

## Introduction: The Corps of Discovery and Confluences in the Pacific Northwest

The Corps of Discovery's journey through the Pacific Northwest in the fall of 1805 and again in the spring of 1806 was a journey through many confluences.<sup>1</sup> Their journey down the Clearwater, Snake, and Columbia rivers took them past confluences of people and cultures, rivers, flora and fauna, and geology. As the Corps passed each confluence, they recorded their adventures, and information about the sounds, the sights and the people

Members of the Corps of Discovery kept different kinds of journals; one journal was a daily record of what each writer thought was "*worthy of notice*." Other journals included maps, a seven-point daily weather log,<sup>2</sup> records of the changing seasons and pen and ink sketches. In their orderly reports and detachment orders, the two captains' recorded their official decisions. Today, the Corps' many accounts are important to our understanding and appreciation of the

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<sup>1</sup>Gary E. Moulton, ed., **The Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition: Volume 3—August 25, 1804–April 6, 1805** [Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987], 153.

In their detachment orders of October 8, 1804, the two captains used the phrase "*the Corps of Volunteers for North Western Discovery*." Today, we continue to use the two captains' phrase, the Corps of Discovery or simply, the Corps, when we talk about the expedition.

<sup>2</sup>Arlen J. Large, " ' . . . it thundered and Lightened': The Weather Observations of Lewis and Clark, **We Proceeded On**, May 1986 : 6-10.

confluence landscapes they saw 200+ years ago, and those same confluences we see today.

### Journal-Keeping

For hundreds of years, careful journal-keeping and map-making were two key components of the scientific, exploratory and diplomatic expeditions sent to examine unfamiliar parts of the world. Journals, maritime logs, scientific observations, artwork, and maps were these explorers' written records of coastlines and rivers, native peoples and their life ways, and flora and fauna. Once these expeditions were completed, the leaders often turned their daily journals into best-selling, multi-volume narratives, narratives that fascinated a curious public, scientists, and scholars like Thomas Jefferson.

From booksellers in London, Philadelphia, Williamsburg, and Paris, men like Thomas Jefferson purchased countless books about western exploration and geography, including many by explorers who set out for the "New World" in the late 1500's. Jefferson's understanding of the west and his interest in exploration was based, in part, on these narratives, as well as the regional histories and natural histories in his 1,600+-volume personal library.

Jefferson's collection was varied, and included works in French, English, and Spanish:

--**A Description of the English Province of Carolana by the Spaniards Call'd Florida, and by the French La Louisiane** by Daniel Coxe [1741]

--**Historia de Mexico** by Francisco López de Gómez [1554]

--**Description de la Louisiane** by Louis Hennepin, a Belgian chaplain who accompanied LaSalle [1683]

--**A Concise Account of North America: Containing a Description of the several British Colonies on That Continent, Including the Islands of Newfoundland, Cape Breton, &c.** by Robert Rogers, an explorer and adventurer during the French and Indian Wars [1763]

--narratives by two British sea captains, Captain James Cook [**Voyage to the Pacific Ocean**, 1784] and Captain George Vancouver [**A Voyage to the North Pacific Ocean**, 1789].<sup>3</sup>

On June 20, 1803, President Jefferson wrote a long letter to Captain Meriwether Lewis. In his letter, Jefferson outlined the Corps' goals and objectives, and detailed his expectations for record keeping during the journey, record keeping that would be both meticulous and duplicative:

*"Your observations are to be taken with great pains & accuracy, to be entered distinctly & intelligibly for others as well as yourself . . . Several copies of these as well as of your other notes should be made at leisure times, & put into the care of the most trust-worthy of you attendants, to guard, by multiplying them, against the accidental losses to which they will be exposed."*

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<sup>3</sup>Christine Coalwell, **Jefferson's Library of the Americas** at [www.monticello.org/jefferson/lewisandcalrk/americanbooks](http://www.monticello.org/jefferson/lewisandcalrk/americanbooks).

Donald Jackson, **Thomas Jefferson & The Stony Mountains: Exploring the West From Monticello** [Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993], 86-97.

Jefferson encouraged Lewis to make one copy of his "*observations*" on "*the paper of the birch*," which he thought was less liable to water damage. He also suggested Lewis send letters and copies of journals, notes and observations back to government officials by whatever means possible during the expedition—traders on the Missouri River, tribal people moving up and down the rivers, hunting and trading, men stationed at Spanish outposts, and in the northwest, sailing ships.<sup>4</sup>

It is clear from Jefferson's letter, that the President expected the explorers to write, to write often and well, to duplicate their notes, and to take care their works were kept safe. Like the journals and maps of other explorers, Jefferson expected the journals of Lewis and his associates would be published.

As the Corps of Discovery began their journey up the Missouri River in the Spring of 1804, Lewis directed the Corps' three sergeants—Charles Floyd, John Ordway, and Nathaniel Pryor--to keep their own journals. On May 26, 1804, he wrote in the Corps' detachment orders:

*"The sergts. . . . are directed each to keep a seperate journal from day*

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<sup>4</sup>Donald Jackson, ed., *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition with Related Documents, 1783-1854* [Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978], 62, 64-65.

*today of all passing occurrences, and such other observations on the country &c. as shall appear to them worthy of notice—*<sup>5</sup>

Almost one year later, as the Corps of Discovery prepared to leave Fort Mandan for the western lands, Lewis wrote to President Jefferson:

*"We have encouraged our men to keep journals, and seven of them do so, to whom in this respect we give every assistance in our power."*<sup>6</sup>

The two captains' "assistance" may have included pens, paper, and ink. On a shopping trip to Philadelphia during the summer of 1803, Lewis purchased six brass inkstands and six paper packets of ink powder, a ruler, 100 quills and eight small notebooks he called "*Rect. Books*." Lewis bought six packing boxes for \$12.00, specifically for storing the Corps' journal-keeping supplies.<sup>7</sup> The two captains also packed several different kinds of paper, including "*fools Cap*," an inexpensive writing paper that measured approximately 13.5 to 14" x 17," and "*post paper*," a larger paper [approximately 19 to 21" x 15 to 16"] often used for map-making.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Gary E. Moulton, ed., *The Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition: Volume 2—August 30, 1803–August 24, 1804* [Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986], 257-8.

<sup>6</sup>Jackson, *Letters*, 232 [Meriwether Lewis to Thomas Jefferson, April 4, 1805].

<sup>7</sup>Jackson, *Letters*, 92, 95, 96.  
Moulton, *Volume 3*, 502-504.

<sup>8</sup>Moulton, *Volume 3*, 502-504.  
[www.baph.org.uk](http://www.baph.org.uk) "Old English Paper Size"

According to Lewis, as many as ten men may have kept journals during the journey. Today, we have the journals of six men, the two captains—Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, three of the four sergeants—Charles Floyd, Patrick Gass, John Ordway, and one private—Joseph Whitehouse.<sup>9</sup> Sergeant Charles Floyd died on August 20, 1804, just four months after the Corps' journey up the Missouri River began; Floyd's journal does not figure in the story of the Pacific Northwest's confluences.<sup>10</sup>

When the Corps of Discovery returned to St. Louis in September 1806, Robert Frazer published a "prospectus," announcing his plan to publish his journal. Today, we have that prospectus and the map Frazer intended to include in his work. His journal has never been found.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>The history of the journals' provenance and publication is a fascinating story! Paul Russell Cutright covers the story well in his book, **A History of the Lewis and Clark Journals** [1976]. For additional information that brings this story full circle, see the bibliography at the end of the **Introduction**.

<sup>10</sup>Following Floyd's death, the Corps selected Patrick Gass as Floyd's replacement.

<sup>11</sup>Jackson, **Letters**, 345-346.

Frazer's map, "A Map of the discoveries of Capt. Lewis & Clark . . ." is in the Library of Congress.

Family tradition holds that Private Alexander Hamilton Willard kept a journal.<sup>12</sup> It is possible other men, such as Sergeant Nathaniel Pryor, also kept journals.<sup>13</sup>

Military officers were expected to be literate, but formal schooling, even for men such as William Clark and Meriwether Lewis, could be haphazard. In 1800, grammar, punctuation and spelling had not yet been standardized. The journal-keepers' spelling is often creative and ingenious; they spelled words as they heard them, they frequently skipped punctuation at the end of sentences, using an elongated dash [—] to move on to the next thought, and they often spelled the same word many different ways. For some journal-keepers, even the names of their own comrades were a challenge. Toussaint Charbonneau appears as "*Shabono*," George Drouillard as "*Drewyer*," and the Field brothers, Joseph and

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<sup>12</sup>Robert B. Betts, " 'The Wrightingest explorers of their time': New Estimates of the Number of Words in the Published Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition," **We Proceeded On** August 1981 : 8.

Jackson, **Letters**, 345-346.

Olin D. Wheeler, **The Trail of Lewis and Clark** [New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1904], 122-124.

<sup>13</sup>See Lewis's detachment orders of May 26, 1804, directing the sergeants to "*keep a seperate journal!*" As the Corps of Discovery separated into smaller parties in July 1806, Clark's instructions to Sgt. Pryor indicate Pryor kept a journal [Gary E. Moulton, ed., **The Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition: Volume 8—June 10–September 26, 1806** (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 209-210; 285].

Reuben, as "*the two Feildses*." The Corps spelled their 16-year old Agaiduka Shoshone interpreter's name [Sacagawea] at least 17 different ways!<sup>14</sup>

One historian, using his knowledge of the journals and of statistical analysis, estimated the published journals of the two captains contain approximately 862,500 words. He estimated Private Joseph Whitehouse's journal contains 55,300 words, Sergeant Patrick Gass', 74,700 words, and Sergeant John Ordway's 123,800 words. Of all the journal keepers, Ordway was the most consistent, writing every day of the journey from May 14, 1804 through September 23, 1806.<sup>15</sup> As a point of reference for modern readers, a type-written, 8" x 11' sheet of paper page, with one inch margins, double spacing, and a 12-point font, contains approximately 200 words!

These journals, with their daily entries, illustrations and maps, are some of the earliest written records we have of the Pacific Northwest's confluences of rivers, cultures, and natural history. In those entries, we learn about the habitat of sage grouse, harbor seals, and condors, and of camas, wapato, and Oregon grape. There are maps of the confluence of the Clearwater and the Snake rivers, of the Snake and the Columbia rivers, and of the Sandy, the Willamette and the Columbia

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<sup>14</sup>Robert B. Betts, " 'we commenced wrighting &c.': A Salute to the Ingenious Spelling and Grammar of William Clark," **We Proceeded On** November 1980 : 10-12.

Alan H. Hartley, **Lewis & Clark: Lexicon of Discovery** [Pullman: WSU Press, 2004], v-xix.

<sup>15</sup>Betts, "writingest," 4-9.

rivers, and of the Columbia River and the Pacific Ocean. In the journals, we meet the Sahaptian-, Kiksht-, and Chinook-speaking people who lived, worked and traveled along these same rivers and their tributaries. A careful reading of the journals provides us with a wealth of ethnographic information—about houses, clothing, canoes, and weapons, about life ways, subsistence, and trade networks. Scattered through the journals and maps are Sahaptian, Kiksht, Chinook, and Chinook Wawa words, phrases and place names.<sup>16</sup>

Captain William Clark mapped the rivers and their confluences and the tribal villages and fishing sites the Corps visited. Both Lewis and Clark sketched aspects of the tribal cultures—fishing weirs, weapons, hats and canoes and paddles. They also sketched some of the northwest's plants, birds, and fish, many of which were important to the American Indian tribes as sources of food, clothing and tools.

Today, there are numerous versions of the Corps' journals, from inexpensive, one-volume books to the carefully and thoroughly edited journals by Gary Moulton,

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<sup>16</sup>The Corps of Discovery found three native languages in the northwest. The tribes of western Idaho [i.e., Nez Perce], northeastern Oregon [Walla Walla and Umatilla] and southeastern Washington [Yakama, Palus, Wanapum] spoke Sahaptian. From The Dalles to the Cowlitz River, the tribes spoke Kiksht, or Upper Chinook. The tribes living around the mouth of the Columbia River spoke Chinook. In addition, most of the northwest tribes also spoke Chinook Wawa, an efficient trade language of native words [Salish, Chinook, and Nootka] and European-United States words [French, Spanish, Russian and English].

Carol MacGregor, and Jim Holmberg.<sup>17</sup> There are the narratives so favored by men like Jefferson--from the pen of David M'Keehan [**A Journal of the Voyages and Travels of a Corps of Discovery**, 1807],<sup>18</sup> Nicholas Biddle and Paul Allen [**The History of the Expedition Under the Commands of Captains Lewis and Clark**, 1814], and Dr. Elliott Coues, who edited a reissue of the Biddle-Allen narrative in 1892-1893.

Some books, like M'Keehan's narration of the Gass journal, include delightful woodcuts to illustrate the Corps' adventures hunting, canoeing, and building Fort Mandan. Others, like Moulton's work, include sketches from the pens of the two captains, Clark's meticulous maps, maps by tribal leaders, and a 200+ specimen **Herbarium**.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>James J. Holmberg, ed., **Exploring with Lewis and Clark: The 1804 Journal of Charles Floyd** [Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004].

Carol L. MacGregor, ed., **The Journals of Patrick Gass: Member of the Lewis and Clark Expedition** [Missoula: Mountain Press, 1997].

Dr. Gary E. Moulton, ed., **The Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition, 13 Volumes** [Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983-2001].

<sup>18</sup>See Cutright's **A History of the Lewis and Clark Journals**.

Using Sergeant Patrick Gass' journal, David M'Keehan produced the Corps' first narrative, **A Journal of the Voyages and Travels of a Corps of Discovery**. Gass' original journal has yet to be found.

<sup>19</sup>Moulton, **Volume 1—The Atlas** [1983]

Moulton, **Volume 12—Herbarium of the Lewis & Clark Expedition** [1999]

Some of the published journals include facsimile pages of the original journal. Modern readers are challenged to read the handwriting of Floyd and Clark.<sup>20</sup>

Equally important, there are many tribal histories of the confluence of Native American cultures with the cultures of the Corps of Discovery. Transcribed from oral histories handed down over two hundred years, some of the northwest selections include stories from the Nez Perce, the Palus, the Wasco, and the Salish.<sup>21</sup>

Each of these "journals"—a map, an oral history, a daily journal entry about an "*object worthy of notice*," a weather record—tells us the story of the northwest's confluences, of the rivers, of the people and their cultures, and the region's natural history. It is a story worth reading; it is a story worth exploring.

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<sup>20</sup>Holmberg, **The 1804 Journal of Charles Floyd**.  
Ernest Staples Osgood, **The Field Notes of Captain William Clark, 1803-1805** [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964].

<sup>21</sup>For a list of some of these histories, see the Bibliography; readers may also log onto the Washington State Library's website at: [www.secstate.wa.gov/library](http://www.secstate.wa.gov/library) and follow the links to **200 Books, 200 Years**, a list of 200 of the most significant books about Corps of Discovery and the tribes.

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