

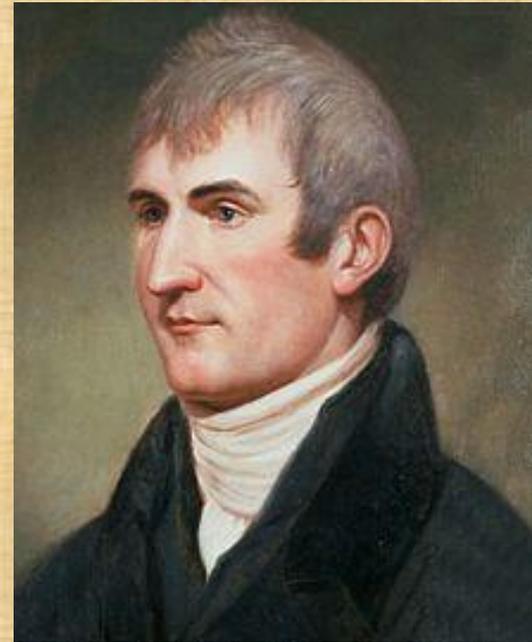
Lewis and Clark

The Great Expedition



William Clark

By SB



Meriwether Lewis

Impact

- The Americans needed rivers to trade. It was the only quick way to get places.
- Early Americans fantasized about a river they called “The Northwest Passage.”
- It was supposedly a river which flowed all the way to the Pacific Ocean.
- Lewis and Clark led an expedition to find if such a river truly existed.
- They never did find this river.
- But they had begun so much more.
- They explored the Missouri River.
- They established contact and began diplomatic relations.
- They expanded the fur trade.
- And they learned much about their country, it’s animals, plants, rivers, mountains, and people.
- This was one of the first great exploration missions. It lead America to have a desire to learn and explore their country.

Meriwether Lewis

- Meriwether Lewis was born in Virginia on August 18, 1774.
- Lewis' father fought in the revolutionary war and died while Lewis was still 5 years old.
- Lewis became the man of the family, he finished up his schooling, and seemed destined to run the plantation on which he grew up.
- In 1794, however, George Washington called for militia volunteers and Lewis answered the call.
- While serving in the army, Lewis' commanding officer was William Clark. They quickly became friends.
- After Lewis finished his military service, Thomas Jefferson, and old friend of the Lewis', asked for Meriwether to serve as his personal secretary.
- Lewis served there until 1803, when Thomas Jefferson discussed his plans for assembling an exploration party to explore America and search for "The Northwest Passage."

Thomas Jefferson

- Jefferson was born on April 14, 1743.
- He was an American founding father and the main author of the Declaration of Independence.
- He served as the third president of the United States from the years of 1801 to 1809.
- Jefferson was a very learned man and he learned all he could about architecture, art, science, languages, and politics.
- Jefferson bought the Louisiana Purchase from Napoleon in 1802 for 15 million dollars.
- Now America had a hundreds of miles of land, hundreds of rivers, mountains, meadows, and plains to be discovered.
- Jefferson then decided to assemble a great expedition and chose Lewis to lead the group.

Preparation

- Lewis had much to learn if he were to lead an exploration of this sort.
- So Jefferson sent him to Philadelphia to learn Botany, Astronomy, Zoology, and Medicine.
- In 1803, Jefferson sent a secret message to congress to asking for 2500\$ to fund the expedition.
- Later that year, this trip took a greater importance when on May 2, Jefferson bought the Louisiana Purchase from the French.
- Lewis chose William Clark to assist him on his expedition.
- He purchased supplies, weapons, even a dog, and supervised the building of a 55 foot steel frame canoe.
- On May 14, 1804 the expedition, which Lewis named the “Corps of Discovery,” was ready to depart.

The “Corps of Discovery”

- The expedition had begun and the world was full of new and exciting sights to explore, rivers to chart, and animals to discover.
- The expedition had almost four dozen men who were all traveling in canoes up the Missouri River. They traveled between ten and twenty miles a day.
- Lewis was instructed to make notes on Latitude and Longitude, as well as the soil, plants and animals, and the native peoples.
- Lewis found 178 new plants and 122 new animals and named several after himself.
- He discovered new rivers, mountains, and prairies and named many after family members and loved ones.

Indian Diplomacy

- One of the main priorities of the expedition was to establish contact and open diplomacy with the Native Americans.
- The Corps of Discovery held councils with the tribes and offered gifts, promised trade, and wanted intertribal peace.
- Most of the tribes welcomed the expedition, but some had already been contacted by previous British explorations. The British had managed to pass off prejudice onto the tribal leaders.
- During this time several men joined their party along with two translators. Toussaint Charbonneau, a French man, and his wife, Sacagawea. Sacagawea was taken from the Shoshone tribe when she was a little girl. The Shoshone tribe resided in Idaho.

Impasse

- The Corps of Discovery continued up the river until they reached the Great Falls.
- An 18 mile trip around the falls began.
- The Expedition encountered rough terrain, cactus, inclement weather, and Grizzly Bears.
- On July 4, 1805, they finished their portage, just in time to celebrate Independence Day.

The Continental Divide

- The expedition arrived at Lemhi Pass.
- Lewis climbed it hoping for a straight shot over The Continental Divide.
- He was disappointed when he saw the seemingly never-ending range of mountains called the Rockies.
- The expedition was assisted by Cameahwait, Sacagawea's brother, who was now the leader of the Shoshone tribe.
- He provided them with horses and assisted their passage through the mountains.
- With the word of the Shoshone, the expedition befriended the Nez Pierce.
- With the help of the Nez Pierce, the expedition built cottonwood canoes and floated down the Snake River to reach the Columbia on October 16th

Arrival

- In mid-November they sighted the Pacific Ocean.
- Inclement weather delayed their progress.
- They hoped to find a passing ship along coast of the Pacific which they could secure passage back home, but finding none they built Fort Clatsop to stay the winter.
- After winter, the expedition stole a canoe from a local tribe and sailed back up the Columbia to the Nez Pierce.
- There they gathered their horses and supplies and waited for the snow to melt in the mountains.

Return Trip

- On their return trip the expedition split into two groups to explore several other tributaries of the Missouri.
- Clark's group had an altercation with several Native Americans who attempted to steal their supplies. Clark's men shot and killed two of them and then fled on horseback to the Missouri River.
- They reunited with Lewis's group and after separating from the Charbonneaus, they floated back down the Missouri.
- On September 23, 1806, the Corps of Discovery was met with a great reception and the members received money, land, and fame.

Conclusion

- Lewis and Clark never did find an all-water route across the continent, in fact one would not exist until the building of the Panama Canal.
- But they discovered animals, plants, created the best map of America that was available at the time period, they established contact with American-Indian tribes across America, and they began fur trades with them.
- The language barrier could not have been overcome without Sacagawea. They might have never made it through the Rockies without the Shoshone's help. Without their American-Indian friend from Idaho they might have never survived.
- No greater exploration expedition exists in American History, Lewis and Clark have been commemorated with stamps, statues, and the historic Lewis and Clark Trail. This great trip opened up a brand new frontier to explore and ushered in the era of American Exploration.