Reviews

But never is Duncan more eloquent than when he considers all the ways native Americans made the expedition’s success possible, all the ways the expedition’s members showed respect for the tribes they encountered—and all the tragic ways most of our ancestors have failed to uphold the promise the expedition’s model offered. Is it too late for us to use the bicentennial as an occasion to both rediscover and reclaim some measure of those potentialities—even if only on a spiritual and intellectual level, now that the more practical opportunities have forever passed us by? Duncan certainly makes us want to, and he offers useful ideas for starting.

This is a book people “suffering” in any stage of Lewis-and-Clark-itis will enjoy. If you’ve only just caught the bug, Duncan will show you ways you haven’t yet discovered to use and learn from the expedition’s story. If you’re already past the “talkative phase” and deep into “stage four,” you likely won’t find much new information here—but you can be certain Duncan’s trains of thought will drop you off at new starting points of your own that you hadn’t found yet. And for any reader who’s never before been introduced to the Lewis and Clark Expedition, I say, watch out. Duncan is a carrier, an agent of a spreading infection, and he proves it—delightfully—on every page.

—Tom Daubert

A scholarly overview of the L&C Expedition

The Lewis and Clark Expedition
Harry William Fritz
Greenwood Press
184 pages / $45 cloth

The success of a book often depends on whether it fills a market niche and connects with an intended audience. The Lewis and Clark Expedition, by Harry William Fritz, the chair of the Department of History at the University of Montana, in Missoula, scores well on both counts.

The publisher, Greenwood Press, aims to bring key events in American history into the classroom through a carefully crafted series, entitled Greenwood Guides to Historic Events, 1500-1900. The “volumes are designed to serve as resources for student research and to provide clearly written interpretations of topics.” The series helps high school and lower division college students gain a better appreciation of American history. Professor Fritz’s book, a volume in this series, achieves this purpose and, in addition, is suitable for a much wider audience of general readers seeking an introduction to Lewis and Clark.

Indeed the value of this book lies in part with its systematic presentation and interpretation of events. Following guidelines from the publisher, Fritz outlines a basic chronology of the expedition, followed by four topical chapters covering the journey to and winter layover at Fort Mandan, travel across the plains and over the Rockies, the trip down the Columbia River and encampment at Fort Clatsop, and the return journey. Other sections examine scientific and ethnological discoveries, provide biographical sketches of...

An artist with the Corps of Discovery

Charles Fritz is among the few contemporary artists of the Lewis and Clark Expedition whose work approaches those of “Old Masters” like C.M. Russell and John Clymer. A total of 88 of his paintings—narrative scenes, landscapes, and compositional studies chronicling the explorers from Camp River Dubois to Fort Clatsop and back—are now available in a handsome new large-format volume, Charles Fritz: An Artist with the Corps of Discovery (University of Montana Press and Farcountry Press, 104 pages, $29.95 cloth). Fritz’s images are infused with light, and details of dress are faithfully rendered. Each painting is accompanied by the artist’s commentary and the journal passage on which it is based. An introduction by Harry Fritz (no relation), a professor of history at the University of Montana, provides a brisk recapitulation of the journey.

Fritz’s Mapping the Missouri: Winter Afternoon at Fort Mandan.

(Another of Fritz’s paintings appears on page 24 of this issue of WPO.)

—J.I.M.
key players, and assess the impact and significance of the expedition. Inclusion of selected primary documents of the Lewis and Clark Expedition is an added bonus.

Although well documented with selections from the journals and other sources, Fritz’s history reads like a story and will surely hold the interest of most readers. At times the author strays from objectivity. Recounting the taking of game during the return down the Missouri River in 1806, for example, he brands Lewis “the West’s first slob hunter.”

Illustrations
I thought the publisher could have done a better job with illustrations. While they are “on target” as to subject matter and convey important aspects of the expedition, the images lack quality. And, except for the Sacagawea coin and a drawing of Clatsop head-flattening (taken from the journals), there are no pictures of Native Americans. Perhaps a few from the works of Karl Bodmer would have provided context to the story.

I also found at least one puzzling statement. On page 57, the reader is left to wonder how the distance on the Missouri River between its junctions with the Marias and the Yellowstone rivers could possibly be 750 miles when the distance across the entire state of Montana is about 520 miles.

As a professor of American history, Fritz is fully aware of, and has likely read all, the important literature related to Lewis and Clark. His detailed annotated bibliography allows readers to identify other key titles chronicling both popular and scholarly aspects of Lewis and Clark, particularly the journals. A complete glossary and index help tie the book and the story together.

The Lewis and Clark bicentennial has produced a slew of new titles on the subject. Most add little to the story. Professor Fritz’s book, however, while not breaking new ground, is a valuable contribution to the literature, mainly because it fills instructional and research needs of students. He also tells a good story.

—John H. Sandy

The reviewer is a librarian with the University of Alabama system.

The Lemhi Shoshone’s struggle for a homeland

Sacajawea’s People: The Lemhi Shoshones and the Salmon River Country
John W.W. Mann
University of Nebraska Press
258 pages / $24.95 cloth

Every student of Lewis and Clark knows of the critical role of the Shoshone Indians to the expedition’s success—how the band led by Cameahwait, Sacajawea’s brother, provided the horses and geographical knowledge needed to cross the Rocky Mountains. Few, however, are aware of the subsequent fate of this band, which came to be known as the Lemhi Shoshones, or of their descendants’ century-long effort to reclaim a piece of their tribal homeland in the country surrounding today’s Salmon, Idaho.

Historian John W.W. Mann tells their post-expedition story in his book Sacajawea’s People: The Lemhi Shoshones and the Salmon River Country. In brief, the Lemhi Shoshones continued to live in their ancestral lands for a hundred years after their encounter with the Corps of Discovery. Thanks largely to the wise leadership of Tendoy, a descendant of Cameahwait who presided over his people’s fortunes from 1863 until his death, in 1907, they managed to live in relative peace with whites. In 1875, after their territory was homesteaded, they were granted a reservation straddling the Lemhi River, but just five years later the government pressured them to resettle with other Shoshones on a reservation at Fort Hall, Idaho. The Lemhi Shoshones—who by now had incorporated the