The Lewis and Clark Expedition

By
Grace Flandrau

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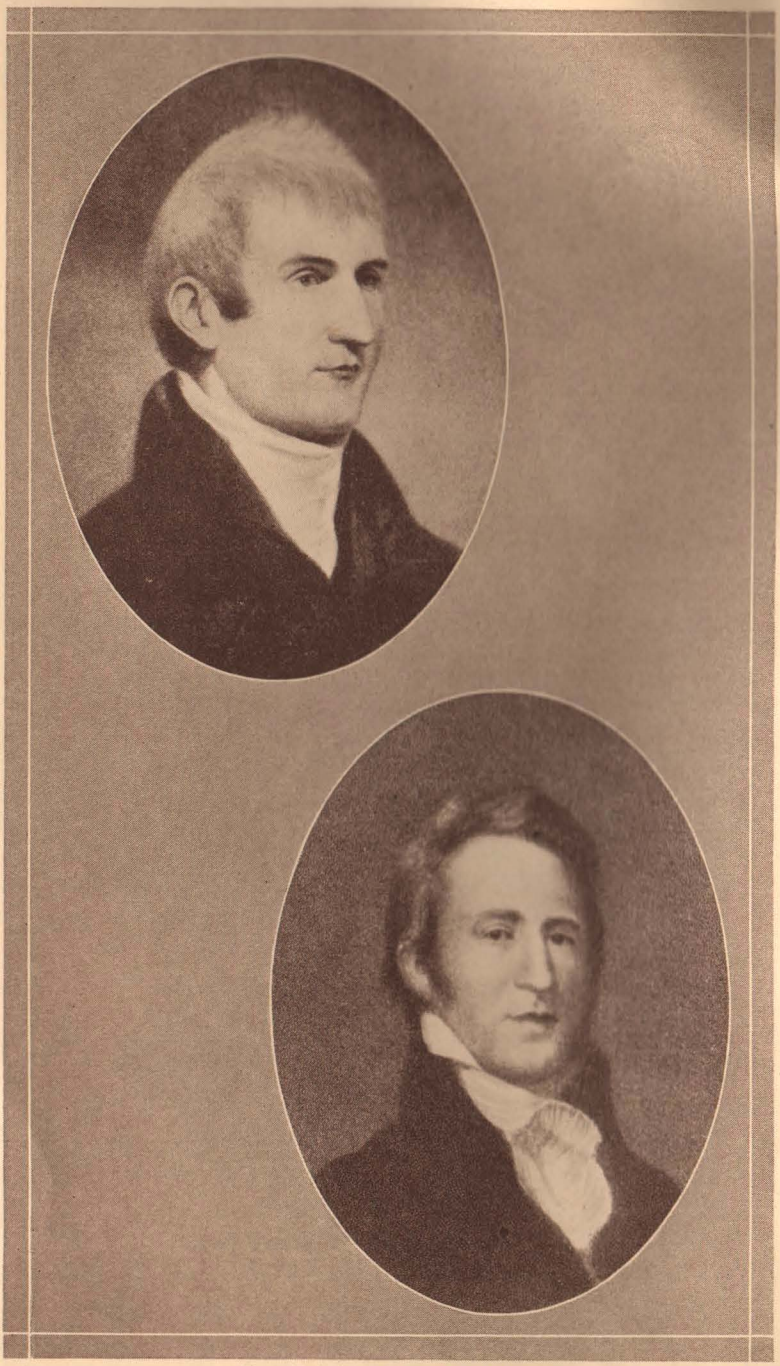
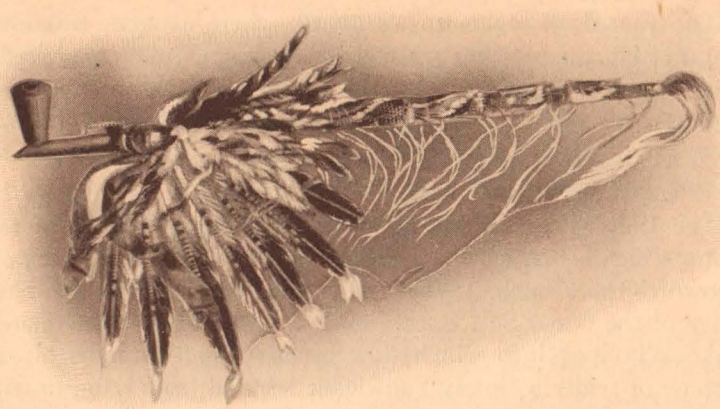
Compliments of the
Great Northern Railway



From Paintings by Peale in Independence Hall, Philadelphia

Captains Meriwether Lewis and William Clark



The Lewis and Clark Expedition

Foreword

Almost exactly two hundred years ago a scholarly traveller, the Jesuit priest Charlevoix, appeared at the French mission and trading-post on the upper end of Green Bay, Wisconsin. Charlevoix's expedition was under royal auspices and was a secret one. It was concerned with the everlasting question which had obsessed European kings, business men, politicians and explorers for some hundreds of years of finding that reported shorter northern route by water or by land to the markets of the Orient. As France was at the time swept by a strange hysteria for investing money in get-rich-quick schemes on the remote Mississippi, the Prince Regent feared that if the true purpose of his emissary's journey were known it would give rise to still more riotous speculation, and he was also disinclined to invite the attention of rival nations to his activities. In consequence of these things the ostensible purpose of Charlevoix's journey was to inspect the North American missions.

A line drawn north and south, a little east of Lake Winnipeg, would have marked practically the boundary of what was then the known Northwest. A few woods' runners and fur pirates may have gone beyond, but no authentic exploration had extended farther than Rainy Lake or the headwaters of the Minnesota (St. Peter's) River.

The vast dark region to westward, where at some unknown distance lay the sea that washed the shores of India, exercised a powerful attraction upon the imagination of the adventurous explorers of New France and of the statesmen at Versailles who after the death of Louis XIV were at their wit's end to pay for having had such a prominent and expensive King.

The Indians were prolific of rumors of a great body of salt water which lay at variously reported distances from the regions known to the French. Whether this was a third or fourth-hand story of the Great Salt Lake—some writers think it was merely Lake Winnipeg into which flow certain small streams of salt water—or really a cloudy knowledge handed from tribe to tribe of the distant ocean is not certain. The French, however, believed it to be the Western Sea.

Fortunately for the mission upon which he was engaged, Charlevoix found at the Green Bay post a delegation of Sioux. They told him that their allied tribes reached almost to the salt lake or sea and invited him to travel among them, assuring him that the way toward it lay westward from the Upper Mississippi.

As a consequence of this and doubtless influenced as well by the recommendations of a local Jesuit, Father Bobé, who had also pointed out this route, Charlevoix advised the establishment of a base for exploration on the Mississippi where it broadens to Lake Pepin, a few miles below the present city of St. Paul—thus putting his finger almost precisely on the spot whence, two centuries later, three great transcontinental railroads of the Northwest were to stretch fanlike to the Pacific. He also suggested pursuing the overland journey by ascending the Missouri—the way taken by Lewis and Clark on the first transcontinental expedition in the territory of the United States, eighty years afterwards.

The Lake Pepin post recommended by Charlevoix was duly built (1727), but no exploration was undertaken from there.

The earliest westward advance in what is now American territory was made sixteen years later by four young Frenchmen, two of them sons of the great explorer La Verendrye. They set out, not from the Upper Mississippi, but from the Mandan villages on the Upper Missouri, to which place they had travelled from the north.

This expedition advanced the frontier of New France across what are now the Dakotahs, possibly into Montana or Wyoming, perhaps even to the eastern foothills of the Rockies which they called the Shining Mountains. Whatever the exact location of the point reached by them, it rather surprisingly remained, until the advent of Lewis and Clark, the limit of discovery in the Northwest portion of the present United States. But curiously enough, we find the main features of Lewis and Clark's journey fairly accurately outlined long before any white man had found his way over it.

In 1772 a Colonial officer, Major William Rogers, a daring and astute Indian fighter, border hero, rascally and able adventurer, who was in London at the time, addressed a rather remarkable petition to the British Crown. It was the renewal of a request made by him seven years before. He had at that time asked that he be authorized and supplied with sufficient funds to equip an overland expedition to proceed from the region indicated by Charlevoix on the Upper Mississippi to the "River called by the Indians Ouragon".[1]

His purpose when he should arrive on the Pacific was to explore the coast for the celebrated Northwest passage, having, he remarks in the first petition, a "Moral Certainty that such a passage there really is."

Although his request was denied, Rogers, in recognition of his brilliant service in the French and Indian War, was made commandant of the important post at Mackinac. There he traded in furs—a practice forbidden to army officers—and became involved in other unethical and even it is said traitorous activities and was consequently removed from the post by his superior officers in Canada; whereupon he returned to England hoping once more to realize on the military reputation he enjoyed there.

His ambition still was to head an overland expedition to the Pacific. In 1772 he presented the second petition to the King in which he specifically outlined the way he would take. It followed the well-known traders' route along the Fox, Wisconsin and the Upper Mississippi Rivers to St. Anthony Falls where the party would winter, "gathering wild rice and drying Buffaloes and Venison for the outward journey."

1 This is the first mention of the word Oregon known in history and appears in Rogers' petition of August, 1765. Public Record office. Colonials office.

In the spring they would ascend the St. Peter's River, portage to a branch of the Missouri, make a second portage from the headwaters of this river to the Ourigan—spelled differently this time—and descend by that stream to the Pacific.

Here, as T. C. Elliott points out in his admirable monograph on the subject, "is an outline of the outward journey of Lewis and Clark in 1805 . . . [disclosing] knowledge of a transcontinental route which antedates that contained in any book or document or shown on any map prior to that date, or for many years afterward."

The petition was again ignored and the ambitious Colonial officer never made the journey he had so expertly planned. But before leaving Major Rogers we must say a word about the celebrated Jonathan Carver who, as a historian, is the best fiction writer I know.

Fame, which so often is either conscienceless or misinformed, has chosen to ignore Rogers and, taking Carver at his word, to confer upon him a considerable place in Northwestern history. Carver—also a Colonial officer and veteran of border warfare—credited himself with the bold project conceived by Rogers.

The facts seem to be that in 1766 Rogers, then commandant at Mackinac, sent Jonathan Carver with a small party of fur traders to make some surveys on the Upper Mississippi and that Carver spent the winter near the Falls of St. Anthony or on St. Peter's River; in the spring he received orders from Rogers to proceed westward on the overland quest with a second expedition sent out by the commandant. The party, however, were afraid of the Sioux, of famine and of various other things and instead of proceeding westward went back to Mackinac where they disbanded. Carver never returned to the West. He went to London where he began writing petitions of his own, suggesting and outlining further expeditions and using information supplied him by Rogers.

He also produced a highly readable and mendacious opus known as Carver's Travels which at once became a best seller in England and on the Continent and the interest of which is greatly augmented by copious extracts made from other people's travels which Carver uniformly fails to put in quotation marks.

He did not, as he alleges, ascend the St. Peter's River two hundred miles above its mouth; nor did he master the Sioux

language, for he never even found out they call themselves not "Nadouwessioux"[2] or Sioux, but Dakotahs; and the Sioux vocabulary he published (the first one to appear in print) was not his own, but taken from other sources; nor is it likely that he obtained from this people the trifling grant of a hundred thousand square miles along the Mississippi which he pretended to have secured and in virtue of which Congress has been pestered with endless claims.

He did get a cave named for him in St. Paul, and as has been said, wrote a most entertaining book which aroused such interest in England that an expedition such as he—imitating Rogers—proposed, was thought of and which, had it not been for the events then taking place in America might have been carried out. But the unruly British colonies had now embarked on that undertaking which was to place a new power—the infant United States—among the nations of the world.

It would seem that the statesmen of the young republic had quite enough to do administering the thinly populated, loose agglomeration of none too harmonious commonwealths along the Atlantic seaboard to give any thought to the rest of the dark continent. But this was not the case.

Even before the Revolution, Washington foresaw the need of and planned avenues of communication between the Hudson and the Great Lakes, the Chesapeake and the Ohio, while shortly after the war was over we find Jefferson casting a benevolently democratic, and disguisedly imperialistic eye on that distant region beyond Spanish Louisiana and the Shining Mountains—the Northwest coast—far more remote from the New York and Baltimore of that time than the Vale of Kashmir is today.

In 1783 he wrote anxiously to General George Rogers Clark that England was planning an expedition overland from the Mississippi to the Pacific. "They pretend it is to promote knowledge, I am afraid they have thought of colonizing in that quarter," and he wished Clark might lead an American expedition which would get there first.

2 The spelling of the word varies considerably. It is a French corruption of the Chippewa word Nadowe-es-ew meaning adder and by metaphor enemy.

Then Jefferson went as Minister to France and in Paris there came to him a shabby, penniless young man, panoplied with an overweaning purpose—attributes peculiarly qualified to win Jefferson's regard. This was John Ledyard.

The year in which the colonies issued their Declaration of Independence so ably drawn up for them by Jefferson, Captain James Cook made his voyage of discovery to the Northwest coast of America. With him were two Americans, Captain John Gore and John Ledyard, the first of their nation to set foot on those shores.

Ledyard returned from this journey with the obsessing ambition to carry the American flag to the Northwest coast.

"I die," he wrote from Paris "to be on the back of the American states after having either come from or penetrated to the Pacific. The American Revolution invites a thorough discovery of that continent . . . . It was necessary that a European discover the existance of that continent, but in the name of Amor Patriae, let a native explore its resources and boundaries . . . . It is my wish to be that man."

His plans included the establishment of regular commercial intercourse between the United States, the Northwest coast and China, and the exploration of the great unknown hinterland lying between the "back" of the United States and the Pacific.

His unavailing attempts to carry out these purposes—one plan involved walking, quite alone, equipped only with a hatchet, a pipe and two large dogs, from Puget Sound to Boston—form one of the amazing episodes in our history.

His strange flaming enthusiasm quickened and deepened Jefferson's interest in bringing about the exploration of the trans-Mississippi region by American agents; and eventually John Ledyard shared at least vicariously in the accomplishment of what he had dreamed and hoped and failed to do himself.

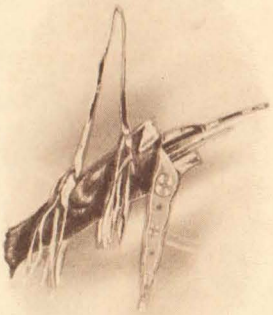
Meanwhile events marched on toward that "thorough discovery", believed by Ledyard to be so desirable and so necessary. Jefferson returned to America, and the year (1792) in which an American, Captain Robert Gray, discovered the mouth of the Columbia—Captain Rogers' "River Ouragon"—Jefferson was inducing the American Philosophical Society to send a French botanist André Michaux across the continent. Michaux was to

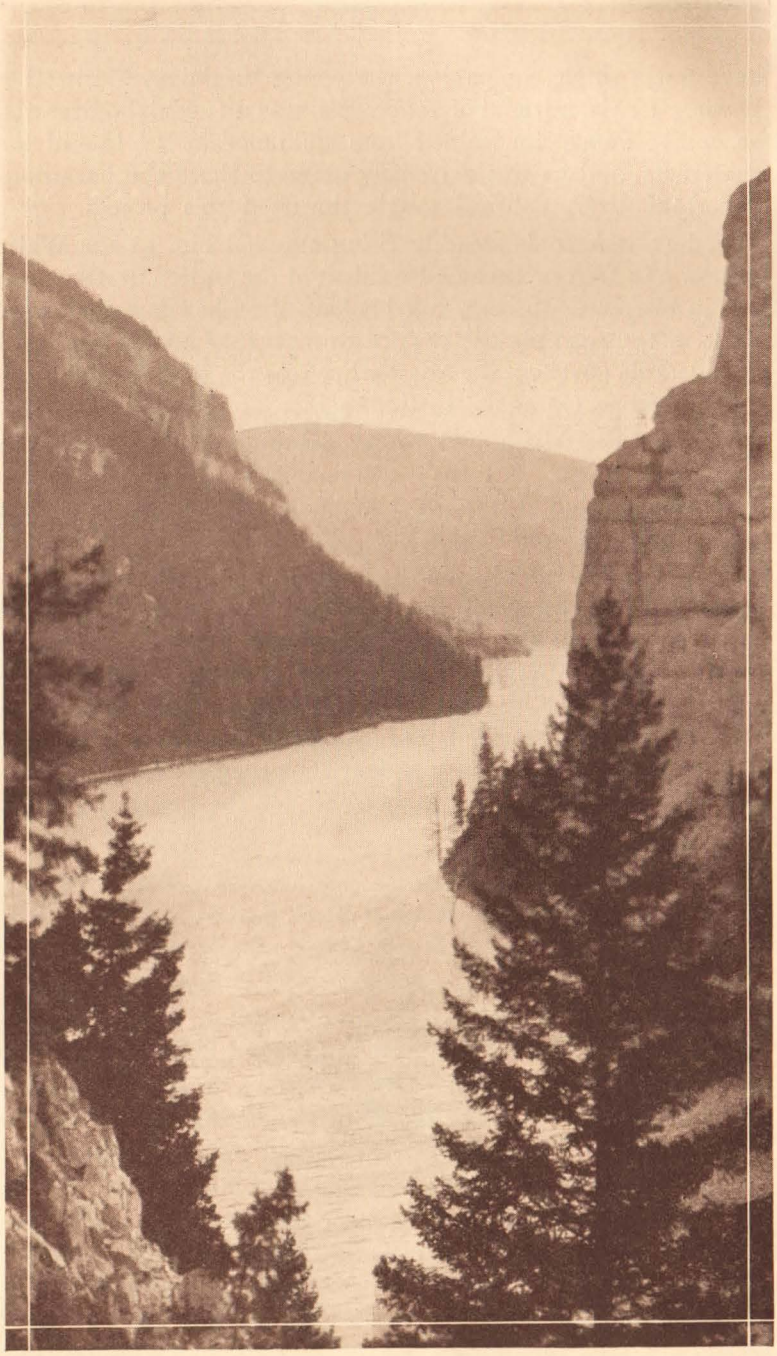
have but a single companion, the young Virginian, Meriwether Lewis. Lewis, a friend of Jefferson's, was a Colonial officer and an expert woodsman trained from childhood in the lore of the wilderness, and he was extremely eager to share the hazardous undertaking. A political tangle thwarted this project.

At last Jefferson's steadily rising star led him to the White House. In 1801 he became President of the United States and it was in his power to carry out his long-cherished purpose in the West. He began almost at once to mature plans for sending a considerable party up the Missouri, across the Rockies and down by the "River Ouragon" to the Pacific.

West of the Mississippi the expedition must pass through Spanish territory. But was it still Spanish? There were rumors that First Consul Bonaparte had intrigued the former French possession back from Spain.

Events moved rapidly and the curtain went up on the fascinating and ironic drama of the Louisiana Purchase. And while negotiations were going forward in Paris between Jefferson's emissaries and Bonaparte's slippery Minister Talleyrand—negotiations which resulted in tumbling the whole of Louisiana and the Floridas into the lap of astonished American statesmen, the President, with the most ardent attention to every small detail, was completing the arrangements for the Lewis and Clark expedition.





The Gate of the Mountains

By Grace Flandrau

From Painting by E. S. Paxson

SACAJAWEA GUIDING LEWIS AND CLARK

Winning of the Overland Way

For a brief twenty-four hours in the month of May, 1804, the French flag which had been first on the St. Lawrence, first on the Great Lakes, first on the Upper Missouri and on the Mississippi above the point reached by De Soto in 1542, first on Lake Winnipeg, the Red River of the North, the Saskatchewan and the great plains of the Northwest, and which had been furled for half a century in North America, once more floated over the frontier village of St. Louis.

It had risen above the descending flag of Spain to the booming of cannon and shouts and tears of the French habitants. For one night it remained aloft and the loyal Frenchmen formed a guard of honor to watch beneath it.

The next morning when the stars and stripes rose in its place the borders of the young United States swept westward to the crests of the unknown Rockies. And one of the Americans who saw it ascend, symbol of our dominion over Louisiana, was Meriwether Lewis, who with his companion Clark was to translate that name from legend into the sober language of fact. Rumored rivers were to take their permanent place on exceedingly well-drawn maps; mountains to be charted and beyond them, the fantastic kingdom of Anian—the Oregon country—to become part of the known world.

Plans for the expedition were complete and at that very time the party waited a short distance above St. Louis to set out on the

great journey. American soldiers, young Kentucky backwoodsmen, French voyageurs, a hunter and interpreter and Clark's black servant, York, made up the party Lewis and Clark were to command, the first official exploring expedition sent out by the American government.

The duties and obligations imposed upon these brave adventurers were so varied and so numerous as to seem almost absurd, had they not actually and to the smallest detail been carried out.

The leaders were to make topographical surveys, take astronomical and meteorological observations, draw maps; examine and report on the plants, animals and minerals of the regions traversed; make an especial study of the waterways as avenues of future transportation and commerce and of the contour of the land with a view to trading-posts and fortifications. Particularly, they were to confer with the various tribes of Indians, assure them of the benevolent interest felt for them by their great father in Washington and prepare the way for further negotiations; try to persuade them to more peaceful relations among themselves; ascertain their numbers, tribal affiliations, morals, languages, diseases, agricultural and other pursuits and condition in general.

A year before the expedition was organized, Lewis had been placed by the philosophic president "under the tutorage of distinguished professors in Philadelphia to learn the technical language of the natural sciences and the use of astronomical instruments;" the weapons of the party had been made under his supervision.

At last on a May day in the year of 1804 the party, with trade goods and provisions, arms, note-books, instructions, high spirits and limitless courage, set forth in a keel boat and "two periogues" on their long journey up the rapid, shallow, shifting, snag-filled Missouri which was to remain for three-quarters of a century the uncertain and troublesome boulevard of the Northwest.[3]

The river was known as far north as the Mandan villages. Spanish and French traders had ascended it from St. Louis; French and British had reached it from the Assiniboine and the

3 An old letter, written by Lewis to his mother just before his leaving for the West, giving an insight into his optimistic outlook upon the ultimate success of the expedition, is reproduced facsimile in the appendix.

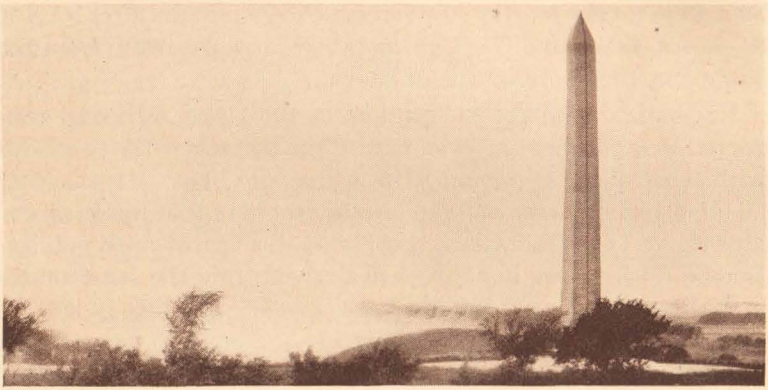
Red River of the North. But when, eleven months after leaving St. Louis, Lewis and Clark turned their faces westward from the Mandans, they entered the unknown.

Rogers had said the headwaters of the Upper Missouri connected by a portage (he even named the distance—thirty miles!) with those of the Ouragon. But where and how? It was after all mere Indian gossip and the meagre record of that region on the latest map Lewis and Clark possessed—the Arrowsmith publication of 1795 revised in 1802—was derived from the same source and offered no greater practical assistance. When they left the Mandans they were, as Lewis writes, "About to penetrate a country at least 2,000 miles in width on which the foot of civilized man has never trodden."

The party had been five months in reaching these villages. There were many delays; masts broke, oars broke, tow ropes broke; observations must be taken, game pursued, Indian conferences held. They dressed the chiefs in scarlet coats and three-cornered hats with red feathers—a special gift from Jefferson. They told them that the United States, not Spain, now ruled along the Missouri and gave much good advice as laid down by the President. Peace, peace, peace—the misguided savages must stop their constant fighting with each other and if necessary take their disputes to Washington to be decided by the Great Father. Good advice, certainly, but just why the Indians should have been expected to act upon these or any of the gratuitous admonitions constantly thrust upon them in the early days, much less be grateful for them, or believe the promises made them which so frequently remained unfulfilled I have never been able to see. Usually of course they didn't.

Clark's black man York had entered upon the path of glory he was to blaze across the continent. Warriors never tired gazing upon his fabulous black skin, strange features and rare kinky hair; children followed in bemused adoration, to run screaming with ecstatic fright when he turned. Monster, God, Medicine of some potent and sinister kind—who could tell?

They passed unharmed through the country of the Sioux. These formidable savages, in proud eagle feathers and painted robes and the glamor of their exceedingly bad reputation, met and smoked with the white travellers; danced in the red light of torch and camp-fire their wild ceremonial dances, displayed their



Floyd Monument at Sioux City, Iowa

excellent horsemanship on mounts stolen from every tribe from Prairie du Chien to the Upper Missouri, from the Saskatchewan to Council Bluffs; haughtily begged, savagely threatened and at all times flaunted their sense of perfect superiority to all mankind whether white or red. Like the rest of the Missouri Indians they listened to the advice of the President against war and promptly demanded arms and ammunition.

One August night some three months after the journey was begun a brave young sergeant, Charles Floyd, fell ill of a complaint which Clark, indefatigable doctor of the expedition diagnosed as a "Biliose Chorlick." He anxiously administered what remedies he could, but the following day, as the little fleet sailed up stream before a favoring breeze Floyd's condition aggravated and to the great sorrow of his comrades, he died. He was buried near the mouth of a small river named in his honor, in what is now the southern part of Sioux City, Iowa. A monument at that place commemorates the only one of the Lewis and Clark party who died on all the long and dangerous expedition.

The threat of approaching winter swept the plains when the party reached the Mandan villages and it was decided to camp at that place until spring.[4]

Two free traders were found among the Mandans; a Frenchman, René Jusseaume, whom Lewis and Clark engaged as interpreter and a Scotchman, Hugh McCracken, both of whom

4 There is reproduced in the appendix a letter written at Fort Mandan by Capt. Lewis to his mother in which he describes the journey from St. Louis to that point. It has, I believe, never before been printed.

From Maximilian's Travels
Mandans on Frozen Missouri

seven years before had visited these villages with the great English geographer David Thompson.

In December a party of North Westers came down over the frozen plains from the Assiniboine by the traders' route along Mouse River. This was a significant meeting. Already American trade had clashed with British at Detroit; already Pike's expedition up the Mississippi was being planned to warn British traders in northern Minnesota that they must not fly the British flag, sell liquor or attempt to win away the allegiance of the Indians.

The North Westers were astonished and not too well pleased to find an official American party invading the remote region of the Upper Missouri which the two great British companies had come to look upon as their own.

The attitude of these experienced merchants, toughened to the harsh realities of commerce beyond the frontier, toward the two Jeffersonian envoys is amusing. They were puzzled, sarcastic and impressed, and far more concerned with meeting the Americans than the latter were with meeting them.

Lewis assured them that his liberal government had no intention of excluding British fur traders from the new dominion provided that they (like the Indians) were good children and obeyed the American laws.

"They heard" the North Wester, Larocque, writes, "I intended giving flags and medals to the Indians . . . which they forbade me in the name of the United States, saying that the government

looked upon those things as the sacred emblems of the attachment of the Indians to their country. As I had neither flags nor medals, I ran no risk of disobeying." Rum had been long since found by those seasoned traders to be more efficacious! As to the Jeffersonian equivocation in the papers carried by Lewis and Clark that the expedition was purely literary and scientific and in no way concerning trade—this they simply disbelieved.

Lewis sent a polite letter by McCracken, to Chabouillez, head of the Red River department of the North West Company, and Larocque and his companion made a flying trip northward carrying additional information of this American invasion of regions where the North West Company had expected no competition but that of their time-honored foemen the Hudson's Bay traders.

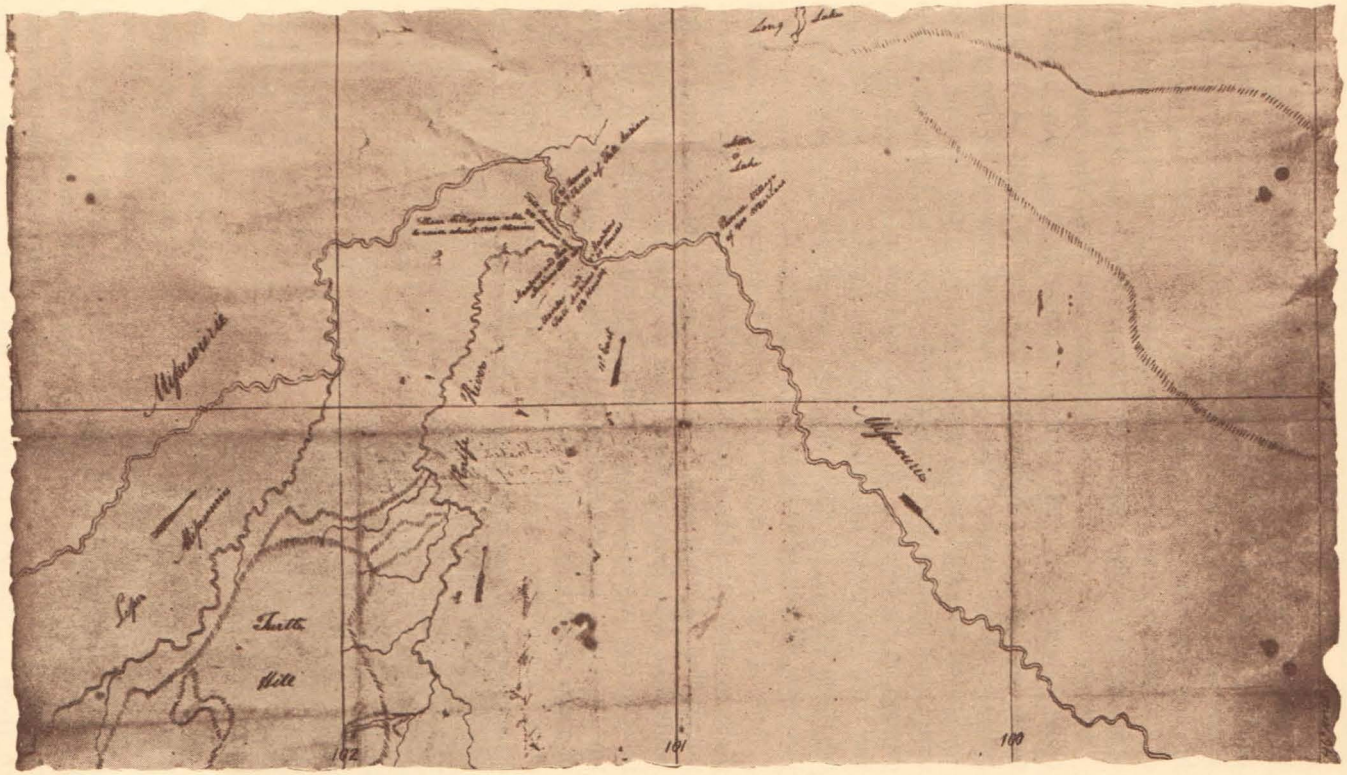
From Chabouillez' post on the Assiniboine runners took the news to company headquarters on Thunder Bay. There an important session was in progress. The desperate rivalry between the North Westers and the X. Y. Company had just come to an end. The two organizations had become one and thus reinforced, the North West people felt strong enough to invade the regions west of the Rockies, and the information which now reached them of an American expedition on the way to the Pacific undoubtedly hastened their preparations.

That fall a North West partner, Simon Fraser, crossed the Divide and built the first trading-post west of the Rocky Mountains, and in 1808 he succeeded in reaching tide-water of the river now called the Fraser in his honor—almost three years after the Americans had wintered at the mouth of the Columbia.

Lewis and Clark, quite unaware of the electric thrill their coming sent along the forest highways beyond the border, spent a peaceful and industrious winter, making elaborate reports of the journey to this point, studying the Indians and the surrounding country, joining in mad gallops over the snow-covered plains after buffalo on ponies as expert in the chase as men.

Another British trader, Heney by name,[5] arrived from Pembina and spent many friendly evenings before the roaring fire in Fort Mandan while the Captains plied him with endless ques-

5 So many misstatements as to this trader's identity have appeared in print that it seems worth while to establish it definitely. He was not as has been said the well-known diarist Alexander Henry; not a North Wester at all. His name which variously appears as Haney, Henny and Henry was Hugh Heney. He was a Hudson's Bay Company official stationed at Pembina.



The David Thompson Map

tions and acquired much first-hand information of the great fur traders' empire of the North West. It was probably either from Heney or Larocque that Lewis obtained a small map of the locality drawn by Thompson which I recently found in the library of Congress bearing Lewis' name and evidently used by him. It is reproduced on the preceding page, I think for the first time.

Indians from neighboring villages and from the Assiniboines came to visit this new variety of Long Knives; they brought presents of corn, squashes, beans or buffalo meat—a hundred pounds packed on one "squar"; examined respectfully the strong stockaded fort and never tired of watching the dancing of the white men with particular admiration for "the Frenchman who danced on his head." The bitter cold set in; two suns shone in the frost-thickened air; the night was gaudy with the blaze of northern lights; fur caps, mittens and double moccasins could not keep off the frost-bite.

Among the Minnetaree (Hidatsa) Indians who lived a short distance above the Mandans on the Missouri, there was a Frenchman called Charbonneau. He was one of those vagabonds of the wilderness who from earliest days trickled beyond the frontier, took native wives and shared in every way the life and ways of the Indians. His knowledge of the Hidatsa language made him of some immediate use to the Americans—apropos of which one of the disobliging North Westers rather amusingly writes that Charbonneau knew Minnetaree, Jusseaume knew Mandan, York knew French "which he spoke even worse than he did English" and that these various interpreters constantly disagreed and quarrelled furiously over the meaning of every word. This, he adds, was the channel through which Lewis and Clark learned the vocabulary they were compiling for the President!

It is not, however, as interpreter, but as the husband of Sacajawea that Charbonneau has achieved an immortal place in the annals of the Northwest.

Sacajawea is best known to tradition as the Bird Woman, but tradition can add nothing to the romance of her amazing story.

Some years before Lewis and Clark arrived on the Upper Missouri a war party of Minnetarees had made a successful horse-stealing expedition to the Rocky Mountains. Upward curling plumes of smoke and a band of grazing horses betrayed to them a Shoshone camp. At daybreak came the surprise

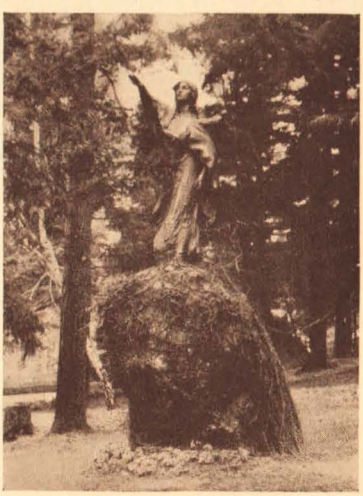
attack, the war whoops and carnage and when it was over the Minnetaree raiders fled eastward across the plains with wet scalps, stolen horses and Shoshone prisoners—among them Sacajawea. Charbonneau bought her as wife and slave, and she is somewhat unromantically introduced to us by Clark as follows: "November 11—two squars purchased from the Rock Indians by a Frenchman came down."

When the westward march was to begin Lewis and Clark engaged Charbonneau as guide and interpreter for the expedition. In reality it was the Bird Woman who acted in both capacities. Faithful and courageous, burdened with a baby born a month before the journey began, she marched with the men, cheerfully sharing the labor, enduring without complaint the hardships of the trail, often guiding and interpreting for the expedition. The early story of the Northwest enshrines many such Indian women whose modest, self-effacing virtues have left a gracious and enduring memory.

In the hour of greatest need among the barren defiles of the Rockies, the expedition, by a coincidence which gives to Sacajawea's life a tang of fiction, came upon the very tribe from which she had been stolen and of which her brother was the chief and obtained the indispensable horses and supplies and perhaps the even more welcome friendship and protection of the tribe.

Insensibly the winter at the Mandan villages yielded to a harsh and windy spring. Wild geese flew north; the river was a swirling mass of ice into which squaws plunged after driftwood, while young men leapt from one ice cake to another to secure and haul ashore for food the rotting carcasses of buffalo which were floating down stream.

Then open water and a small fleet sent down river to St. Louis. It carried despatches, reports and maps prepared by Lewis and Clark, and scientific



Sacajawea Monument, City Park, Portland, Ore.

specimens—"A variety of articles for the President" writes one of the leaders, including stuffed animals, skeletons, horns of mountain sheep, elk and deer; peltries of various kinds; dried plants, Indian curios; tobacco seed; an ear of Mandan corn; a box of insects, and a "burrowing squirrel, a prairie hen and four magpies, all alive."

It is not stated that the latter were still alive when and if they reached the White House. We can easily imagine with what passionate interest its learned occupant examined these first fruits of his longfelt scientific curiosity as to the remote and virgin world of the Upper Missouri.

Green cottonwood canoes were now made ready for the western journey and, loaded with provisions, arms, clothing, Indian presents and the precious astronomical and surveying instruments they waited along the shore of the muddy, turbulent river.

April 7, 1805, "This little fleet altho' not quite so rispectable as those of Columbus or Capt. Cook, were still viewed by us with as much pleasure as those deservedly famed adventurers ever beheld theirs; and I dare say with quite as much anxiety for their safety and preservation . . . these little vessels contained every article by which we were to expect to subsist or defend ourselves—the picture which now presented itself to me was a most pleasing one, entertaining as I do the most confident hope of succeeding in a voyage which had formed a darling project of mine for the last ten years." So wrote Captain Lewis when the hour for departure had arrived.

As they toiled upstream across the North Dakota plains, sign of spring was all about them in swollen stream and gleaming rivulet and green new grass thrusting through melting snow; in the billowing, rain-clouded sky, the returning flight of swan and long-winged cranes; in the calving buffalo, the herds of elk and antelope lean from their winter's fast; in all the clean, wide, wind-swept world. The level, fertile plains flowed away without tree or shrub "except such as from their moist situation and steep declivities of hills are sheltered from the ravages of fire."

After leaving the Minnetaree villages a few miles above the Mandans they saw no Indians and except for three French trappers whom they overtook and who availed themselves of the protection of the expedition as far as the mouth of the Yellowstone, they came upon no human being for many months.

Here in North Dakota where towns, cities, railroads and highways have crowded out the last vestige of the wilderness, where vast rectilinear fields and fertile pastures leave no square foot of land to its own devices, where in every direction white farmhouses break the spacious vista and red-painted barns and silos spot with mist-softened crimson the delicate pale colors of the landscape—in all this rural, agricultural, determinedly modern and business-like North Dakota were only these wild herds which, dogged by their savage shepherds, the prairie wolves, wandered in uncounted multitudes.

Abandoned Assiniboine camps, however, were frequently found with the remains—highly disapproved by the Captains—of the kegs which had contained liquor traded at British posts. Here hung a sacrifice—a few yards of red cloth or some other meagre treasure, left on tree or rock to propitiate the Gods; there was found a crumbling, burying scaffold and the body of a woman with her dog travois and harness and a few relics of her laborious and fétich-haunted life—a sharp bone for scraping hides, a twist of sweet grass, the toe nails of a sacred beaver, some of the red and blue paint with which she had decked herself for prayer and feasting, a bit of Mandan tobacco to cheer her on the long journey to that spirit land where virtuous Indian women might hope to find rest at last—all of it fallen from the rotting platform and sport for the wolves.

Many of the American tribes built these platforms which held aloft, to cleansing mercies of sun and wind, the bodies of the dead. Each lay wrapped in his buffalo robe, his arms and amulets, and the vermilion painted skin of beaver, blue jay or whatever animal had mystically protected him in life beside him, the bones of faithful dog or horse at his feet.

The expedition travelled three weeks after leaving Fort Mandan before reaching the western boundary of North Dakota. In the crisp mornings water froze on the oars, yet willow, aspen and tangled berry bushes were budding in the river bottoms, pea vine and choke cherries were in bloom, and mosquitoes (mis-

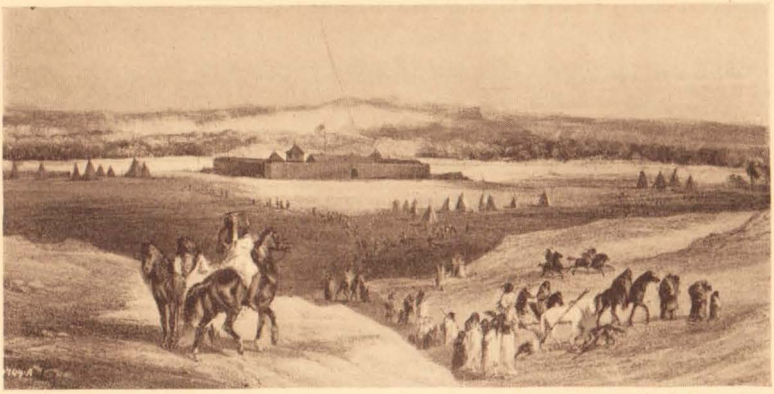
From Maximilian's Travels

Confluence of Yellowstone and Missouri Rivers

quetors according to Clark) had already begun their persecutions. Buffalo wool bleached by sun and wind was caught on wild rose bushes and Clark suggested as had Joliet almost two centuries before and as was later attempted at the Red River settlements, that it could be used to make European cloth. Beaver swam in the river, bears prowled the lowlands and the diaries tell of frequent desperate encounters with the ferocious grizzlies called white or yellow bears by the writers.

Late in April they reached the Little Muddy River, the most northerly point attained by the Missouri, where the present town of Williston on the Great Northern Railway now stands. Accustomed as they were to the prevalence of game the Captains exclaim at the immense numbers of buffalo, elk, deer and antelope seen here and which spread like the denizens of a fabulous Noah's Ark over the plains, and four buffalo calves furnished "delicious veal" for the evening meal. The Little Muddy was called by them the White Earth River.

Then on up the Missouri, harassed by blowing sand and delayed by high winds which occasionally made the water too rough for navigation. They knew from descriptions of the country obtained at the Mandan villages that they were approaching the confluence of the Missouri with its greatest tributary, the Yellowstone—the Roche Jaune of the French variously featured by the good Captains as Roghejone, Rejihone, Rejone and other singular orthographic forms. The first appearance of the name in English was a literal translation in a letter written by



From Maximilian's Travels

Fort Union

Lewis to President Jefferson the day after the return of the expedition to St. Louis in September, 1806—"At the distance of 1888 miles (from St. Louis) we reached the entrance of the Yellow Rock. . . ."

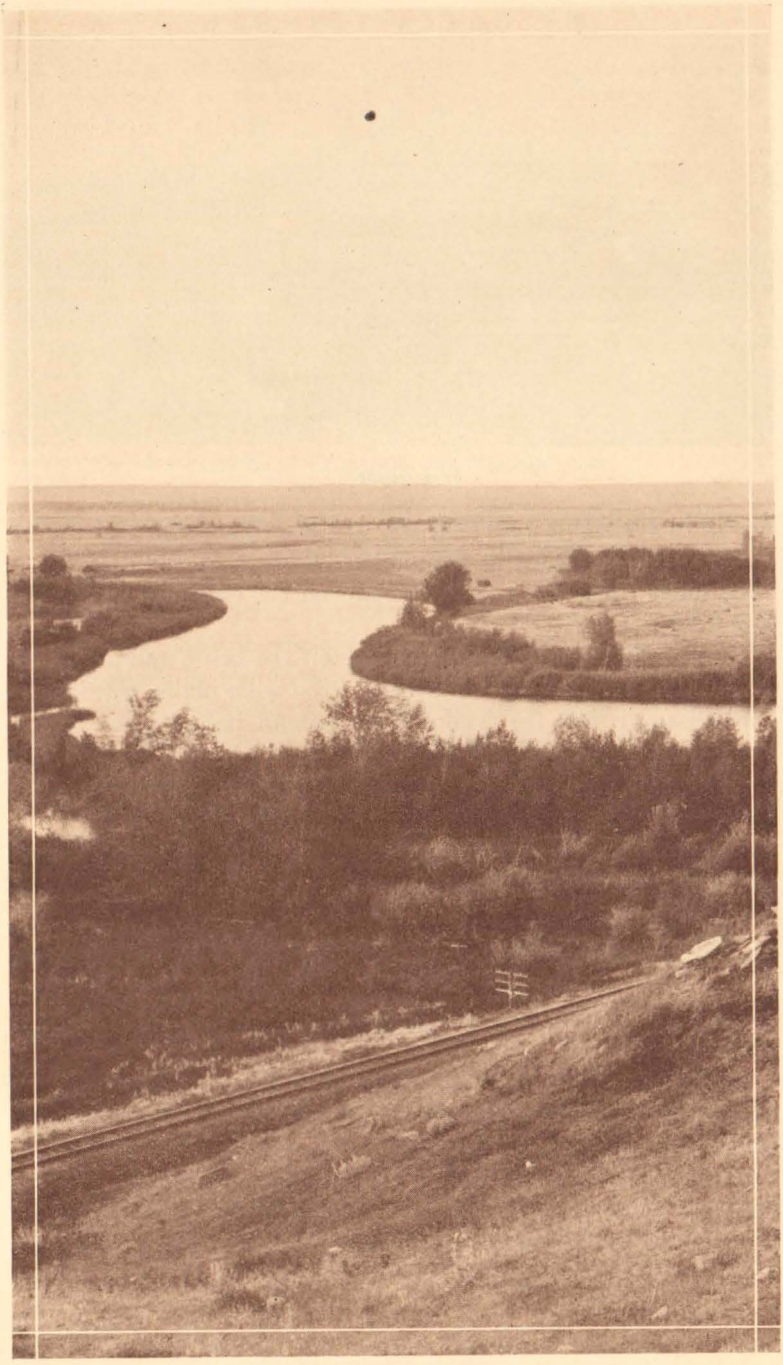
Captain Lewis with four men had left the boats and proceeded on foot across the hills from which "the wide plains watered by the Missouri and the Yellowstone spread before the eye, occasionally varied with the wood of the banks . . . animated by vast herds of buffalo, deer, elk and antelope. The confluence of the two rivers was concealed by the wood . . ."

Lewis camped that night on the banks of the Yellowstone and the following day was joined by the remainder of the party.

Great excitement prevailed at reaching this long-anticipated landmark. That night special rations were ordered, a dance was held and for the first time since the world began these lush lowlands rang to the gay and questionable music of self-taught fiddlers.

Lewis and Clark believed this to be a point of peculiar significance; its position was carefully determined, the surrounding country explored and Private Fields sent to reconnoiter the Yellowstone which he ascended for about eight miles—the first recorded white man on this river. One of the members of the party, John Colter, was to discover its sources two years later.

Both leaders pronounced this "a situation highly eligible for a future trading house"—a curiously prophetic statement, for the most important commercial station and frontier outpost of the



The Milk River

Upper Missouri—Fort Union—stood here for forty years. Later this confluence of the two great rivers suggested the natural boundary point between North Dakota and Montana; a military post, Fort Buford, was built in the vicinity—the present town of Fort Buford on the Great Northern Railway—and a few miles east the city of Williston grew to prosperity.

On April 27th, the little fleet was again under weigh with sails spread before a favoring breeze. Two days later they reached the mouth of a river flowing from the north, now known as the Big Muddy. The main line of the Great Northern Railway crosses this stream a few miles beyond Culbertson, a famous "cow town" of later days. The Big Muddy was more elegantly called "Marthey's" (Martha's) River by Captain Clark "in honor of the Selebrated M. T."

We are thus often rather touchingly reminded of the youth and gallantry of these men whose achievement has given them so serious a place in history. More than one tributary of the brown old Missouri immortalizes a pretty girl met in candle-lighted ballroom on the Potomac or plantation mansion in Kentucky, and named with who knows what touch of lonely heart-ache as their perilous quest took the young leaders deeper into the unknown wilderness.

The day of the christening of "Marthey's" River one of them had narrowly escaped a mortal accident. Lewis and a single companion fired on two grizzlies wounding but not killing them. One of the bears pursued Lewis and had the latter not been able to reload and make a lucky shot Clark would have captained the journey alone.

Next a small river where such masses of porcupine were seen that it was named Porcupine Creek, now known as Poplar River, and several days later the most important northern tributary of the Missouri, except possibly Maria's, was reached. Lewis notes on his map that the Indians called this the "River-which-scolds-all-others," but the explorers renamed it Milk River, because of a peculiar whiteness "such as might be produced by a tablespoon of milk in a dish of tea." Not even Indian rumor had advised them of its existence and theirs is the first mention of it in history.

Because of their ignorance of the important watershed formed by Milk River between the Missouri and the Saskatchewan, the explorers were constantly mistaken in supposing the tributaries

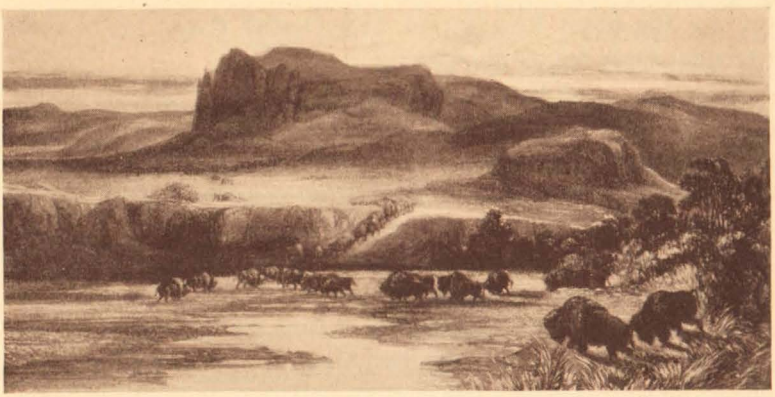
of the latter river to approach more closely to those of the Missouri than is the case. Milk River rises in Glacier Park, makes a northward sweep into Canada and returns to Montana; on this detour beyond the border it was tapped some years ago for irrigation purposes by the Canadian government and a large portion of its waters, needed for irrigation projects in the United States, was diverted. To repay us for this loss an interesting exchange has been made:

A certain St. Mary's River rises in lower St. Mary's Lake in Glacier Park, but flows into Canada and does not return. The source of St. Mary's River is near that of the north fork of Milk River. A diversion dam and canal have been constructed across the height of land between St. Mary's and Milk River and part of the former stream turned into the Milk at one place by means of a siphon—thus diverting waters from Hudson's Bay to those flowing to the Gulf of Mexico. Thus replenished Milk River has created along the main line of the Great Northern Railway one of the most important irrigated regions in Montana.

With sail and oars the party steadily ascended the unknown waterway. Stories of hairbreadth escapes from grizzly bears continue to enliven the journals. Not far from the mouth of Milk River one of these super-creatures, although shot in eight different places, charged six hunters over a twenty-foot precipice into the river. On that same day a far more serious incident occurred "which . . . I cannot recollect but with the utmost trepidation and horror," Lewis writes. A squall struck the canoe which contained papers, instruments, medicines "and almost every article indispensable for the success of our enterprise."

The leaders were on shore and the worthless Charbonneau—wife-beater, coward and general liability, and the "worst steersman" of the party was at the helm. The boat turned halfway over and Charbonneau completely lost his head. What with Cruzatte, the experienced boatman, threatening to shoot him if he let go and the coolness and efficiency of others on board the boat was righted before she was completely upset. Besides a loss of essential articles so serious to an expedition two or three thousand miles from any base of supplies, three men who could not swim would have been drowned. As it was, much of the cargo was injured and had it not been for Sacajawea would have been lost.

"The Indian woman to whom I ascribe equal fortitude and



From Maximilian's Travels
Nearing the Rocky Mountains

resolution with any person on board . . . caught and preserved most of the articles which were washed overboard."

Still they toiled on, past the mouth of the Musselshell and of the Judith so-called in honor of a lady dear to Clark, Miss Julia Hancock whom he afterwards married. Bluffs lined the river and the boats were for the most part painfully dragged upstream by the tow-line.

They were out of Assiniboine country now in the hunting grounds of the Gros Ventres and of their terrible allies the Blackfeet. Sign of Indians everywhere, but as yet, no Indians.

Some distance before reaching the Great Falls they came on the festering remains of a hundred slaughtered buffalo, beside which wolves sat, too sated to snarl and run. The corpses lay at the foot of a precipice over which they had been driven in a recent buffalo hunt.

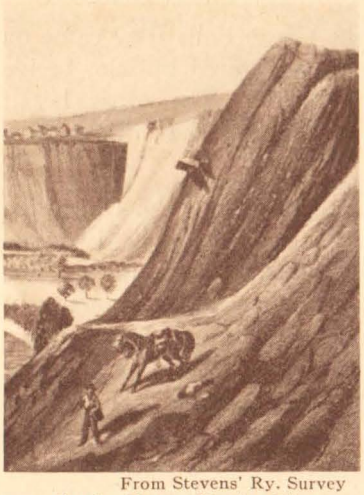
This was a favorite Indian method of killing buffalo. One of the savages disguised in horns and robe, decoyed the herd—urged from behind by the other hunters—toward the precipice. The job of decoy, given to the bravest and fleetest of the young men, seems to have been a questionable privilege, his escape from destruction depending entirely on whether he could run faster than the buffalo, and find a foothold under the cliff. The shaggy monsters thundered on following each other in panic-stricken blindness into the abyss below from which the Indians could take hides and meat of their victims at their leisure. On the

present Blackfoot Reservation, near Glacier Park, one of these hunting places may still be seen.

A month after leaving the mouth of the Yellowstone, the shadowy outline of distant mountains had appeared on the western horizon, a lovely and sinister portent. What terrible difficulties would that cloudlike barrier oppose to their onward march?

Lewis' adventurous heart throbbed with exultation at the further unfolding of his adventure. "While I viewed these mountains I felt a secret pleasure in thus finding myself so near the head of the hitherto boundless Missouri; but when I reflected on the difficulties which this snowey barrier would most probably throw in my way to the Pacific, and the sufferings and hardships of myself and party in them it in some measure counterballanced the joy I had felt in the first moments I gazed on them." But Lewis "held it a crime to anticipate evils," an excellent maxim which he, unlike most of us, scrupulously observed.

Indeed the immediate evils might well have occupied all his attention. The sluggish brown Missouri had become a clear, tumultuous stream flowing between walls of rock. For many weary days the men fought their way up the river, towing the canoes over rapids, often immersed in water to their armpits, their moccasins cut and their feet wounded by the sharp stones. Incessant repairs had to be made on the flimsy craft; elk skin tow-lines rotted and broke. The bluffs became palisades, columned walls, gigantic crumbling palaces on top of which great-horned sheep dangerously pastured.



From Stevens' Ry. Survey
On the Upper Marias River

On June 2 they reached a place where the river forked and they were uncertain as to which was the main channel. The only known way which it was believed afforded practicable passes across the Rockies was the Missouri River and

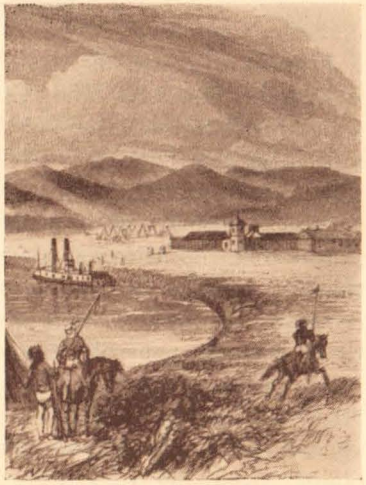
it was extremely important that the expedition should not mistake a tributary for the main stream. Nothing is more characteristic of the two men and their conduct of the whole expedition than the care with which they studied this important question, and the exactness of their deductions. The clearness of the water, speed of the current, topography of the country and reports previously obtained from Indians were duly considered.

Their Arrowsmith map contained certain topographical records of this region taken from the maps of the Hudson's Bay Company clerk, Peter Fidler. Fidler's information had been obtained by hearsay and was discovered by Lewis and Clark to be inaccurate.

Captain Lewis ascended the northern branch and soon felt convinced that it was the tributary and not the Missouri he was following. He named it Maria's River in honor of Miss Maria Wood, although, he remarks in terms of true southern gallantry, "the hue of the waters of this turbulent and troubled stream but illy comport with the pure celestial virtues of that lovely fair one."

Captain Clark meanwhile reconnoitered the south fork for a short distance. When the leaders returned to their camp at the junction of the two rivers, both were agreed that the south branch was the Missouri, although the men of the party were unanimously convinced that Maria's River was the main stream.

The conclusion reached by Captains Lewis and Clark was, like most of their careful decisions, correct. Had they, however, been mistaken and ascended Maria's River they would have obtained a more favorable crossing of the mountains by what is now known as Maria's Pass and an easier way from there to the Columbia than by the route taken. But they chose to proceed by the Missouri, a way illumined at least by the vague light of rumor, while away from that stream all was profound darkness.



From Stevens' Ry. Survey

Fort Benton

A cache was now made of burdensome articles not indispensable to the outward journey and one of the boats left at the mouth of the Maria's.

This was to be an important point for trade with the Blackfeet. In the thirties small posts, Fort Piegan and Fort McKenzie, succeeded each other in the vicinity; in 1845 Fort Lewis was built some miles farther up the Missouri and soon afterwards this post was moved to the site of the present city of Fort Benton on the Great Northern Railway. Fort Lewis was rechristened in honor of Senator Benton, one of the foremost politicians of the day and an ardent advocate of western expansion. Fort Benton was not only the most important trading-post west of Fort Union, which it outlived many years, but became the foremost river port of the Northwest when prospectors bound for the Idaho and Montana gold fields and the nascent tide of immigration poured up the Missouri. As head of navigation on the Missouri all the trade and travel for the Upper Missouri country and much for the Oregon country passed through it and a great empire to the north in Canada likewise was served by this gateway. The village of Fort Benton is seen from the car windows of Great Northern trains.

From the mouth of Maria's River the Captains proceeded, separately, Lewis by land, Clark by water. It was known in a general way to the leaders of the expedition that a series of great falls intercepted the flow of the Missouri in its upper reaches. The discovery of these falls would of course prove to them that they had been correct in pronouncing the river flowing from the south to be the Missouri proper. They were eager therefore for this confirmation before precious days should have been wasted. Avoiding the broken bluffs which formed the river banks Lewis took his course generally over the rolling plains that swept away to the snow-crowned Rockies. Among vast herds of elk and "infinitely more buffalo than I had ever witnessed" he advanced until spray "rose like a column of smoke from the plains" and his ears were greeted with "a roaring too tremendous to be mistaken for any cause short of the Great Falls

of the Missouri . . . I hurryed down the hill . . . to gaze on this sublimely beautiful spectacle." And the usually sober-tongued traveller, after invoking the voice of a poet, indulges in several lyric pages of description. Hastily he despatches a courier back to Clark to announce his discovery and that they were beyond any further doubt following the true course of the Missouri. Clark, always matter of fact, gives a careful technical description of the falls, which he observes "we had herd for several miles making a dedly sound."

Now came the arduous work of transporting canoes and baggage around the succession of falls and rapids which obstructed the river for almost ten miles. This was the greatest barrier with the exception of the mountains themselves which nature opposed to the progress of the expedition. A camp was made near the mouth of Portage Creek, now called Belt Creek, some 13 miles down the river from the present city of Great Falls. Once more the amount of baggage to be carried must be reduced and a cache was made at this place. There still remained an immense amount of goods indispensable to the forward journey which must be hauled by man-power alone to the upper end of the falls.

Clark surveyed and staked a portage path from a point near the mouth of Portage Creek along the south shore of the Missouri —though in many places at some distance from the river—to the head of the falls. The upper camp was made on the south shore of the river near the mouth of a small river called by them Flattery Run, now known as the Sand Coulee. It was opposite a group of islands so infested by grizzly bears that the explorers gave to them the name of White Bear Islands. They lie a short distance above the present city of Great Falls, and the explorers speak of their camp both as opposite from these islands and as upon them. It was, however, situated on the mainland.

This portage path was the first highway laid out by white men in the entire American Northwest beyond Red River. The Great Northern Railway crosses from the north to the south bank of the Missouri at the Rainbow Falls and parallels approximately this primitive road into Great Falls. It was a rough way—the bluffs were cut with deep ravines, the earth was trampled and kneaded by the myriad hooves of the buffalo into ridges, sun-dried as sharp as rocks. These, together with the prickly pears which strewed the ground, tore the moccasins and

Great Falls of the Missouri Before Its Present Development

wounded the feet of the men toiling under their heavy burdens. Trucks were built of cottonwood on which to haul the baggage, but tongues and axle trees frequently broke and the loads were shifted to the shoulders of the men. On a luckier day a sail was hoisted and their labors made a little lighter. It was midsummer and the heat was stifling. Stripped and sweating the men were a prey to voracious hordes of mosquitoes and other insects; hailstones large as musket balls beat upon them and even knocked them down. The portage was 17¾ miles long and the transportation feat here accomplished was one of the momentous achievements of the journey.

Every landmark along this historic stretch of rapids and cascades was faithfully described by Lewis and Clark; the accuracy of their measurements of river and falls, in view of the instruments they had, is now regarded as "little short of miraculous". To Sun River, which empties into the Missouri at Great Falls, they gave the name of Medicine River. Near its mouth Lewis had one of the narrowest of all the narrow escapes from bears recorded by the adventurers. The animal caught him with his gun unloaded and Lewis fled for his life into the Missouri. There he turned and faced his pursuer who retreated before a brandished weapon which Lewis refers to as an "espontoon."

A sudden cloudburst caught Clark, Charbonneau, Sacajawea and her baby in a ravine and almost swept them into the Missouri. Charbonneau, as usual, lost his head while Clark, as usual, kept his and by his quick wits and courage rescued them all.

For two weeks they labored incessantly, transporting their loads around the falls. All about them countless hordes of buffalo pastured which, when they went down to the river bank to drink, often crowded each other in foolish blindness into the raging current. Hunters went up Medicine River after elk, female antelope grazed singly with their young, a great eagle soared above his eyrie on a little island—now disappeared—in Black Eagle Falls, surveying for the first time the labors of civilized men. Grizzlies lurked and attacked and were hunted by the party, rattlesnakes coiled among the stones, wolves raided the stores of meat. The abandoned frames of Indian lodges were seen, but no Indians. With never a complaint,

we read, from any member of the party, the carry around the Great Falls was accomplished. Then with characteristic light-heartedness "such as were able to shake a foot amused themselves in dancing on the green to the music of the violin which Cruzatte plays extremely well."

At the White Bear camp Lewis devoted himself to supervising the construction of his famous iron boat. He had brought the framework with him and now set about covering it with rawhide. It was his darling scheme and it was a failure. There was no pitch to pay the seams and the composition of tallow, beeswax and pounded charcoal was not a successful substitute. The "experiment" was launched, promptly proved unseaworthy and was left behind with the cache made at the upper camp.

Clark, with a small advance party, went up the river to build extra canoes. On July 13th, Lewis broke the camp across from White Bear Islands, embarked the baggage in six canoes and joined Clark. Two days later the united party resumed their great journey into the unknown.

Their way lay up the Missouri Valley. They pressed onward through a valley blooming with sunflowers the seeds of which were made into a kind of flour by the Indians. Evidences that the savages had recently been in the vicinity were plentiful and the smoke of their signal fires rose from remote hilltops. In all probability the expedition had been observed and was believed by the Shoshones to be a party of hostile Blackfeet. Clark, searching for Indians who might supply them with guides and horses for the mountains they must soon pass, proceeded overland. He followed for some distance a small river thick with beaver, dam succeeding dam as far as the explorer ascended it. He called it Ordway's River, but it is now known as the Little Prickly Pear and is followed by the Great Northern Railway to Helena, the ties of which road, Coues writes, "are laid in the very foot prints of the great pioneer."

The remainder of the party, advancing by boat, passed through the grey, rock-walled gorge which they called the Gates of the Mountains—so sheer that it was with difficulty a place could be found large enough on which to make a camp. The Great Northern passes the Gates of the Mountains between Great Falls and Helena.

Pleasure trips are now made from Helena to this landing-place. The rat-tat-tat of motor-boats cracks the silence which the softly

dipping paddles of Lewis' and Clark's boatmen scarcely troubled a century ago; the phonographs of picnic parties play jazz beside the small monument with its copper plate commemorating the night spent there by these first pathfinders. Otherwise this part of the river with rugged cliffs and quiet forest has remained curiously unchanged.

Now the expedition was to pass through a Midas-land where river and stream were literally paved with gold. Sixty years later in every gulch and fold of the mountains where the sands ran heavy with the precious metal, men were to go almost mad with gold lust. In some places gravel at a thousand dollars a pan was washed.

Clark, crossing from Prickly Pear River to the Missouri, passed near the famous Last Chance Gulch, now the city of Helena, Montana, and every reader of the Lewis and Clark journals has asked himself what the effect upon the expedition and upon subsequent events would have been had these fantastic riches been discovered at that time.

Less spectacular but more inexhaustible were the stores of copper which lay hidden in the mountain fastnesses the party was soon to invade. On the evening of June 21 Lewis, proceeding by boat along the Missouri, camped at the entrance of a beautiful wide valley a few miles below Helena. There the Missouri River Power Company now makes the electricity that is flashed to this city and to Butte, the copper capital of America.

A few more days brought the expedition to the three forks of the Missouri. Ominously close loomed the mountains, their broad slopes cloaked with pine, or bare and torn by ancient cataclysm into deep fissures of gashed grey rock; their lofty peaks streaked with snow towered above the clouds.

The most westerly of the forks of the Missouri, called the Jefferson by Lewis and Clark, was boldly followed by the adventurers. It took them to the summit of the continent beyond which they reached westward flowing water—the sources of the Lemhi, the tributary of a tributary of a tributary of the distant Columbia!

Now at last they came upon Indians—Shoshones. By a most remarkable and fortunate coincidence it was, as has been said, the very tribe from which Sacajawea had been taken and the chief was her own brother. The friendship and what help this

very poor people could afford was thus secured. A guide, horses, a little dried salmon were traded and the travellers undertook their difficult journey northward through the Rockies, westward through the Bitter Roots, down the Clearwater River to the Snake.

It was a terrible journey, beset with every difficulty of travel through a pathless mountain country. Half famished, they roasted even the heads of what horses they could spare, eating lips, ears and skin.

On the Clearwater they found the Nez Percé Indians of the Shahaptian family. The Nez Percés were a handsome people, darker than the plains tribes, finely dressed in white buffalo and white elk skins, with ornaments of white beads and mantles of sea otter traded from the Columbia River Indians. Women and children fled in terror or hid in the grass, but the warriors bravely concealed their trouble and alarm at the arrival of these amazing if not supernatural strangers and received them hospitably. The Nez Percés were for many years firm friends of the whites, a friendship which, under repeated injustices, was to turn only once to bitter hostility in the short, fierce conflict known as Chief Joseph's war.

At a Nez Percé village on the Clearwater canoes were built, horses branded and entrusted to a chief for safe-keeping until the party should return in the spring, and the travellers set forth on the last lap of their victorious journey.

They descended Snake or Lewis River and on October 16 reached the Columbia—the great river Ouragon toward which, since the days of Rogers and Carver, the dreams and hopes of so many explorers had turned; and along which, following where Lewis and Clark led, all the early adventurers into the Oregon country were to follow. Lewis and Clark were the first white men on the river above the point (twenty miles below Vancouver, Washington) reached from the sea by Captain Broughton in 1793.

The explorers make no comment on their arrival at the Columbia (near the present city of Pasco, Washington) beyond a mere statement of fact, but inadvertently a fitting pageant celebrated the event. They had scarcely made camp and gathered—not without difficulty in this treeless country—enough willow bushes for fuel, when wild chanting and the throb of drums announced the approach of a welcoming committee. Two hundred warriors marched in regular procession, the chief at their head,

and formed a great semi-circle around the white men. When the dance and singing ended, smoking ceremonies took place and presents were distributed—to the first chief a big medal, to the second chief a smaller medal, to the third chief the smallest medal. The medals were stamped on one side with the portrait of Jefferson and on the other with two hands clasped, a pipe and battle-axe crossed, and the words Peace and Friendship. Several of them have been found in Indian graves and deserted villages on the Snake and Columbia Rivers. Speeches intended to convey the joy experienced by the good Captains at being "surrounded by our children" were delivered by signs and a purchase of seven dogs and twenty pounds of fat, dried horse-flesh for food completed the incidents of this memorable occasion.

After a second day spent in taking the usual "celestial observations", exploring the surrounding country and receiving Indian visitors, they laid in a food supply of forty more dogs, paying for them with knitting needles, thimbles, copper wire, beads and other articles equally irrelevant it would seem to a state of nature, and the voyage down the Columbia was begun.

They were now on a populous thoroughfare among a numerous and industrious people whose central industry—salmon fishing—was as characteristic of and as determining a factor in their culture as buffalo hunting was to the plains Indians. The rush or wooden houses of this fisher people clustered in numerous villages along the shores, their canoes skimmed the broad stream like water beetles, men, women and children in hundreds lined the banks to see the amazing strangers go by and numerous flotillas of canoes put off from shore to accompany them.

Others were terrified and fled in terror to their huts where they received the white men weeping, with hanging heads and every sign of hopeless terror. Clark shot a white crane on the wing and they believed that he, too, fell from the clouds.

But the hand-shaking, beads, scarlet coats and wampum; the harangues delivered by signs all about Jefferson's paternal interest in his Red Children; the presence of the Indian girl Sacajawea; and the much-admired violin playing of Cruzatte, seem quickly to have reassured them.

Fat Indians these, with flat faces, flattened heads—the heads of babies were pressed between planks till they reached a peak—legs distorted and swollen from much sitting in canoes; with sore

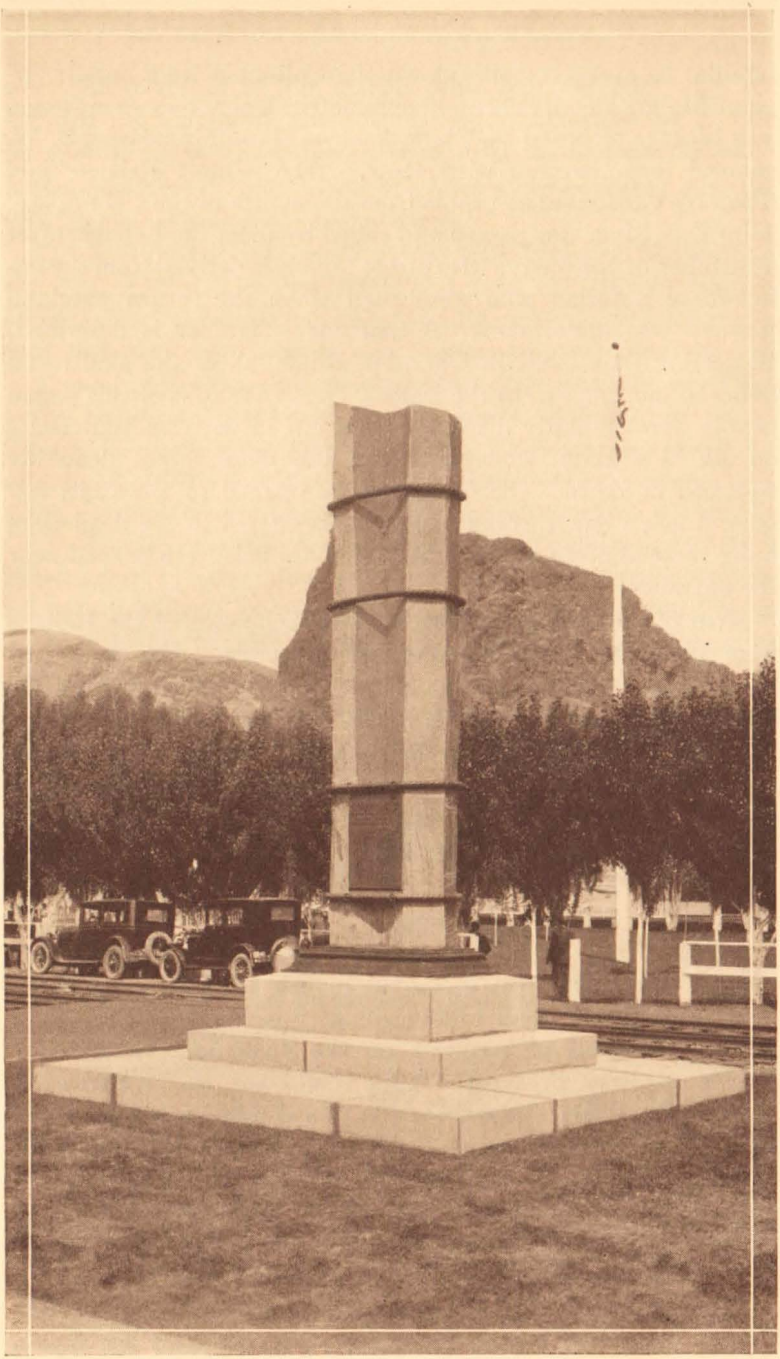
eyes, unkempt hair, teeth ground away from eating fish bones and scales, and the dirt and gravel collected on the wapato and quamash roots; Indians not much given to ornament, although many, especially farther down the river, wore a white shell two inches long thrust through their noses. Yet the men, many of whom were monogamous, seemed to do more work, it was remarked, for their flat-headed squaws, than the plainsmen for the graceful, straight-backed girls of their nations.

The various tribes on the lower Snake and down the Columbia as far as the Dalles—variously called Chopunnish, Solkuks, Eneeshures and other local names by the explorers, were of the same racial stock as the Nez Percés. But in many respects, particularly in general unattractiveness, they seem far more to have resembled the Chinook tribes below the falls than this proud, intelligent, good-looking and honorable mountain tribe. Doubtless common occupations as fish Indians developed these physical and cultural similarities between such racially different peoples as the Shahaptians and the Chinooks.

Tall scaffolds for drying salmon were everywhere. The multitudes of the fish, wrote Clark, "are almost inconceivable. The water is so clear that they can readily be seen at the depth of fifteen or twenty feet, but at this season they float in such quantities down stream and are drifted ashore that the Indians have only to collect, split and dry them on scaffolds." He adds that they even used salmon for fuel. Clark was at a loss to account for the planks with which these scaffolds were built, but a somewhat later traveller, David Thompson, says they were made from drift logs which the Indians dragged ashore and split with sharp wedges of bone or stone.

There were evidences, too, of well-organized commerce. Dried fish was pounded to a powder, packed in finely woven baskets lined with fish skins and tied with string made of grass and bark. This compact food, easy to transport and to preserve, recalls the pemmican prepared and packed in rawhide bags by the buffalo Indians. The dried fish was traded with tribes farther up the river for articles exchanged by them from savages east of the mountains; and also bartered with Indians living at the mouth of the river for the products brought by foreign ships.

Almost continuous rapids rocked the adventurous canoes along channels narrowed by islands and rocky islets. Landmarks



The Wishram Monument

familiar to every traveller down the Columbia were noted; virginal Mount Hood, delicately symmetrical, shadowy as a dream, was bluntly recorded by Clark, "saw a Mountain bearing S. W. conocal form covered with snow," then Mount Helens "laid down by Vancouver as visible from the mouth of the Columbia;" John Day River was passed and called by them the Lepage, after a member of the party. Its present name is derived from the unfortunate Astorian who went mad when the return overland journey was undertaken. A mortuary chamber is described, suggesting that vault in Christian Rome where the skulls and bones of monks pattern the walls. Here the skulls of this pagan people were similarly displayed, laid out in wreaths and circles on elk hide mats, while bodies of the more recent dead lay wrapped in skins. The funeral house opened to the east; fish nets, wooden bowls, robes and trinkets offered to the dead were hung there and the bones of sacrificed animals were heaped near the entrance.

Most of the villages and fishing establishments of the Indians were along the North Bank of the Columbia. The Snakes or Shoshones, enemies of the Columbia tribes, roamed the regions southwest of the river and its waters made a convenient barrier.

As the expedition approached the great falls, immense piles of rocks "which seemed to have slipped from the cliffs under which they lie" obstructed the channel. They began to see among the natives articles of foreign manufacture traded from ships which visited the mouth of the river—red blankets, round sailor jackets, guns, kettles and similar objects.

At last after four days travel the falls of the Columbia—now called Celilo Falls—just below the mouth of Deschutes River were reached. A small Indian village was found on the site of the present town of Wishram on the Spokane, Portland and Seattle Railway or North Bank road—not the Wishram of Washington Irving's Astoria which was situated a few miles below. These Indians assisted the travellers in carrying their effects around this first great pitch in the river. The tracks of the railroad are laid almost exactly on this portage path. Although of great assistance to the white men, the savages "repaid themselves very adroitly" by stealing their effects.

This and the carrying-places around the Dalles, below, became famous places for Indian banditry. The tribes of the region

were the terror of all fur traders who later ascended and descended the Columbia and the diaries of the latter are a continuous record of robbery, murder and battle at these places.

Baggage having been carried the canoes were lowered over the falls and camp was made below them.

The expedition was now reaching the verge of Shahaptian country; at the Dalles they would encounter the Chinook peoples whose beautiful canoes ornamented with richly carven figures in bow and stern were already seen coming up river from the sea.

A great cliff projecting almost from shore to shore forced the entire river into a channel of not more than forty-five yards. This place, called the Short Narrows, Clark decided could be navigated. "The only danger," he writes, "was the whorls and swills arising from compression of the water, which I thought . . . by good stearing we could pass down safe, accordingly I determined to pass through this place notwithstanding the horred appearance of this agitated gut boiling and whirling in every direction which from the top of the rock did not appear as bad as when I was in it."

Indians crowded the cliff above watching with amazement the skill of the master boatman Cruzatte as he kept his craft alive in the tumultuous river.

They camped near a Chinook village—the Wishram of that day—the present station of Spearfish on the North Bank Railroad—where they calculated that 10,000 pounds of dried fish were packed ready for trade.

Below were the long narrows where for three miles the river is crowded into a channel fifty to a hundred yards in width. Once more the baggage must be carried, the canoes perilously lowered through the boiling waters.

As the explorers proceeded, the natives became if possible even less personally alluring, but ridge poles and inside walls of the rushhouses were elaborately painted and carved, and the handsomely ornamented canoes, more and more numerous, brought Indians in round sailor hats with pea jackets or blue cloth trousers strangely super-imposed on their native attire; with shifty eyes and manners and morals by no means improved by contact with the personnel of the sailing vessels.

Near the present city of Lyle, Washington, they came upon Memaloose Island called by the Klickitats Memaloose Alahee,

The Astoria Column

"Land of the Dead." There the funeral lodges were painted inside with strange figures of men and beasts.

The party had been travelling for weeks through a country bare of trees or underbrush. Now woods began to appear and, as they approached the Cascades, the verdure rapidly increased. The river plunged at last into the mountains between steep rock walls softly rose-tinted, crowned with dark pine; deeply wooded draws sloped to the shores, while high above peak after peak loomed cloudlike against the sky.

Once more canoes were unloaded and carried or taken through the roaring cascades by shipping them between poles placed from rock to rock. Below the last of the falls the river broadened to a wide and gentle current, and at last the battered canoes rode the deep swell of tide-water pushing up stream.

On they went past the site of Vancouver, Washington, where the Hudson's Bay trading-post of that name was to be established by Dr. John McLoughlin twenty years later, and past the mouth of the Willamette a few miles below the present city of Portland. Much of the time they travelled in slanting, drenching rain, or through fog that blotted out the river and the crowded pine trees of the lowlands, and swallowed a comrade at fifty feet. New courage now in every breast as they swept down stream to the sea.

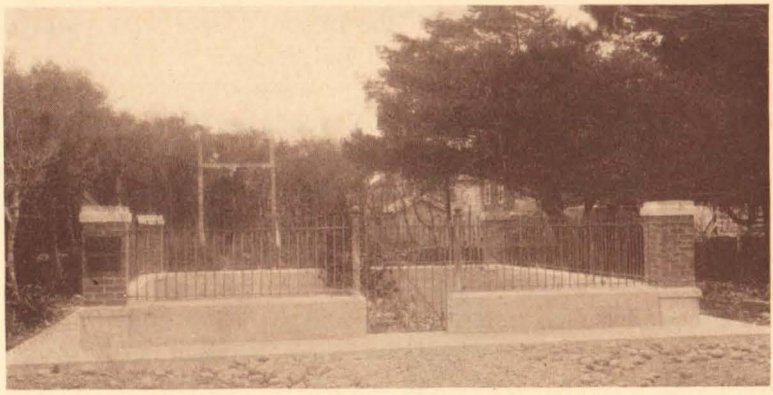
The morning of November 7th dawned with weeping skies. As the day advanced, however, the curtain of fog lifted and before them lay the mighty Pacific, the goal of their long effort.

"Great joy in camp" Captain Clark writes, "we are in view of the Ocian, this great Pacific Octian, which we have been so long anxious to see, and the roreing or noise made by the waves, brakeing on the rockey shores . . . may be heard distinctly . . . O! the joy."

No trading vessels on which they had counted to renew their supplies were anchored in the mouth of the great river. Nor were they to find any succor here or have any contact with the outside world until the long homeward journey had been accomplished.

Some weeks were spent searching for suitable winter quarters. At last Fort Clatsop, a cluster of huts surrounded by a stockade, was built on Lewis and Clark River not far from the present town of Astoria.

They lived like amphibian creatures in an incessant downpour of rain; their houses dripped at every crack; they slept, cooked,



Lewis and Clark's Salt Cairn at Seaside, Ore.

hunted, explored in a bleak deluge. Game was scarce and hard to follow in the thick forests of spruce and fir.

Indians, vitiated by their contact with the crews of trading vessels, visited them and demanded exorbitant prices for what they had to sell. Concomely, the Clatsop chief, later to be father-in-law of a North West Company nabob, first appears at this time on the page of history where he is to figure not without honor.

The men hunted, fished, established a salt camp where a detachment boiled sea water over kilns, the remnants of which are still to be seen at Seaside some seven miles from the ruins of Fort Clatsop. These also may be seen about midway between Astoria and Seaside.

The leaders worked on the journals of their eighteen months' journey which so keenly and copiously describe the peoples and country through which they had passed, and on their various scientific observations and maps.

Spring came but still no ships.

Northward on Nootka Sound two white men were living as slaves of the native chief. Jewitt an English sailor and Thompson an American were the sole survivors of the trading vessel Boston, the entire crew of which had been massacred by the Indians of that place three years before.

Jewitt in a rare and curious little journal published in 1838, writes that the ship by which they were finally rescued touched at the Columbia River to trade only a fortnight after Lewis and Clark had set out on their overland journey.

The health of the party had suffered severely from the discomforts and privations of the winter; the elk which had afforded uncertain sustenance left the coast region and returned to the mountains; the Americans were too poor in trade goods to buy food of the natives. Although Lewis and Clark had expected to stay until April in the hope that ships might arrive they dared not wait that long.

On March 26th the valiant little band set out on their long homeward march across the continent.

They lacked almost every necessity but that gallant spirit with which each member of the party was so plentifully endowed. The first part of their route was the same that had been taken on the westward journey. On the Clearwater they found the Nez Percé chief to whom they had entrusted their horses. These were delivered to them together with a plentiful supply of food for which this admirable Indian indignantly refused any payment. Most of this time the explorers, being almost without trade goods, bought the services of the Indians by administering medical treatment. For this the scrupulous Captain Lewis apologizes, observing, however, that they were careful to prescribe none but harmless remedies!

When they reached the Bitter Root Valley the two leaders separated—each to proceed by a different way to the confluence of the Yellowstone and the Missouri Rivers where they were to meet.

Captain Clark turned southeastward. When his party should reach the Three Forks of the Missouri, a number of men under Sergeant Ordway were to descend this river to the mouth of the Maria's where they were to await Captain Lewis, while Captain Clark was to go on across country to the Yellowstone and proceed thence by canoe to the rendezvous at the mouth of that river.

Lewis' expedition, which has received less attention than other parts of the exploration, we shall follow in some detail. On July 3, this leader, with nine men and five Indians (the Indians remained with them only one day) left the camp on the Bitter Root. They proceeded in a northeasterly direction, crossed the

Continental Divide by what has since been known as the Lewis and Clark Pass, and reached the Missouri in the vicinity of the Great Falls. Leaving a small party of men and four horses to await Sergeant Ordway and remove the caches, Captain Lewis with only three men set out on what was to be the most dangerous and nearly fatal of all their adventures.

When Lewis had investigated the Maria's River the previous summer, he had believed it to be one of the most important tributaries of the Missouri and one which was likely to be of importance in determining the international boundary. He decided, therefore, to ascertain how far north it had its source. It seems probable that he also wished to discover whether there were not passes in this northern latitude more favorable than those by which they had crossed the mountains farther south.

The party left the Great Falls July 17, 1806. Their course lay over a vast plain, empty of tree and shrub on which roving herds of buffalo peacefully grazed.

After traveling twenty miles they reached a river (the Teton) called by them the Tansy. Here they came upon the track of a bleeding buffalo which they took as an indication that Indians were in the vicinity. They were now in a country frequented by the Minnetarees of Fort de Prairie—one of the two distinct tribes to which the name Gros Ventres was also applied[6]—and by the Blackfeet. Lewis had been told that these were Indians of a far more dangerous temper than those formerly encountered, in spite of which he does not seem to have had the slightest hesitancy in proceeding with his slender escort, deep into their territory.

Lewis on the Marias River

Hoping now, he writes, to avoid an interview with them, the party hurried into a small wood across the Teton River. From this shelter, however,

6 These Minnetarees were a branch of the Arapahoes, a separate racial stock from the Hidatsa, or Minnetarees found near the Mandan villages.

they seem promptly to have emerged and set out separately in search of the buffalo and further Indian signs. Neither were discovered and the night passed tranquilly.

The next day they struck a small tributary of the Maria's which they called Buffalo Creek and which they descended, passing countless herds of buffalo. After traveling twelve miles they cut across overland to Maria's River.

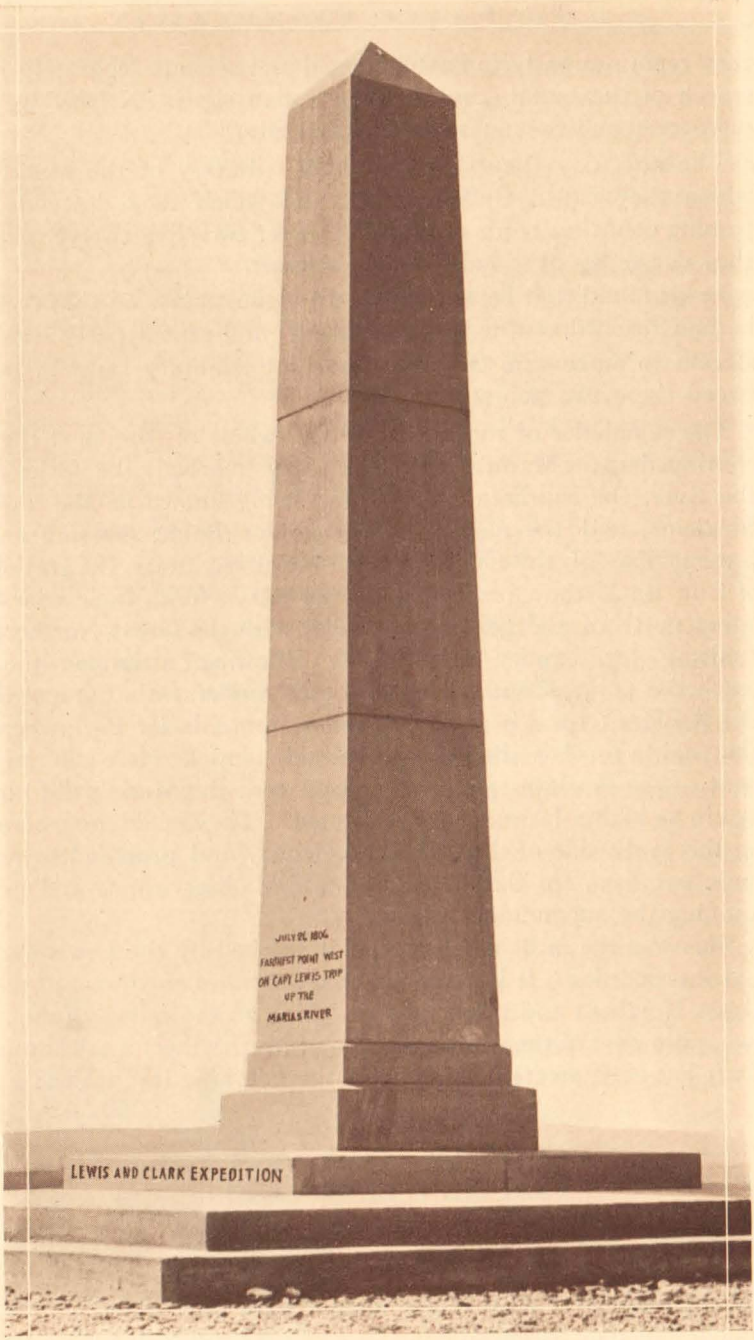
Lewis found that he was above the highest place on that river he had reached on the former journey, and sent a party down stream to make sure that no important tributary came in between these two points.

The remainder of that day and the whole of the next they continued up the Maria's. The 21st they reached the forks of the river, the southern branch now being known as the Two Medicine, and the northern as the Cut Bank; crossing the present line of the Great Northern Railway near the station of Cut Bank they proceeded up the latter fork, their course being north of and generally parallel with the Great Northern Railway for twenty miles. The following afternoon they reached a point about ten miles, Lewis writes, from the foot of the Rockies (it was in reality 25 miles from Glacier Park where the prairie touches the rugged mountain slope). Here the river bent to the southwest, and he realized that the Maria's did not attain so high a latitude as he expected. They made camp here, on the south side of the Cut Bank River, and proposed to remain two days for the purpose of taking observations and examining the surrounding region.

This was the most northerly point reached by the Lewis and Clark expedition. It is about six or seven miles northwest of the Great Northern and at the nearest point on the railway (about two miles west of the present station of Meriwether) a sandstone shaft has been erected which bears the following inscription:

JULY 26, 1806
FARTHEST POINT WEST
ON CAPT. LEWIS' TRIP
UP THE
MARIAS RIVER

To the southwest they might almost have seen Maria's Pass, which, had they ascended Maria's River instead of the Missouri



Lewis Monument at Meriwether, Mont.

on their outward journey and had they been fortunate enough to find would have taken them across the mountains by a far easier way than the one they followed. It is the pass now used by the Great Northern Railway in crossing the Rocky Mountains and is famous for the favorable route it affords.

Lewis' first care was to send a man forward to examine the river "till its entrance to the mountains". Although they prolonged their stay at this place several days, the desired astronomical observations could not be taken; the weather remained overcast and the captain's chronometer stopped for several hours. Game was scarce and the party suffered from hunger and cold. They left on the morning of July 26th, naming the place Camp Disappointment.

Their course lay southeastward across the plains. The party crossed Willow Creek about two miles from camp and soon crossed the present line of the Great Northern Railway two miles west of the station Meriwether where the monument previously referred to now stands; a twelve-mile ride brought them to the Two Medicine or south fork of the Maria's. They forded this river and a few miles farther reached a small tributary known as Badger Creek, on which many years afterwards a trading-post and the Blackfoot agency were situated. Crossing Badger Creek at its mouth they continued down the south side of the Two Medicine for three miles. One of the hunters, Drewyer, advanced along the valley on the opposite side.

Captain Lewis with the remaining two men ascended the high land beside the river. They soon caught sight of about thirty horses grazing on the plains. With the aid of his glass Lewis now made a most unpleasant discovery. Eight of the horses were saddled and he had not far to look for their riders. On a hilltop, gazing down into the valley, probably at Drewyer, he beheld for the first time since entering the territory of the plains Indians whom he refers to as "vicious and profligate rovers", a group of savages.

He carefully weighed the situation which seemed to him serious. He did not know how numerous this band might prove to be; he had every reason to fear that their disposition would be hostile. The horses of his party were slow and could easily be overtaken; it was, moreover, out of the question to abandon Drewyer, whom the Indians had already seen. He decided,

therefore, to advance in "friendly fashion" under the problematic protection of the American flag.

On perceiving them the Indians were thrown into great confusion, but at last mounted and rode to meet the Americans. When the two parties were within a hundred yards of each other the savages halted and one of them came on alone. Captain Lewis, therefore, stopped his men and went forward to meet him. They shook hands, after which the others advanced and greeted each other with the same show of good feeling, the Indians indicating that they wished to smoke with the white men. Captain Lewis gave them to understand that the man they had first seen going down the river had the pipe and asked that an Indian go with one of his party to bring Drewyer back.

He learned by signs that they were, as he had feared, Minnetarees of the North and inquired if there were chiefs among them. They indicated three of their number to whom although Lewis did not believe them to be chiefs he offered gifts—a flag to one, a medal to one, and a handkerchief to the third. He felt somewhat reassured in finding there were but eight of the savages, believing his men could easily hold their own with that number.

Lewis now proposed that the parties camp together for the night. Accordingly they descended to the river bank where the Indians put up a leather lodge and the evening was spent in talk and smoking. They learned that these Indians were part of a large band which was camped on the Two Medicine branch of the Maria's, near the Rocky Mountains, and that another party was hunting about the Broken Mountains (Sweetgrass Hills).

Lewis recounted to them his long journey, said that he hoped to persuade the Minnetarees to live on more peaceful terms with other tribes and to bring their furs to the future trading-posts which were to be established at the mouth of the Maria's. He told them that the rest of his party was waiting for him there and suggested that some of the Indians proceed to their main encampment and invite all of the band to meet him at that place, while the rest should go there with him. It was arranged among the white men that a watch be kept during the night. I shall quote Elliott Coues in his "History of the Lewis and Clark Expedition":

"Sunday, July 27th. At sunrise, the Indians got up and crowded around the fire near which J. Fields, who was then on watch, had carelessly left his rifle, near the head of his brother, who was still asleep. One of the Indians slipped behind him, and, unperceived, took his brother's and his own rifle, while at the same time two others seized those of Drewyer and Captain Lewis. As soon as Fields turned, he saw the Indian running off with the rifles; instantly calling his brother, they pursued him for 50 or 60 yards; just as they overtook him, in the scuffle for the rifles R. Fields stabbed him through the heart with his knife. The Indian ran about fifteen steps and fell dead. They now ran back with their rifles to the camp. The moment the fellow touched his gun, Drewyer, who was awake, jumped up and wrested it from him. The noise awoke Captain Lewis, who instantly started from the ground and reached for his gun, but finding it gone, drew a pistol from his belt, and turning saw the Indian running off with it. He followed him and ordered him to lay it down, which he did just as the two Fields came up, and were taking aim to shoot him; when Captain Lewis ordered them not to fire, as the Indian did not appear to intend any mischief. He dropped the gun and was going slowly off when Drewyer came out and asked permission to kill him; but this Captain Lewis forbade, as he had not yet attempted to shoot us. But finding that the Indians were now endeavoring to drive off all the horses, he ordered (all) three of us to follow the main party, who were chasing the horses up the river, and fire instantly upon the thieves; while he, without taking time to run for his shot-pouch, pursued the fellow who had stolen his gun and another Indian, who were driving away the horses on the left of the camp. He pressed them so closely that they left twelve of their horses, but continued to drive off one of our own. At the distance of 300 paces, they entered a steep niche in the river-bluffs, when Captain Lewis, being too much out of breath to pursue them any further, called out, as he had done several times before, that unless they gave up the horse he would shoot them. As he raised his gun one of the Indians jumped behind a rock and spoke to the other, who stopped at the distance of thirty paces. Captain Lewis shot him in the belly. He fell on his knees and right elbow; but raising himself a little, fired and then crawled behind a rock. The shot had nearly been fatal, for Captain Lewis, who was bareheaded, felt the wind of the ball very distinctly; not having his shot-pouch, he could not reload his rifle; and having only a single load for his pistol, he thought it most prudent not to attack the Indians, and therefore retired slowly to the camp. He was met by Drewyer, who, hearing the report of guns, had come to his assistance, leaving the Fields to pursue the Indians. Captain Lewis ordered him to call out to them to desist from the pursuit, as we could take the horses of the Indians in place of our own; but they were at too great a distance to hear him. He, therefore, returned to the camp; and whilst he was saddling the horses, the Fields returned with four of our own, having followed the Indians until two of them swam the river and two others ascended the hills, so that the horses became dispersed.

"We, however, were rather gainers by the contest, for we took four of the Indian horses, and lost only one of our own. Besides which, we found in the camp four shields, two bows with quivers, and one of the guns, which we took with us, as also the flag which we had presented to the Indians, but left the medal round the neck of the dead man, in order that they might be informed who we were. The rest of their baggage, except some buffalo-meat, we left; and as there was no time to be lost, we mounted our horses, and after ascending the river-hills, took our course through the beautiful level plains, in a direction a little to the south of east. We had no doubt but that we should be immediately pursued by a much larger party, and that as soon as intelligence was given to the band near the Broken Mountains, they would hasten to the mouth of Maria's River to intercept us. We hoped, however, to be there before them, so as to form a junction with our friends."

This was the only open conflict with Indians which took place during the entire expedition.

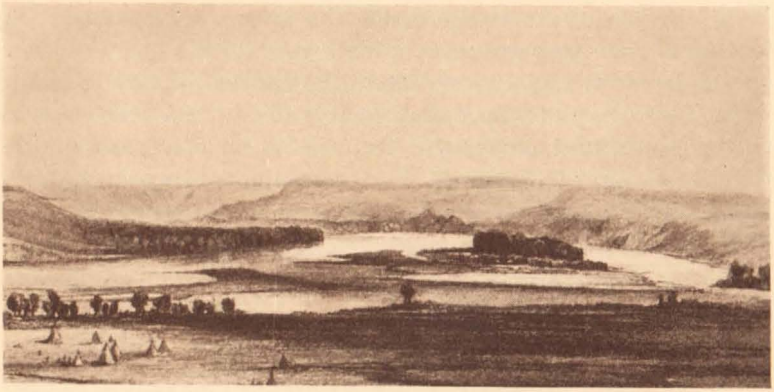
Mandan Village From Maximilian's Travels

Traveling as fast as their horses could carry them, they soon passed a stream which they called Battle River, now known as Birch Creek, and later crossed the Teton, five miles above where they had passed it on the northward trip. Here they halted for a much needed rest of an hour and a half. They continued their journey until nightfall when, having killed a buffalo, they ventured to stop for another two hours. By the light of a cloudy moon, among limitless dark masses of buffalo they then continued their desperate race from this perilous vicinity. At two in the morning they stopped for a few hours' sleep, but at dawn, broken and sore from the hard riding of the previous day, were again in the saddle.

Captain Lewis was as deeply concerned for the safety of the party at the mouth of the Maria's as for himself and his three men. He felt sure that the main body of the Minnetarees, on learning what had occurred, would proceed to that point and attack the men waiting with the canoes. He announced his intention of advancing by the most direct and most dangerous route to the confluence of the rivers. If, before reaching there, the enemy overtook them they were to make a stand until—as, with his fine courage and hopefulness he suggests—they routed the Indians, or were killed.

As they approached the river they heard the sound of rifles and hurrying to the bank "saw, with exquisite satisfaction our friends coming down the river."

It was Sergeant Ordway with the party which had separated from Captain Clark at the Three Forks of the Missouri.



From Maximilian's Travels

On the Lower Missouri

At the mouth of the Maria's, by great good fortune, Ordway had met the men Captain Lewis had left above the falls and who had descended to this point by land bringing the horses.

On the 29th the whole party set out by canoe down the river. The water was high and the current strong and they were soon swept safely out of reach of the Minnetarees.

It rained at first in torrents; buffalo continued in immense numbers; elk, bighorn, antelope, deer and wolves were seen and the hunters brought in a varied supply of meat.

The progress of the party was rapid and without serious incident and on August 7, 1806, they reached the mouth of the Yellowstone. Here they found the fragment of a letter left by Captain Clark saying that he had continued down the Missouri. Captain Lewis accordingly went forward.

On the 12th of August they met two traders from Illinois, the first white men outside of their own party they had seen since leaving the Mandan villages in April, 1805, and on that same day they overtook Captain Clark.

On August 14th the united party reached the Minnetaree and Mandan villages where they had spent the winter of 1804-05 and where they were now cordially received. They tried to induce chiefs of both nations to accompany them to St. Louis and go from there to Washington to visit the President. A Mandan chief was finally persuaded, together with his wife and son, to accept the invitation. At this place Charbonneau asked for his discharge and, with his wife Sacajawea and their much-travelled infant, remained among the Mandans.

As the party proceeded down the river the most striking feature of their journey was the frequency with which they met parties from St. Louis ascending to the Indian country to trade. These were the pioneers of that great traffic in furs which was to be the important commerce of the frontier for fifty years and in them Lewis and Clark beheld the first result of their own achievement.

In spite of the generally sober language of the journals we find a growing undercurrent of excitement and joy at this return to civilization after two years and three months of such isolation, toil, danger and privation as they had undergone.

On September 20, they reached the French village of La Charette where they were welcomed with astonishment, it being the popular belief that they had perished in the wilderness. The next day they were again on their way. New settlements had sprung up and they were "refreshed with the sight of men and cattle" along the banks. St. Charles was reached on the 21st and wildest excitement greeted their arrival. Detained by the hospitalities extended them they did not set out until ten o'clock of the following day.

Word of their coming preceded them and men, women and children flocked to the shore, the river rang with cheers as the small flotilla swept past with its bronzed and tattered crew.

On the 23rd of September they entered the Mississippi and at noon fired their salute before the village of St. Louis.

Their task was accomplished. They had navigated the Missouri River from its mouth to one of its sources in the heart of the Rocky Mountains; had crossed that range to the western slope of the continent; found their way to the Columbia and down its waters to the Pacific Ocean. On their return they discovered new mountain passes and widened the scope of their exploration by separate expeditions. The various operations of the party covered over 6,000 miles in a primeval world which afforded no aid or succor but that which they themselves could wrest from its hard grasp. When they entered it the calendar turned back thousands of years and took them to an age the story of which is written only in geologic strata.

At all times even in moments of most desperate need or peril they did not fail carefully to observe birds, plants, animals and topographical features and record them in their copious reports.

The maps they drew are accurate and complete and served for many years as guides to those who followed them into these wild regions. Of the aboriginal peoples they encountered, many had never before seen a white man; the courage with which they were met and the fairness with which they were treated won from them often friendship, always respect. If all the white men who came in early contact with the Indians had been of the quality of Lewis and Clark the story of Indians and whites in the Northwest would have been a very different one.

The significance of this expedition in our national development cannot be overemphasized and is so obvious as scarcely to require a summary. As the first transcontinental journey through United States territory, as the first exploration of the Oregon country except that of the lower Columbia near the sea which was explored by ship, as the winning of a route so long discussed and which remained so long unknown—the overland way to the Western sea recommended by Charlevoix or even earlier explorers, sought by the Verendryes, described by Rogers, dreamed of by Ledyard—it is of absorbing historic interest; as the first step in fulfilling the far-sighted ambition of early American statesmen to extend the new Republic from ocean to ocean it is of immense political significance. It formed one of our best claims to the Oregon country; it inaugurated the period of continuous development in the Northwest; it prepared the way for the Astorians, for the fur trader-explorers; for the travellers on the Oregon trail and all the tide of American occupancy that flowed northward from St. Louis, westward from the Upper Mississippi, to and along the Upper Missouri, across the Rockies, down the Columbia, over the Cascades to Puget Sound; for Isaac I. Stevens and other railroad heralds and pathfinders and at last for those greatest agencies of united empire, the transcontinental railroads themselves. These bring with them a galaxy of significant names, none greater than that of James J. Hill, the builder of the road, which for many hundreds of miles follows the route laid down so long ago by Charlevoix and Rogers, and found by Lewis and Clark.

Appendix

St. Memin Portrait

Captain Meriwether Lewis

The above portrait of Captain Lewis and the following letters have been loaned to the Great Northern Railway for publication in this booklet through the courtesy of Mrs. Meriwether Lewis Anderson of Richmond, Va.

Washington July 2d 1803.

Dear Mother,

The day after tomorrow I shall set out for the Western Country; I had calculated on the pleasure of visiting you before my departure but circumstances have rendered this impopible; my absence will probably be equal to fifteen or eighteen months; the nature of this expedition is by no means dangerous, my rout will lie altogether through tribes of Indians who are perfectly friendly to the United States, ~~that~~ therefore I consider the chances of life just as much in my favor on this trip as I should conceive them were I to remain at home for the same lapt of time; the charge of this expedition is honorable to myself, as it is important to my country for its fatigues I feel myself perfectly prepared, nor do I doubt my health and strength of constitution to bear me through it; I go with the most perfect preconviction in my own mind of returning safe and hope therefore that you will not suffer yourself to indulge any anxiety for my safety. ——

As John Marks has been with Mr. Colhoun a considerable time I would not wish him to change his situation untill he is prepared for the Collge of William & Mary at Williamsburgh, although he might be taught by Mr Robertson somewhat cheaper I do not think that the change would be advantageous— If no other means can

be devised by which to get money to enable you to send John to Williamsburgh I must insist on his portion or half of the certificates being sold and appropriated to that purpose; I wish him to continue with Mr Colhoon untile the 1st of October 1804 and then go on to Williamsburgh the commencement takes place at that seminary on the 1st monday in October annually: I presume that from the progress that John will have made by the time mentioned that two years at the College will fit him for any professional study, and suppose that eight or nine hundred dollars will be adequate to this object, which sum will be not more than the one half of the Certificates to which he is intitled.

You will find thirty dollars inclosed which I wish you to give to Sister Anderson my love to her Cousins & the family; Reuben writes me that Sister Anderson has another son; remember me to Mary and Jack and tell them I hope the progress they will make in their studies will be equals to my wishes and that of their other friends —— I shall write you again on my arrival at Pittsburgh ——

Adieu and believe me yours

affectionate Son

Meriwether Lewis.

Mrs Lucy Marks.

N B I send by Mr Jefferson the patents belonging to P & J. Marks for their Beaver creek land.

M. Lewis.

Fort Mandan, 1609 miles above the entrance of the
Missouri, March 31st 1805

Dear Mother.

I arrived at this place on the 27th of October last with the party under my command, destined to the Pacific Ocean, by way of the Missouri and Columbia rivers. The near approach of winter, the low state of the water, and the known scarcity of timber which exists on the Missouri for many hundred Miles above the Mandans, together with many other considerations equally important, determined my friend and companion Capt. Clark and myself, to fortify ourselves and remain for the winter in the neighbourhood of Mandans Minetares and Shwahharways, who are the most friendly and well disposed savages that we have yet met with. accordingly we sought and found a convenient situation for our purposes a few miles below the villages of these people on the North side of the river in an extensive and well timbered bottom, where we commenced the erection of our houses on the 2nd of November, and completed them so far as to put ourselves under shelter on the 21st of the same Month, by which time, the season wore the aspect of winter. having completed our fortifi- early in December, we called it Fort Mandan, in honour of our friendly neighbours. So far, we have experienced more difficulty from the navigation of the Missouri, than danger from the Savages. the difficulties which oppose themselves to the navigation of this immence river, arise fro m the rapidity of it's current, it's falling banks, sandbars, and timber which remains wholy, or partially concealed in it's bed, usually called by the navigators of the Missouri and Mississippi, Stenyerson plaster one of those difficulties, the navigator never ceases to contend with, from the entrance of the Missouri to this place; and in innumerable instances most of those obstructions are at the sam instant combined to oppose his progress, or threaten his distruction. to these we may also add a fifth and not much less inconsiderable difficulty, the turbed quality of the water, which renders it impracticable, to discover any obstruction even to the debth of a single inch. such is the velocity of the current at all seasons of the year, from the entrance of the Missouri, to the mouth of the great river Platte, that it is impossible to resist it's force by means of oars or poles in the main channel of the river; the eddies therefore which generally exist one side or the other of the river, are sought by the navigator; but these are almost universally incumbered with concealed timber, or within the reach of the falling banks, but notwithstanding ar usually preferable to that of passing along the edges of the sand bars, over which, the water tho' shallow runs with such violence, that if your vessel happens to touch the sand, or is by any accedent turned sidewise to the current it is driven on the bar, and overset in an instant, generally distroyed, and always attended with the loss of the cargo. the base of the river banks being composed of a fine light sand is easily removed by the water, it hapens that when this capricicious and violent current, sets against it's banks, which are usually covered with heavy timber, it quickly undermines them, sometimes to the debth of 40 or 50 paces, and several miles in length. the banks being unable to support themselves longer, tumble into the river with tremendious force, distroying everything within their reach. the timber thus precipitated into the water with large masses of earth about their roots, are seen drifting with the stream, their points above the water, while the roots more heavy are draged along the bottom untill they become firmly fixed in the quicksands which form the bed of the river, where they remain for many years, forming an irregular, tho' dangerous chevauxdefrise to oppose the navigator.—

This immence river so far as we have yet ascended waters one of the fairest portions of the globe, nor do I believe that there is in the universe a similar extent of country, equally fertile, well watered, and intersected by such a number of navigable streams. The country as high up this river as the Mouth of the river Platte, a distance of 630 miles is generally well timbered; at some little distance above this river the open or prairie country commences. with rispect this open country I have been agreeably disappointed, from previous information I had been led to believe, that it was barren, steril and sandy; but on the contrary I found it fertile in the extreem, the soil being from one to 20 feet in debth, consisting of a fine black loam, intermixed with a sufficient quantity of sand only to induce a luxuriant growth of grass and other vegitable productions, particularly such as are not liable to be much injured, or wholy distroyed

by the ravages of the fire. it is also generally level yet well watered; in short there can exist no other objection to it except that of the want of timber, which is truly a very serious one. This want of timber is by no means attributable to a deficiency in the soil to produce it, but ows it's orrigine to the ravages of the fires, which the natives kindle in these plains at all seasons of the year. the country on both sides of the river, except some of it's bottom lands, for an immence distance is one continued open plain, in which no timber is to be seen, except a few detatched and scattered copse, and clumps of trees, which from their moist situations, or the steep declivities of hills ar sheltered from the effects of fire. the general aspect of the country is level so far as the perception of the spectator will enable him to determine, but frorm the rapidity of the Missoury, it must be considerably elevated as it passes to the N. West; it is broken only on the borders of the watercourses.—

Game is very abundant, and seems to increase as we progress; our prospect for starving is therefore consequently small. on the lower portion of the Missouri, from it's junction with the Mississippi, to the entrance of the Osage river, we met with some deer, bear, and turkies; from thence to the Kancez river, the deer were more abundant, a great number of black, bear, some turkies, geese, swan and ducks; from thence to the mouth of the great river Platte, an immence quantity of deer, some bear, Elk, turkies, geese, swan and ducks from thence to the river S . . . , some deer, a great number of Elk, the bear disappeared almost entirely, some turkies, geese swan and ducks; from thence to the mouth of white river, vast herds of Buffalos, Elk, and some deer and a greater quantity of turkies than we had before seen; a circumstance which I did not much expect, in a country so distitute of timber. from hence to Fort mandan, the Buffalos, Elk and deer increase in quantity, with the addition of the Cabré as they are usually called by the French engages, but which is a . . . abot the size of a small deer, it's flesh is delic . . . . oured.—

The ice in the Missouri has now nearly disappea . . . I shal set out on my voyage in the course of a few . . . I can foresee no material obstruction to our progress, and . . . feel the most perfect confidence that we shall reach . . . cific Ocean this sum . . . For myself individually I . . . better health than I . . . since I commenced my . . . party are now in . . . health and excellent spirits . . . tatched to the interp . . . anxious to proceed; not a whisper of discontent or murmur is to be heared among them, but all act in unison, and with the most perfect harmony. with such men, I feel every confidence necessary to insure success. the party with Capt. Clark and myself consists of thirty one white persons, one negroe man, and two Indians.—

The Indians in this neighbourhood inform us that the Missouri is navigable nearly to it's source, and that from a navigable part of the river, at a distance not exceeding half a day's march, there is a large river runing from South to North, along the Western bases of the Rocky mountains; but as their war excurtions have never extended far beyond this point, they can give no account of the discharge or source of this river. We believe this stream to be the principal South fork of the Columbia river, and if so we shall probably find but little difficulty in in passing to the Ocean. We have subsisted this winter on meat principally, with which, our guns have furnished us an ample supply, and have by that means reseved a sufficient stock of the provisions which we brought with us from the Illinois, to guard us against accedental wants, during the voyage of the present year.— You may expect me in Albemarle about the last of next September twelve months.— I request that you will give yourself no uneasiness with rispect to my fate, for I assure you that I feel myself perfectly as safe as I should do in Albemarle; and the only difference betwen 3 or 4 thousand miles and 130, is that I cannot have the pleasure of seeing you as often as I did while at Washington.—

I mus request of you before I conclude this letter, to send John Markes to the College at Williamsburgh, as soon as it shall be thought that his education has been sufficiently advanced to fit him for that ceminary; for you may rest assured that as you reguard his future posperity you had better make any sacrifice of his property than suffer his education to be neglected or remain incomple—give my love to my brothers and sisters, and all my neighbours and friends, and rest assured yourself of the most devoted filial affection of

Mrs. Lucy Markes. Yours. Meriwether Lewis.

Fort Mandan, 1609 miles above the entrance of the Missouri, March 31st 1805.

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Mrs Lucy Marks
care of Charlottesville
Virginia

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Yours.

Meriwether Lewis.

Mrs Lucy Markes.

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GREAT
NORTHERN