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# LEWIS AND CLARK EXPEDITION AT FORT CLATSOP

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## JULY 21, 1926, AT THE SALT CAIRN OF THE LEWIS AND CLARK EXPEDITION, SEASIDE, OREGON.*

In order to have a proper understanding of the Lewis and Clark Expedition at Fort Clatsop, it is necessary to consider events immediately previous to the building and occupation of Fort Clatsop. When I refer to the Expedition, I mean not only Captains Lewis and Clark, but the men composing that Expedition.

The Lewis and Clark Expedition came down the Columbia River, below the mouth of the Willamette River, in November, 1805.

They were at Pillar Rock, November 7, 1805, where they first saw at a distance, the Pacific Ocean, and heard "the distant roar of the breakers". They then went down the north shore of the Columbia River, and camped near a Chinook village, oposite the present city of Astoria.

November 18, 1805, Captain Clark and a party left the rest of the Expedition for a short exploration to Cape Disappointment and the sea beach north of that Cape. After some trouble they reached a point near Cape Disappointment, not far from where the officers' quarters of Fort Canby are now situated. Captain Clark ascended Cape Disappointment and viewed the ocean and channels from that point. From that point Captain Clark's party crossed

*Given before the Columbia River Historical Expedition at the terminus of its westward course in dedicating the series of monuments erected at Bonner's Ferry, Wishram and Astoria.

through the thick brush to the clay bluff on North Beach, which is a short distance northerly from the fishing rocks.

They then went north along the beach about four miles, where Captain Clark marked his name on a small pine tree. They returned south along the beach to where the clay bluff is situated, where they had luncheon, and then went east along the foot of the hills until they came to Whealdon or Black Lake, and thence along the low land to where the Town of Ilwaco is now situated. Thence they went along the shore of the bay to Wallacut River, and rejoined the rest of the Expedition near the Chinook village.

The weather was stormy and rainy, and the Indians told them there were more elk and deer on the south side of the Columbia River than on the north side. As the river is about seven miles wide where the Chinook village was situated, they went up the river to a point near Pillar Rock, arriving there November 25, 1805. From there they crossed the river to a point near what is now Warren's Landing and east of Tongue Point. The rain was almost continuous, and their clothing, bedding and stores were completely wet. Patrick Gass, in his Journal, under date of December 5, 1805, wrote:

"There is more wet weaether on this coast, than I ever knew in any other place; during the month we have had about three fair days; and there is no prospects of a change."

They were able to dry most of their clothing and supplies near Tongue Point. From Tongue Point they went across Young's Bay to the estuary of what is now known as Lewis and Clark River, where they built Fort Clatsop.

## FORT CLATSOP

Fort Clatsop, when built, was about 50 feet square, having an open space in the center, the sides being divided into compartments. The fort was constructed of split spruce or fir timbers, as the spruce and fir trees would easily split into planks. These planks were about ten feet long, two feet wide, and one and a half inch thick. During the construction of the fort rain was almost incessant. The

fort was practically finished December 30, 1805. Fort Clatsop was not an elegant or elaborate structure, but it enabled the Expedition to keep itself and its supplies dry, for they constructed several fire places and chimneys out of mud and sticks. Unfortunately the winter of 1805-1806 was very wet, although the temperature was not very cold. In fact, they experienced little snow or practically any freezing weather, although at times snow fell to a depth of a few inches.

It was necessary to have some men at the salt cairn and a number engaged in hunting, for they had few supplies except what they could procure for themselves. Several of the Expedition were sick. There was a certain necessary guard duty on account of the number of Indians who visited them, and men who gave necessary attention to the keeping of the camp in proper order, and also in curing the skins of wild animals, particularly elk, although they had few appliances for the purpose of curing them. They also made clothing out of elk skins for the Expedition and a great many pairs of moccasins. The elk buckskin is much better than the deer buckskin, for it is thicker and more durable.

The Expedition was frequently visited by Indians. Among other Indians was the Chief of the Clatsop Indians. His real name was Coboway, but both Lewis and Clark in their Journals wrote his name as "Commonwol." As an inspection of the original Journals shows, Lewis and Clark were not only intrepid explorers, but also "fierce" spellers. Fort Clatsop was also visited by Chinook Indians and by Delashalwilt, one of the Chinook Chiefs, and by parties of other Indians, including the Wahkiacums or Cathlamahs, whose habitat was near what is now Cathlamet.

From these Indians Lewis and Clark purchased furs, some of which were sea-otter skins. Lewis and Clark had only a few articles for trading purposes. They had several strands of white and red beads, but very few blue beads, which the Indians particularly prized. Lewis and Clark were able to purchase a few dogs to kill for food for the sick. They also purchased from the Indians some wapatos and other roots and dried berries. These were the only ve-

getable foods of the Expedition. Lewis and Clark were able to purchase from the Indians some fish, mostly sturgeon and salmon. In February there was a run of eulachon, which Lewis and Clark called anchovies. These are candlefish, the fish which are commonly known in Oregon as Columbia River smelt and Cowlitz River smelt. The eulachon spawn in glacial streams. They enter the Columbia River and ascend Cowlitz River from Mount Rainier,Lewis River opposite the City of Saint Helens, which rises at Mount Saint Helens, and Sandy River from Mount Hood. For some reason the eulachon did not enter the Columbia River for a great many years, but along late in the sixties these fish came in in abundance and were caught in the Cowlitz River and for several years afterwards were known as Cowlitz River smelt.

The supply of tobacco had become quite small. Seven of the party did not use tobacco, the rest used crab-tree bark as a substitute for chewing tobacco. It was very bitter, but they assured Captain Lewis that they found it a good substitute for tobacco. The smokers substituted the inner bark of the red willow and the bearberry for tobacco. The bark of bearberry (whose botanical name is *Arctostaphylos uva ursi*) is used by the Indians, west of the Mississippi River, with tobacco, to give a flavor to smoking-tobacco which they like, is called by them "Kinnikinic". It was called by Lewis and Clark, in their Journals, "sacommis".

The hunters killed many elk but only a few deer. Sergeant Gass, in his Journal, under date of March 20, 1806, says:

"I made a calculation of the number of elk and deer killed by the party from the 1st of Dec., 1805, to the 20th March, 1806, which gave 131 elk and 20 deer. There were a fewer smaller quadrupeds killed, such as otter, beaver; and one raccon."

Elk meat is good but it becomes almost distasteful when eaten three times a day. There was an agreeable change when there was a chance to get some blubber from a whale. In the first week of January, 1806, Lewis and Clark learned that a whale had come ashore south of Tillamook Head.

January 6, 1806, Clark, with a small party, started for the place where the whale had come ashore. With them was Sacajawea—the Bird Woman—who was the wife of Chabaneau, an interpreter of the Expedition, and the only woman in the party. She said she had never seen the ocean, nor, of course, a whale, and she was very insistent on being one of the party. Of course, she was successful on account of her insistence. They went over Tillamook Head and came to the skeleton of the whale, which was 105 feet long. With some difficulty they secured some blubber from the Indians, who were loath to sell any of it. The Indian name for whale is "ecola", and from the fact of this whale having come ashore while Lewis and Clark were at Fort Clatsop, the place has become known as Ecola, and the creek emptying into the ocean at that point is also called Ecola.

Before arriving at Fort Clatsop the supply of candles had given out, so the Expedition made for use crude candles out of elk tallow.

## TREES NEAR FORT CLATSOP

Fort Clatsop was situated a short distance from the west side of the estuary of the Lewis and Clark River. A mile or two from Fort Clatsop the Lewis and Clark River above its estuary is really a creek. Near this creek was a magnificent grove of spruce trees, most of them more than ten feet in diameter and covering possibly 100 acres. In this grove was a magnificent spruce tree of an estimated height of about 400 feet and of a large diameter. Lewis in his Journal says it was 40 feet in circumference, at a height "as high as a tall man could reach which was about the circumpherence for at least 200 feet". I saw that tree in 1872 when, with three other boys, we camped in that grove. I measured this tree about five feet above the ground with a piece of twine, which I afterwards measured. It showed the circumferènce of this tree was about 43 feet. It was not round. A cross-section would have been elliptical. This was probably due to the tree, being in reality two large trees, which had coalesced or grown together, for at a height

of about 200 feet it divided into two separate prongs. A homesteader and his wife had taken up this land claim and built a cabin, and, instead of clearing the land, he started in, while we were there, to cut down this enormous tree. It was apparently solid and there was no danger of its falling, as it stood straight. But it was too large to be used by a saw mill, for logs from this tree could not be transported without being split by gun-powder. It is greatly to be regretted that not only this magnificent tree, but this grove of spruce trees, have ceased to exist. I think it may be safely said that this tree was the largest tree in Oregon.

## SALT CAIRN OR SALT MAKERS' CAMP

One reason why Lewis and Clark located at Fort Clatsop was that, in addition to affording access to the Columbia River by canoes, the fort was near to the Pacific Ocean, where salt could be made from the ocean water. The salt cairn or salt makers' camp as established was southwest of the fort and at a distance which Lewis and Clark estimated at about 15 miles. I think this distance is an overestimate. Probably Lewis and Clark's estimate was based on the number of miles travelled in going to and from the salt cairn. In some respects this camp or cairn was well located. It was south of the Necanicum River, but by reason of that river emptying into the ocean near the cairn, the water was fresher than ordinary ocean water, so, although the pot of sea-water was kept boiling night and day most of the time, only about two quarts of salt a day was made.

The cairn was situated on what had been the terminal moraine of a glacier which in ancient times must have filled the canyon of the Necanicum. This is shown by the great number of boulders and other rocks situated near the old Seaside Hotel and in the ocean, where bathing was practically impossible a few years ago by reason of the sand washing away and leaving only the boulders. This Necanicum glacier evidently debouched into the ocean just north of Tillamook Head.

Before reaching the lower Columbia the supply of salt carried by the Expedition had become exhausted and they

were unable to procure any salt from the Indians. White people have a craving for salt, but the Indians of the Pacific Northwest apparently did not care for salt, getting their supply from the wild animals and fish they ate. There were no deposits of salt or salt springs near the mouth of the Columbia River.

In 1803 the ship Boston was captured and all of its officers and crew, except two, John R. Jewitt, the armorer, and a man named Thompson, the sail-maker, were killed. This occurerd on Nootka Sound, on the west coast of Vancouver's Island. The ship was run ashore. A short time afterwards one of the Indians went on the ship at night to obtain some of the cargo. The ship caught fire during the trip of this Indian, and then all on the ship was destroyed, including a large quantity of salt beef and salt pork. In Jewett's "Narrative" he says that he and Thompson were greatly disappointed, for they "had calculated on having these provisions for ourselves, which would have furnished us with a stock for years, as whatever is cured with salt . . . . . are never eaten by these people."

Jewett further wrote in his "Narrative" that he and Thompson tried to make salt by boiling salt water, but Maquinna, the head-chief, "one day finding Thompson and myself on the shore employed in boiling down sea-water into salt, and being told what it was, he was very much displeased, and taking the little we had procured, threw it into the sea."

About February 20, 1806, the salt makers' camp was abandoned. February 21, 1806, the salt makers arrived at Fort Clatsop, and brought with them about twenty gallons of this salt. Twelve gallons of this salt was placed in two small iron-bound kegs, and laid by for use on the return trip of the Expedition to the Eastern States.

## LEAVING FORT CLATSOP

The Expedition abandoned Fort Clatsop March 23, 1806. Before leaving, Lewis and Clark gave the fort, its buildings and furniture, to Coboway, the Clatsop Chief. Lewis, in his Journal, says of Coboway:

"He has been much more kind and hospitable to us than any other Indian in this neighborhood."

They also gave to Coboway and to Delashalwilt written certificates of good character.

Captain Lewis purchased from the Indians a canoe with his United States artillery officer's uniform, and the Expedition seized a canoe from the Clatsop Indians on account of a number of elk which the Clatsop Indians had stolen from the hunters of the Expedition.

The Lewis and Clark Expedition had a letter of credit from the United States, to be used particularly for the purchase of supplies from ships. But no ship came into the Columbia River while Lewis and Clark were at Fort Clatsop, although there were several American ships along the coast of Vancouver's Island and Alaska. In consequence, in addition to a few extra old clothes, 358 pairs of moccasins, and some dressed buckskin, they had but very little to take with them. In his Journal Lewis, under date of March 16, 1806, wrote:

"Two handkerchiefs would now contain all the small articles of merchandize which we possess; the ballance of the stock consists of 6 blue robes one scarlet do, one uniform artillerist's coat and hat, five robes made of our large flag, and a few old cloaths trimed with ribbon, on this stock we have wholy to depend for the purchase of horses and such portion of our subsistence from the Indians as it will be in our powers to obtain. a scant dependence indeed, for a tour of the distance of that before us."

Their powder had been packed in lead canisters, airtight and water tight. On taking an inventory of their powder and lead, February 1, 1806, Lewis says in his Journal of that date:

"Today we opened and examined all our ammunition which had been secured in leaden canesters. we found twenty seven of the best rifle powder, 4 of common rifle, th[r]ee of glaized and one of the musqu[e]t powder in good order, perfectly as dry as when first put in the canes-

ters, altho' the whole of it from various accedents has been for hours under the water. these cannesters contain four lbs. of powder each and 8 of lead",

i. e., 140 pounds of good, dry gun-powder in 35 canisters.

In his Journal Clark wrote, under date of March 17, 1806:

"Drewyer returned late this evening from the Cath-lah-mahs with our Indian canoe which Sergt. Pryor had left some days since, and also a canoe, which he had purchased from those people. for this canoe he gave Captn. Lewis's uniform laced coat and nearly half a carrot of tobacco. it seams that nothing except this Coat would induce them to dispose of a canoe which in their mode of traffic is an article of the greatest value except a wife, with whome it is nearly equal, and is generally given in exchange to the father for his daughter. I think that the United States are in justice indebted to Captn. Lewis another uniform Coat for that of which he has disposed of on this ocasion. it was but little worn.

"We yet want another canoe as the Clatsops will not sell us one, a proposition has been made by one of our interpts, and sever[al] of the party to take one in lieu of 6 Elk which they stole from us this winter &c".

Before leaving, Lewis and Clark made out several copies of a certificate, one of which they pasted up in Fort Clatsop, and gave one to Delashalwilt, and some other Indians, concerning which Clark wrote as follows, under date of March 18, 1806:

"Those list's of our names we have given to several of the nativs, and also posted up a copy in our room. the object of these lists we stated in the preamble of the same as follows Viz: 'The Object of this list is, that through the medium of some civilized person who may see the same, it may be made known to the informed world that the party, consisting of the persons whose names are hereunto annexed; and who were sent out by the Government of the United States in May 1804, to explore the interior of the Continent of North America, did penetrate the same by way of the

Missouri and Columbia rivers, to the discharge of the latter into the Pacific Ocean, where they arrived on the 14th. of November, 1805, and from whence they departed the [blank space in MS.] day of March, 1806, on their return to the United States by the same rout they had come out.'

"On the back of lists we added a sketch of the continent of the upper branches of the Missouri with those of the Columbia, particularly of its upper S. E. branch or Lewis's River, on which we also delineated the track we had come and that we ment to pursue on our return, when the same happened to vary. There seemes so many chances against our governments ever obtaining a regular report, through the medium of the savages, and the traders of this coast that we decline makeing any. Our party are too small to think of leaveing any of them to return to the Unt. States by Sea, particularly as we shall be necessarily devided into two or three parties on our return in order to accomplish the Object we have in View; and at any rate we shall reach the U. States in all humain probability much earlier than a man could who must in the event of his being left here depend for his passage to the U. State[s] on the traders of this coast, who may not return imediately to the U. States. or if they should, might probably spend the next summer in tradeing with the nativs before they set out on their return."

The exact number of men comprising the Expedition at Fort Clatsop is a little uncertain. On pages 357-359 of Volume 7 of Thwaites' Original Journals of Lewis and Clark, is given a copy of a roll or roster of the men in the Expedition in a report of Captain Lewis to General H. Dearborn, Secretary of War. This list or roll enumerates twenty-nine men. But in this roll is included the name of Sergeant Charles Floyd, who died as the Expedition was going west. It also includes the names of George Drulyard and Chabaneau (whose name is spelled in the roll "Charbono"). It would therefore appear that besides Lewis and Clark there were twenty-eight men of the Expedition at Fort Clatsop, of which two were interpreters. There was, in addition, Sacajawea, the wife of Chabaneau.

In a foot-note of Coues' Edition (Volume III, pages 903, 904), the following is set forth:

"By a singular casualty, this note fell into the possession of Captain Hill, who, while on the coast of the Pacific, procured it from the natives. This note accompanied him on his voyage to Canton, whence it arrived in the United States. The following is an extract of a letter from a gentleman at Canton to his friend in Philadelphia:

" 'Extract of a letter from . . . . to . . . . , in Philadelphia.

" 'Canton, January, 1807.

" 'I wrote you last by the Governor Strong, (Captain) Cleveland, for Boston; the present is by the brig Lydia, (Captain) Hill, of the same place.

" 'Captain Hill, while on the coast, met some Indian natives near the mouth of the Columbia river, who delivered to him a paper, of which I enclose you a copy. It had been committed to their charge by Captains Clarke and Lewis, who had penetrated to the Pacific ocean. The original is a rough draft with a pen of their outward route, and that which they intend returning by.' "

Although the Expedition had many severe hardships at Fort Clatsop, Lewis and Clark were good sportsmen and explorers, and in his Journal, under date of March 20, 1806, Lewis wrote:

"Altho' we have not fared sumptuously this winter and spring at Fort Clatsop, we have lived quite as comfortably as we had any reason to expect we should; and have accomplished every object which induced our remaining at this place except that of meeting with the traders who visit the entrance of this river. Our salt will be very sufficient to last us to the Missouri, where we have a stock in store. It would have been very fortunate for us had some of those traders arrived previous to our departure from hence, as we should then have had it in our power to obtain an addition to our stock of merchandize which would have made our homeward-bound journey much more comfortable."

And so, thus poorly equipped, on March 23, 1806, at one

o'clock in the afternoon, the Expedition left Fort Clatsop on their return trip.

Alexander Mackenzie (afterwards knighted), in 1792-1793 crossed the North American continent. He discovered what is now known as Fraser River, which the Indians called Tacoutchee-Tessee ("Tessee" meaning river), and floated down that river about 250 miles. Afterwards, reascending the river for about one degree of latitude, he proceeded westward, and on July 22, 1793, reached the Pacific Ocean at latitude 52 degrees and 20 minutes north. At no time was Mackenzie near the Columbia River or its source.

For a time after Gray's discovery of the Columbia River it was thought that the Tacoutchee-Tessee was the upper part of the Columbia River. That it was another river was discovered by Simon Fraser, who descended it in 1808, and found that it emptied into the Gulf of Georgia.

The source of the Columbia River was discovered in 1807 by David Thompson, the noted explorer and geographer.

Lewis and Clark and their Expedition were thus the first to cross the American continent between latitude 42 degrees, the present northern boundary of the States of California and Nevada, and latitude 49 degrees, which is the northern boundary of the State of Washington and extends east on that parallel of latitude to Lake Superior. They knew that Captain Gray had discovered the mouth of the Columbia River and that Lieutenant Broughton, of Vancouver's Expedition, had ascended the Columbia River to a point a few miles above the present City of Vancouver, Washington. But nothing was known in 1804 of any part of the Columbia River beyond where Broughton and his party had been in October, 1792. Lewis and Clark went to find this river and to descend it to its mouth.

## EULOGY OF LEWIS AND CLARK

When Lewis and Clark organized and started on their Expedition, they knew that they were going into an uncharted and unknown wilderness, probably inhabited by wild and savage Indians; that they would have to rely for their sustenance on game along the route; that they would probably have to stay at least two winters in the wilderness before returning to their starting place on the Missouri River. Lewis and Clark and their party were intrepid men—they were unafraid—they did not hesitate. They overcame and surmounted every obstacle and difficulty. Only one of the Expedition died—Sergeant Floyd, and he died on the way west from drinking poisonous water. All the rest of the party returned to Missouri, except John Colter, one of the hunters of the Expedition. In August, 1806, he was allowed to leave the Expedition to join some trappers, who were going into the wilderness, as his services were no longer indispensable and the offer would apparently be to Colter's advantage. Colter had performed his duties well. He was a most efficient man. The others of the Expedition agreed not to ask a similar permission, and continued with the Expedition to St. Louis, Missouri.

Lewis and Clark and all their men were heroes—heroes of peace but not of war—true sportsmen and explorers—good and true Americans, who carried the flag of their country in their hearts as well as in their hands. Their true spirit is shown in the Journals of Lewis and Clark of March 20, 1806, concerning their stay at Fort Clatsop.

Their trip was not in vain—it was of great and lasting benefit, in many ways, to the United States. It was the first military expedition to cross the American continent by the government of the United States or of Great Britain.

The Lewis and Clark Expedition were of the same kind and quality as the early pioneers of Oregon, who saved an empire in extent, by peace and not by war. Nine of the party were volunteers from Kentucky. The hardships endured only intensified their feeling of service to their country. They were heroes, although they were not aware that

they were heroes. As long as the history of Oregon is known, it can never be forgotten what they hoped, what they dared, what they endured, and what they accomplished.

NOTE.—In preparing the foregoing address on Lewis and Clark at Fort Clatsop, I have consulted and relied on the following books, all of which I have in my private library:

"Journal of Patrick Gass", printed at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1807.

"A Re-print of the 'Biddle Edition', with Notes by Elliott Coues", published in New York, in 1893, by Francis P. Harper, 4 volumes.

"Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition 1804-1806", edited by Reuben Gold Thwaites. This "Thwaites Edition" is in 7 volumes and contains the original "Journals" by Lewis and Clark with the originnal bad spelling by them, published by Dodd, Mead & Company, in 1905.

Lewis and Clark each kept a Journal. Apparently they compared notes or showed to each other what they had written in their respective Journals, so that in many respects their Journals are practically duplicates, except as to the spelling.

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