

Brief Account
of the
LEWIS AND CLARK
EXPEDITION
FROM ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI
TO THE
MOUTH OF THE COLUMBIA RIVER
OREGON
AND RETURN
1804 ~ 1806
With Illustrative Map

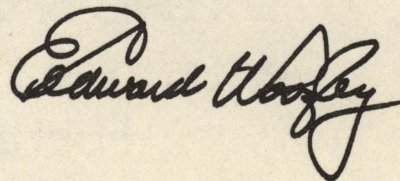
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Exhibit of the
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GENERAL LAND OFFICE
Lewis and Clark
Centennial Exposition
Portland
1905

FOREWORD.

The Lewis and Clark Expedition in 1804-1806 is important for a number of reasons. First, it was the climax to three centuries of exploration of the North American Continent. Second, it was a key element in the claim of the United States to the great Pacific Northwest. Like Columbus, Lewis and Clark hoped to find a short and easy route to the Orient. Both expeditions failed in this, but in establishing the realities of the vast continent of North America they opened new worlds greater than any now anticipated.

In commemorating the Lewis and Clark Expedition, it is natural to reflect on the great historical and political significance of this undertaking, but this should not blind us to the many valuable personal lessons to be gained from the actual day to day experiences so brilliantly recorded by several members of the expedition. In its planning and execution this was surely one of the most successful explorations ever undertaken. It serves as an inspiring example of sustained group effort under difficult, and sometimes truly hazardous circumstances. The courage and vision of this great enterprise are appropriately celebrated by reprinting an historical sketch of the Lewis and Clark Expedition from the files of the Old General Land Office. This brief account emphasises the human side of the expedition. Morale was high on this trip. It is a vivid example of what enlightened leadership can accomplish and how a spirit of loyal cooperation can be built in a group made up of persons with widely different national origins and personal characteristics.

To give historical perspective to the Lewis and Clark effort, two new maps showing the routes of the principal explorers of the United States and Alaska have been added. The publication, originally issued in 1905 by the General Land Office, a predecessor agency of the Bureau of Land Management, was reissued in 1926. This reprint has been prepared to answer the many requests from educators and others for this historic pamphlet.



Director, Bureau of Land Management.

THE LEWIS AND CLARK EXPEDITION.

The voyage of Sieur de La Salle down the Mississippi river, in 1682, was an extraordinary adventure. When measured by the influence for civilization and world progress now exercised by the people who dwell and prosper within the territory claimed by La Salle for France, this expedition stands next in importance to that other achievement along the Atlantic coast, which began sixty-two years earlier with the voyage which ended at Plymouth Rock. When he had reached the mouth of the Mississippi river, La Salle, by right of discovery, took possession, under the name of Louisiana and for the French King, of a vast and virtually unknown region. It embraced the drainage basin of the Mississippi, and extended along the Gulf of Mexico eastward to the river of Palms, which emptied into the Gulf about the middle of the west coast of the Florida peninsula.

Prior to this voyage of La Salle, some small portions of this vast claim for France had been visited by other Europeans. The interior, north of the Gulf of Mexico, had been penetrated at varying distances by Spanish fortune-hunters, de Narvaez in 1528, de Luna in 1559, and de Soto in 1535 to 1542, the last named crossing the Mississippi river into what is now Arkansas and northern Louisiana territory. In the north several intrepid Roman Catholic missionaries, his own countrymen, preceded La Salle. Nicolet visited the territory which is now included within the States of Wisconsin and Illinois in 1634, and in 1673 Marquette and Joliet floated down the Illinois and Mississippi rivers about to the mouth of the Arkansas. These are the most important of the earlier expeditions which entered the territory claimed later by La Salle. Considering them as factors in pushing civilization, or in their relation, as primary agents, to the foundation of future political States, their combined influence was comparatively unimportant. The most that may be said of any of them is, that in some small measure those in the South gave Spain a shadow of title to a province; but La Salle added to France an empire whose value, had it been rightly understood by the First Consul, would have precluded even the remotest suggestion of that extraordinary alienation of French soil which he authorized in 1803.

Long prior to the purchase of Louisiana from France, however, the interest of public men had been directed toward the Pacific coast and what was known as the Oregon territory, as well as toward exploration of the great unknown interior country west of the Mississippi river. At least twenty years before 1803, Jefferson had enlisted the co-operation of explorers and travelers in schemes to explore this territory. Several beginnings were made and the journeys in some instances actually begun, but none was

carried to a conclusion. The northwest coasts, from northern California northward, were visited by the ships of several nations at comparatively early dates. Chief among these early navigators, perhaps, and upon whose discoveries were based the most important claims to territory, were: Cabrillo, 1542; Ferrelo, 1543; Viscaino, 1603; Perez, 1774, and Heceta, 1776, all Spanish; Drake, 1579; Cook, 1778; Vancouver, 1792, British; and Captain Robert Gray, 1792, American. All of these navigators touched here and there along the California, Oregon and Washington coasts, and conflicts of authority arose between the British and Spanish, more particularly as to titles to territory in and about Vancouver island and farther north. Of all of these explorations by sea, that of Captain Gray is of the greatest interest to Americans. Captain Gray discovered the mouth of the Columbia river, gave the stream the name it bears, and sailed up the current for many miles. The early American claims to "Oregon Territory," which embraced the States of Oregon, Washington, Idaho and parts of Montana and Wyoming, were based upon this discovery of Captain Gray, and the claim was strengthened by subsequent land and water expeditions, and especially by the Spanish-American boundary treaty of 1819. In 1803, President Jefferson asked of Congress an appropriation of \$2,500.00 for the expedition which was begun by Lewis and Clark the following year. The fact is unquestioned that the American claim to Oregon territory was the prime motive of this great expedition, while the purchase of Louisiana was a secondary but immensely stimulating excuse for its immediate prosecution.

Political considerations, in the narrower sense, appear to have exercised no influence in the selection of the men to command the party thus authorized by Congress. The capacity and acquirements of Captain Meriwether Lewis, for the trying duties of chief commander of the expedition, had become well known to President Jefferson, whose private secretary Lewis had been; and William Clark, associate of Lewis in command, was of distinguished family and a younger brother of George Rogers Clark. Prior to his appointment, Clark was a lieutenant of infantry, and had seen five years' service, some of which was had in active Indian campaigns. Both men were courageous, tactful, fertile in expedient and persistent, and both were familiar with the Indian character.

The men chosen by them for the journey were selected with special reference to the arduous and hazardous duties they were to perform. Omitting the seven soldiers and nine river men who acted as guards to the expedition, and assisted in carrying stores as far as the first winter camp with the Mandan Indians, at the great bend of the Missouri river, the personnel of the party included twenty-seven men besides Lewis and Clark, divided into privates, non-commissioned officers, etc., after the manner of a purely military establishment. Of these twenty-seven men, nine were young frontiersmen from Kentucky, fourteen were soldiers from the United States army, two were French boatmen, one an interpreter and hunter, and the

last a negro servant of Captain Clark. All were unmarried and without family ties except Chaboneau, the French interpreter, who took with him Sacagawea, his Indian wife. This woman was a Shoshone squaw who was stolen when a child and sold a slave to the Mandans. The Mandans in turn disposed of her to the Frenchman, who made her his wife. From the references to her in Lewis and Clark's report, it is certain that Sacagawea was no common Indian squaw. She was a sister of one of the chiefs of the Shoshone tribe, and for her virtue, her courage under almost insurmountable difficulties, fealty to the leaders of the expedition, and extraordinary service in times of great need, she deserves a heroine's place in the history of the aborigines of this country.

On May 14, 1804, the expedition with abundant supplies, including weapons for defence, presents for savages and cheap but, to an Indian, very desirable articles for barter, left the mouth of Wood river, on the Illinois bank of the Mississippi, and opposite the mouth of the Missouri, for the first great and successful journey overland and by canoe, from the Father of Waters to the Pacific ocean. The journey was begun by water, three boats, the largest being fifty-five feet in length and drawing three feet of water, being used. The method of propulsion was chiefly by oars in deep water, but in the case of the largest craft it was often necessary, also, to attach a line to the bow upon which a long line of men along shore lustily pulled. In shallow places, poles for propulsion were used, and a large sail helped where a breeze could be utilized and the water was deep enough to promise a safe passage. Progress was made at the rate of about ten miles per day. On July 30, the expedition reached the place about twenty miles above the present site of Omaha, Nebraska, where the first powwow was held with the Indians and a treaty entered into. On account of the council here held, Lewis and Clark named the place "Council Bluff," and this name, with slight change, is perpetuated in the flourishing city of Council Bluffs, Iowa, which, however, occupies a site twenty miles further down the river and on the opposite, or Iowa, side.

Thence by toilsome journey the expedition pushed on resolutely up stream, but met with a sad experience in the death of Sergeant Floyd of the party on August 20, 1804. This was the only death which occurred during the two years of the expedition. Floyd's river, an Iowa stream which empties into the Missouri a little below Sioux City, was named by Lewis and Clark in honor of Floyd, who was buried upon a high hill about a mile below its mouth. This hill also commemorates the name of Floyd, being called "Floyd's Bluff" since the date of his death. After the burial of Floyd the voyage was again resumed as rapidly as possible, every opportunity to confer with the Indians being improved, and many presents were given to chiefs. The first buffalo was killed on the 27th of August. On September 5, Lewis and Clark saw their first antelope, and on September 7 the first prairie dogs were seen. These two interesting animals of the plains, the antelope and prairie dog, were first made known to science during this



expedition. On October 26, or one hundred and sixty-five days from the start at the Mississippi river, the Mandan villages, at which Lewis and Clark proposed to spend the winter, were reached. Here, on the north or left bank of the river, a fort called Fort Mandan was erected. The winter of 1804-5 was passed without serious illness or accident to any of the party.

On April 7, 1805, the large barge in command of Corporal Warfington with thirteen persons all told, ten being members of the expedition thus far, set out on the return journey to St. Louis with despatches for President Jefferson. They also took a considerable collection of objects of interest, embracing specimens of natural history, articles of Indian manufacture, etc. On the same day the main expedition, now reduced to thirty-three persons, including the Indian wife of the interpreter, and a Mandan Indian, who was taken along as a peace emissary to the Shoshones or Snakes, continued their journey into the unknown west. Six light canoes, constructed upon the river's bank, and one of the large boats brought from St. Louis, were taken. On April 26 the mouth of the Yellowstone river was reached. The French name for this stream, "Roche Jaune," was probably given by Verendrye, who had visited this region more than fifty years before Lewis and Clark. Practically all of the country, however, traversed by the expedition from Fort Mandan to the Pacific coast, was new to the white man, and, very naturally, prominent streams and topographical features were named by Lewis and Clark. Many of these names still prevail, but the majority have been lost through lapse of time, and through inability to identify places and objects designated by the explorers. On June 13, Captain Lewis, tramping in advance of the boats, reached the Great Falls of the Missouri river.

From the Great Falls, the expedition pushed on up the river, although for many miles the general direction of travel changed from west to almost due south. The three large forks of the Missouri were named for Jefferson, Madison and Gallatin, and the largest and most western of these, the Jefferson, was followed about to its source in the continental divide. As may be seen on the map, the continental divide and main range of the Rocky Mountains were crossed three times—once by the entire expedition, going west, and at two other points by Lewis and Clark separately on the return journey. The lofty Bitter Root Range, which now marks the boundary between the States of Montana and Idaho, was crossed three times by the entire expedition—twice going west and once on the return trip. Owing to the extreme roughness of the country and lack of game, this was the most difficult portion of the journey. The entire party were compelled to subsist chiefly upon berries, and often went hungry, but they were greatly assisted by the Shoshone or Snake Indians, the tribe of Sacagawea, and from whom she was stolen many years before, as noted above.

After crossing the Bitter Root range, the expedition followed down the Clearwater river and tributaries, called by them Kooskooskie river, to its junction with the Lewis or Snake river, and thence continued down the

latter to the Columbia. On reaching navigable water, canoes were again constructed, and this easier method of travel was followed to their ultimate destination. Many landings were made on both banks of the streams navigated, to repair canoes and hold councils with the Indians. The Shoshone guide and his son who had led the party across the mountains deserted them before the Columbia was reached, but their services were no longer needed. On October 24, the little fleet of canoes passed through the Dalles of the Columbia, without accident, and much to the astonishment of the natives, who watched the passage from the river banks. They shot the Long Narrows on the 25th, and on November 2d the empty canoes were navigated through the Cascades, the baggage having been previously landed and carried around by portage. On November 7, 1805, as reported in Captain Clark's journal, they saw for the first time the "object of all our labors, the reward of all our anxieties," in the salt waters of the Pacific Ocean.

Near the mouth of the Columbia, but in reality upon the Pacific shore, the expedition established quarters for the winter of 1805-6, and erected a fort which was called Fort Clatsop, in honor of the Indian tribe which occupied and claimed the territory in that vicinity. The winter passed without notable events, but much time was given to the manufacture of salt by evaporating sea water, for consumption on the return journey. The Indians of the coast generally were found to be friendly, and peace councils were held with all who could be reached.

THE RETURN JOURNEY.

On March 23, 1806, Lewis and Clark began the return journey, following, in the main, the route traveled westward. The personnel of the party was the same as that which left Fort Mandan on the Missouri river nearly a year before, but they had been compelled of necessity to part with nearly all of their trading materials, and provisions were scarce and hard to obtain. But they knew the road home, its difficulties and how to surmount them; so that it was with feelings of hope, even of elation, that the return journey was begun. Boats were used until Fort Rock, just below the Dalles, was reached, where horses were traded for and the overland journey begun. Arriving at the Kooskooskie river, now the Clearwater, they camped for three weeks and until it was thought the snow on the high mountains was sufficiently melted to permit the expedition to cross; but the first attempt made June 15, was unsuccessful. The second attempt, made nine days later, found four feet less of snow, and the cavalcade containing the entire party with sixty-six horses started to re-cross the Bitter Root range. One after another, the camps occupied during September of the previous year

were passed, and the final divide of the Bitter Root range was crossed. At this point the party was divided, Captain Lewis taking nine men and striking off toward the northeast, while Captain Clark, with the remainder of the party, turned southward, and for a distance travelled over the path of the outward bound expedition.

Captain Lewis and party crossed the dividing ridge of the Rocky Mountains at the point now called "Lewis and Clark Pass" on July 7, and on the 11th reached the Missouri river, where they found herds of countless thousands of buffalo. In boats made of green buffalo hides, they crossed the river to their old camp at White Bear islands. Here a *cache*, made on the outward journey, was opened. All articles not injured by the invasion of high water were taken out and re-hidden. From this point Captain Lewis took three men and explored the Marias river, overtaking the remainder of his party at the junction of this stream with the Missouri. It was on this side trip that the first and only serious conflict with the Indians occurred. An attempt was made to steal the guns and horses of the little party, which was stoutly resisted, and resulted in the killing of two Indians, one by Captain Lewis. The horses were saved and the entire party got away safely, and after a hard ride joined the main party at the mouth of the Marias, as well as the party under Sergeant Ordway with the boats sent down the Missouri by Captain Clark. At this point the horses were turned loose to shift for themselves, and the party embarked in the boats and proceeded down the river to the rendezvous at the mouth of the Yellowstone. On August 11, 1806, while out hunting, Captain Lewis was accidentally shot through the thighs by one of his men. This wound caused much pain, but healed rapidly. The next day, August 12, the Lewis and Clark parties which had separated immediately after crossing the Bitter Root mountains on July 3, were happily united without the loss of a man.

The route of Captain Clark's party after the separation, is shown upon the map. It was southerly, along the base of the eastern slopes of the Bitter Root and Rocky Mountains, to the head-waters of the Missouri, and thence down the Jefferson fork by boat to the three forks of the river. Their horses, however, were taken along the banks and used later. From the junction of the three forks, the Jefferson, Madison and Gallatin rivers, Captain Clark's party on July 13th proceeded up the Gallatin, crossed the Gallatin range and entered the valley of the Yellowstone; the expedition again being indebted to Sacagawea, whose knowledge of trails and passes was of almost incalculable value to the party. The route down the Yellowstone was by land until the feet of the horses became worn and tender, when canoes were constructed. While constructing the canoes, twenty-four horses were stolen by Indians. The main party boarded the canoes on July 24, three men being detailed to trail the remaining horses along the river banks, but all were stolen by the Crows before the rendezvous was reached.

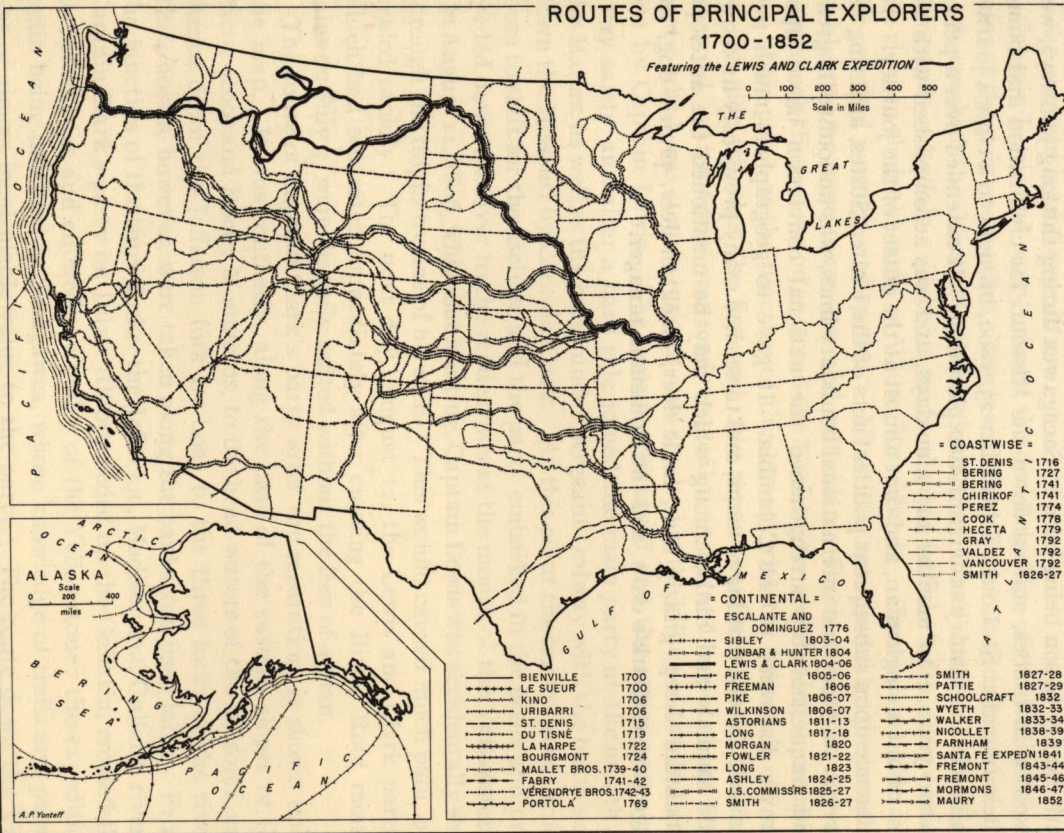
The united party, with Clark in chief command and Lewis slowly recover-

ing from his wound, pushed on by canoes to Fort Mandan, which was reached on August 14. The stay at their former winter quarters was short, for on the 17th, three days after their arrival, the expedition, reduced in number by four, the trapper Colter and the French interpreter and his little family (a son being born to Sacagawea during the long journey), well disposed in canoes, started down the Missouri for civilization and home. Their arrival at St. Louis, September 23, 1806, brought to a close a journey unique in the history of territorial exploration. It extended over a period of two years, four months and nine days, and was accomplished with the loss of but a single man, and that almost at the outset of the journey. Its influence upon subsequent political acts of the United States, affecting the Oregon territory and international boundary lines, was undoubtedly great, and unquestionably strengthened the national conviction based upon Gray's discovery of the Columbia. It gave to geographers much new material for the making of maps, and to science many previously unknown wild animals and birds, among which may be mentioned the antelope, mountain sheep, grizzly bear, mule deer, blacktail deer, prairie dog, the sage grouse, Clark's crow, and the Louisiana tanager.

ROUTES OF PRINCIPAL EXPLORERS 1700-1852

Featuring the LEWIS AND CLARK EXPEDITION

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Scale in Miles



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