32. Ancestry.com database of War of 1812 Service Records, with original data from the National Archives and Records Administration; Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society, 190, 195; Thrapp, Frontier Biography, P-Z, 1582; Morris, Fate of the Corps, 201-2.

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of Seattle, WA
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Lindy Hatcher of Great Falls, MT

In Memory of Orville O’Keefe
Brian O’Keefe of Denver, CO

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Donations to the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation to honor individuals, activities, or the memory of a friend, family member, or colleague are deeply appreciated, and may be designated for the foundation’s general fund or earmarked for a particular purpose.

Photograph of Trapper Peak, Bitterroot Mountains, Montana, courtesy of Steve Lee.

We Proceeded On

The Journal of the Lewis & Clark Trail Heritage Foundation

ADVERTISING RATES

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For example, a Foundation member who runs ads in the May, August, and November issues of *WPO* would receive an 18% discount on the total bill if paid by cash, check, money order, or credit card through our website—[www.lewisandclark.org](http://www.lewisandclark.org)—by selecting “Join” or “Donate.”

Direct all advertising correspondence, including ad reservations, to Erin@lewisandclark.org or call 415-272-4210.
ARRIVAL AT THE PACIFIC: OBJECT ACHIEVED

We are at the end of our voyage to the Pacific Ocean.
— Private Joseph Whitehouse, Nov. 16, 1805

50th Annual Meeting, October 7–10, 2018, Astoria, Oregon
Also remembering the beginnings of the Lewis & Clark Trail Heritage Foundation (LCTHF), the signing of the National Historic Trails Act, and the Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail (LCNHT)

WHAT YOU’LL DO

Visit sites during the Corps’ winter stay, 1805–1806
✦ Dismal Nitch
✦ Station Camp (Middle Village)
✦ Cape Disappointment
✦ Fort Clatsop
✦ Salt Works
✦ Whale site, NeCus’ village, McNeal’s Folly
✦ Columbia River (on the Portland Spirit)

Learn about life before and after the Corps arrived
✦ Chinook and Clatsop Indian lifeways
✦ Exploration and trade before Lewis & Clark
✦ Challenging but rich environment of the Columbia/Pacific region
✦ Arrival of the Astorians and later commerce
✦ How the Corps of Discovery impacted science and American lore
✦ Ongoing struggles to retain tribal identity

Celebrate 50 years of Trail preservation and interpretation

✦ Recognize the Foundation’s early leaders in Portland
✦ Commemorate the National Trails System Act of 1968 (see www.trails50.org)

© Bob Gatten photos

Your hosts:
The Oregon and Washington Chapters of the Lewis & Clark Trail Heritage Foundation
You’ll Meet

♦ Descendants of Chinook and Clatsop Tribes frequently mentioned in the Journals
♦ Chinook Tribal members preparing an authentic salmon/oyster feast on Sunday
♦ Nationally-known authors (with 10% off at Fort Clatsop Bookstore; no sales tax in Oregon!)
♦ Scholars who research the Corps of Discovery and the tribes they met
♦ Pacific Northwest Living Historians making salt at the ocean in Seaside Oct. 6–7
♦ Rangers and interpreters at Lewis & Clark National Historical Park and Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center at Cape Disappointment (a Washington State Park)
♦ Columbia River bar and river pilots, period entertainers, and local residents who welcome visitors to their beautiful coastal region
♦ Keepers of the Foundation’s early history, LCTHF award winners, new Board members and officers

Accommodations

...all the party Snugly fixed in their huts. — Cpt. Clark, Dec. 25, 1805

Holiday Inn Express, our headquarters hotel, sits on the shore of the Columbia River near the 4-mile Astoria-Megler Bridge connecting Oregon and Washington. You can enjoy a free hot breakfast while watching ship traffic plying the same waters the Corps knew so well. Call 1-888-898-6222 and mention “Lewis & Clark”. Conference rate good until Sunday, August 5. Rates vary by day of week and view. Contact treasurer@or-lcthf.org for other nearby housing options, including RV parks and Camp Rilea (historic defense facility 8 miles south).

Transportation

...they are the best canoe navigators I ever Saw. — Cpt. Clark, Nov. 11, 1805

But since you are coming by land, plan on two hours from Portland to Astoria by several different routes: rental car recommended; ride-sharing encouraged; potential shuttle service options will be announced via www.or-lcthf.org. Commercial bus service also available. Plan to come early and stay late to see much more than we can offer in four days. Email Glen Kirkpatrick with questions: Glen.Kirkpatrick@or-lcthf.org.
WEATHER

…I have not seen one pacific day since my arrival.— Capt. Clark, Dec 1, 1805

But you will be coming several weeks earlier and the weather promises to be better! However, be prepared with sun hats, rain gear, sweaters and jackets. Early October weather can range from low 50s to 70s with gusts at the beach and on the river.

ON YOUR OWN

…never one day without 3 meals of some kind.— Capt. William Clark

Time will be available to sample unique restaurants in Ilwaco and Long Beach, Washington, as well as Astoria, Seaside and Cannon Beach, Oregon. Bring Sacagawea dollar coins to use as tips to remind residents that the Corps lives on. We will not have a “vendors’ fair” this year, but both the Fort Clatsop Bookstore and Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center at Cape Disappointment have an extensive selection of books and gifts.

SHOW US YOUR “LETTER OF CREDIT” FROM JEFFERSON

♦ Until June 30
  - Early Members: $375;
  - Early Non-Members, $424
♦ Until August 27
  - Member: $400;
  - Non-Member: $449
♦ After August 27
  - Late Member, $425;
  - Late Non-Member: $474

Inviting local friends to see what we do?
  - Additional seats for Salmon/Oyster Feast, Sunday, Oct. 7 @ $40 ;
  - Portland Spirit cruise (includes lunch), Tuesday, Oct. 9 @ $99 ;
  - Additional banquet seats, Wednesday, Oct. 10 @ $50 .

EXPLORE MORE

We then set out and came about 9 miles…

— Sgt. John Ordway, Nov. 25, 1805

♦ Astoria Riverwalk to new LCTHF signage and Keith Hay Memorial Bench (¼ mile)
♦ Fort to Sea Hike (6 miles one way with return shuttle)*
♦ Clark’s Point of View (Tillamook Head) Hike (from Seaside to Cannon Beach with return shuttle)*
♦ Netul Kayak/Canoe Trips (3 hours depending on tides, Oct. 5 or Oct. 6)*
♦ Long Beach Discovery Trail Hike (8 miles long, your car)
♦ Related History: Columbia River Maritime Museum, Clatsop County Heritage Museum, Flavel House, Oregon Film Museum, Columbia Pacific Heritage Museum (Ilwaco, Wash.), Cannon Beach History Center, Seaside Museum, World Kite Museum and Cranberry Museum (Long Beach, Wash.). See their websites for more information.
♦ Crabbing Trip on Saturday, Oct. 6 (depending on tides)*
♦ Birdwatching and mushroom hunting at Fort Stevens State Park (Saturday, Oct. 6)*
♦ Sleep one night inside Fort Clatsop (chosen by lottery; be sure to enter your name, if interested!)*

* Email Larry.McClure@or-lcthf.org in advance if you are interested in these opportunities.
Registration

50th Annual Meeting, Lewis & Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, October 7–10, 2018, Astoria, Oregon

:Register Early! Online registration available at www.or-lcthf.org.

Online registrants will receive 5 blue beads as a thank-you for saving paper and data-entry work.

Full Name(s) __________________________________________________________________________________

Address (City, State, ZIP) _________________________________________________________________________

Phone (home) ________________________ (mobile) ___________________________________ 

Email ___________________________________________________________________

Emergency Contact(s) ___________________________________________________________________________

Relationship __________________________________  Phone ____________________________

Special requests (dietary needs, limited mobility, hearing impaired) _________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________

Chapter membership(s) __________________________________________________________________________

NOTE: Activities begin Sunday, Oct. 7 at Fort Clatsop ending with an authentic salmon/oyster feast in another location.
To avoid missing these activities, we recommend you arrive Saturday, Oct. 6. Please email registration@or-lcthf.org with any 
questions you may have. We will send you a registration confirmation, either by email or by postal mail.

☐ I am driving to Astoria ☐ I have a National Parks senior pass (Golden Age Passport) and will bring 
it for use at Fort Clatsop

☐ I am willing to ride-share with others ☐ I am interested in sleeping overnight on a Fort Clatsop bunk (chosen by 
lottery)

☐ I am interested in shuttle service between Portland International Airport & Astoria

FEES

My registration rate (“Letter of Credit” on previous page) $________

Note: Non-Member rate includes one year individual membership in LCTHF.

Additional Chinook salmon/oyster feast tickets @ $40 ________

Additional Tuesday Portland Spirit cruise seats @ $99 ________

Additional Wednesday banquet tickets @ $50 ________

Total Due ________

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Credit Card: Visa, MasterCard, Discover (circle one — AmEx not accepted)

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If not registering online, please send completed registration form to:
Oregon Chapter LCTHF, 17760 SW Cheyenne Way, Tualatin, OR 97062
Please make checks payable to Annual Meeting 2018

See www.or-lcthf.org for special weekend activities (Oct 6–7) for teachers and youth, 
particularly Boy Scouts and other youth groups. Separate registration for these.
The War of 1812 on the Northern Plains
by Tracy Potter

When the United States declared war on the British Empire on June 18, 1812, neither side had troops stationed on the Northern Plains. In Rupert’s Land, where all waters flow to Hudson Bay, the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) officially represented English law and order. Officially, but not completely, as they were late-comers to the plains, having hugged the coast of the oft-frozen sea for more than a century. The representatives of French Montreal’s fur traders, after 1779 known as the Northwest Company (NWC), had forts in the region and they didn’t much care what the HBC thought about them. Until the Lewis and Clark Expedition encouraged their departure from the United States, the French and Scots from Montreal had trading contacts across the nearly-invisible continental divide on down to the Knife River Indian villages on the Missouri River.

Lewis and Clark’s soldiers left the Northern Plains in 1806. The second US military expedition to the Upper Missouri was meant to close a chapter left from the first. In 1807, Ensign Nathaniel Pryor was turned around by angry Arikara at the mouth of the Grand River on his failed mission to return Mandan chief Sheheke to his home at the Knife River. Pryor’s report on the engagement contained the estimate that a company of no fewer than 400 men would be required to force the river open, and even a thousand might fail in the attempt. President Jefferson didn’t have 400 soldiers readily available. He looked to his Governor of the Louisiana Territory, Meriwether Lewis, for a solution to complete his obligation to Sheheke, to make sure that the Mandan leader’s visit to Washington, DC, would not be a one-way trip.

None too soon for Jefferson, Lewis activated a plan. A militia unit was formed under the just-begun Missouri Fur Company and was granted a generous government contract to return the Mandan. It succeeded in September 1809 in getting Sheheke, his wife, and son home. The militia disbanded then, and the United States was represented in the region by fur traders and trappers who had been part of the return party.

During the War of 1812, a radical new element was introduced to the region. The first non-Indian farmers came, a group of displaced Scots gathered together by Thomas Douglas, fifth Earl of Selkirk.

Lord Selkirk was a philanthropist with a vision. He also had deep pockets and a controlling interest in the Hudson’s Bay Company. He wrestled a land grant to be known as Assiniboia, the most southern and habitable part of Rupert’s Land, from the HBC in 1811, and the following year sent 36 Scots and Irish on a ship to York Fort at Hudson Bay. They survived a miserable winter there and as rivers thawed, they were delivered in York boats to the Red River of the North to start an agricultural colony. It was a rough start, made survivable by the generosity and buffalo hunting skills of the local Métis. By January, 1814, with more colonists on the way, Selkirk’s Governor of Assiniboia, Miles Macdonell, de-
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termined that all the wild game and domesticated animals of Assiniboia were sufficient only to provide for the sustenance of the Red River colony. Nothing could be spared for export. He began a war he was unprepared to win by an official of dried meat, usually bison. Pounded thin with a proper amount of fat and often berries, then packed to keep dry, it was nutritious, light and compact to carry. It packed a protein punch. Daily rations for hard-paddling engagés equated eight pounds of fresh meat with a pound and a half of pemmican. That distinction allowed the Nor’westers’ long canoe trail from Quebec to Assiniboia to compete with the supply line of sailing ships and York boats of the Hudson’s Bay Company. As naval battles on the Great Lakes disrupted the Montreal-Assiniboia route, pemmican became even more crucial for those on the far western end of the supply trail.

Subsequent to the prohibition on export of foodstuffs, Macdonell tried to level the hunting field for his mostly pedestrian colonists by forbidding the hunting of bison on horseback, the preferred method for the Métis and their Native American friends and relatives. When Macdonell began enforcing his edicts and confiscating NWC property, the company responded. In other words, while the War of 1812 consumed the military leaders of Britain and the United States, a trade war and sovereignty struggle not involving the United States unfolded on the northern Great Plains and Canadian prairies. The NWC’s men in high-enough places provided a veneer of legality to their opposition to Selkirk and the HBC. While the war with the United States wound down, a unit that had performed well in defense of Montreal was reconstituted on the Red River. The Corps of Canadian Voyageurs was invoked by NWC partner William MacGillivray who described himself as a colonel in the corps. He named fellow partner Duncan Cameron a captain and Cameron appointed Métis lieutenants, including 21-year-old Cuthbert Grant and Robert “Bonhomme” Montour. Cameron also came with an arrest warrant for Governor Macdonell and his aides for illegal seizure of NWC property.

The Métis became aware of themselves as a new nation in the Pemmican War, born with a cavalry corps of men familiar with and suited to Assiniboia. King George III, if aware, might have been quite unhappy that in his name a Métis cavalry fought not against the Americans, but against his own Crown corporation and a Lord of his realm. The British troops representing the North West Company fought well and Selkirk’s colonists and the Hudson’s Bay Company were no match.

By June 1814, Macdonell relented somewhat and negotiated a settlement with the NWC to return some of their confiscated property. But Macdonell wasn’t through stirring the hornet’s nest. In October he gave the NWC an eviction notice. They had six months to close their posts. Anticipating the trouble he was causing, the governor raised and armed a colonial militia.

In the midst of the action on the ground came word to Assiniboia that the war with the United States was over. The war in Assiniboia was not. There was peace in all the world but along the Red River. From out-of-work soldiers Lord Selkirk recruited 150 Swiss mercenaries. They would not arrive in time to save the colony.

Support from the colonists for Selkirk’s grand idea was undercut by the Nor’westers with a classic carrot-and-stick approach. The Métis provided a visible threat of violence, more threat than actual, while the company provided a carrot. Those colonists who wanted to leave the Red River would be granted free passage to Upper Canada where they could try settling outside a war zone. The scheme worked to perfection. Macdonell lost his militia, saw most of his colony desert, and submitted himself to arrest. Métis leaders Grant, Montour, William Shaw, and Bostonais Pangman issued a decree, June 15, 1815, ordering the HBC to eliminate the Selkirk colony. The Métis carried out the order themselves.

But Selkirk and the HBC weren’t done. 1816 saw renewed hostilities. At the forks where the Red and Assiniboine meet were two forts of the two companies, Fort Douglas of the HBC and Fort Gibraltar of the NWC. The men of Fort Douglas captured and destroyed Fort Gibraltar in the spring.

In response, Cuthbert Grant, proclaimed Captain General of the Métis cavalry, led a bloodless ambush and seizure of eight HBC York boats at narrow rapids on the Qu’Appelle River. On June 1, 1816, his cavalry surprised and overwhelmed Brandon House, the HBC post on the Assiniboine River west of the Red River colony. It was another bloodless victory. Then he led his men overland to the forts, where a new group of colonists were establishing themselves under a new governor, an American businessman named Robert Semple. The Métis were camped nearby at the Frog Plain, called Seven Oaks by the English (near today’s Winnipeg, Manitoba).

On June 19, 1816, Semple saw Grant’s Métis approaching Frog Plain and quickly organized a group of men to
march out of Fort Douglas and confront them. It was a fatal error.

The Métsis sent François-Firmin Boucher to see what the new governor had to say. Although outnumbered three to one, Semple attempted to arrest Boucher. A gun was fired. Then more. When the smoke cleared Semple and twenty of his men were dead, victims of the sharp-shooting of the Métsis, who suffered only one fatality. The victory inspired the new Métsis national anthem, “The Song of Frog Plain,” subsequently composed by Pierre Falcon (1793-1846), a participant in the fight. It would be sung by Métsis on hunts and marches for decades.

The Selkirk-Red River colonists had no stomach for more warfare. They gathered their belongings and left the colony. The Métsis’ new nation had triumphed again, but it would be another temporary victory.

The British government had grown tired of the fighting and unauthorized arrests. The war with the US was over, Napoleon had met his Waterloo (June 18, 1815), and the unrest in Assiniboia had produced negative economic and political consequences. In July, the Canadian Governor-General John Sherbrooke received instructions to end the conflict. The companies were to be ordered to disband their military forces, allow free movement of goods, and return confiscated property. Government representatives were to deliver the orders and conduct an investigation into the confiscations and battles with the authority to make the appropriate arrests.

Selkirk’s Swiss mercenaries arrived too late to defend the colony at Frog Plain, but they were on time to capture the Northwest Company’s main supply depot, Fort William, on Lake Superior, August 13, 1816. Selkirk arrested and under guard sent back to Montreal several senior NWC partners, including MacGillivary, Colonel of the Corps of Canadian Voyageurs. Subsequently Governor-General Sherbrooke added the arrest of Lord Selkirk to the duties to be performed by his investigators, William Coltman and John Fletcher.

If the second destruction of the Red River colony led to the seizure of Fort William by Selkirk, that action led to wholesale attacks by the Northwest Company on Hudson’s Bay Company posts in retaliation. Posts and pemmican were taken and retaken by each side, though the level of outright violence receded after Frog Plain. The conflict did, however, cause fatalities through starvation at an isolated HBC post.

The investigators arrived at Fort William in 1817 and started to restore order. Selkirk was arrested and released on bail. Selkirk’s army was forced to disband, but allowed to travel to the Red River as colonists. Cuthbert Grant found his Métsis less willing to engage in continued military actions and found himself on trial in the East. Coltman issued a report on the incident at Frog Plain, finding that someone in the governor’s group appeared to have started the shooting. Just about everyone in leadership on both sides in the conflict was obstreperous, but Canadian civil authority asserted itself more or less successfully.

The colonists kept coming. The chief area of dispute between the two companies shifted to the Grand Rapids northwest of Lake Winnipeg. It was a choke point for fur trade posts not connected to the Assiniboine River. After another two years of flouting authority and damaging each other’s business, a merger of the ancient Hudson’s Bay Company and the merely decades-old Northwest Company was negotiated in 1821.

South of the “Border”

South of the border it appears that surrogates fought the War of 1812, though it is unclear how much they knew about it.

John Luttig’s journal from Fort Manuel on the Missouri River on the south side of the modern-day border between the two Dakotas reports the death of Chief Sheheke in the fall of 1812. Sheheke and the war chief of his village, Little Crow, had been killed in a fight with the Gros Ventre (Hidatsa). Three Mandan were wounded, one eventually succumbing to his wounds. Eleven Gros Ventre died in the fight and others were wounded, according to the word Luttig received from two Mandan individuals on October 3, 1812.

Two Native American nations shared the appellation “Big Bellies,” the English translation of the French term Gros Ventre. One is a group also called the Atsina, living on the periphery of the Blackfoot Confederacy in north central Montana. The other were the Hidatsa of the Knife River in today’s North Dakota. They were certainly the Gros Ventre the Mandan leaders of Mitutanka fought in the fall of 1812.

In the twenty-first century, the Mandan and Hidatsa are such close allies as to be a hyphenated word, the “Mandan-Hidatsa.” Battles between the two nations are unheard of in the historical record, with this one exception. What brought their centuries-old alliance to the breaking point?

The seeds of the fight were planted during Lewis and Clark’s visit to the Knife River villages in 1804-05. Man-
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dan chief Sheheke famously welcomed the Americans with words and deeds of comfort. “If we eat, you shall eat,” he had proclaimed and made good on his word, bringing corn to Fort Mandan and taking Lewis and several others on a mounted buffalo hunt. He was a frequent visitor to Fort Mandan and the Americans reciprocated with visits to Mitutanka, the nearest of the five earthlodge villages at which they wintered.

The Hidatsa, particularly their fierce warrior Le Borgne, were more stand-offish from the start. Northwest Company trader Charles McKenzie was embedded with the Hidatsa and his journals enhance the flavor observable in the journals of the expedition. The Hidatsa liked the Canadians better than they liked the Americans. It was natural. The Canadians had been coming to their villages bringing useful goods since 1738. They had weathered a previous notice of a change in supposed ownership of the region, when John Evans, a Welsh representative of Spanish King Carlos V, declared in 1796 that all trade with the Canadians was banned and only trade with Spain through St. Louis would be allowed. The Mandan and Hidatsa threw Evans out and welcomed back the Canadian traders.

That the Mandan of Mitutanka were more receptive to American entreaties is also natural. Canadian traders came from the north. Mitutanka was south of the other villages and south of the Missouri River. Mitutanka was last in line for those traders from the north, but was first in line at the southern limit of the Mandan-Hidatsa world, if hostilities broke out, as they often did, with the Sioux or Arikara. The Lewis and Clark Expedition had come from the south through Lakota and Arikara territory with their keelboat. Their first stop was at Mitutanka. They had brought the largest non-Indian military force ever seen on the Upper Missouri. They offered trade and friendship and, perhaps, an opportunity to restore the Mandan to the dominant position in the alliance they had held prior to the smallpox epidemic of 1781. The more urban Mandan had suffered more in that disaster than had the less urban Hidatsa Proper, Le Borgne’s people, who were slightly more nomadic.

Hostility to the (white) Americans is seen in the rudeness Hidatsa chief Caltacorta exhibited as he grew bored (October 29, 1804) with the standard, long speech Lewis delivered in the first council at Knife River. It is more clearly seen in the words of Le Borgne who declared that among the Americans only the blacksmith had any worth and that if his young men on horseback came upon the Americans on the plains, they would do with them as with so many wolves.

The contrasting views towards the Americans engendered a split in the alliance of the Mandan and the Hidatsa, reflected in a personal dispute between Sheheke and Le Borgne. In August 1806, with all of President Jefferson’s goals for the expedition accomplished save one, Le Borgne was invited to accompany the Americans back to their capital city to meet the “Great Father.” He refused, cit-
Ironically, if Sheheke had died on the diplomatic journey, as so many other chiefs from the middle Missouri had done earlier that year, there may have been no problem. But Sheheke returned in 1809, accompanied by a remarkable force, Pierre Chouteau’s Missouri Fur Company militia. Having successfully completed a mission Le Borgne admitted was too dangerous and having solidified relations with a clearly powerful, but not Hidatsa-favored nation, Sheheke’s status in the five villages ascended and Hidatsa taunts about the weakness of Lewis and Clark were undercut. Le Borgne immediately set about being publicly dismissive of Sheheke’s accomplishment.

Sheheke and his American friends received an enthusiastic homecoming at Mitutanka and the other villages, with one exception. Entering a village unidentified by an observer by the name of Dr. Thomas, Sheheke, Chouteau and several dozen Mandan and Americans sat astride their horses waiting to be greeted by the town’s headmen. Sheheke was a grand sight. He had a full-dress military uniform and his horse was dressed ostentatiously in scarlet and gold-lace. The visitors waited an uncomfortably long time before being received. Finally arriving at the parlay, the Hidatsa chiefs were impatient for distribution of the presents they expected from their guests. Those presents are central to the suicide of Meriwether Lewis (October 11, 1809), but not to this story. Suffice to say, Chouteau somehow managed to blacken Sheheke’s reputation for generosity in front of the Hidatsa.

Le Borgne, in his few recorded comments about Sheheke, showed a complete change of attitude after the Mandan leader’s return from Washington City. The Hidatsa leader had directed Captain Clark to take good care of Sheheke in 1806, but in 1811, visitor Henry Marie Brackenridge saw Le Borgne treat Sheheke with contempt. Le Borgne called the Mandan “a bag of lies” and said Sheheke only pretended to have any authority in the villages.

Those personal and socio-political status motives may be enough to explain the Mandan v. Hidatsa battle in 1812. But they comport also with the choosing of sides Indian nations did during the War of 1812. The British factor Robert Dickson did well in recruitment of Dakota to fight in Ohio, including his wife’s brother, Waneta, The Charger, a Yanktonai. Waneta earned his name so well that he was commissioned a captain after the war and taken to England to meet King George III. Later, Waneta also became a warrior for his former enemy the United States, joining Col. Henry Leavenworth’s assault on the Arikara in 1823. He was a signatory of the peace treaty of 1825 brought by the wheelboat armada of General Henry Atkinson. Others who fought for the king included the ancestors of Little Crow, the reluctant leader of the 1862 Minnesota uprising, and the grandfather of Sitting Bull, who fought for the grandfather of Queen Victoria. Both men later noted their heritage in seeking asylum from George’s granddaughter.

In the West, direct evidence of the War of 1812 is less clear. Fort Manuel was in a panic after a trapper was killed by the Sioux within sight, but not rifle range of the fort. The Arikara reported to the Americans that a party of trappers had been killed by the Sioux. Crow warriors, cousins a century or two removed from the Hidatsa, attacked and killed Americans. Hidatsa Proper warriors robbed and killed two American hunters, stealing 26 horses. Manuel Lisa marched to Big Hidatsa village with 26 men to demand return of the horses. Le Borgne acknowledged the incident, but sent Lisa home dissatisfied. There is, finally, the battle in which Sheheke lost his life and only a supposition that it related to the War of 1812, based on thin threads of evidence. Le Borgne was hostile to the United States. Sheheke’s success at improving relations with the United States raised his status in Mitutanka, but in Big Hidatsa, Le Borgne fumed. He urged the expulsion of traders in February, 1813, not because they were white, but because they were Americans.

For Sheheke’s part, there was no question of his allegiance to the American side. He was, after all, “Brother … of the President” of the United States. He had been the guest of Thomas Jefferson in the White House. His village appears to have agreed with his position. The Mandan continued to trade at Fort Manuel during the war.

There is no oral tradition of which I am aware about the battle that killed three Mandan and eight Hidatsa, including Sheheke. In fact, on the Fort Berthold Reservation, home to the Three Affiliated Tribes of Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara, a classroom wall in the village of Mandaree reports that Sheheke’s death came at the hands of the Sioux in the 1830s. That is incorrect.
Lacking an eyewitness account or a solid oral tradition, we are forced to fall back on logic and imagination. This battle was a big deal. It was more than personal, it was political. It was less than all-out war, but its death toll was shocking. Its timing was more than coincidental. The War of 1812 came to the Knife River villages.

Tracy Potter writes about Northern Plains history. Author of Sheheke: Mandan Indian Diplomat and Steamboats in Dakota Territory, Tracy retired in 2015 from a career in heritage tourism with the Fort Abraham Lincoln Foundation. A former state senator, Tracy and wife Laura Anhalt live in Bismarck, North Dakota.

Notes
4. Samuel Hull Wilcocke, et al., A narrative of occurrences in the Indian countries of North America, since the connexion of the Right Hon. the Earl of Selkirk with the Hudson’s Bay Company, and his attempts to establish a colony on the Red River: with a detailed account of His Lordship’s military expedition to, and subsequent proceedings at Fort William, in Upper Canada. (London, 1817), 26-27.
Joe Mussulman
by Clay S. Jenkinson

Editor's Note: The late Joe Mussulman (1928-2017) was one of the leading experts on the social dynamics of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. He was the founder and editor of the outstanding website, Discovering Lewis and Clark. Further details about him can be found in the November 2017 issue of We Proceeded On, pages 6-7. This interview was conducted in Missoula, Montana, at the time of the bicentennial of the expedition (2003-2009). A few of Joe’s quotations from the journals were, as is usually the case in interview situations, close paraphrases of the actual text. Whenever Joe sang tunes with his beautiful voice, I have transcribed the lyrics and marked them with the musical notation ♪.

WPO: When Lewis and Clark left Fort Mandan they rented a lodge, a tipi. The Captains shared it with York, Drouillard, and the Charbonneau family as the Corps moved west. Can you give us a sense of a day in the life of Lewis and Clark post-Fort Mandan? What happened in a military command like this?

JM: By the time they were ready to leave Fort Mandan in the spring of 1805, they had become a band of brothers. There was an ease to their relationships with one another. Both captains frequently found occasion to say how proud they were of these men, and we see an echo of that attitude and that mood in the letter that goes back down the river on the keelboat, a letter that was eventually published in various newspapers. One of the statements in that letter was, “At this moment, every individual of the party are in good health, and excellent spirits; zealously attached to the enterprise, and anxious to proceed; not a whisper of discontent or murmur is to be heard among them; but all in unison, act with the most perfect harmony.” They had confidence in one another.

Music is mentioned more than 30 times in the journals, and we know that Clark particularly was pleased to say from time to time how much fun the men were having singing. People frequently ask me if I think Lewis or Clark joined in, and I honestly think they did not.

It may seem superficial, but the evidence that Clark gives us is that the Captains took pride in the fact that the men could enjoy themselves, could relax, could be that informal. This was reassurance that their command was working.

WPO: How did that happen, how did these men become...
a band of brothers?

**JM:** It happened in the crucible of the lower Missouri, I think. I didn’t come to that conclusion by myself, but through the work of other Lewis and Clark scholars. Teamwork was necessary. There’s a painting in the Missoula County Courthouse, an Edgar Paxson mural, that shows Lewis with eleven of his men and six Indians crossing the Clark Fork River. [See the back cover of this issue.] Paxson’s paintings in many respects are flawed. There is Paxson’s romanticism of frontier clothing, for instance, the elaborate fringing on the leathers that they didn’t have time to fashion. After all, they barely had time to cure their hides to make shirts and pants. So Paxson’s paintings are sort of campy that way. But Paxson shows us in that mural that he knows rivers. He’s sensitive to what it takes to get a raft across a river. If you look at that painting you’ll see that there are several men getting that raft across the river and they are working as a team. They are working with one another, because one corner of that raft is in the current, it’s right in the center of the channel, and something is happening to it. The other two men have to react, they’ve got to keep it moving up the current or they will spin. This is the kind of teamwork that was necessitated by the process of getting up the Missouri, and we can only imagine the satisfaction that each man in that little group felt once they got everything safely across the river.

A colleague of mine looks at the Corps of Discovery as the archetypical fire crew. These guys’ lives depend on one another, and that’s the discovery, the amazement that the Corps guys felt, the satisfaction they felt, when the keelboat had wheeled on a sandbar or the anchor rope had broken and they had to keep it from going over because the current was going under it and tipping it into the river. They learned to cooperate.

**WPO:** But not every time you put 30-some people together with hard labor does it produce that harmony, that band of brothers. It can go the other way.

**JM:** Yes it can. And of course there must have been disagreements. But I think those men, by the time they were ready to leave Fort Mandan, knew each person of the expedition and knew whom he could trust his life with in the sense of getting across the river without getting drowned. That’s the most important thing.

They certainly had disagreements, and then there are some things we don’t understand about certain reactions. Remember the often-told story accusatory of Charbonneau?

He was at the helm of a boat up in northeastern Montana (May 14, 1805) and the wind caught the sail and whipped him around and nearly turned the boat over. Instead of righting the pirogue, Charbonneau cried out for help from his God. He was a French Canadian voyageur, and there’s a theme song that was known by every voyageur, by every boatman, among that fraternity, a kind of litany of their responsibility. As well as I remember (I’m of course paraphrasing), the first stanza goes:

> When you are on the rivers in the deep woods, and the current spins you around and threatens to dump you in the river, etc., remember that is Satan at the bottom of the river drawing you down and you must resist. And when you get to the shore safely you must thank your God, pray to God, and pray to the Virgin Mary.

That’s all Charbonneau was doing. He was doing exactly what any professional boatman would have done, responding to the protocols of his profession. This is like the honor code, the how-to book of being a voyageur. You see, knowing these seemingly insignificant things helps put sometimes perplexing events in the journals into perspective.

**WPO:** And Lewis, who’s an Anglo-American rationalist, is not getting it?

**JM:** Right. And even Cruzatte doesn’t seem to appreciate what Charbonneau is doing here. You have to wonder about Cruzatte. He surely knew what Charbonneau was doing. But I suppose you would say Cruzatte knew who was paying the bills.

**WPO:** In the first year of travel to today’s North Dakota, there were a lot of temporary French boatmen with the expedition. What do you see when you close your eyes and imagine that important first year?

**JM:** There were a lot of French. We don’t quite know how many. That’s an obvious cultural gap, though it wasn’t the only one.

I think one of the ways of closing or narrowing those gaps was through the music, because singing was so much what *A Prairie Home Companion’s* Garrison Keillor would call a guy thing. I suspect none of those guys would have said, like we would today, “Shucks, I can’t carry a tune. You go ahead.” No, that was how you showed your guy-ness in the days before we showed our guy-ness by memorizing all the statistics and prison records of our favorite athletes. So
I think much of their cross-cultural communication came through their music, teaching one another their songs.

WPO: Imagine one of those early days either at Camp Wood or on the lower river when, given what you just said, maybe Ordway might be hanging back at first, but then coming around and saying, “Here’s a song that I learned growing up in New Hampshire. Do you know this one?”

JM: Yes. I think we must acknowledge the fact that this was not a men’s chorus traveling west. It was completely unrehearsed. Nobody ever said, “Okay guys, let’s sing. Gather around the fire here and pass out the music.” No, nobody gave a downbeat, nobody said 1-2-3, go. Somebody began to sing because he had to. And then somebody else joined in. Or somebody else didn’t. I can imagine one night, maybe the night after Floyd died (August 20-21, 1804), one of the men quietly singing to himself:

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\text{He is able, He is able, } \\
\text{He is willing, doubt no more; } \\
\text{He is able, He is able, } \\
\text{He is willing doubt no more.}
\]

\[
\text{Let not conscience make you linger; } \\
\text{Nor of fitness fondly dream; } \\
\text{All the fitness He requireth } \\
\text{Is to feel your need of Him.}
\]

\[
\text{It is given, it is given } \\
\text{’Tis the spirits rising thee } \\
\text{It is given, it is given } \\
\text{’Tis the spirits rising thee. ℗}
\]

And probably nobody else making a sound. That was a medicine song right there. That might have been the power, that song might have contained the power that they needed at that critical moment to go on. That might have been the “Amazing Grace” that we use now.

WPO: How do you propel your own scholarly and imaginative mind to a song like that? Obviously the journals don’t mention a song at the time of Floyd’s sudden death. How does your historical and musicological research work for you?

JM: I go back to a collection called *Early American Imprints.*¹ This is a collection of every book, magazine, pamphlet, and broadside that was published between 1630 and 1800. There’s a second series from 1800 to 1819. Also, to find some of the tunes they might have liked, I also go to a collection that was published about 1797 called *An Evening’s Amusement,*² a title containing not a little irony because it contains 300 different tunes. Tunes only. No words. So there’s another good resource.

Then there are the records, sketchy as they may be, of the Second Great Awakening. This was a religious revival movement that began around 1790 in southwestern Kentucky. It was the movement that really gave us the word “revival.” There was a preacher by the name of Jim McGready (1763-1817) who called his camp meetings revivals. The really gifted preacher was one who, when his message outreached the power of his words, could roll his message over

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¹ *Early American Imprints.*
² *An Evening’s Amusement.*
into song, drawing upon a melody that he knew everybody knew. One of the most popular tunes at the time, a favorite of George Washington, was called the “Rose Tree:"

♫ A rose tree in full bearing,
Had sweet flowers fair to see;
One rose beyond comparing,
For beauty, attracted me.
Tho’ eager then to win it,
Lovely, blooming, fresh, and gay,
I find a canker in it,
And now throw it far away. ♫

That tune was very popular, and Jim McGready or whoever it was who recast it for the first time, just reached out and grabbed it and taught his congregation new words to it.

♫ There is a land of pleasure,
Where strings of joy forever roll,
’Tis there I have my treasure,
And there I hope to rest my soul.
Long darkness dwelt around me,
With scarcely one achieving ray:
But since my Savior found me,
A light has shone along my way. ♫

That piece happened to have been written down, published as a matter of fact, in 1830, by the wife of one of those camp meeting preachers, in a collection of what she thought were the most interesting and memorable songs of that movement. I think probably few of the men in the Corps of Discovery could have escaped the impact of the Second Great Awakening and that musical spirit. They might have sung the song that I just sang.

So that’s where we go to find these things. There are plenty of published resources. We rely on what has been published, either on paper or on a CD, but we need to remember that popular music was an oral tradition then, as it essentially still is now. It consisted of tunes and songs, meaning the words, and popular music and songs were transmitted in kind of a mix and match pattern. A real guy was a guy who knew a lot of tunes and who knew a lot of songs and could mix and match them in ways that would make other guys say, “Hey, that’s cool, I want to hear that one again, I want to learn that.”

WPO: But the journals do not report any songster?

JM: Never. And the Corps probably didn’t carry any songbooks of any sort. Songs, words that is, were also published in almanacs, which were serial publications. But the hypothesis I’ve always operated on is that the words of a song would not have gotten into print unless there was already a market for it. There were no agents, particularly in the first decade of the nineteenth century. We were just coming, theatrically, out of the effects of the Revolutionary War. The theaters had opened in the 1790s and that helped to introduce more popular music into the atmosphere of every day life.

When the Corps of Discovery was on its way home from the Pacific coast they stopped, as they had agreed to on the way out, at the Walla Walla village of Yelleppit. He was so pleased to meet these tourists that he made the grandest gesture a Native American could make. He said, as Ordway reports to us, that he wished to hear one of our medicine songs, to try to learn it, and wished us to learn one of theirs. According to Ordway the men sang two songs that appeared to take great effect. What might those two songs have been? Why did they sing two? Yelleppit only asked for one. That’s slightly bad manners to sing two. They must have had some disagreement over what was a really powerful medicine song. The journal keepers didn’t say what songs those were, but we can make a pretty good guess based on what we know was popular then.

One of the most popular tunes was one that everybody knows now, what became “The Star Spangled Banner.” When Francis Scott Key wrote the words in 1812 and then published them on a penny broadside a week later, he inserted under the title, “To ‘Anacreon in Heaven.” Thus everybody knew what tune he had in mind when he wrote the poem. “To Anacreon in Heaven” was a London Gentleman’s Club song written by a member of the Anacreontic Society in the mid 1790s. By 1820 there were at least 85 songs written to go with that tune. It’s not surprising then that not long after Francis Scott Key published the song and wrote the name of the tune it was to be sung to, he forgot all about it for a long while. Now obviously the Corps wouldn’t have known those words, but they might have known the original words to the tune that were written by the club member:

♫ To Anacreon in heaven, where he sat in full Glee,
A few sons of harmony sent a petition,
That be their Inspier and Patron would be;
When this answer arriv’d from the Jolly Old Grecian Voice, Fiddle and Flute,
No longer be mute,
I'll lend you my Name and inspire you to boot,
And, besides I'll instruct you, like me to intwine
The Myrtle of Venus with Bacchus's vine. 🎶

**WPO:** That's a great song, Joe, but it doesn't sound much like a medicine song. Besides, it was written by the odious Brits for a British dining club.

**JM:** Well, we think of a medicine song as something somber. It was popular music, so you sing it the way it needs to be sung. But here's the medicine in that song. They probably didn't use the British lyrics. The words that they would have probably sung were written in the 1790s. In other words, this was a current, popular song then. They would have sung:

🎶 Ye sons of Columbia, who bravely have fought,
For those rights, which unstained from your Sires had descended,
May you long taste the blessings your valor has brought,
And your sons reap the soil which your fathers defended.
‘Mid the reign of mild Peace,
May your nation increase,
With the glory of Rome, and the Wisdom of Greece. 🎶

See, there's the Enlightenment appeal to Roman military power and Greek philosophy. I wonder if this was one of the medicine songs they sang for Yelleppit and his people? And I wonder what York thought about this last line?

🎶 And ne’er shall the sons of Columbia be slaves,
While the earth bears a plant, or the sea rolls its waves. 🎶

White American revolutionaries and political thinkers had the strange habit of talking about themselves as “slaves” to British tyranny, without any apparent sense of irony or shame. This was a popular tune for a couple of reasons. Number one, it was high pitched. We all know that. You know how we sing “The Star Spangled Banner” now. Not easy. The folks of the early national period loved the high notes because their popular music values were the same as ours. High is loud, and loud is good, loud is best. To these guys George Washington was a living hero, having just died in 1799. They had grown up with him. Their fathers, their brothers, their uncles, their cousins had fought with or for Washington, and now they were all responsible for building the nation. I think that was another thing that helped to reassure these men. After they gained the feeling of being a band of brothers, they could remind themselves of what it was they were doing. They were doing something great for their nation.

**WPO:** So “medicine” in this case can mean patriotic reverence?

**JM:** Yes, it has power that stands for a sense of patriotism that I think you and I and the people around us now have no sense of. That’s because the blood of these men came out of the Revolution. That’s why they liked the tune, that’s why it worked for them, which is what a medicine song does. I spoke a while ago of the importance of the theater, how theaters opened after the Revolution. It was in the late 1790s again that a theater owner asks one of the cast members, one of his employees, to write some of the words to a tune that had been around a long time, that didn’t have any words. We still know today it as “The President's March.” 🎶 That’s how it was known then. But the man wrote these words on the very night it was performed for the first time, and it was encored three or four times and at the end the whole audience stood and shouted the last refrain:

🎶 Hail Columbia, happy land!
Hail, ye heroes, heav’n born band,
Who fought and bled in freedom’s cause,
Who fought and bled in freedom’s cause,
And when the storm of war was gone
Enjoy'd the peace your valor won.
Let independence be our boast,
Ever mindful what it cost;
Ever mindful of the prize,
Let its altar reach the skies. 🎶

That high pitch is what made a tune popular. Since singing was a guy thing and a show-off thing, a tune with that little flourish in it was a chance for a guy to show how good he was. Like a rock singer. You ever try to sing along with a rock singer? You can’t do it. They’re way up in the stratosphere. But that’s popular music. It ends with a very high note. So that was a popular tune.

**WPO:** One thing that seems certain from that Yelleppit incident, on the return journey, is that by now the 33 permanent members of the party had unified culturally. Although it is not clear that Sacagawea and Pomp joined in!
The members of the Corps might not have just one song, but they don’t say, “We couldn’t think of one,” or, “Potts wouldn’t do it because he’s German.” By now they had some agreement on a small cultural repertoire.

**JM:** Exactly.

**WPO:** How did that happen?

**JM:** How does music work? Music is medicinal. The arts are medicinal. What was our principal non-military arsenal during the Cold War? Our artists going to Russia and the Russian artists coming here. What is our principal arsenal now, our survival tool? What is our cultural gun? It’s rock music. Is there a kid in the world who doesn’t know what American popular music sounds like? And who doesn’t covet pirated copies? I think we overlook that fact. We can rail at our representatives, our politicians, our administration all we wish but it’s that popular music that’s doing the read diplomatic work, whether we like it or not. When some other culture, such as Al-Qaeda, doesn’t like it, they can’t suppress it. It has that unifying effect, that reassuring, reaffirming effect. It can be divisive also, but music has cut powers.

**WPO:** None of the songs you’ve nominated for this moment are hymns. But there were hymns and at least some of the Corps members must have known them. We know, for example, that Jefferson used to hum Psalms as he wandered around the fields and hills at Monticello.

**JM:** His favorite Psalm was called “Saint David’s”:

\[
\text{How glorious are the morning stars,} \\
\text{How doth their glory shine,} \\
\text{Angels most glorious creatures,} \\
\text{Are ye holy and divine.}
\]

Can’t you just see him striding back and forth in his study singing that?

**WPO:** Flash to Christmas at Fort Mandan. They told the Indians that it was a big medicine day. What songs might have occurred that Christmas Day in 1804?

**JM:** Good question. It’s quite likely that York would have sung something, considering how much the Native Americans admired him. Whether we would call it a Negro spiritual or not I don’t know, because what we now know as Negro spirituals got going during the Second Great Awaken when blacks were permitted, after the whites were through, to hold their own camp meetings. They stood in the back among the trees during the white meetings, and they heard what was going on among the white farmers. Afterwards they could conduct their own observance, and that’s where they would do their parodies of white man’s tunes. That’s a whole other story, but a fascinating one.

You know George Gibson is said to have played the fiddle once. I suspect that since he’s not mentioned more than once, he was not very good. Either he got booed off stage or somebody very kindly said, “That’s not going to work, George.” You know, don’t quit your day job. Or maybe Cruzatte wouldn’t let him touch his fiddle any more.

But for that particular observance, that Fort Mandan celebration, a tune called “Breaking Up Christmas” would certainly have been in the repertoire. “Breaking up Christmas” was a Southern tradition, a plantation tradition. Early in the Christmas observance people would travel from plantation to plantation, celebrating at each place. They couldn’t be at all places at once, and to get everybody together for a midnight service wasn’t practical. So they broke up Christmas into the number of plantations they could get around to in the twelve days. And there’s a tune. The refrain, sung high and loud and fast, goes:

\[
\text{Hoo-ray Jake and Hoo-ray John,} \\
\text{Breakin’ up Christmas all night long.}
\]

**WPO:** Would any of the Christmas songs in our present day repertoire have been in use then?

**JM:** They might have known the tune to “Greensleeves,” they might have sung that. I have an episode on Christmas songs on the website, Discovering Lewis and Clark.

The men of the Corps got four ounces of government issue whiskey a day. That’s enough to make it illegal to drive in most states. And toasting went along with drinking. They didn’t just throw it down. This was an opportunity to be a little poetic. Or maybe poke fun at somebody. So someone might have said— think about their social habits among the Indians— “May we kiss whom we please and please whom we kiss.” Or “may the evening’s diversion bear the morning’s reflection.” Or “may the miser grow poor and the benevolent rich.” Or “short shoes and long corns to the enemies of America.” And here’s Lewis’s toast on his return: “May works be a test of patriotism, as they ought of right to be that of religion.”
**WPO:** That’s very lofty.

**JM:** It is but he’s among his fraternity brothers, he’s among his Masonic brothers, and the point I’m getting to is that it was obligatory that whoever gave the toast had to start the song. It was always toast and song, toast and song, toast and song.

**WPO:** So they distribute their four ounces when the day’s work is over. They call for Cruzatte, avoid eye contact with Gibson, and then someone says to George Drouillard, “Thank goodness we have this hunter of such prowess.” Then “Drewer” starts to sing a hunting song.

**JM:** Or it might be a joke about the fact that Drouillard left his tomahawk at last night’s camp and he had to walk back for it today. They would poke a little fun at him.

**WPO:** What do we know about jokes in the age of Jefferson?

**JM:** Quite a bit. Again we go back to *Early American Imprints.* I’ve done a talk called “Men in High Spirits: Humor on the Lewis and Clark Trail.” Victor Borge said, “Laughter is the shortest distance between two people.” And poet and critic Mark Van Doren taught us that “wit is the only wall between us and the dark.” An old saying claims, “he who laughs last laughs loudest,” while a well-worn variation on that leaves it as, “he who laughs, lasts.” If anything ensured the safe return of the Corps of Discovery from the western sea beyond the extraordinary leadership, the strict military discipline, and the integrity, determination, and resilience of the enlisted men and civilians, it may well have been laughter, that universal incantation for joy. Transcending all barriers—age, race, sex, nationality, language, and adversity—we cannot imagine this robust company facing hardship any more than triumph in solemn silence.

**WPO:** What did they laugh at?

**JM:** Circumstances. Daily events filled with surprises, incongruities, and frustrations. And there’s that catchall criminal, human nature. Two hundred years ago, those guys, that stalwart, long-suffering band of brothers, they were heroes out on heroic business. Not a vaudeville show or a historical sitcom or *The Man Show.* There were near disasters and near drowning, falls and sicknesses. There was that awful day when Sergeant Floyd died of one awful bellyache, and the searing, shuddering fear that occurred when one’s own gut hurt so bad and not knowing. As James Thurber reassured us, “humor is emotional chaos remembered in tranquility.” They knew that. There was plenty to laugh about. No one had to order them to.

We can find the clues in books called “jesters,” a sort of a *Playboy* without illustrations. And almanacs, like *Reader’s Digest.* One of the more popular jesters of the day was entitled *Laugh, and be Fat.* It was just jokes. What does that tell us right there? Laugh, and be fat. There’s a cultural standard. The fat man is wealthy, he is important, he is in control. His fatness, his girth signifies his importance. In those jesters and almanacs were some sight jokes and lots of puns. Shakespeare was a recurrent figure. Yankees, Scotchmen, and Irishmen are butts of jokes. Profanity is usually bleeped with a “- - - -.” A small percentage are really funny. A joke is not to be read. They suffer on the printed page.

Lewis on July 7, 1805 wrote, “Their leather clothes soon become rotten as they are much exposed to water and frequently wet.” Sounds like a Jay Leno headline, right? And it was even worse at the mouth of the Columbia River. And again with Clark on the Yellowstone.

I think the cleverest is the one that might have been pulled on the man ordered to take the horses to the Mandan villages, Sergeant Pryor. The horses were stolen from him. Maybe somebody like Collins revised an old joke just to rib his sergeant. It went this way. “Sgt. Pryor was driving a team of horses and a wagon to Fort Mandan when thieves set upon him and knocked him out. He came to after a while and the thieves were gone, but so were the horses. He shook his head and he said, “Who am I? Where am I? If my name is Nathaniel Pryor, then I’ve lost six horses. But if it ain’t, I found a wagon.”

Shannon may have heard the one about the farmer who had two horses, couldn’t tell them apart, so he went to a neighbor for suggestions. The neighbor suggested putting a bell on the tail of one of them. That worked until the bell fell off and got lost in the marsh, so he went back to his neighbor. This time the neighbor suggested he trim the tail of one of them. The farmer did just that, and it worked for a season until the tail grew back. Finally, the neighbor suggested that he measure them to find out which horse was taller. The farmer did just that, and then ran back to his neighbor to tell him how effective this was. “The white one,” he exclaimed, “is two hands taller than the black one.”

Sorry. I can’t let these go by. The enlisted men watched the captains shooting the sun and the moon and the stars taking their celestial observations. Maybe they helped by holding a lantern or shielding the artificial horizon from the
wind. Had any of these guys ever seen a sextant or an octant before St. Louis? Willard might have said, “Hey, fellas, how many degrees are there in a circle?” “I don’t know,” says Collins, “that depends on how big the circle is.”

Maybe Pryor teased Charbonneau, who had two wives, that, “Bigamy is having one wife too many. Monogamy is the same.”

WPO: A Sacagawea joke. No doubt Otter Woman was delighted to hear it.

JM: Right.

WPO: When Clark says, “I’ve never been as wet and cold and miserable in every part as I am at this moment,” you think somebody’s a wag out there?

JM: Sure. Now I don’t think they would have made a joke in his presence, at his expense. Not at that moment, but perhaps in retrospect. The men were that self-controlled. And Irishmen, the Englishman’s fall guy, were the butt of many stories. There were plenty of Irishmen in the Corps of Discovery to provide grist for that mill. One of the jesters contains this two-liner: “Hey, I hear your sister had a baby. Did she have a son or a daughter? Are you an uncle or an aunt?”

WPO: You would actually have heard some of this stuff out there? You’re saying this is the kind of humor we’re talking about?

JM: Yes.

WPO: No wonder they drank. What about black jokes? There’s an African-American among them and no one’s protecting him?

JM: I don’t think there were those jokes because to the men of the Corps blacks were down below the American Indian on the Great Chain of Being. They found the Native Americans superior to blacks because the Indians had a culture, had traditions, had language. An Indian had a name, and the members of his family had names. They had traditions, history. The blacks didn’t even have names. Plantation owners had to give them a name. York, that’s enough. No tradition, no family. He had a wife but that didn’t mean anything, apparently. It was a bitter irony, of course, because it was the white man who took all that away. There was a very rich culture behind it, an African tradition, but it had all been taken away by white slavers, auctioneers, overseers, and masters. So no, I don’t think there was any blackface comedy.

WPO: And yet York had a rich comic sense.

JM: He did, and that might have been appreciated and laughed at by some of the men. But remember, Lewis was a little bit embarrassed, or was it Clark? He didn’t want York to be quite so straightforward, so terrifying. York told the Arikira children that he ate little kids, that he was a bear.

WPO: So you’re hearing everyday music and everyday humor. What about everyday prayer?

JM: I’m frequently asked, “Did they pray?” The answer is maybe individually they did. We know as a matter of fact that on one occasion there was sort of a prayer, that day at the headwaters of the Missouri just before they crossed Lemhi Pass. Was it McNeal who stood astride the stream, the little creek there, and thanked his God? His God, you understand. Not ours, not mine, but his God. Lewis is heart and soul a part of the Enlightenment. So he is a deist, he believes in God, Thomas Jefferson’s celestial physicist. And when Clark gets home and somebody says, “Thank God you were along and your trip was successful and only one man died and it wasn’t your fault,” Clark responds that “It wasn’t because of any heroism on my part or on Lewis’s part, it was divine providence.” Lewis and Clark had somewhat distinct religious sensibilities, I think.

WPO: So when Lewis says that about McNeal, who does he think McNeal’s God is?

JM: As I said earlier, it’s unlikely any of those men were unaffected by the Second Great Awakening. That was sort of the Crystal Palace of the time. It’s Whitehouse who gives us the clearest clues that there were some reverent Christian men among them. Maybe most were. Whitehouse says at Fort Clatsop on Christmas Day, “We had no ardent spirit of any kind among us; but are mostly in good health, A blessing, which we esteem more than all the luxuries this life can afford, and the party are all thankful to the Supreme Being, for his goodness towards us, hoping he will preserve us in the same, and enable us to return to the United States again in safety.”

WPO: Did they have a tambourine?

JM: I don’t think so. I thought they did at first because one is mentioned, but it’s only mentioned that one time, on
New Year’s Day. And the tambourine as we know it was so much a part of popular music back then, dance music, that surely if they had one it would have been mentioned more than once. I suspect that somewhere along the line one of the men traded with an Indian for a hand drum, a small, round, double-sided hand drum.

**WPO:** What about the tin horns? Were they used for anything other than signaling?

**JM:** Noise making. New Year’s. They took one of the horns along with them on the “Breaking Up Christmas” event, that Southern plantation tradition I mentioned earlier. They were demonstrating that tradition by, as they said in the journals, going from lodge to lodge around the Mandan village. They were breaking up Christmas.

**WPO:** That’s a brilliant insight. That is an incredible insight.

**JM:** Yes, that’s a sharing that nobody would notice for the most part. The Mandan people may have thought it was quaint, but for the guys with any connection to the South, such as those from Fort Southwest Point in Tennessee, they would have thought they were sharing the real, sacred tradition of breaking up Christmas.

**WPO:** That’s great. We think of Christmas as Christmas Day, Christmas Eve, maybe Boxing Day, but they’re doing the full Christmas Saturnalia.

**JM:** Yes, implicitly. They don’t really carry it out. They just go for New Year’s Day, and they’re breaking up the celebration by going to different lodges. They’ve been invited to do that. We assume from the way it’s put that they didn’t gather all the villagers in the square and show off for them. They actually went into their lodges as they made their way around.

**WPO:** But they’re not exactly making sweet music on the horn, it’s just a noisemaker?

**JM:** Just a noisemaker, not a musical instrument at all.

**WPO:** On a daily basis, are they using it for reveille or equivalent?

**JM:** No, they’re using it to signal hunters who are overdue. They’re using it to keep track of boats. You know on the wide Missouri there are times when they couldn’t distinguish the red pirogue from the foliage on the bank. “Is that the boat over there? Give them a blow on the horn.”

**WPO:** Was there a signing system, or just a straight blow?

**JM:** Typically, boatman’s horns were individualized, because that’s how you told one boat from another. Canal boats, each had its own call. It’s possible by overblowing to get four or five notes out of it, but it’s pretty hard to make a melody out of it because you’re just overblowing. It’s a brass reed that’s vibrating in there.

**WPO:** So we shouldn’t think of it as a trumpet?

**JM:** No. Just a noise.

**WPO:** Is there a horn blower? Can anyone blow this thing?

**JM:** Anyone can blow it. I’ve got one here. I found two of them. They were boatman’s horns.

**WPO:** Let’s hear it. ❚

**Editor’s Note:** And so the interview ended not with a whimper, but a bang.

**Notes**

1. Early American Imprints, Series I: Evans, 1639-1800 is regarded as one of the principal collections for the study of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century America. Early American Imprints, Series II: Shaw-Shoemaker, 1801-1819 provides an equally comprehensive set of American books, pamphlets, and broadsides published in the early nineteenth century. Joe was referring to the earlier print edition. The more recent digital edition of Early American Imprints contains materials not available in the print editions.

2. The actual title is, *Winter evenings amusement, or, Jovial companion Containing a choice collection of songs, much admired. And sung at most genteel places of amusement* (Boston, 1795).

3. See Gary E. Moulton, ed., *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, 13 vols. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983-2001), April 28, 1806, 7:178-80 and 9:299-300. Ordway: “the head chief told our officers that they Should be lonesome when we left them and they wished to hear once of our medicine Songs and try to learn it and wished us to learn one of theirs and it would make them glad. So our men Sang 2 Songs which appeared to take great affect on them.”

4. “The President’s March” was composed by Philip Phile for the first inauguration of George Washington on April 30, 1789.

5. A now-forgotten television program celebrating the less savory aspects of American manhood.


Dear Editor,

I’d like to respond to Nancy Kemler’s letter in the November 2017 issue of WPO, which faults historian Elliott West for, among other offenses, his supposed lack of knowledge about who Sacajawea was and what eventually happened to her. Kemler thinks West is in error when he suggests that the question of whether Sacajawea was Shoshone or Hidatsa is unsettled, since the evidence of the journals is so clear that she was born Shoshone. But Kemler misses the point here, I think. Elliott and the WPO editor are discussing the issue of cultural identity, raising in effect the question of whether Sacajawea had lived so long among the Hidatsa that she had become more Hidatsa than Shoshone by the time Lewis and Clark got to her. I also think West is right to suggest further that there is a great deal we don’t know and will probably never know about her (even if we do know, with near certainty, where and when she died).

I do agree with Kemler that, whenever possible, we need to ground our arguments about the expedition in the language of the journals themselves. But it is not always possible to do this (there are many lacunae), and the journals themselves are not entirely consistent in their representation of the “facts.”

What I particularly enjoyed about the two-part interview with West (who is introduced to us, by the way, as a historian of the American West who does not specialize in Lewis and Clark) was the light it sheds on the broader historical context of the expedition, something we specialists sometimes lose sight of in our preoccupation with historical minutiae. West is particularly good on the mythic dimension of the story and the need to maintain an awareness that the facts of expedition don’t always correspond neatly to their mythic counterparts. I also appreciated the comparisons drawn between Lewis and Clark and the other nineteenth-century explorations of the American West that have not achieved anything like their level of popularity. It also probably takes a historian of the American West who does not specialize in Lewis and Clark to alert us to the fact that the “great thrust of expansion” during the early nineteenth century was to the west and south, not west and north.

We need, in other words, big picture historical contextualists from time to time to help us understand the larger dimensions of a story whose granular elements sometimes preoccupy us to our detriment. I learned from the West interviews, and I’m happy that such interviews will now be a regular feature of WPO.

— Arend Flick

Pasadena California

Dear Editor,

Is it possible that the firearm known as Harpers Ferry 1800 short Rifle #15 (serial number 15), discovered in an Antiques Bazaar in 1960, was the one the expedition’s leaders gave to the Nez Perce leader Speaking Eagle at Travelers Rest on July 1, 1806? The short rifle (the original barrel less than 42 inches in length), built in 1803 at Harpers Ferry armory, and purchased for the expedition by Meriwether Lewis, had been further shortened after it “burst near the muscle,” as Clark reported on July 2, 1806. Expedition blacksmith John Shields shortened the rifle to remove a split barrel muzzle. Clark reported (July 2) that “one which is very Short we exchanged with the Indian whoe we had given a longer gun to induc them to pilot us across the Mountains.” Apparently, the Nez Perce guide Speaking Eagle (never mentioned by name) preferred a short rifle, or perhaps the captains preferred to discard a damaged rifle than to part with one still fully functional. At any rate, an examination of Rifle #15 shows rough frontier use with missing parts and displays Indian sun pattern carvings on the stock, all typical of Native American use. Over the many years, Rifle #15 undoubtedly was traded and sold many times. That could have brought it back to St Louis where it was amazingly discovered in 1960. Although it is not absolutely certain that Rifle #15 is the one Shields reworked, there is no good reason to doubt its provenance.

— Keith Jones

Mount Pleasant, Wisconsin
Reviews

I am Sacagawea

By Brad Meltzer, Illustrated by Christopher Eliopoulos
Reviewed by Catherine Jenkinson

Brad Meltzer’s new children’s picture book, I am Sacagawea, is part of his series Ordinary People Change the World, which has included short biographies of Gandhi, Harriet Tubman, Neil Armstrong, and others. It, like the others in the series, is meant to inspire young readers as much as to inform them.

It may seem odd to review a children’s book in the pages of We Proceeded On, but this short book is an iteration of the so-called “Sacagawea mythology,” and thus warrants consideration here. Naturally, it would be unfair to hold Meltzer’s book to the academic standards of historical scholarship, and this book cannot and should not be considered in the same way that groundbreaking academic work might be evaluated. The book is ostensibly a concise biography for children under ten, and—despite some factual errors—the book is a successful introduction to Sacagawea.

The colorful cartoonish drawings by Christopher Eliopoulos are aesthetically pleasing and offer speech balloons through which Sacagawea—and occasionally Lewis and Clark—speak to the reader, usefully explaining the Louisiana Purchase, the chain of language interpretation, and several of the most famous episodes of the expedition involving Sacagawea, including the incident of the white pirogue (April 1805) and Sacagawea’s importance in securing horses from the Shoshone (August 1805).

While Meltzer attempts to introduce children to Sacagawea, the historical figure, he actually introduces them to Sacagawea, the cultural phenomenon, a decidedly distinct character not necessarily grounded in evidence. While inspiring, Meltzer—like so many others—inflates Sacagawea’s role in the expedition’s success, going so far as to posit that without her, the journey “might not have ever been completed.” Sacagawea was very important at certain points of the journey, not the least of which as a translator (on only a few occasions, though, not consistently, as the book suggests) and in helping to acquire horses from the Shoshone. Beyond these and other isolated incidents, however, there is little to suggest that the expedition would have failed without her. Thus, despite the constant attempts by children’s writers like Meltzer and some historians to apotheosize Sacagawea, her importance to the Corps of Discovery remains far from clear.

Sacagawea is an enigmatic, overly-romanticized figure about whom very little is known beyond the products of oral tradition and what appears in the journals. To attach heavy importance to her role in the expedition is speculative, at best. But that is not a failure of Meltzer alone. Still, this book contributes to the cultural mythology that insists that Sacagawea was integral to the expedition’s mission as an interpreter, guide, and even as a source for finding food. To some degree, of course, this is correct. Clark himself wrote in August 1806 to Charbonneau that “your woman who accompanied you…diserved [sic] a greater reward for her attention and services on that rout [sic].” Similarly, it should hardly be discounted that Sacagawea was the only woman and only Native American among dozens of white men, and she did, in fact, carry her young son from the Dakota territory to the Pacific Ocean and back.

The book is, on the whole, a great introduction for children to both Sacagawea and the Lewis and Clark Expedition. It is informative, aesthetically pleasing, and provides an interesting pictorial interpretation of Sacagawea’s experience. It isn’t accurate in some of its claims, but then again, why should it be? It fulfills its purpose to inspire children, and even if it exaggerates Sacagawea’s role in the expedition, it proclaims the resounding importance of Sacagawea and the expedition, more broadly, in our national historical memory.

Catherine Jenkinson is a recent M.Litt. graduate in history from the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. She wrote her master’s dissertation on Sir Walter Raleigh’s History of the World, written in the Tower of London between 1603-13.