

Lewis & Clark: Kentuckians and the Corps of Discovery

The years 2003 - 2006 mark the 200th anniversary of the exploration of the Louisiana Purchase and Oregon Country by an expedition led by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark. Rather than attempt to tell the details of the first American overland exploration of the West, this exhibit examines Kentucky's connections to the Corps of Discovery.

The journey across the continent began in Washington, D.C., but the Corps was assembled in Kentucky and departed for the West from Louisville. Many members of the expedition were recruited in Kentucky, but information about them is limited. Many do not appear in public records, leaving unanswered questions about the identities of these men who ventured west into history.

When Lewis and Clark returned to St. Louis, the news was quickly carried to Kentucky, where it was first published in a Frankfort newspaper. That newspaper report was then carried to the East, where the rest of the nation and the world were informed of the return of Lewis and Clark. As the party traveled to Washington, D.C., it crossed Kentucky, enjoying congratulations and celebrations offered in its honor.



Lewis & Clark At Three Forks, E.S. Paxson, oil, 1912
The Missouri Historical Society

The Louisiana Purchase

One of the greatest real estate deals in history took place on April 30, 1803. For about four cents an acre, 600 million acres - over 800,000 square miles - were purchased for 15 million dollars. This land, acquired by peaceful means instead of force of arms, almost doubled the size of the country and positioned the United States as an emerging world power.

The sale was the result of a complicated chain of events. France ceded the territory known as Louisiana to Spain in 1762, and it remained under Spanish rule for nearly forty years. Napoleon Bonaparte wanted to revive French colonial ambitions in North America and coerced Spain into returning the Louisiana Territory to France.



The Louisiana Purchase, 1803
Public Domain

The Mission

The expedition of the Corps of Discovery was the first United States overland exploration of the American West and Pacific Northwest. From the Falls of the Ohio to the Pacific Ocean and back, the exploration covered a total of about 9,000 miles between October 1803 and November 1806. The principal goal was to locate a northwest passage, or water connection, between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and survey its potential as a waterway for American westward expansion and international trade.

Although Lewis and Clark did not find such a route, Jefferson was not disappointed. The journals, maps, plant and animal specimens, and notes on American Indians collected by the explorers amounted to a western encyclopedia. The expedition established peaceful contact with many native peoples and set a pattern for government-sponsored, scientific exploration in the United States.

The Louisiana Purchase increased the importance of the expedition. Since the team would now be exploring United States lands, Lewis and Clark had the added duty of announcing American sovereignty in the new territory.



A. Karl & J. Kemp, Compass Projections, Brooklyn, N.Y.



Thomas Jefferson, Charles Willson Peale, oil, 1791
Independence National Historical Park, National Park Service

Since the 1780s Thomas Jefferson had been attempting to organize an exploration of the continent west of the Mississippi. He was convinced that a waterway existed that would link the eastern United States with the Pacific Ocean. Jefferson was also concerned that foreign powers with holdings in North America could restrict the growth of the young United States. After he learned of the territorial exchange between France and Spain, he began to negotiate for the purchase of New Orleans. Napoleon Bonaparte abandoned his plans in North America and decided to sell the entire territory.

It is interesting to note that the Louisiana Territory ended in the Rocky Mountains at the continental divide. When Lewis and Clark crossed the divide, they were entering land that was not part of the Louisiana Purchase and was claimed by Spain, Britain, and Russia. The Spanish government in Mexico, tipped off by its secret agent, former Kentuckian General James Wilkinson, was so concerned that it sent out patrols to try to intercept and capture the Corps of Discovery.

Thirteen states contain land that was acquired through the Louisiana Purchase. They are: Louisiana, Missouri, Arkansas, Iowa, Minnesota, Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Wyoming, and Oklahoma.

Lewis and Clark and Kentucky

Kentucky has many interesting connections to the Corps of Discovery:

- Lewis and Clark met in Louisville on October 14, 1803, to assemble the most famous exploration team in American history.
- As many as half the members of the expedition were Kentuckians or had Kentucky connections. Almost one-third of the members were from the Louisville area, including co-leader William Clark and York, his enslaved African American.
- York was the first African American to cross the United States from coast to coast and the continent north of Mexico.



Replica of the Lewis and Clark keelboat Discovery
Photo: James J. Holshagen



The Ohio River at the Big Bend, Meade County, Ky.
Photo: James J. Holshagen



Clark Overlooking the Great Falls of Missouri, Charles M. Russell, 1906, Pen and Ink
The Missouri Historical Society

- The nucleus of the Corps of Discovery was enlisted at the Falls of the Ohio. These nine recruits became known as the "Nine Young Men from Kentucky" and became some of the most important members of the Corps.
- Kentucky has about 660 miles of the eastern portion of the 1803 Lewis and Clark trail - its entire border with the Ohio River. Consequently, several Kentucky river towns have Lewis and Clark connections. Kentucky has the longest section of the trail in the east.

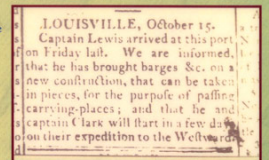


Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, Inc.
A carved signature of William Clark on Pompeys Pillar on the Yellowstone River near Billings, Montana. This is one of the few examples of physical evidence indicating the passing of Lewis and Clark through the American West.

- Lewis and Clark and the Clark family celebrated the captains' return at Locust Grove on November 8, 1806. This gives Locust Grove the important distinction of being the only known structure west of the Appalachians that is an actual Lewis and Clark site.
- Lewis and Clark both took overland routes eastward from Louisville through Kentucky to the Cumberland Gap. Lewis took the Wilderness Road from Frankfort in November and Clark and York from Danville in December 1806.
- In 1803 Lewis collected fossils for Thomas Jefferson at Big Bone Lick on his way to meet Clark. Clark made a major fossil dig for Jefferson there in 1807.
- It was in Shelbyville on October 28, 1809, that Clark learned of the death of his friend Meriwether Lewis.

Some of the expedition letters and artifacts that Clark sent to his family in Louisville still exist. The Filson Historical Society in Louisville has one of the finest Lewis and Clark collections in the country.

A newspaper article announcing the arrival of Meriwether Lewis in Louisville on October 14, 1803, and his and William Clark's intent to "start in a few days on their expedition to the Westward."
Lexington Kentucky Gazette, November 1, 1803.

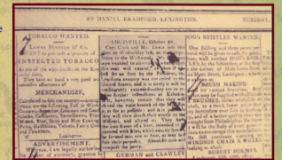


The Filson Historical Society

The first public notice of the return of Lewis and Clark was published in the Frankfort newspaper, the *Palladium*, October 2, 1806. The first detailed printed account of the expedition's successful return was published in the *Palladium* on October 9, 1806.

In late October and early November 1806, Lewis, Clark, York, and some of the other men traveled southeastward from St. Louis to Kentucky and then northeastward along the Ohio River to Louisville, arriving November 5.

A newspaper article announcing the departure of Lewis and Clark from the Louisville area on October 26, 1803, and speculating on their destination.
Lexington Kentucky Gazette, November 8, 1803.



The Filson Historical Society



The Filson Historical Society

The horn of a Bighorn sheep brought back by William Clark from the expedition and given to his sister Fanny. Many historians believe this to be the only verified animal artifact from the expedition.

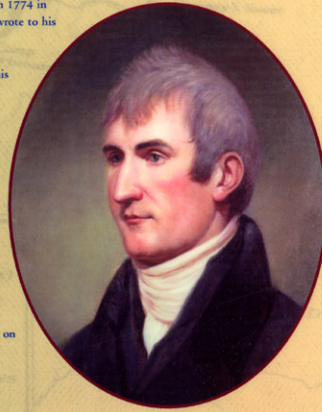
Captain Meriwether Lewis

Meriwether Lewis was not a Kentuckian, but like many other Virginians he purchased large tracts of land in Kentucky for speculation. He was born in 1774 in Albemarle County, Virginia. In 1794 he joined the militia and wrote to his mother, "I am quite delighted with a soldier's life."

President Thomas Jefferson, an old family friend, asked Lewis to become his private secretary in 1801. He served in that capacity until 1803. The President shared with him his vision of expanding the territory of the United States and the need to learn about the West. Jefferson offered Lewis leadership of an expedition to explore this western territory. Lewis accepted, selecting William Clark as his partner.

After the journey, Jefferson made Lewis governor of Upper Louisiana Territory. Before moving to St. Louis to assume office, Lewis spent a year beginning preparations to publish the journals of the expedition.

Although Lewis threw himself into the work of governing the territory, the results were mixed. An ideal explorer, he was a mediocre administrator. After several bureaucratic misunderstandings, he decided to go to Washington to set matters straight. Physically unwell and suffering from financial and emotional problems, Lewis shot himself at a remote inn on the Natchez Trace in Tennessee.



Meriwether Lewis, Charles Willson Peale, oil, 1807
Independence National Historical Park, National Park Service

Lewis died on the morning of October 11, 1809. Both Jefferson and Clark readily accepted the theory of suicide based on their personal experience with Lewis's bouts of depression. However, a number of years later a theory arose that the governor had been murdered, and the controversy continues to this day.

The nation that had cheered Lewis's exploits only a few years before promptly forgot him. No gravestone was erected until 1848, when the state of Tennessee erected a monument over his grave in Lewis County, which is today a national monument.



Lewis at Black Eagle Falls, Edgar S. Paxson, oil, 1912
The Montana Historical Society

Captain William Clark

William Clark was born in Caroline County, Virginia, in 1770. In 1785 the family settled in Kentucky, establishing a homestead called Mulberry Hill near Louisville. Clark followed in the footsteps of his older brothers, Generals Jonathan and George Rogers Clark, by serving in the military.

Clark was quickly promoted to the officer corps and served in the Ohio Valley Indian wars. In August 1794 he participated in the Battle of Fallen Timbers, which ended the power of American Indians in Ohio and Kentucky. He earned a reputation for courage and leadership and developed into an experienced frontier diplomat. It was at this time that he befriended Meriwether Lewis, who was assigned to Clark's rifle company.

In June 1803 Lewis invited Clark to join him as co-commander of a federally sponsored exploration of the newly acquired Louisiana Territory. Clark was the expedition's surveyor and mapmaker. His army experience had prepared him to be the expedition's most able negotiator and diplomat. After Lewis's sudden death in 1809, Clark assumed responsibility for completing the book on the Corps of Discovery's journey. A map that he drew for the publication was a valuable resource for the geographic understanding of the American West.

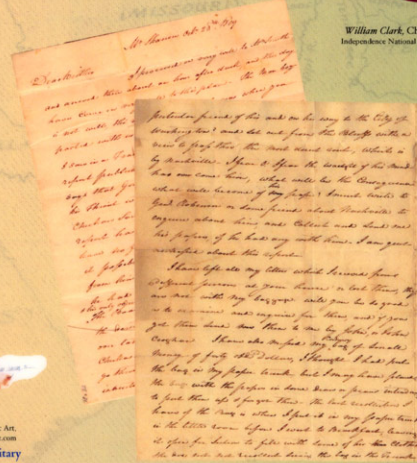
The first overland exploration of the American West and Pacific Northwest made Clark famous and influential. As a federal Indian official and governor of the Missouri Territory (1813-20), he earned the respect of many native people who called him "the red-head chief." Clark died in St. Louis in 1838.



William Clark, Charles Willson Peale, oil, 1810
Independence National Historical Park, National Park Service



Michael Haynes, Michael Haynes Historic Art, www.mhaynesart.com
William Clark's formal military uniform in 1803.



While in Shelbyville, William Clark first learned of the death of Meriwether Lewis. William wrote his brother about the distressing news and his reaction to it. On page two of the letter William exclaims, "I fear O! I fear the weight of his mind has overcome him." This is the closest statement Clark is known to have written voicing his belief that Lewis committed suicide.

The Illinois Historical Society

Nine Young Men from Kentucky

In June 1803 Meriwether Lewis asked Clark to "find and engage some good hunters, stout, healthy, unmarred men, accustomed to the woods, and capable of bearing bodily fatigue in a pretty considerable degree." Clark found seven such men in the Louisville area and Lewis brought two additional men with him. These men became the nucleus of the Corps of Discovery. The reference to the "Nine Young Men from Kentucky" did not include Clark or York, his enslaved African American, both of whom had more claim to the title "Kentuckian" than some of the other men. In addition, after recruitments of Kentuckians already in the army, half of the membership of the expedition consisted of men with Kentucky connections.

The nine were: Joseph and Reubin Field, Charles Floyd, Nathaniel Hale Pryor, John Shields, George Gibson, William Bratton, George Shannon, and John Colter.



Lewis & Clark Expedition in 1804, Dean Cornwell, c. 1955, oil
The Montana Historical Society

Private William F. Bratton

Private William Bratton was born July 27, 1778, in Augusta County, Virginia, in what is now West Virginia. The Bratton family may have migrated to the Jefferson County area around 1790, although public records regarding the Brattons have yet to be found.

Bratton was described as solidly built, above six feet in height, reserved and having the strictest morals. He also had some blacksmithing and gunsmithing skills and often worked as an assistant to John Shields.

Bratton initially returned to Kentucky after the expedition. He was back in the military during the War of 1812 and participated in the Battle of the Thames in Canada. He settled in Waynetown, Indiana, where he served as a justice of the peace and superintendent of schools. He died in 1841.



Replica of Fort Masse, Ill. Lewis and Clark and the nucleus of the Corps of Discovery arrived here in mid-November 1803 and recruited more men.

The Field Brothers: Privates Joseph and Reubin

"Two of the most active and enterprising young men who accompanied us."
Meriwether Lewis, 1807

Calpeper Co., Va., southwest of present-day Washington, D.C., was the birthplace of the Field brothers, Joseph - born ca. 1780, and Reubin, born ca. 1781. The family moved to Kentucky in 1783 and settled in Jefferson County in 1784, where the boys were reared. It is likely that the Field brothers were acquainted with William Clark's family. The brothers were among the first recruits for the expedition.

The Field brothers were both excellent hunters and woodsmen and were usually assigned to scouting missions. In addition, it seems that these men knew the trade of salt-making - a highly valued skill on the frontier - most likely learned at their brother Ezekial's salt-making business at Bullitt's Lick in present-day Bullitt County.

After the return of the Corps of Discovery, the brothers settled into private life. The exact date and circumstances of Joseph's death remain a mystery, although it is generally assumed he died a violent death. This comes from a note written by William Clark in which he mentions that Joseph was "killed." He is known to have died in 1807.



Salt Makers, John F. Clymer, oil, 1957
Courtesy of Mrs. John F. Clymer, Clymer Museum of Art, Elmhurst, Wash.

Reubin Field impressed Clark, who unsuccessfully attempted to obtain a lieutenant's commission for him in the U.S. Army. Reubin married in 1807 in Indiana, before relocating back to Jefferson County, Kentucky, in 1816. He is known to have died in 1822 or 1823, but as with his brother Joseph, his exact burial site is unknown.

Sept. 21, 1805 - Reubin Field accompanies Clark on an exploration that culminates in the first contact with the Nez Perce Indians. The Nez Perce were friendly and helpful, and this contact followed the generally peaceful pattern of all other contacts with American Indians with one exception. It is important to note that without help from the Indians, the entire mission would have failed.

July 16, 1806 - Lewis selects both Field brothers and George Drouillard to accompany him on an independent exploration of the Marias River area. On July 27 this group experienced the expedition's most violent incident with American Indians - the Blackfeet.

These Indians were young, possibly even teenagers. After a hospitable night camping together, the Blackfeet attempted to run off with the party's guns and horses at dawn. In the ensuing struggle Reubin Field killed one Indian with his knife, and shortly after, Lewis shot another in the stomach after being fired upon himself.

The incident was unfortunate and tragic. Although Lewis was convinced he had done the best he could, he had violated President Jefferson's explicit order to avoid violence with the Indians. Lewis's little party had to return quickly to the main body of the Corps to escape the vengeance of Blackfeet warriors that might pursue them.



The Arrival of Sergeant Pryor, John F. Clymer, oil
Courtesy of Mrs. John F. Clymer, Clymer Museum of Art, Ellensburg, Wash.

Sergeant Nathaniel Pryor

Nathaniel Pryor was another early volunteer to join the Corps of Discovery. He was the first cousin of Sergeant Charles Floyd. Pryor was born in 1772, and by 1782 his family had relocated to Jefferson County.

Following the return of the Corps of Discovery in 1806, Sergeant Pryor remained in the army and was promoted to ensign. In 1807 he was ordered to escort Chief Sheheke on his return to the Mandan villages after his trip to Washington, D.C.

Pryor left the army in 1810 to pursue a trader's life on the upper Mississippi. In 1812 he barely escaped an attack by a group of Winnebago Indians by crossing the Mississippi River on floating ice. He rejoined the army in 1813, rising to the rank of captain and fighting in the Battle of New Orleans in 1815. He lived primarily in Arkansas Territory after the War of 1812 until his death in June 1831. He is buried in the town that bears his name - Pryor, Oklahoma. The Pryor Mountains in Montana and the Pryor River in Oklahoma were also named after him.



At Lemhi, Robert F. Morgan, oil, 1988
The Montana Historical Society

Sergeant Charles Floyd

"This Man at all times gave us proofs of his firmness and Determined resolution to doe Service to his Country and honors to himself."

William Clark, after the death of Charles Floyd

Charles Floyd was born near Louisville around 1782, most likely at Floyd's Station in present-day St. Matthews. His family, like so many other early Kentucky families, was from Virginia. In fact, when Floyd was born, the area that became Kentucky was still a part of Virginia.

Little is known about the early life of Charles Floyd, but by 1800 his family had relocated to Indiana Territory. Charles was named the first constable of newly formed Clarksville Township. This nineteen or twenty-year-old man had clearly impressed the community with his sense of responsibility and his capacity to maintain peace and order on the frontier. This may in part explain why William Clark readily recruited Floyd and appointed him a sergeant at such a young age.

Floyd's experience with the Corps of Discovery had a tragic end. Near present-day Sioux City, Iowa, he died from what many believe to have been a ruptured appendix. He was the only member of the expedition to die on the trip, and he became the first U.S. soldier to die west of the Mississippi.



Photo James J. Holmberg

The Sergeant Charles Floyd Monument, Sioux City, Iowa. Floyd, the only member of the Corps to die on the journey, was buried on a bluff overlooking the Missouri River.

Private John Shields

[Private John Shields] "Has received the pay only of a private. Nothing was more peculiarly useful to us, in various situations, then the skill and ingenuity of this man as an artist, in repairing our guns, accoutrements, &c."

Meriwether Lewis

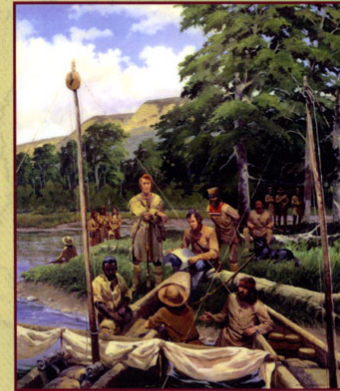
It is believed that Private John Shields was born near Harrisonburg, Virginia, in 1769. In 1784 the Shields family moved to the Pigeon Forge area of Tennessee. It was there that he learned blacksmithing from his brother-in-law. Shields was living in Kentucky by the 1790s. By 1803 he was married and living in West Point in Hardin County. He was recruited into the expedition in spite of being married and in spite of his advanced age of thirty-four, becoming the oldest enlisted member of the Corps of Discovery.

During the expedition, Shields proved his worth as a blacksmith, gunsmith, general mechanic, and hunter. In the journals of Lewis and Clark there are nearly seventy references to Shields's skill as a hunter.

After returning from the West, John Shields reportedly stayed in Missouri for a year, trapping with Daniel Boone, to whom he may have been distantly related. He relocated to Harrison County, Indiana, across the river from West Point. John Shields died in 1809, three years after returning from the Pacific.

"John Shields cut out my rifle and brought bir to shoot very well. The party owes much to the ingenuity of this man, by whom their guns are repaired when they get out of order which is very often."

William Clark



Desicion, Robert F. Morgan, oil, 1988
The Montana Historical Society

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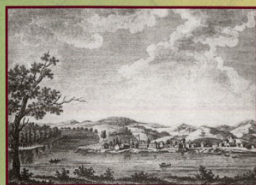


Capt. Clark - Buffaloes Gangee, John F. Clymer, 1976, oil
Courtesy of Mrs. John F. Clymer, Clymer Museum of Art, Ellensburg, Wash.

On the afternoon of August 1, 1806, Clark and his small band encountered an enormous herd of buffalo crossing the Yellowstone. The men were forced to land their canoes until the herd had passed. The buffalo herd seemed to have no end, and Clark described them as "a gangee of buff a low."

Private George Gibson

George Gibson was born in Mercer County, Pennsylvania, north of Pittsburgh and near the Ohio border. Some researchers believe he was raised in Kentucky, but no definite information exists to confirm that belief. Gibson was reputed to be an interpreter and skilled hunter. After the expedition, he married a woman from Louisville, lived in the area, and later died while moving to St. Louis in 1809.



View of Pittsburgh, Pa. 1796, Victor Collet, from A Journey to North America
The Flom Historical Society

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Private John Colter

John Colter was born about 1775 in Augusta County, Virginia. His family moved to Kentucky four years later and settled at Limestone, present-day Maysville, on the Ohio River. Colter may have been recruited by Meriwether Lewis. Colter was 29 years old, five feet ten inches in height, blue-eyed, and shy, but bright.

Of all the members of the Corps of Discovery, Colter seems to have been the man most captivated by the West. The party was only six weeks away from returning to St. Louis when they met two American trappers going to the Yellowstone River. The trappers recruited Colter to join their party, and after obtaining permission from Lewis and Clark, Colter turned his face west and went trapping. By spring 1807 he was once again on his way back to St. Louis when he met another trapping/trading expedition on its way west. And again he turned his back on "civilization" and returned to the Yellowstone area, where he helped establish a small fort and trading post.

While at this post, Colter was sent on a mission to locate the Crow Indians in their winter camps and persuade them to trade at the post. It was on this trip that he happened upon the magnificent wonders of what is now Yellowstone National Park and became the first white man to report them - even though for many years few believed him.

There are many exciting stories of John Colter's adventures as a trapper. In fact, his fame as the "first of the mountain men" has eclipsed the fame of most of the other participants in the Corps of Discovery. He finally returned to Missouri in 1810 and married. He died in 1812 or 1813 of jaundice, and his burial site is unknown.



White Boats and White Cliffs, Robert F. Morgan, 1988, oil
The Montana Historical Society

Private George Shannon

As with several of the young men from Kentucky who joined Lewis and Clark, George Shannon's Kentucky connections prior to the journey are thin. It is believed he was born in Pennsylvania around 1785. Shannon, one of the two men recruited by Meriwether Lewis, was formally enlisted at the Falls of the Ohio on October 19, 1801, after a seven-week trial on the trip from Pittsburgh.

The year after the expedition returned home, Shannon was among the party led by Pryor to return the Mandan chief Sheheke to his home after a visit to Washington, D.C. After a journey of fifteen hundred miles up the Missouri River, Arikara Indians attacked the party and Shannon received a severe leg wound. By the time the group returned to St. Charles, Missouri, the wound had become infected and the leg was amputated above the knee. The loss of his leg earned him the nickname "Peg-leg" Shannon.

Following his recovery, Shannon enrolled at Transylvania University in Lexington. After he left school in 1810, Clark sent him to Philadelphia to assist Nicholas Biddle with the official expedition publication. He returned to Kentucky in 1812 and married in 1813. Through his connections with his former classmates, Shannon moved through several public service positions and practiced law in Lexington. He was elected to the Kentucky House of Representatives, 1820-23. He was eventually appointed to a position as circuit court judge and became involved in several high-profile and controversial cases.

In 1828, Shannon gave up his judgeship and moved to Missouri. He was appointed United States Attorney for the District of Missouri by President Jackson in 1830 and served one term. He was elected to the Missouri House of Representatives shortly before his death in 1836 and is buried in an unmarked grave.



Lewis and Clark Meeting Indians at River Bend, Charles M. Russell, 1921, oil
The Montana Historical Society

York - the Tenth Young Man from Kentucky

There was an African American with the Corps of Discovery - York, the slave of William Clark. Numerous instances suggest that this man's contributions to the success of the expedition were significant. Yet York's life is the story of enslavement and tragedy, consisting of both the best and worst of a slave's existence.

York most likely was born in Caroline County, Virginia, in the early 1770s. His early life was probably typical of most enslaved people. Clark inherited York in 1799, along with Old York and Rose, a couple believed to have been York's father and stepmother.

When the Clark family moved to Kentucky in the 1780s, York accompanied them and grew to manhood in a frontier environment where race relationships were more flexible than in Virginia. The Clark men were hardy outdoorsmen and military men, and in their company York developed the wilderness skills that would later become invaluable to the Corps of Discovery.

The Lewis and Clark expedition was a military operation and functioned with regular daily orders and discipline. From all indications York, accustomed to taking orders from his master, blended well with the other privates of the Corps. He performed the same work as the other men, shared their camps and food, and even went on independent assignments. However, he was still enslaved, and the other men were simply enlisted; they were paid for their services and given land - York was not. At least two landmarks along the journey were named in honor of York. The three years that York spent as a member of this group must have been an amazing and unique experience for him - a brief taste of limited freedom far from the constrictions of slave-holding society.



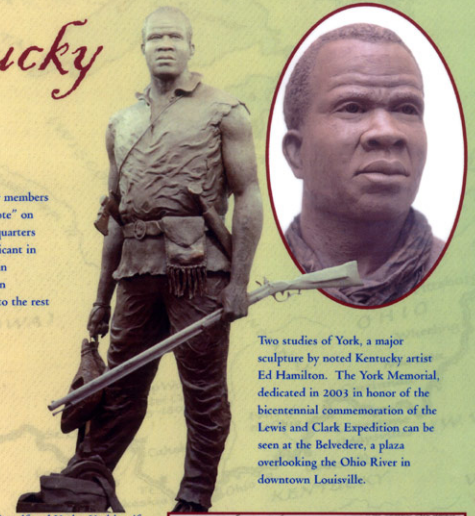
York in the Village of the Mandans, C. M. Russell, 1908, watercolor. The Montana Historical Society

York's large size was amazing to the Indians, as was his hair and dark skin. There is a report that the American Indians in a Mandan village tried to rub his color off. They were convinced he had painted himself black. Despite his large size he was an agile dancer and the Indians loved to watch him dance. They believed York had great spiritual power.



York Michael Haynes, Michael Haynes Howard Art, www.mhaynesart.com

York, along with Sacagawea and other members of the expedition, were allowed to "vote" on the location of the explorers' winter quarters on the Pacific Coast. This was significant in demonstrating that an enslaved African American man and an American Indian woman's opinion were equal in value to the rest of the Corps' members.



Two studies of York, a major sculpture by noted Kentucky artist Ted Hamilton. The York Memorial, dedicated in 2003 in honor of the bicentennial commemoration of the Lewis and Clark Expedition can be seen at the Belvedere, a plaza overlooking the Ohio River in downtown Louisville.

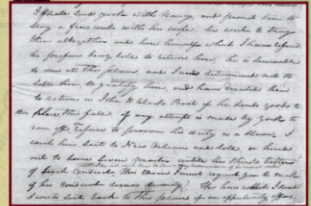
In June 1808 Clark moved to St. Louis, which caused a serious conflict between himself and York. York's wife was owned by another slaveholder and the move to St. Louis separated York from her. Understandably, York's behavior and attitude changed dramatically as a result of this forced separation. He believed that he should be granted his freedom as a reward for his services. After much contention, York was permitted to live in the Louisville area working for the Clark family or being hired out to others.

The estrangement between the two came despite Clark's numerous references to his personal regard for York. In fairness to Clark, he was much conflicted by the nature of slavery, as were many other slaveholders, including Thomas Jefferson, who also sold slaves and separated families. Clark wrote to his brother Jonathan, "I did wish to do well by him [York], but as he has got such a notion about freedom and his immense Services [on the expedition and through the years], that I do not expect he will be of much Service to me again."

Clark worried over the situation and discussed it with Lewis. In an 1808 letter to his brother, Clark wrote, "I do not care for Yorks being in this Country [St. Louis area]. I have got a little displeas'd with him and intended to have punished him but Gov. Lewis has insisted on my only hiring him out in Kentucky which perhaps will be best." Clark seemed to believe that York would learn a lesson from "a Severe Master" and thus "give over that wife of his" and want to return to Clark in St. Louis. York returned to St. Louis in 1809, and Clark wrote, "Yerk brought my horse, he is here but of very little Service to me, insolent and sulky, I gave him a Severe trouncing the other Day and he has much mendal."

In the end Clark may have accepted that his punishments and lectures would not prevail upon York. In 1832, Clark told author Washington Irving that he had freed York (sometime after 1815), and set him up with a wagon and team hauling freight between Nashville, Tennessee, and Richmond, Kentucky. Clark also told Irving that York's business failed and that he died of cholera in Tennessee. Most historians have accepted Clark's account of York's fate.

However, there is a report that York may have returned to the West. One historian cites evidence of a trapper-Zenas Leonard—who in 1832 and again in 1834 met an elderly African American living with the Crow Indians in Wyoming. The man, who appears to have fit York's description in size and age, boasted of having participated in the Lewis and Clark expedition. Could this have been York?



The Filson Historical Society

In a November 9, 1808, letter to his brother Jonathan, Clark explained that he would, "send York and permit him to Stay a few weeks with his wife, he wishes to Stay there altogether and hire return [out] which I have refused. He prefers being sold to return [in] here, [but] he is Serviceable to me at this place, and I am determin'd not to sell him, to gratify him, and have directed him to return . . . to this place, this fall. If any attempt is made by York to run off, or refuse to perform his duty as a Slave, I wish him Sent to New Orleans and sold, or hired out to some Severe Master a while until he thinks better of such Conduct. I do not wish him to know my determination if he conducts [himself] well."

William Clark, St. Louis, to Jonathan Clark, Louisville, Ky, November 9, 1808

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Indians Discovering Lewis And Clark, Charles M. Russell, oil, 1896. The Montana Historical Society

Private William Werner

Of all the young men from Kentucky who journeyed with Lewis and Clark, William Werner is the least known. It is likely that he was born in Kentucky and was transferred to the Corps of Discovery from another army unit. His duties with the Corps included cooking and salt-making. After the expedition, he is known to have worked for William Clark while he was the Indian agent for the West. Werner was reported living in Virginia in 1828.



National Geographic Society



Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation

The Pacific coast near the mouth of the Columbia River and Lewis and Clark's winter quarters, Fort Clatsop.

The Corps of Discovery's arrival at La Charette, near St. Charles, in September 1806, as depicted in this sketch by Richard Schlecht. This was the last settlement the Corps passed in 1804 and the first they encountered on their return in 1806.

Private Joseph Whitehouse

Joseph Whitehouse was born in Virginia about 1775 and moved to Kentucky with his family when he was around nine years of age. The family settled either in present-day Boyle or Mercer County. Whitehouse enlisted in the army at an early age. While stationed on the edge of the frontier, he became highly interested in the West. When he learned of the proposed expedition, he applied to join the group.

The journals of Lewis and Clark frequently mention Whitehouse's skill as a "tailor" and "hide-curer" and record that Whitehouse made and repaired clothes for the other men. He was also one of the journalists of the group. Whitehouse was expelled from the Corp for "misconduct," but was reinstated after he apologized and appealed to the captains. In 1807 an arrest order was issued against him in St. Louis for bad debts. It is believed he deserted from the army in 1817 or 1819. When and where he died is unknown.



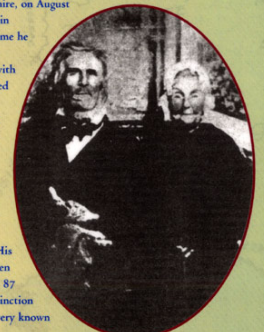
Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation

Replica of Fort Clatsop, Oregon, the Corps of Discovery's 1805-6 winter quarters.

Private Alexander Hamilton Willard

Willard was born in Charlestown, New Hampshire, on August 24, 1778. He is believed to have been living in Kentucky prior to joining the army. At the time he joined the Corps of Discovery, he was serving in an army artillery unit. Willard was five feet ten inches in height with a good physique, brown hair, and dark eyes. He is reported to have had skills as a gunsmith, blacksmith, and hunter. Early on the expedition Willard fell asleep on guard duty, was court-martialed and sentenced to one hundred lashes - a severe but common sentence.

After the expedition returned, Willard married Eleanor McDonald of Shelbyville, Kentucky. They had five daughters and seven sons - one named Lewis and another named Clark. They settled in Missouri by 1808, and Willard was again in the army during the War of 1812. His family was living in Wisconsin from 1824 until 1852, when they migrated overland to California. Willard died at age 87 near Sacramento in 1865. Alexander Willard has the distinction of being one of only two members of the Corps of Discovery known to have had his photograph taken.



Alexander Hamilton Willard and wife, Eleanor. G.P. Putnam & Sons, P&L

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