

Lewis & Clark Fun Facts

William Clark:

- Brother of Revolutionary War hero George Rogers Clark, whom Jefferson had earlier approached about exploring the upper Missouri River.
- Served in the same army unit as Meriwether Lewis years before the expedition during the Northwest Campaigns of the 1790s.
- After his return from the Expedition, Clark became head of Indian Affairs headquartered in St. Louis where he sought to control trade and incursions onto Indian land.
- At 6'0", was one of the tallest members of the Corps of Discovery.

Meriwether Lewis:

- The Lewis and Meriwether families were long-time neighbors and family friends of Thomas Jefferson.
- Lewis served as Thomas Jefferson's personal aide prior to the expedition.
- Lewis had a lifetime's experience as an outdoorsman, hunter, and herbal medicine expert, all facts of which Jefferson was aware and influenced his decision to choose him as Corps leader.
- While at the Great Falls of the Missouri River, Lewis reflected on how, at age 31, he felt he had not accomplished much in the way of aiding the advancement of the human race.

Seaman:

- Large, black Newfoundland dog and constant companion of Meriwether Lewis.
- Seaman accompanied the expedition to the Pacific Ocean.
- The dog disappears from the historical record before returning to St. Louis.

Sakakawea (Sacagawea):

- Born Shoshone, she lived most of her life with the Hidatsa whose culture she adopted.
- Sakakawea was married and a mother at age 16 when she accompanied the expedition to the Pacific Ocean and back.
- Sakakawea is currently being honored with a statue erected in Washington, D.C. in statuary hall.
- Lewis and Clark both gave glowing praise to her strength of character, intelligence, and courage.

Moccasins:

- Due to the limitations of their own footwear, moccasins were worn by all in the expedition after time spent at Mandan and Hidatsa villages.
- The moccasins had to be replaced every few days as a result of long walks on rough terrain.
- Moccasins, of course, had no arch support, but did not need it because of the soft soles' ability to conform to the land.

Food:

- Most often the expedition members consumed elk and bison as a matter of preference, although they supplemented their diet with other animals as well.
- As a result of extreme physical exertion, each person ate upwards of 6-7 pounds of meat a day, the equivalent of 24-28 hamburgers.
- The Corps' diet was supplemented with vegetables, berries, and pemmican.

Toe Ball:

- Mandan and Hidatsa children played toe ball, a version of modern hacky-sack.
- The bird motif was of an old Hidatsa design.
- The Deerskin ball is stuffed with buffalo hair and decorated with porcupine quills.

Compensation for the Corps of Discovery:

- Lewis and Clark received 1600 acres of land each, with \$40 and \$30 a month respectively.
- Lewis was named Governor of Louisiana and Clark the Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the same territory.
- Enlisted men received 320 acres each, with monthly payment of \$8 for sergeants, \$7 for corporals, and \$5 for privates.
- Despite his impressive contributions, York, Clark's slave, is not given any compensation, nor his freedom.

New Species:

- The expedition had discovered and catalogued 178 new plants and 122 new species and subspecies of animals.
- Among the animals catalogued were big horn sheep, mule deer, grizzly bear, prairie dogs, and pronghorn antelope.
- Botanists named some of the new plants discovered in honor of Lewis and Clark, such as *Lewisia rediviva* (bitterroot) and *Clarkia pulchella* (ragged robin).

Keel Boat

- Meriwether Lewis had a specially made 55-foot keelboat constructed for the voyage up the Missouri River.
- 55 feet in length with a reinforced hull, it was intended to survive water hazards such as tree limbs and sandbars.
- Shares similarities with boats of Spanish design in the late 18th century.

Louisiana Purchase

- When purchased from French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte in 1803, it more than doubled the size of the United States.
- The US originally sought to purchase only the port city of New Orleans from France.
- Bought for \$15 million it proved to be one of the greatest land deals in history.

Bull Boat:

- A circular bison-skin covered boat used by the Mandan and Hidatsa on the Missouri River and its tributaries.
- Proved a remarkably stable boat in rough water and high winds, as William Clark discovered on the Yellowstone River.
- The bison-skin covered willow frame boats were strong enough to hold two or three people.

Ft. Mandan:

- Lewis and Clark's 1804-1805 winter headquarters located across from the Knife and Missouri river confluence.
- The fort had two rows of huts placed at an angle, with a palisade facing the river, sentry posts, and a small swivel cannon.
- The walls were 18 feet high and meant, if need be, to hold off an attack.
- A reproduction of the fort lies just west of Washburn, ND.

Thomas Jefferson:

- Third U.S. President and first Democratic-Republican candidate elected to that office.
- An Enlightenment thinker, Jefferson's quest for scientific knowledge led him to pursue exploration of the Louisiana Purchase.
- President Jefferson tried four times to send explorers west before Lewis and Clark.
- Author of the Declaration of Independence and ardent supporter of Separation of Church and State.

Pomp:

- Pomp, Sakakawea's baby boy, accompanied the expedition west less than three months after his birth.

- Named Jean Baptist Charbonneau and nicknamed “Pomp”, born to Sakakawea, and delivered by Meriwether Lewis on February 11, 1805.
- William Clark raised and educated Pomp in St. Louis; Pomp later received education in Germany as well.

York:

- York’s father had been a slave of Wm. Clark’s father; York, in turn, was bequeathed to Clark.
- The Mandan and Hidatsa had never seen a Black person before York.
- York was married to a slave who belonged to a Kentucky owner.
- When York asked to be allowed to live with his wife, Clark refused and eventually beat him for “insolence”.

Navigation Skills:

- Lewis trained under Andrew Ellicott, one of the top navigational experts in the US.
- The expedition made extensive use of the sextant, quadrant and other navigational devices to determine their position.
- Compasses were used to find and determine the magnetic north and differentiate between true north.

Notable Failures:

- No water route to the Pacific Ocean was ever found, dashing hopes for opening Far Eastern trade via a shorter route.
- Licensing of fur traders proved unsuccessful and led to significant problems with Native Peoples upstream
- Indian policy also proved less than successful in the long run, as westward expansion provoked ongoing conflict until 1890.
- Conflict with the Blackfeet Nation on the return trip resulted in nearly seventy years of hostilities with the United States.

Cottonwoods

- Cottonwoods made a great impression on the expedition for their size, ease of use, and strength.
- Cottonwoods were used in the construction of boats such as pirogues and dugouts.
- Ft. Mandan, winter home of the Corps of Discovery, like Mandan earth lodges, boasted cottonwood construction.

Trade Items:

- Tribes on the upper Missouri particularly valued blue-colored beads.
- Trade items included tobacco, thimbles, scissors, arm bands, silk, vermilion, and knives.
- Emphasis on the trade and gift items was more on the visually attractive than the utilitarian.
- Beads remained a standard trade item until the 1850's, when the fur trade declined.

Medical Treatments:

- "Thunderclappers", a powerful laxative invented by Philadelphia physician Benjamin Rush, was used with "regularity".
- Bleeding of those ill was a common, if misguided, method of cure.
- Mercury was used for a number of ailments, though its toxic effects were not fully known at the time.

Common Medical Problems:

- The most common medical problems were frostbite and syphilis.
- Common ailments on the trip were malaria, dysentery, and rheumatism.
- "Sore eyes" was also a common complaint, thought to be caused by blowing sand and/or the reflection of sunlight off of the water.

Cameuwaite(sp)

- A Shoshone leader, aided the Corps of Discovery in preparations for their trek across the Rocky Mountains, notably with horses.
- Brother of Sakakawea, reunited with his long-missing sister when she accompanied Lewis and Clark west.
- Despite Lewis's original hope, Cameuwaite warned that the expedition still had a long and dangerous path ahead of them.

Grizzly Bears:

- Prairie Grizzlies were referred to as "White" or "Yellow" Bears.
- Undoubtedly, the grizzly left the greatest impression of all of the animals seen and catalogued.
- Members of the expedition killed a grizzly bear south of Bismarck.

Miles traveled per Day:

- On the trip north to the Mandan villages, the expedition averaged seven to ten miles per day.
- On the trip back from the Mandan villages, the expedition made approximately 30 miles a day.
- Greatest distance traveled in a day was over fifty miles, going downstream.

Purpose of the Expedition:

- A primary goal was to establish American claims to trans-Mississippi West.
- An Important goal was the scientific study of flora and fauna, cultures, and geography.
- Finding a water route through North America to the Pacific Ocean was a primary concern.

Pirogue:

- Lewis often used the terms “canoe” and “pirogue” interchangeably.
- The first pirogues Lewis purchased for the expedition leaked badly and caused the loss of supplies.
- Because they could unexpectedly tip, pirogues were sometimes bound together to increase stability.

Fossils:

- One of the assigned duties of the Corps of Discovery was to record and obtain fossil remains.
- A 60 million year old petrified wood sample found near Ft. Mandan was sent back to Thomas Jefferson.
- Native Peoples collected fossils for hundreds of years, using them as ornaments and items of spiritual significance.