

Essays Present Lewis & Clark in Broader Context

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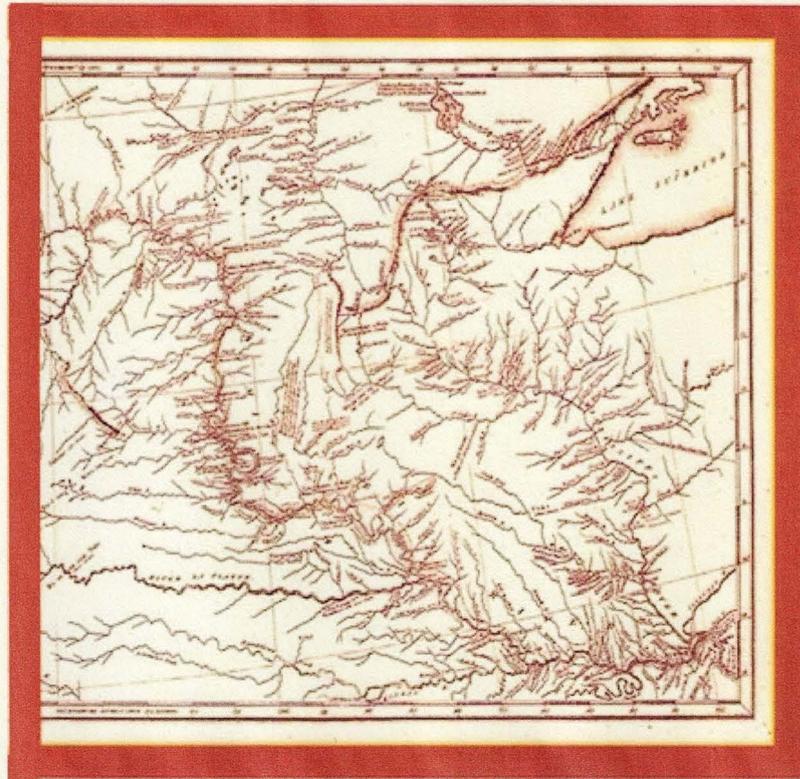
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THE SHORTEST AND
MOST CONVENIENT ROUTE

Lewis and Clark in Context



ROBERT S. COX
EDITOR

Reviews

Seaman, The Dog Who Helped Lewis and Clark Explore the West, by Gail Karwoski; WPO, November 1999). Likewise, Wolf's Oolum is most convincing when he "speaks" as one of his own species, as when kidnapped by Columbia River Indians. His vulnerability to a bait of biscuits, his fear and defiance, and his joy upon his rescue will resonate with readers who like dogs.

Inexorably, Wolf directs us to the inner character beneath the external trappings. Drouillard sees a lesson in the fate of a trapped beaver that has fought two miles downstream before giving up the ghost: "How far will you travel to discover who you are?" Sacagawea struggles over the Bitterroots with her infant, melting snow in her mouth to mingle with breast milk. "I will be your tepee now," she avows. Reuben Field wrestles with guilt over the young Blackfeet man he killed, and receives loving reassurance from brother Joseph: "That Indian, he made a choice . . . Brother or not, yer the best man I know."

Through these and other vignettes, Wolf seduces us into a potent sympathy with the explorers. We vicariously experience their travails; we yearn to intervene and help them; above all, one more time, we wish we had been there.

—Dennis M. O'Connell

Essays present Lewis & Clark in broader context

The Shortest and Most Convenient Route: Lewis and Clark in Context

Robert S. Cox, ed.

American Philosophical Society
255 pages / \$24 paper

No great enterprise, nor that which follows in its wake, takes place in a vacuum. This is certainly true in the case of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, since the mission of the Corps of Discovery and the actions of its members and benefactors were inevitably influenced by the social, political, and cultural forces that helped to define and guide the early American experience.

With this in mind, Robert S. Cox, head of special collections at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and a team of scholars have written six essays to "grapple in different ways with the complex of motives underlying the Corp of Discovery" and its impact on American culture. The essays are based on papers delivered at the Bicentennial Conference on Lewis and Clark, held in Philadelphia in 2003.



Jefferson's profile, from *The Shortest and Most Convenient Route*

A major question for many scholars is what motivated Lewis and Clark to act in the manner so carefully chronicled in their journals. And how does one explain the successes and failures of this great adventure, including all that happened in the aftermath of the expedition? Further, why, throughout much of the 19th century, did the Corps of Discovery fail to receive the attention and credit its great achievement deserved? This collection seeks to tease out some answers to these and other questions.

Its success is in large part due to the caliber and reputation of its authors. In addition to writings by Robert Cox (a former librarian at the American Philosophical Society) the book features essays by Domenic

Vitiello, an urban planner and historian, who teaches urban studies at the University of Pennsylvania; S.D. Kimmel, a research associate in the history of medicine at the University of Michigan; John W. Jengo, a geologist with an environmental consulting firm; Brett Mizelle, an assistant professor of history and director of American Studies

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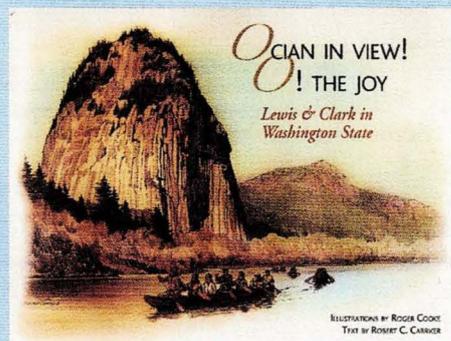
Lewis and Clark in Washington State

A largely overlooked part of the Lewis and Clark saga is explored in *Ocian in view! O! the joy: Lewis & Clark in Washington State* (Washington State Historical Society, 156 pages, \$27.95 paper).

The format of this handsome volume consists of facing pages of text and artwork devoted to noteworthy events, from trading with local tribes to weathering fierce Pacific storms. The 78 watercolors by Roger Cooke are a splendid addition to the remarkable body of bicentennial-related Lewis and Clark art. The introduction by David L. Nicandri

notes the tendency of L&C historians (and therefore artists) to ignore the Snake and Columbia River passages in favor of the expedition's Missouri River portion. He attributes this oversight to the absence of Lewis journal entries for these periods, leaving them dependent on Clark's inchoate if colorful prose.

The text by historian Robert C. Carriker is succinct and incisive. Those who have followed the debate regarding the "vote" at Chinook Point on where to establish a winter camp will welcome the writer's even-handed take on this controversy:



Carriker states that Clark recorded the "voiced preference" of each person. "In a manner of speaking," he adds, "the members of the expedition had voted. More accurately, they had been consulted in a non-binding opinion poll."

—J.I.M.

at California State University, Long Beach; and Andrew J. Lewis, an assistant professor of history at American University.

In the first essay, Vitiello documents the eminence of Philadelphia's scientific leaders and the technological advances they sparked in the period immediately prior to the expedition. In 1803, Lewis visited Philadelphia, where members of the American Philosophical Society schooled him well in the fields of science and technology.

Kimmel suggests that philanthropy, with its wide range of activities to promote democracy and human well-being, and its role in the era's political economy were underlying factors in the successes and failures of the Corps of Discovery. Readers may find his presentation at times difficult to follow, but his essay nonetheless presents interesting scholarship.

Another fascinating essay, written by Cox, could well be called "Politics, Naturalism, and Seedsmanship." The author weaves an intriguing and insightful story of what happened to the seeds Lewis brought back from the West. While the essay focuses on the role of an immigrant horticulturist named Bernard McMahan, the story is truly amazing for the cast of characters involved, including Thomas Jefferson, the botanists Benjamin Smith Barton and Frederick Pursh, and the gentleman horticulturist William Hamilton.

Some scholars think that Lewis and Clark failed to fulfill Jefferson's charge to discover the West's "mineral productions of every kind." After scouring the journals in detail and noting in particular Lewis's observations, John Jengo shows that geology and mineral resources in fact received more attention than has been assumed. He contends that Lewis's observations cannot be seen as deficient when viewed in the context of the embryonic state of geologic knowledge in the late 1700s and the limited knowledge Lewis had in the geological sciences. As I remember

from my personal reading of the journals, Lewis covered many topics of geology, some so well that even the great American geologist Nevin Fenneman would have benefited from reading the journals when writing his seminal books on physiography in the 1930s.

The essay by Brett Mizelle examines the impact of public exhibitions of western fauna in early Philadelphia. Mizelle demonstrates that specimens brought from the West by Lewis and Clark were treasured additions to Charles Willson Peale's famous Philadelphia museum; somewhat surprisingly, he finds little evidence of much public interest in Lewis's live specimens, a prairie dog and a magpie.

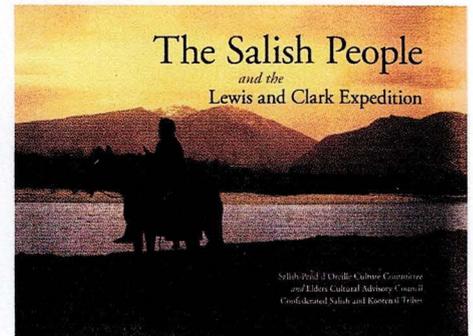
In the final essay, Andrew Lewis discusses possible reasons why Lewis and Clark and their achievements were largely ignored for much of the 19th century. He argues that they were overlooked in part because their "natural history contributions were not particularly notable for the period." A kind of Lewis and Clark renaissance began at the end of the century with the publication, in 1893, of a new edition of the journals edited by Elliott Coues. This was actually a heavily annotated version of Nicholas Biddle's 1814 paraphrase of the journals.

When first introduced to Lewis and Clark, most readers likely focus on the popular presentations, such as *Undaunted Courage*, by Stephen E. Ambrose, or perhaps a primary source such as the abridged one-volume *Journals of Lewis and Clark*, edited by Bernard DeVoto. Soon, however, many want to probe deeper into the character of the American nation in the years leading up to, and immediately following, the expedition. This collection of essays does a wonderful job of providing that context.

—John H. Sandy

The reviewer is a librarian at the University of Alabama.

Lewis & Clark from Salish perspective



The Salish People and the Lewis and Clark Expedition

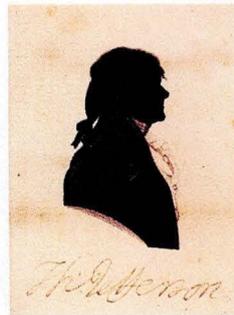
Salish-Pend d'Oreille Culture Committee and Elders Cultural Advisory Council, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes

University of Nebraska Press
216 pages / \$29.95 cloth

On September 4, 1805, the Corps of Discovery entered the Bitterroot Valley in today's southwestern Montana. At a place later known as Ross's Hole the explorers encountered a band of Salish Indians. The two groups communicated by sign language and later through a cumbersome translation chain. The whites purchased a dozen "ellegant horses," in William Clark's words, to supplement those acquired earlier from the Shoshones, as well as food, robes, and pack saddles.

There was misunderstanding on both sides. Hearing the Salish's unusual guttural language, Meriwether Lewis thought he might be in the presence of the legendary Welsh Indians. For their part, the Salish mistook the explorers' short-cropped hair as a sign of mourning for comrades killed in battle and believed that York had blackened his skin with charcoal, a gesture of defeat at the hands of an enemy.

These and other examples of cultural confusion are explored in *The Salish People and the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, an informative volume compiled by elders of the affiliated Salish, Pend d'Oreille, and Kootenai tribes. The



Jefferson's profile, from *The Shortest and Most Convenient Route*