

WHAT WAS HER NAME?

Sah-kah-gar we a
Sah cah gah, we a
Sar car gah we a
Sah car gah we a
Sah-cah gah-weah

Clark 4/7/1805
Clark 6/10/1805
Clark 6/22/1805
Clark 6/29/1805
Clark 11/24/1805

Sah-ca-gar me-ah
Sah-cah-gah, we a
Sah-cah-gar-we-ah
Sah-cah-gar-weah
Sah cah-gar-we-ah
Sah-cah-gar Wea
Sahcargarmeah

Lewis 5/20/1805
Lewis 6/10/1805
Lewis 7/28/1805
Lewis 8/17/1805
Lewis 8/17/1805
Lewis 8/22/1805
Lewis 5/16/1806

Sah cah gah

Sgt. Ordway 6/10/1805

Sah ca gah we a

Biddle, Editor

Sacagawea was commonly referred to as the “Indian woman”, *Interpters wife*”, “*Squar*” or “*Charbono’s Squar*”. In one entry (11/24/1805), Clark referred to her as “*Janey*”. Was her name Shoshone or Hidatsa? Lewis wrote that her name meant “Bird Woman”. The Hidatsa spelling is *Sakakawea*. A Shoshone spelling is *Sacajawea* (“Boat Launcher”). The Bureau of American Ethnology spells it *Sacagawea*.

Appendix

A Note on Sacagawea

Readers of this book will undoubtedly wonder why the most famous Indian associated with the Lewis and Clark expedition is mentioned so infrequently. Over the past century a powerful mythology has grown up, making extravagant claims for Sacagawea as expedition guide and American heroine. Writers from Eva Emery Dye and Grace R. Hebard to Donald Culross Peattie and Anna Lee Waldo have fashioned narratives that go far beyond what can be known from reputable historical sources. When evidence runs thin, many writers have been all too willing to pass off fabrication for fact. Thus the claims still persist that Sacagawea single-handedly guided the expedition through unknown lands to the Pacific and that she died an old woman at Wind River, Wyoming in 1884. Such myths diminish Sacagawea and make a balanced evaluation of her genuine contributions more difficult. More important, they draw our attention away from those native men and women who made more fundamental contributions to the expedition's success.

What is reliably known about Sacagawea makes for only a brief biographical sketch. Sometime in the fall of 1800, the young Lemhi Shoshoni girl, then perhaps twelve or thirteen years old, was camped at the Three Forks of the Missouri with others from her band. As so often happened to northern Shoshonis who ventured out on the plains to hunt buffalo, the party at Three Forks was attacked by Hidatsa raiders. In the fighting that followed, several Shoshonis were killed. Among the prisoners taken were four boys and several women, including Sacagawea. Sometime between 1800 and 1804, she and one other Shoshoni captive were purchased by Toussaint Charbonneau, a trader with ties to the North West Company. When Lewis and Clark met Charbonneau at Fort Mandan on November 4, 1804, the trader and his family were living at the Awatixa Hidatsa village of Metaharta. Sacagawea was already pregnant and on February 11, 1805, she gave birth to a son named Jean Baptiste. When Toussaint Charbonneau was finally hired by Lewis and Clark as an interpreter, Sacagawea and her child became part of the Corps of Discovery.

Three questions about Sacagawea have long fascinated Lewis and Clark scholars. The name of the Indian woman—its meaning and proper spelling—continues to spark considerable debate. Sacajawea, Sacagawea, and Sakakawea have all had their

partisans. The concern about spelling is not just a quibble over orthography. If the woman's name was Sacajawea, the word might be Shoshoni, meaning "boat launcher." However, if the spelling is more properly Sacagawea, the name would be Hidatsa and translate as "Bird Woman." The journal evidence from Lewis and Clark appears as to support a Hidatsa derivation. On May 20, 1805, Lewis wrote: "Sah cah we ah or bird woman's River" to name what is now Crooked Creek in north-central Montana. The most effective arguments for a Sacagawea spelling and a Hidatsa meaning are offered by Irving Anderson in his "Sacajawea, Sacagawea, Sakakawea?" (*South Dakota History* 8 [1978]: 303-11). Anderson summarizes the previous literature and finds that the Sacagawea spelling best fits both the historical and linguistic evidence. However, it should be noted that an unpublished paper by Bob Saindon, "'Sacajawea': The Origin and Meaning of a Name," does raise important questions about the whole matter. Both Anderson and Saindon rely heavily on the findings of professional linguists, who in turn differ considerably in their conclusions. Along with the historian Donald Jackson, I have found the Sacagawea spelling most acceptable.

Far more important than the spelling and meaning of Sacagawea's name is the nature and scope of her contributions to the expedition. Perhaps the most persistent Lewis and Clark myth is that Sacagawea "guided" the party to the Pacific. In countless statues, poems, paintings, and books she is depicted as a westward-pointing pathfinder providing invaluable direction for bewildered explorers. In the interest of correction, there has been a tendency to underestimate Sacagawea's genuine achievements as a member of the Corps of Discovery. Not as important as George Drouillard or John Ordway, the young woman did make significant contributions to the expedition's success.

Those contributions can be discussed under four heads. When the expedition left Fort Mandan in April 1805, its most immediate need was to find the Shoshoni Indians and obtain horses for what was assumed would be an easy mountain portage to Pacific waters. Lewis and Clark certainly believed that Sacagawea would be of considerable value in the Shoshoni mission. They expected that she might recognize landmarks along the route and would provide general information about the location of Shoshoni camps. When Sacagawea became ill at the Great Falls of the Missouri, Lewis admitted, "This gave me some concern as well as for the poor object herself, than with the young child in her arms, as from the consideration of her being our only dependence for friendly negotiation with the Snake Indians."¹ But just what the captains expected from her in those talks is not plain. For reasons that are now unclear, Sacagawea was not included in Lewis's advance party that finally made contact with the Shoshonis in August 1805. Good relations between the explorers and Cameahwait depended far more on promises of guns and trade than on any intercessions made by Sacagawea.

Sacagawea was not an expedition guide in the usual sense of the word. When Lewis and Clark needed to make a critical decision in early June 1805 about the true channel of the Missouri, she took no part in the process. Much later, when the expedition needed guides, men like Old Toby, Tetoharsky, and Twisted Hair were hired for that duty. Only twice did Sacagawea provide what might be termed guide services. In late July and early August 1805, she recognized important geographical features on the way to find Shoshoni camps. On the return journey in 1806, Sacagawea accompanied Clark's party and provided the explorer with valuable information on what has since been named Bozeman Pass. For most of the transcontinental journey, Sacagawea was seeing country as new to her as it was to the captains. That she was not in the lead making trail decisions does not diminish the fact that when she did recognize a landmark, "this piece of information cheered the spirits of the party."²

Success in many of the expedition's Indian missions depended on reliable communication and translation. Both diplomacy and the collection of ethnographic information demanded the sort of communication that George Drouillard's signs could not always provide. One of Sacagawea's most important roles in the expedition was that of translator, or as Clark quaintly put it, "interprestress with the Snake Indians." She often worked as part of a long and cumbersome translation chain that took each native word through many speakers before reaching the captains. Sacagawea was able to continue those duties west of the Continental Divide because of the presence of Shoshoni prisoners among groups that did not speak Shoshoni. Talks with the Flatheads at Ross's Hole were conducted through such a prisoner, as were those on the return journey with the Walulas and Nez Percés.

The expedition also benefited from the physical presence of Sacagawea and her child. Indians who might have thought the explorers part of a war party were evidently reassured when they saw a woman and an infant in the group. Clark said as much when he wrote, "The Wife of Shabono our interpreter We find reconciles all the Indians, as to our friendly intentions. A woman with a party of men is a token of peace."³

If Sacagawea's life and accomplishments have been hotly debated, controversy has also swirled around the date and place of her death. When Grace R. Hebard published her *Sacajawea* in 1933, she claimed that the Indian woman had lived at Wind River, Wyoming, under the name Porivo until her death in 1884. As Irving Anderson points out in his closely argued "Probing the Riddle of the Bird Woman" (*Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 23 [1973]: 2-17), Hebard's book misinterpreted some evidence and neglected much more. Statements by William Clark and trader John C. Luttig make it plain that Sacagawea died on December 20, 1812, at Fort Manuel in present-day South Dakota. Most scholars now accept Clark's note in his Cash Book that Sacagawea was dead by the 1825-28 period and Luttig's note—"this Evening the wife of Charbonneau, a Snake Squaw, died of a putrid fever she

was a good and the best woman in the fort, aged abt 25 years"—as substantial evidence for Sacagawea's early death.

From the time of the expedition itself, Sacagawea has prompted strong opinions. Lewis and Clark themselves wrote quite different evaluations of the woman and her place in expedition history. Lewis, evidently unimpressed with her, declared, "If she has enough to eat and a few trinkets I beleive she would be perfectly content anywhere."⁴ Clark did not share what seems the ill-concealed contempt in those lines. He wrote to Toussaint Charbonneau after the journey was over, "Your woman who accompanied you that long dangerous and fatiguing rout to the Pacific Ocian and back diserved a greater reward for her attention and services on that rout than we had in our power to give her at the Mandans."⁵ Clark's care for the Charbonneau children after the expedition is yet another measure of his esteem for their mother.

Readers in search of a balanced treatment of Sacagawea might begin with Irving Anderson, "Probing the Riddle of the Bird Woman," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 23 (1973): 2-17, and E. G. Chuinard, "The Bird Woman: Purposeful Member of the Corps or Casual 'Tag-Along,'" *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 26 (1976): 18-29. Also of considerable value are Irving Anderson, "A Charbonneau Family Portrait," *American West* 17 (1980): 4-13, 63-64; C. S. Kingston, "Sacajawea as a Guide—The Evaluation of a Legend," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 35 (1944): 2-18; Blanche Schroer, "Boat-Pusher or Bird-Woman? Sacagawea or Sacajawea?" *Annals of Wyoming* 52 (1980): 46-54. The best book-length treatment is Harold P. Howard, *Sacajawea* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971). Ella P. Clark and Margot Edmonds, *Sacagawea* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979) must be read with caution since it uncritically accepts the notion of a Sacagawea who lived into the 1880s. Recent novels about Sacagawea, including Anna Lee Waldo, *Sacajawea* (New York: Avon Books, 1979) must be read as fiction, not history. Their claims to historical accuracy are dubious at best and misleading at worst.

Labrevois, Jacques Charles de, army officer (c. 1667-Jan. 19, 1727). B. in France, he reached Canada about 1685 and took part in campaigns against the Iroquois in 1695 and 1696, in 1709 he was operating in the Lake Champlain area. From 1715 to 1717 he commanded at Detroit and when recalled following a dispute with Ramezay, he went to France to clear himself, and returned in 1720. He became town major of Montreal, and died there.

Hlwaites, JR, LXIX, 298n43; DCB, II.

Sacajawea (Sacagawea, Bird Woman), interpreter (c. 1780-1812/1884). A Shoshone woman, she was captured by the Crows or the Minutaris (Hidatsa) and won in a gambling game by Toissant Charbonneau, a voyageur-interpreter-trader in 1794 when she reportedly was 14. He married her along with another Shoshone girl. Charbonneau was hired by Lewis and Clark as interpreter and he took his wife and infant son (b. Feb. 1805 in the Mandan villages) with him as the expedition moved westward up the Missouri in 1805. Sacajawea proved of more value to the endeavor than her husband, occasionally becoming guide as well as interpreter. The first band of Shoshone encountered was headed by Cameahwait, her brother; the meeting was warm and through the relationship Lewis and Clark were enabled to obtain horses and supplies with which to cross the high mountains into the Columbia basin; they reached the Pacific coast November 7, 1805. On the return Sacajawea guided Clark's division of the expedition through the confusing mountains of Montana. Both Lewis and Clark spoke highly of her talents and character in their journals, Clark particularly taken by her and her infant son whom he called Pomp or Pompey, a leader or head man. Lewis called Sacajawea "Jenny," while Clark called her "Janey." She and her husband and son remained at the Mandan villages as the expedition returned to St. Louis, but in 1809 Clark persuaded them to come to St. Louis. In 1811, according to one

version, they left their son, now named Jean Baptiste Charbonneau, with Clark to be educated, while Sacajawea and her husband joined a Manuel Lisa expedition back up the river. Lisa's clerk, John C. Luttig wrote in his journal December 20, 1812: "This evening the wife of Charbonneau, a Snake squaw, died of a putrid fever. She was the best woman in the fort, aged about twenty-five years. She left a fine infant child." Some believe that Clark accepted that as the notice that this was not Sacajawea, but the other Snake Woman whom Charbonneau had married. Eventually the child, a girl named Lizette Charbonneau also reached St. Louis and Clark became her guardian as he had offered to become for Jean Baptiste. Hebard believed that Charbonneau had taken both Shoshone wives (he also had a Mandan wife) to St. Louis and had left one there (Sacajawea) while returning upriver with Lisa and the other wife, who had died as recorded by Luttig. Sacajawea, according to this view, thereafter lived for a time among the Comanches (a Shoshone people), then rejoined her own Shoshone on the Wind River Reservation of Wyoming where she died at about 100 on April 9, 1884. This view was also accepted by Hodge and others, although today's historians are about evenly divided on the matter. By this account Sacajawea was interred at the burial ground of the Shoshone Agency where a granite monument marks the site near Fort Washakie, Wyoming. A towering cement shaft was erected in 1929 at Dakota Memorial Park, Mobridge, South Dakota, to commemorate her supposed lost grave in that vicinity. Numerous memorial plaques, statues and other permanent tributes to Sacajawea have been placed at points important to her story.

Literature abundant: Hodge, HAI; Dockstader; Grace Raymond Hebard, *Sacajawea*. Glendale, Calif., Arthur H. Clark Co., 1967.

Sadekanaktie, Onondaga chief (d. 1701). A principal chief and speaker, he is first mentioned at a council at Onondaga, New York, January 29, 1690. He was as famous as

Sacajawea

Native American Heroine

Marie Webster Weisbrod

A granite marker in a cemetery on the Shoshone Wind River Reservation in Wyoming proclaims:

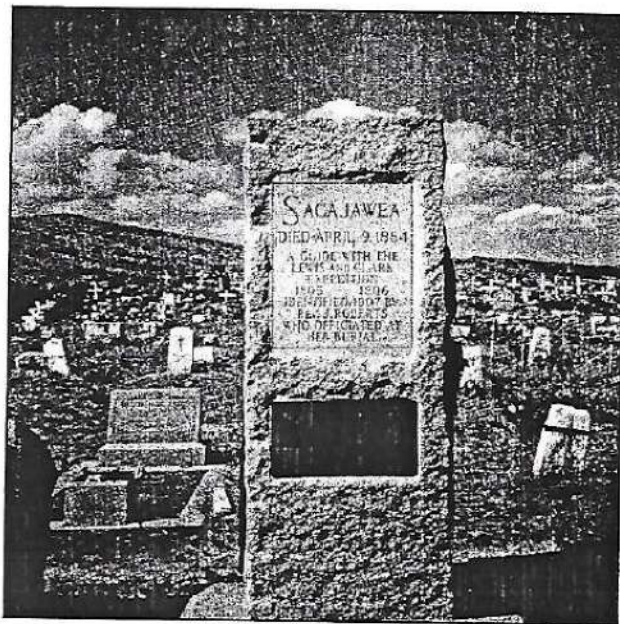
SACAJAWEA
DIED APRIL 9, 1884
A GUIDE WITH THE
LEWIS AND CLARK
EXPEDITION
1805-1806
IDENTIFIED 1907 BY
REV. J. ROBERTS
WHO OFFICIATED AT
HER BURIAL

The monument is flanked by two other markers, claiming to identify sons of Sacajawea: Bazil, who died 1886, and Baptiste Charbonneau, papoose of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, who died 1885.

Like many before me, I had driven off U.S. Highway 287 and back into the hills of Fort Washakie to pay my respects to a heroic Indian woman. Unknowingly, I marveled that she could have lived for 78 years after her momentous trek across the Western states. Little did I realize that the bones buried under the granite slab were those of an old Shoshone woman known only as Porivo, mother of Ba-zeel and Bat-tez. How could that have happened? It was not until I began to research the brief but brilliant life of Sacajawea that I found some answers.

Crowning the Bitterroot Range above the Beaverhead Valley of Montana, source of a network of streams forming the Missouri River's most distant headwaters, and high atop these same mountains overlooking the Salmon River Valley in Idaho, lies a trail leading over the continental watershed. Into this mass of snow-glazed spires and labyrinth of canyons came the Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery in 1805, searching for a feasible route to the Pacific. Of necessity, abandoning their dug-out canoes as they left navigable rivers behind, the explorers crossed the Great Divide for the first time. Riding on a horse provided by the Shoshones was an Indian maiden, a papoose on her back, returning to the homeland she had not seen for five years.

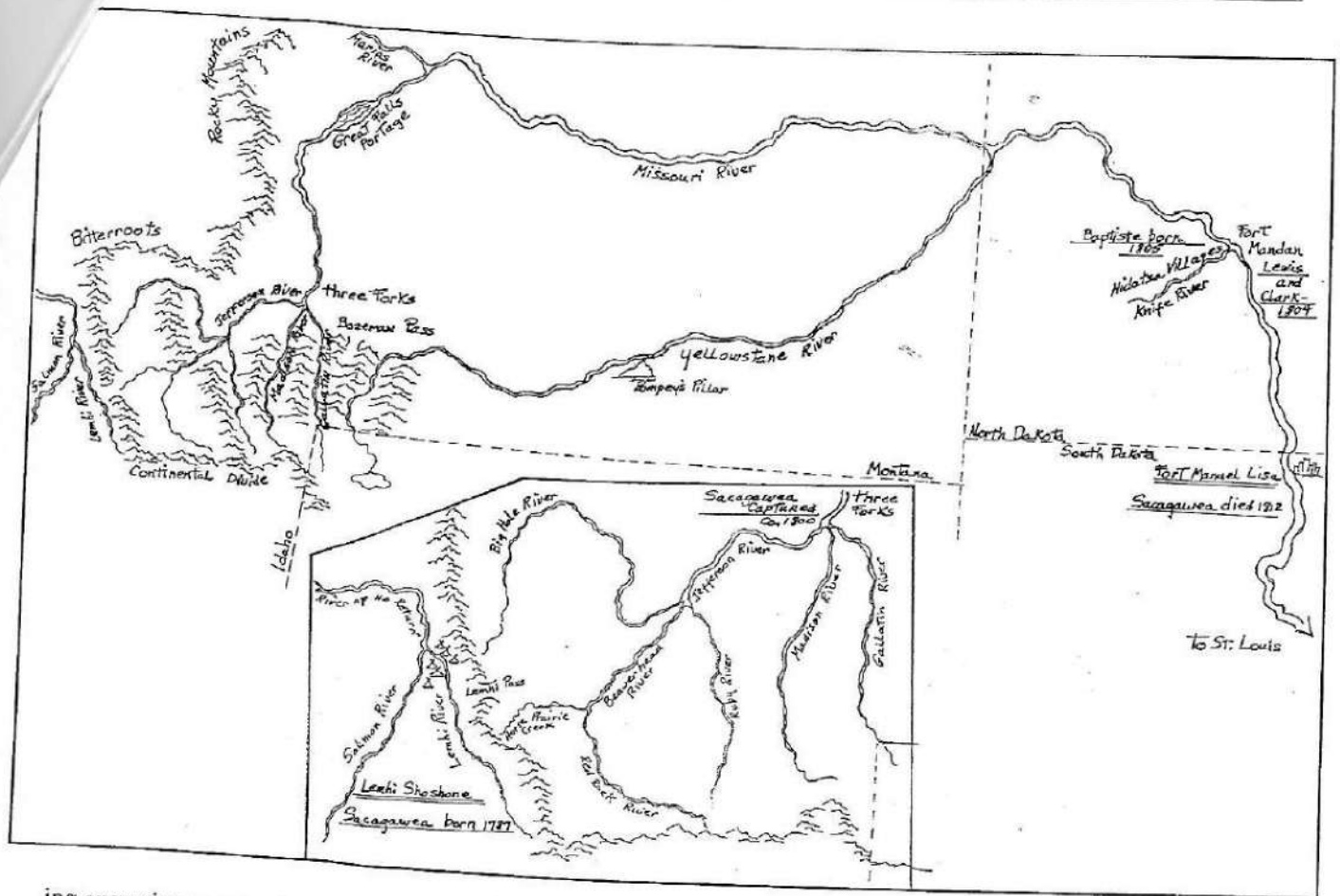
Little is known about this Native American heroine, but much has been surmised; her role in the expedition ascended to that of guide and leader, her travels with the



Corps romanticized by novelists, her image immortalized in statues and paintings, and the length of her life subject of controversial research. Of a life span of two and a half decades, only 18 months, from February 1805 to August 1806, are documented in the journals of William Clark and Meriwether Lewis and other members of the expedition.

Even Sacajawea's birthdate is a conjecture, ranging from 1784 to 1788. That she was born into a band of Indians inhabiting the valley on the western side of "the Shining mountains" is acknowledged in the journals, with her recognition and acceptance by the tribe when the Corps crossed over the Divide. Alternately referred to as Shoshone or Snake Indians, their villages dotted the meadowlands at the confluence of two rivers, the Salmon and Lemhi, a designation applied by Mormons in 1855. Loosely organized into small self-sufficient family units, Sacajawea's people lived off the land, gathering seeds, nuts, and berries, digging wild carrots, onions, and the starchy bulb of the camas lily, snaring rabbits, and netting fish. During her childhood years, she would have become proficient in acquiring all of these life-sustaining necessities, skills that would prove invaluable to the expedition.

Long before the explorers invaded their territory, the Lemhi Shoshone had acquired horses, permitting forag-



ing excursions across the mountain passes to the east as they followed rivers to the broad valley of the three forks of the Missouri. It was during one of their hunting forays that the Lemhis were attacked by an enemy tribe riding south from the Northern Plains. Their captives, among them Sacajawea, were taken some 500 miles across the vast grasslands of eastern Montana and North Dakota. For the next four years, Sacajawea lived among the Minnetares and Hidatsa Indians in one of several villages clustered on the bluffs above the Knife River at its junction with the Missouri. As she was to prove many times, she was an intelligent young girl, learning to speak the language of her captors and quickly adapting to their farmer, buffalo-hunting lifestyle. Perhaps it was because of her resilience and adaptability that the tribe gave Sacajawea her name, also spelled Sakakawea, meaning "bird woman," from the Hidatsa word Tsakaka, bird, and wia, woman.

Unquestionably, she would need every ounce of resilience and fortitude when a much older, unsavory fur trapper took her as one of his squaws during the spring of 1804. The half-breed son of a Sioux mother and French-Canadian father, Toussaint Charbonneau had learned to communicate with Indian tribes while negotiating with fur traders. As fortune or fate would have it, the Lewis and Clark Corps forged up the Missouri in the fall of 1804, building winter quarters among

the Mandan villages across the river from the Hidatsa. In November, Clark noted that he had met with a Mr. Chaubonie (his spelling) who was an interpreter for the Grosse Ventre nation and wished to hire on as their interpreter. On Monday, February 11, 1805, Lewis wrote:

... one of the wives of Carbono [his spelling] was delivered of a fine boy . . . the first child this woman had boarn [sic].

Jean Baptiste Charbonneau was destined to become a favorite of Captain Clark.

Through their interpreters, Lewis and Clark learned from the Indians the hazards of the route that lay ahead — the falls on the river around which they would have to portage and the lofty mountains they would need to surmount. The Hidatsa knew that Shoshone, living among the Rockies, had horses, perhaps endorsing the decision to include Sacajawea and babe along with Charbonneau. When the Corps headed west on April 17, 1805, Clark made a list of the people who would accompany them. Included were:

Sharbonah and his Indian Squar [sic] to act as interpreter and interpretes for the snake Indians — Sharbonah's infant and Sah-kah-gar-wea.

Accounts of the remarkable exploration from its conception July 5, 1803, to its launching in St. Louis on May 14, 1804, and return September 23, 1806, have been chronicled ad infinitum for nearly two centuries. The only references needed in this account of an equally remarkable heroine are those pertaining to her contributions to the expedition.

On several occasions mention is made of Sacajawea augmenting their provisions by collecting edible plants: wild artichokes that she dug "from the earth with a sharp stick" and yellow fruit from "a bush something like a currant." And again,

Sahcargarweah geathered [*sic*] a quantity of the roote [*sic*] of a species of fennel which we found very agreeable food [and] year-pah (yampa) roots which could be eaten fresh, roasted, boiled or dried.

The calm courage she exhibited in perilous situations is noted frequently by both captains. During their second month on the river, a squall overturned one of the pirogues carrying supplies. Following what could have been a great loss, Lewis recorded:

the Indian woman to whom I ascribe equal fortitude and resolution with any person on board . . . caught and preserved most of the light articles which were washed overboard.

In recognition of her valor, on May 20 Clark wrote: "this

stream we called Sah-ca-gah-we-a or bird woman River after our Interpreter the Snake woman."

Time and again, Sacajawea was to prove herself indefatigable, trudging along the 18-mile portage around the Great Falls, surviving violent torrents of rain, swarms of flesh-piercing mosquitoes, and frequent abuse by her husband. On one occasion, Clark noted he had "checked our interpreter for striking his woman at their dinner."

Her knowledge of Indian ways proved helpful when the expedition encountered an abandoned encampment at the mouth of a river the leaders named Judith. On examining moccasins found there, "our Indian woman said they do not belong to her tribe." Later, when passing the remains of other Indian camps, Sacajawea observed pine trees stripped of bark as her countrymen did to obtain sap and soft parts of wood for food.

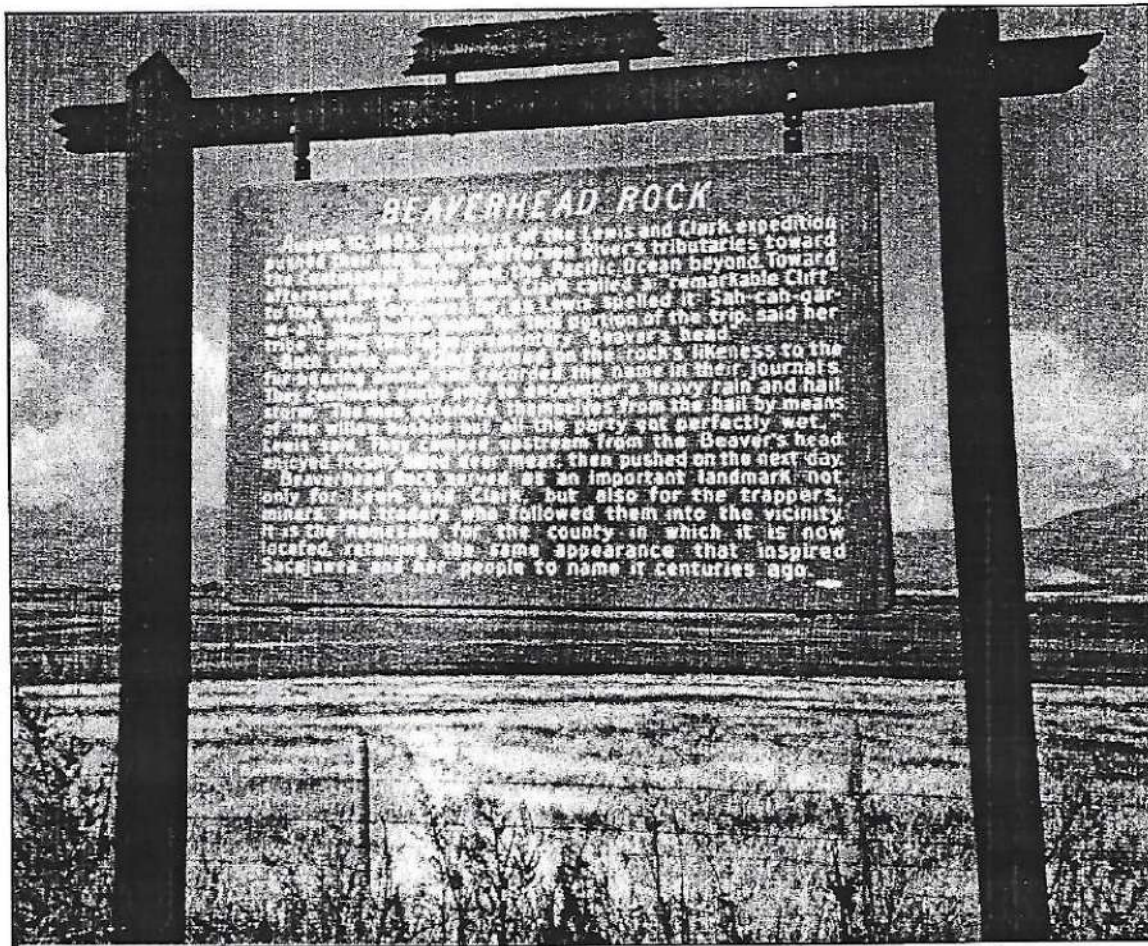
Upon reaching the area where three rivers flowed into the Missouri, Sacajawea informed the captains that this was the place she had been taken captive. As the Corps proceeded up the Jefferson River, she recognized a large rock known as the Beaver's Head and said that her tribe could be found on "a river beyond the mountains and running to the west." After the Corps made contact with the Lemhi Shoshone and she was reunited with her people, Sacajawea discovered the chief was her brother, Cameahwait. Several weeks were spent scouting the area for passage to the Columbia River before the leaders learned that the Lemhis intended to travel east on their annual buffalo hunt, leaving the expedition stranded. Sacajawea persuaded her brother to provide

THE THREE FORKS OF THE MISSOURI

This region was alive with beaver, otter and game before the white man came. It was disputed hunting territory with the Indian tribes. Sacajawea, the Shoshone who guided portions of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, was captured near here when a child during a battle between her people and the Minnetarees. Her memories of this country were invaluable to the explorers. The Expedition, westward bound, encamped near here for a few days in the latter part of July, 1805. The following year Captain Clark and party came back, July 13, 1806, on their way to explore the Yellowstone River.

In 1808 John Colter, discoverer of Yellowstone Park, and former member of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, was trapping on a stream in this vicinity when captured by a band of Blackfeet. His only companion was killed. Colter was stripped, given a head start, and ordered to run across the flat which was covered with prickly pear. The Indians were hot on his heels, but Colter undoubtedly made an all time record that day for sprints as well as distance events. He outran the Indians over a six-mile course and gained the cover of the timber along the Jefferson River. Once in the stream he dove and came up under a jam of driftwood. This hide out saved him from a lot of disappointed and mystified Indians. When night came he headed east, weaponless and outnuding the nudists. He traveled in this condition for seven days to Fort Lisa, his headquarters at the mouth of the Big Horn River.

In 1810 the Missouri Fur Co. built a fur trading post close by but due to the hostility of the Blackfeet Indians were forced to abandon it that fall.



horses and guides for the difficult trek ahead of them. Having achieved that goal, Clark wrote:

the wife of Shabone our interpreter we find reconciles all the Indians as to our friendly intentions, a woman with a party of men is a token of peace.

Sacajawea's assistance to the Corps as they navigated the treacherous route down the Columbia to the Pacific Coast continued to be invaluable. Returning eastward in July 1806, after once again crossing the Divide, the two captains split the Corps, Lewis's group exploring a northern route and Clark, accompanied by Sacajawea and ten men, heading south and east. After retrieving supplies and canoes cached the year before, Clark's intention was to proceed by land to the Yellowstone River. Recognizing the country through which she had traveled as a child, Sacajawea directed Clark toward a shortcut, later known as Bozeman Pass. Clark noted:

The Indian woman who has been of great service to me as a pilot through this country recommends a gap in the mountains more south which I shall cross.

Once more voyaging by water, the group stopped to

examine an immense boulder on which Indians had carved figures of animals. Named "Pompey's Tower" in tribute to Sacajawea's son, whom Clark had nicknamed "Pomp," Clark chiseled his own name and the date, July 25, 1806, into the rock.

At the end of the journey, August 14, 1806, Captain Clark expressed his admiration for Sacajawea:

She has borne with patience truly admirable the fatigues of so long a route incumbered with the charge of an infant who is even now only nineteen months old.

As he left Fort Mandan on August 20 to sail down river to St. Louis, Clark wrote to Charbonneau:

Your woman . . . deserved a greater reward for her attention and services than we had in our power to give to her.

He offered to provide Baptiste with an education befitting his obvious intelligence and wrote:

As to your little son (my boy Pomp) you well know my fondness for him and my anxiety to take and raise him as my own child. Your femme had

best come along with you to take ceare [sic] of the boy untill [sic] I get him.

Probably within a year or two, Charbonneau, accompanied by Sacajawea and son, went to St. Louis and purchased or was awarded a tract of land on the Missouri River. During the spring of 1811, the Frenchman sold the land back to Clark and returned up river with Sacajawea, leaving Baptiste in Clark's care. Their destination was Fort Manuel Lisa just south of the North Dakota border, a trading post established by the Missouri Fur Company. A fellow traveler, Henry Brackenridge, wrote in his journal:

We had on board a Frenchman named Charbonneau, with his wife an Indian woman of the Snake nation, both of whom accompanied Lewis and Clark to the Pacific. The woman, a good creature of mild and gentle disposition . . . had become sickly and longed to revisit her native country.

Another reference to Sacajawea was made by John Luttig, a clerk at Fort Manuel Lisa, who kept a daily log of events. On December 20, 1812, he recorded:

This evening the wife of Charbonneau, a Snake Squaw, died of a putrid fever. She was a good and the best woman in the fort, aged about 25 years. She left a fine infant girl.

A final mention of the Indian lass appears in William Clark's notes, written between 1825 and 1826, in which

he lists the names of expedition members and what had become of them: "Se car ja we au — Dead."

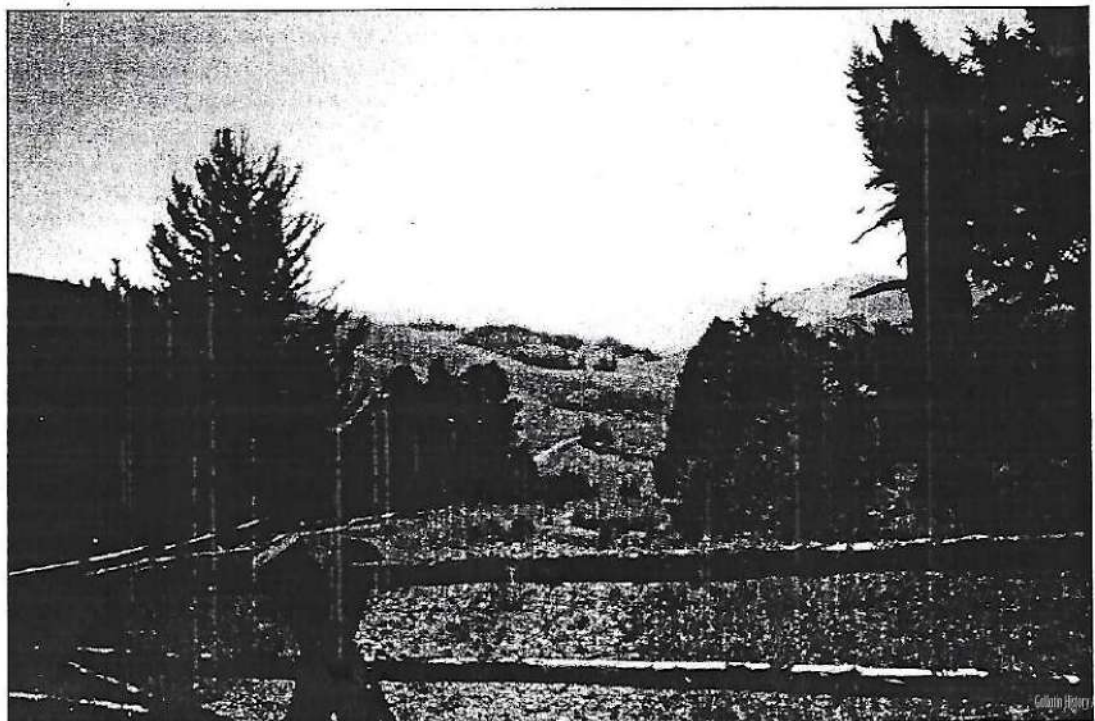
A definitive closure to the Sacajawea story? Since it is logical to assume that she would have been buried at Fort Manuel Lisa, why the controversy that has raged for so many years as to the time and place of her death? No grave marker for Sacajawea has been erected in South Dakota, but looming above the rocks and plastic flowers on a Wyoming hillside is that granite marker. What events or information sanctioned such a myth?

The deification of Sacajawea as "the guide without whom the Corps of Discovery would never have reached the Pacific," began in 1902 with the publication of Eva Emery Dye's *The Conquest: The True Story of Lewis and Clark*. The work of fiction, loosely based upon the captain's journals, contained many flowery phrases; "Sacajawea, the beautiful Indian Princess stolen beyond the Rockies"; pseudo-vernacular dialogue: "She my slave, said Charboneau. Me buy her from de Rock Mountains"; and much speculation: "Sacajawea's heart clung to the easy-going Frenchman as her best friend. The worst white man was better than an Indian husband." (Quite contrary to comments in the journals!) About the fate of the couple, Dye wrote:

Sacajawea and Charbonneau lived for many years among the Mandans, and their descendants are found in the Dakotas to this day.

And the motivation for the glorification? The Woman's Suffrage Movement. A symbolic heroine had

View down into Lemhi Valley, the birthplace of Sacajawea, 1787.



been created, a pathfinder who had led the explorers through the labyrinthine Rockies, saved them from enemy Indian tribes, and brought them safely home again. The result? To celebrate the achievement of the Suffragettes, a statue sculpted by a woman of Sacajawea, a papoose on her back, right arm raised, pointing the way westward. Erected 1905 in Portland, Oregon, as a centennial monument, it was the first of many commemorating one of the greatest explorations ever made by man — or woman.

The spark struck by Eva Dye was fanned into flames by the hyperbole of Grace Raymond Hebard, Ph.D. As librarian at the University of Wyoming and a member of the State Historic Society, she published an article in the *Journal of American History*, January 1907:

Pilot of First White Men to Cross the American Continent: Identification of the Indian Girl who led the Lewis and Clark Expedition over the Rocky Mountains in their Unparalleled Journey into the Mysteries of the Western World & Recognition of Sacajawea as the Woman who Guided the Explorers to the New Golden Empire.

Although eloquently written, the 18-page article contained discrepancies apparent to any who have read the original journals. To quote but one:

The Blackfeet swept down upon the Shoshone Indians along the Snake River in Idaho just west of the Bitterroots and stole Sacajawea and took her over the mountains to the east . . . where she was sold to Charbonneau as a slave when she was a child of five years.

Within the article, Hebard claimed: "The grave of Sacajawea has recently been found, and her identity established beyond doubt." Apparently, the impetus came from a statement made by an Episcopal minister on the Wind River Reservation, Reverend John Roberts, that he had

. . . buried in 1884, a hundred year old woman known as Porivo or Ba-zeel's mother — who might possibly have been Sacajawea.

Hebard's intense desire to trace Sacajawea's life after the end of the historic trek and to find proof of her final years on the Wyoming Reservation resulted in a book, *Sacajawea, Guide of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*. From interviews with aged Shoshones, Agency officials, missionaries, and teachers who had known Porivo before her death, Hebard spun an incredible story of a woman wandering for 60 years from the Dakotas south into Comanche territory in Oklahoma, north through Colorado and, ultimately rejoining her kin on the Wind River in Wyoming.

The author relied heavily on a 1925 report by Charles Eastman, inspector for the Office of Indian Affairs, who was instructed to locate the final burial place of Sacajawea. In the report he consistently used the name Porivo, and his reconstruction of her life with Charbonneau and after her departure from Fort Manuel Lisa is so riddled with inconsistencies that it is difficult to follow, much less comprehend.

Dr. Hebard identified and interviewed numerous descendants of Porivo, all of whom accepted the possibility that she had been "Sacajawea, the guide for Lewis and Clark." However, affidavits and letters attesting to the assertion were written 20 to 30 years after Porivo's death, and evidence of this kind, most historians agree, is not always reliable. Unfortunately, Grace Hebard also misinterpreted documents written during Sacajawea's last years in South Dakota in such a way as to support her suppositions. She dismissed the record of John Luttig when he wrote in 1812: "This evening the wife of Charbonneau a Snake squaw, died of a putrid fever." For Hebard, the Snake squaw was apparently another wife of the Frenchman, disregarding Brackenridge's earlier notation that he was accompanied up the Missouri by "Charbonnet, with his wife an Indian woman of the Snake nation, both of whom accompanied Lewis and Clark to the Pacific."

By the time of the book's publication in 1932, Grace Hebard was professor of political economy at the University and esteemed as the authority on Sacajawea. Her book became the standard text on the subject and spawned a plethora of others, both fictional and biographical, most of them reiterating and/or embellishing Hebard's rhetoric.

Soon after my visit to the Sacajawea Cemetery in Fort Washakie, I began my research in the Public Library of Landers, Wyoming. It was through newspaper articles in the pamphlet file that I discovered a remarkable woman who dared to debunk the myth: Blanche Schroer. As the daughter of an Indian Service physician and hospital administrator, Mrs. Schroer was educated on Native American reservations throughout the Northwestern states. During her early married years, she worked for the Government Indian Office and as bookkeeper for the Post Trading Company at Fort Washakie.

I have since conducted a lively correspondence with the sprightly octogenarian and an even more intense interview. As she began to talk about Sacajawea, her eyes sparkled and answers came to my questions almost faster than their utterance. Her investigation into the life and death of Sacajawea had started

solely to prove Wyoming's allegations that Sacajawea, as an old woman, came to the Wind River Reservation and died there.

However, after many years of research, she found no documentation from the nearly 100-year life span of

Porivo to verify the claim (proposed more than two decades after her death), that the bones buried were those of Sacajawea. The most important piece of evidence against the claim came from her conversation in 1945 with Rev. Roberts, then an old man. When Schroer asked him about Porivo, her death and burial, he said, "All I know is I buried an old Indian woman. The historian told me she was Sacajawea."

The controversy blazed into prominence when the Wyoming Chapter of the Daughters of the American Republic (DAR) planned to erect the six-foot granite monument in 1963 dedicated to the "Guide of the Lewis and Clark Expedition." The *Wyoming State Journal* printed a long article in which Mrs. Schroer reviewed the history of the expedition, Sacajawea's role as interpreter, not guide, and presented evidence of her death in 1812 in the Dakotas. In a letter to the editor of the *Journal*, Alfred Larson, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus of History, University of Wyoming, wrote:

Congratulations on the courage you have shown in publishing both sides of the Sacajawea controversy. . . and on having such a well-informed student of the subject (Blanche Schroer) in your midst. She is the leading expert on the subject in the United States. Moreover, the documentary evidence is on her side.

The DAR did not yield. At the dedication ceremonies in August, 1963, a representative was quoted as saying:

Whether Sacajawea is buried here or not, she was a Shoshone Indian and was born in Wyoming. She was picked up by Lewis and Clark and dropped off here when they returned.

Blanche Schroer's retort?

Even Wyoming school children know that during Sacajawea's time (late 1700-early 1800), the home camps of the Eastern Shoshones were in Montana and Idaho and Fort Washakie did not exist until sixty-five years after the return of the expedition.

Two other disturbing aspects of the dispute concern the markers designated for Sacajawea's sons flanking the DAR monument in the cemetery. That Ba-zeel and Bat-tez were sons of Porivo is true, as shown on a 1877 census record. That Ba-zeel (Bazil) was the nephew of Sacajawea, claimed by Hebard to have been adopted when the Indian woman was reunited with her native tribe in 1805, is a myth. Although there is mention in the original journals of Sacajawea's adopting the son of her dead sister, there is no recorded name, Bazil, nor any indication that the boy accompanied Sacajawea back to Fort Mandan.

The subject of Jean Baptiste Charbonneau, born to Sacajawea in 1805, has been diligently researched by Irving W. Anderson, past president of the National Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation. In an article published in the *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, September 1970, Anderson outlined Baptiste's activities from his adoption by William Clark and his school days in St. Louis, to the end of his life in Oregon. Cited are references to Baptiste's education in Europe, his return to America in 1829, his years as guide for the Mormon battalion en route to California, his brief period as *alcalde* for the San Luis Rey Mission, his mining pursuits in the gold fields, and his recorded death on the Inskip Ranch, Danner, Oregon, in 1866. His grave is now recognized as a Registered National Historic Place.

In Dr. Hebard's book, she acknowledged Porivo's son, Bat-tez, as Baptiste and had him returning to Wyoming after his journey to California, saying,

In later life, he seems to have deteriorated, despite his education and his contacts with civilization.

Blanche Schroer vehemently rejected this possibility.

Porivo's son had no outstanding qualities; he never learned to write and even Rev. Roberts made no secret of the fact that old Bat was illiterate, untravelled and quite fond of the bottle.

Had the controversy been laid to rest with the accurate identification of Baptiste? No indeed. The possibility of Sacajawea's death at Fort Manuel Lisa in 1812 continued to be questioned by detractors because John Luttig's log did not specifically name Sacajawea as the woman who died on December 20, leaving an infant girl. Could the Snake woman have been a different wife of Charbonneau?

This speculation was challenged by Irving Anderson in another scholarly article in *Montana, the Magazine of Western History*, Fall 1973. In his carefully documented style, Anderson followed Sacajawea's progress from St. Louis up the Missouri in 1811. By the autumn of 1812, Fort Manuel Lisa had been established as the permanent trading post of the Missouri Trading Company. Two months after Luttig's notation, the fort was attacked by Indians, and 15 of the fort's men were killed. When the survivors retreated down river, John Luttig and the infant were also evacuated. On August 11, 1813, according to Orphans Court Records in St. Louis, William Clark became the guardian of "Tousant Charbonneau, a boy about ten years; and Lizette Charbonneau, a girl about one year old." This event would only have occurred with the knowledge that the children were orphans — Sacajawea known dead and the father presumed dead in the massacre at Fort Manuel Lisa.

The adoptions, coupled with Clark's recorded note in 1825 "Se car ja we au — Dead," should have put finis to

any question about Sacajawea's last days on earth, yet disparagers have asked, "How could William Clark be sure the Luttig's reference to the squaw of Charbonneau was Sacajawea?" Blanche Schroer answered the question easily:

As an agent for the Department of Indian Affairs and partner in the Missouri Fur Company, Clark maintained constant contact with the tribes of the territory, with members of the trading post and the Charbonneau family. There would be no reason for him to doubt that Luttig's report referred to Sacagawea.

Schroer's contention is verified by Jerome O. Steffen, who wrote:

Each partner agreed to maintain close contact with the fur trading expeditions and the posts established. Clark's duties as president were to sign and execute all notes, bills, obligations and receipts in behalf of the company.

During more than 50 years of research, Blanche Schroer has written numerous articles for historical society magazines refuting false suppositions about the identity of Sacajawea. In an essay for *Annals of Wyoming*, 1980, she praised one historian who had the "moral courage to change horses in turbulent waters." John Bakeless, in his book about Lewis and Clark published in 1947, said there was "not much doubt of Sacajawea's identity with the squaw who died at Wind River in 1884." Writing an Introduction to Biddle's 1962 edition of the *Journals of the Expedition*, Bakeless wrote:

Perhaps it is well to say here that the mystery of Sacagawea's death is resolved at last. She was the Shoshone squaw, wife of Charbonneau . . . who died . . . at Manuel Lisa's Fort Dec. 20, 1812.

Two other noted historians, James P. Rhonda and Gary E. Moulton, concur, stating that most scholars accept the documents written in 1812 and 1825 as substantial evidence for Sacajawea's death at Fort Manuel in present-day South Dakota.

In spite of all the foregoing conclusions, stories continue to appear in popular magazines perpetuating the "Sacajawea mystery," posing the question, "Where did she vanish?" yet making no attempt to provide an answer. Even the current AAA Tour Book for Wyoming states that the grave of Sacajawea, the Shoshone woman who accompanied Lewis and Clark, "is in Fort Washakie," and Wyoming travel guides continue to direct tourists to the Sacajawea Cemetery.

A governmental publication disagrees. In 1988, the National Park Service published a brochure on the Lewis and Clark Trail. On the map is shown the "Site of

Fort Manuel — Location of the Missouri Fur Company where Sacajawea died December 20, 1812." And to further refute the bogus 1884 death date, the U.S. Postal Service issued a page of commemorative stamps, "Legends of the West." Among the honored was

Sacagawea — Bird Woman. 1787-1812. Born Shoshone, she was captured by rival Native Americans and later sold to a French trapper. Both joined the Lewis and Clark Expedition, which she served as a guide.

Mrs. Schroer commented:

I, with Irving Anderson and others, did give the Sacagawea information to the Philatelic Department. Too bad they continued the use of "guide"; at least, the rest of the biography is correct.

Whether the controversy fanned the flames of America's fascination for Sacajawea, there is no debate about the remarkable achievements of that wisp of an Indian maiden — barely 18 years of age when she made her own journey of discovery.

Bibliographic Note

It is no wonder that history buffs interested in learning about this Native American heroine might be confused. If they consult the *Academic American Encyclopedia* 1991 or *Encyclopedia Americana* 1992, the first gives Sacajawea's birthdate as 1788, the second 1784, but both "Deluxe Library Editions" allege she died in Wyoming in 1884.

However, as early as 1935, the *Dictionary of American Biography* presents a succinct two-column account of Sacajawea's life (born ca. 1787) and death (Dec. 20, 1812). *Notable American Women*, 1971, has a two-page article, "Sacagawea" (ca. 1786 — Dec. 20, 1812), and gives more details about the trek, listing references. *The Encyclopedia of Frontier Biography*, 1990, plays it safe by listing both death dates, 1812/1884.

Other reference books noting birth, 1786-1787, and death, 1812, are: *Webster's New Biographical Dictionary*, 1983; *Illustrated Biographical Dictionary*, 1994; *World Book Encyclopedia*, 1995. For the most complete and accurate information in five pages, including a list of sources, the reader is referred to *Great Lives from History: American Women's Series*, 1995, vol. 5, page 1584. "Sacagawea: Born: c. 1788; central Idaho. Died: December 20, 1812; Fort Manuel, Dakota Territory."

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HISTORICALLY Speaking

Lyle K. Williams

SACAJAWEA - THE WEST GREATEST HEROINE

Sacajawea is probably best known of all northwest heroines of early day history.

Although modest and unassuming in her demeanor, she has carved a niche never to be erased in the history of the Northwest. The Missouri headwaters is prominent in this history because it was near the Point-of-Rocks, west of Three Forks, that she was captured by the Minnetarees when only 9 or 10 years old and taken east to the Dakotas. As one historian puts it, had it not been for this event, Sacajawea would probably have been just another Shoshone squaw.

Sacajawea's birthplace is definitely known, near the present town of Salmon, Idaho. Historians recognize the cemetery out of Fort Washakie, Wyoming as her true resting place. Perhaps history will never establish with certainty the number of times the little Shoshone girl was sold or traded, before she finally was bartered for by Toussaint Charbonneau, a French-Breed trapper-trader. She was destined to become his third wife...and while in her teens. They were residing in a Mandan village near the present Bismarck, North Dakota, when the Lewis and Clark Expedition arrived on their epic trip of exploration. Her first child was born while the Expedition was camped there, preparing to head west. The Lewis and Clark Journals tells how Sacajawea was in great pain but nothing seemed to bring her labour to fruit. One of the interpreters, a Mr. Jesseaume, knew of an Indian custom of putting slivers of rattlesnake rattles into water for the expectant mother to drink. Captain Lewis had some rattlesnake rattles so the remedy was tried and ten minutes later delivery took place. Thus was born the Breed, Baptiste Charbonneau or "Little Pomp" to Sacajawea.

Charbonneau, Sacajawea and eight-week-old Baptiste set out with 31 hardened frontiersmen to explore the vast wilderness to the Pacific Ocean. So this lone woman, with an infant strapped to her back, won the respect and admiration of the hardened frontiersmen. Her presence in the group helped to win the friendship of the Indians encountered, and enabled the Expedition to get horses from the Shoshones. Without Sacajawea the expedition could have been a fiasco instead of the success that it was. She managed Indian translations from Minnetaree to Shoshone and to Ootlashoot and Chapunnish, the dialect of the Pacific coast Indians.

Captain Clark writes of an amusing incident when the men, while camped on the Pacific coast, discovered a huge whale that had been washed ashore. Some of the Expedition members were going to view it...but Sacajawea was not included in the party, as it was a bit of an arduous trip to where the whale was grounded. But this was one time in the entire trip when the mild-mannered, kindly squaw went on the warpath and Captain Clark quickly told the men that she must also make the trip. That Sacajawea was devoted, especially to Captain Clark, was observed by his men on the Pacific Coast. Captain Clark craved a superb otter robe made of two sea otter skins. The Indians owning it would trade it for nothing that Clark had to offer them. Then Sacajawea stepped forward and stripped from her waist a wide belt of the Indian-loved turquoise and offered it to Clark to trade for the sea-otter skins.

river to escape. Later the other girl escaped and returned to her people but Sacajawea was taken to the Mandan country. This was the first time which shaped a portion of history and gave Sacajawea an eternal place in history. Had she not been traded to Charbonneau and returned to her people on the Expedition, her name would not be emblazoned in history.

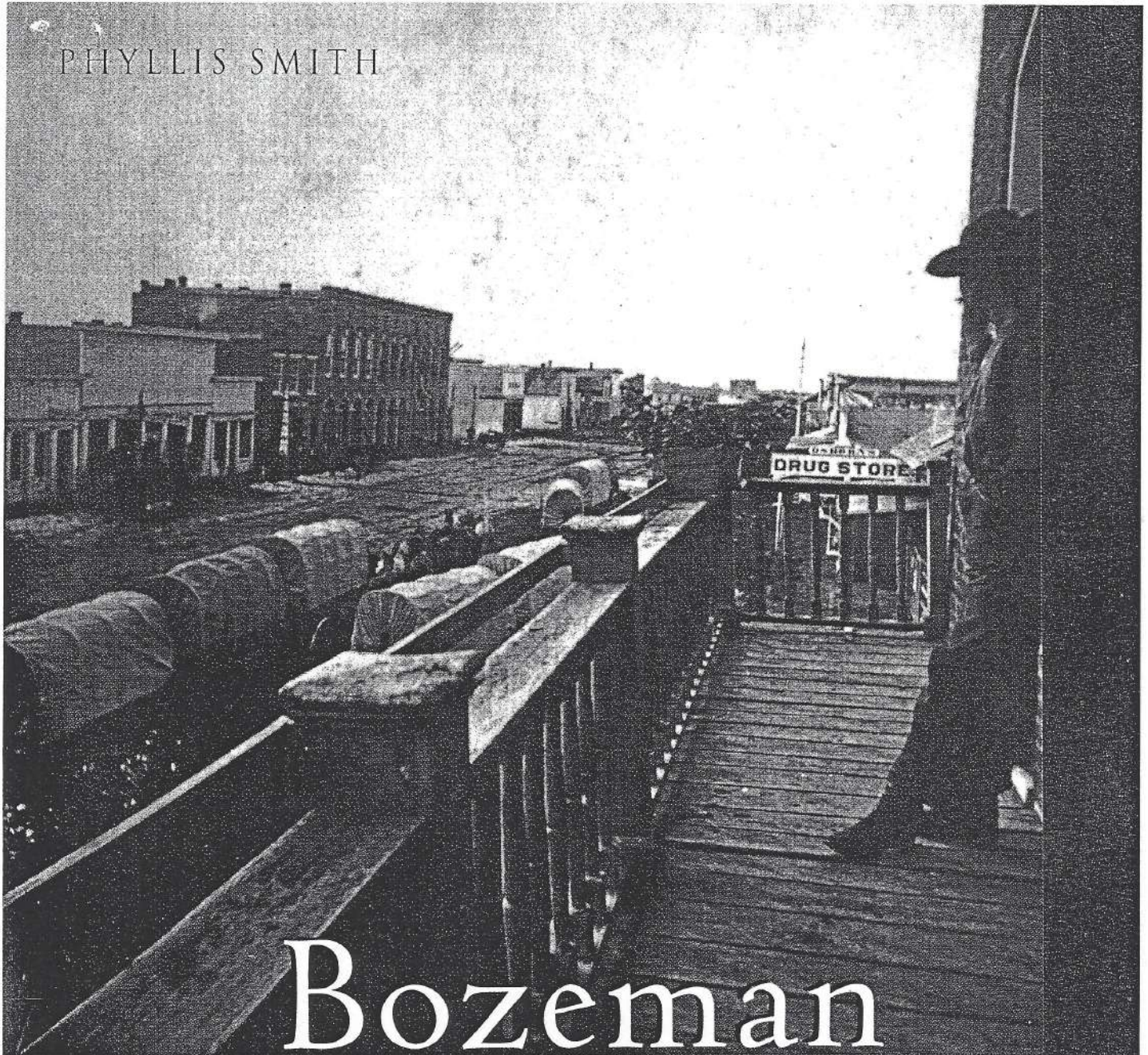
This is the story of Sacajawea. The government made no use of her for her services, but the kindness of Clark repaid her in part, and her place in history gives this Indian woman the honor of a nation.

would trade it for nothing but...
stepped forward and stripped from her waist a wide belt of the Indian-loved turquoise and offered it to Clark to trade for the sea-otter skins. The transaction was immediate. This unselfish gesture showed the Indian woman's sentiments and her willingness to sacrifice for Captain Clark.

Somewhere between the years 1810 and 1820, Sacajawea deserted Charbonneau when he brought home a young girl wife who had a falling out with Sacajawea and Charbonneau took the girl's part and beat Sacajawea in front of her. It was not the first beating, for even on the Expedition the Captains had tried to shield her from Charbonneau's cruelty. Her proud soul would not accept a beating in front of the new wife and she forever left the French Breed.

Returning to the event that made history, the abduction of Sacajawea by the Minnetarees near Three Forks. According to entries in the Lewis and Clark Journals, the Minnetarees surprised a band of Shoshones just above the headwaters of the Missouri. The Shoshones and their

PHYLLIS SMITH



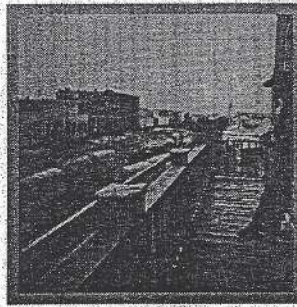
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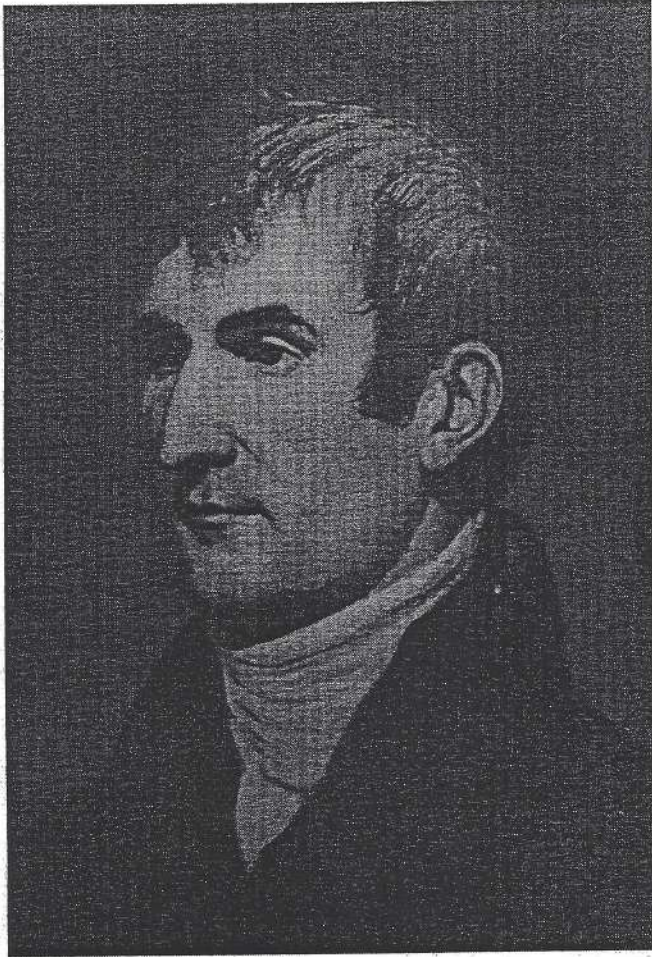
F O U R

Although some Indian groups continued to favor the Gallatin Valley as prime ground for hunting and fighting, others claimed the area, along with most lands west of the Mississippi River. Few of these early landlords came to visit the property, however.

In 1682, France assumed ownership of the region up to the Continental Divide (though the French were not certain just where the divide was) and called the land Louisiana in honor of King Louis XIV. Sometime before 1742, a French fur trader with the imposing name of Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, Sieur de la Verendryé, who operated a post north of Lake Winnipeg, explored the northern Louisiana area, getting as far as what are now the Dakotas. Age and ill health forced him to return home before he had learned much. He sent his sons François and Louis-Joseph back south from Canada in 1742;



Louisiana Purchase, 1803.



Meriwether Lewis, 1774-1809.

OIL PORTRAIT (1807) BY CHARLES WILLSON PEALE,
COURTESY INDEPENDENCE NATIONAL
HISTORICAL PARK.

they may have wandered through the Black Hills or possibly got a look at what is now eastern Montana. The romantic notion that the Verendryé brothers ascended the Missouri River to its source persists, but there is no evidence they visited the Gallatin Valley.

Twenty years later, in 1763, France ceded Louisiana to Spain, which claimed the land for thirty-seven years as a buffer between British activity in Canada and Spanish settlements in the Southwest. Then, in October 1800, agents for Napoleon took back Louisiana under the terms of the Treaty of San Ildefonso.

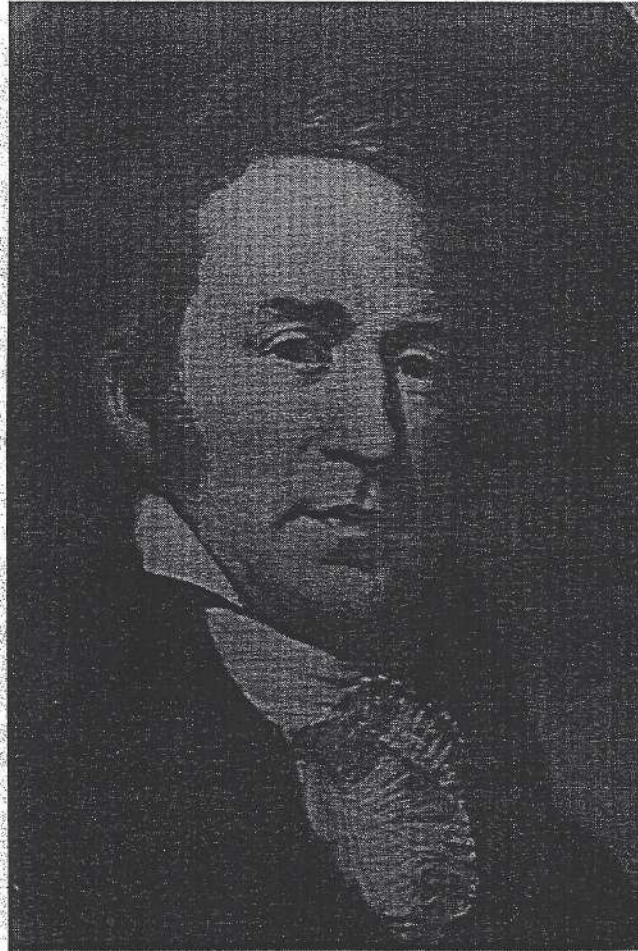
Adventurers may have traveled about the territory during these years. No known diary or record gives evidence of any Frenchman or Spaniard moving about the Gallatin Valley before 1800.

Perhaps a few fur traders from the northeast ventured to the area, but seldom did any of these early wanderers commit their observations to paper or map—perhaps because, as historian Robert Athearn said, they were “an uncommunicative lot and had no precise information about what they had seen.”¹

Despite French ownership of vast Louisiana, Thomas Jefferson, even before he became president in 1801, quietly began to plan for an American expedition to the Far West. As president, he secured \$2,500 from Congress to finance an overland trip of exploration to the Pacific Ocean, although he did not advertise the appropriation widely. At the same time, Jefferson sent diplomatic feelers to Paris for a possible \$2 million land purchase of the Florida region and the land surrounding New Orleans.

William Clark, 1770-1838.

OIL PORTRAIT (1810) BY CHARLES WILLSON PEALE,
COURTESY INDEPENDENCE NATIONAL
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Neither Jefferson nor his associates dreamed that Napoleon would be open to American purchase of Louisiana itself for \$15 million. The French leader had suffered sufficient military losses in the New World to determine that he could not explore or exploit Louisiana for French benefit. The real estate deal was struck on April 30, 1803, but it was not until July that President Jefferson learned that "his representatives had bought not only a city, but a whole wilderness empire. . . . In retrospect, it was a transaction of daring proportions and of considerable significance. At the stroke of a pen, about one third of modern America was attached to the young nation . . ." Thus, the United States bought "the world's largest pasture, considerable mineral rights, one major and several minor rivers—all in good working order—and the best-known desert in the

Western Hemisphere."³

Jefferson appointed his personal secretary, Virginian Meriwether Lewis, to lead what the president called a Corps of Discovery to explore the newly acquired territory and seek the elusive Northwest Passage to the Pacific Ocean. At Lewis's suggestion, the president then named as co-leader William Clark, another Virginian, whose older brother George Rogers Clark had been a hero in the Revolutionary War. The twenty-nine-year-old Lewis received a captain's rank; thirty-three-year-old Clark became a second lieutenant with a promise that he too would become a captain. A cantankerous U.S. Congress and an equally cantankerous War Department balked at making Clark's higher rank official. Nevertheless, the two men regarded one another as military equals, as did the party of twenty-

six regular army men. Clark's black slave York, two French voyageurs, interpreter George Drouillard (sometimes written Drewyer), and Lewis's dog, a Newfoundland named Seaman, completed the group.⁴ Members of the Corps, who had been carefully selected by Lewis, were "good hunters, stout, healthy unmarried men, accustomed to the woods and capable of bearing bodily fatigue in a pretty considerable degree."⁵

The two leaders complemented one another, both in their different personalities and the skills they brought to the enterprise. Lewis was lean; Clark was heavysset. Both were tall men, over six feet, and in good physical condition, although Clark was plagued by occasional digestive complaints. Lewis was better educated; Clark learned from the school of experience. Lewis needed long periods of solitude and was inclined to be introspective. He was somewhat formal, even a bit pompous with the men, although he could be charming enough at the Washington soirées Jefferson asked him to attend. Red-haired Clark was a hearty open fellow, genial with the men.

Lewis was meticulous and precise; Clark was expansive and imaginative (witness his prowess as a master misspeller). Lewis planned the route; Clark drew the maps to show where they had been. Lewis collected plants and animals, made extensive notes on their appearance, and packed them away so that the president could study them later in Washington. Clark collected medicines and doctored the men when needed, although most remained healthy. (The expedition lost only one man, Charles Floyd, who probably died of a ruptured appendix as the group neared the present site of Sioux City, Iowa.) It was appropriate that Clark was in charge of such potions as Dr. Benjamin Rush's Thunderbolt pills because he often doctored himself for one ailment or another. Lewis was temperamental; Clark was sanguine and more comfortable in negotiations with Indian groups. Lewis usually went ahead, investigating the choice of route. Clark often stayed with the boats and saw to their maintenance.

Toward the last of May 1804, after a winter of drill, the assembling of equipment, and the packing of a fifty-foot-long keelboat and two pirogues, the group left Saint Louis to ascend the Missouri, as William Clark reported in his creative spelling,

"under a jentle brease."⁶ After hauling the keelboat and pirogues upstream for a grueling distance of sixteen hundred miles, the group arrived in late October at the Mandan villages twenty miles north of present-day Bismarck, North Dakota. There they stopped for the winter.

During their cold weather stay, Lewis and Clark found out what they could about the journey ahead. They learned of a great falls upstream and of the three forks, sources of the Missouri. They also learned of a large tributary that their informants told them was called "the river which scolds all others," and wondered whether this waterway might give passage to the Pacific Ocean.

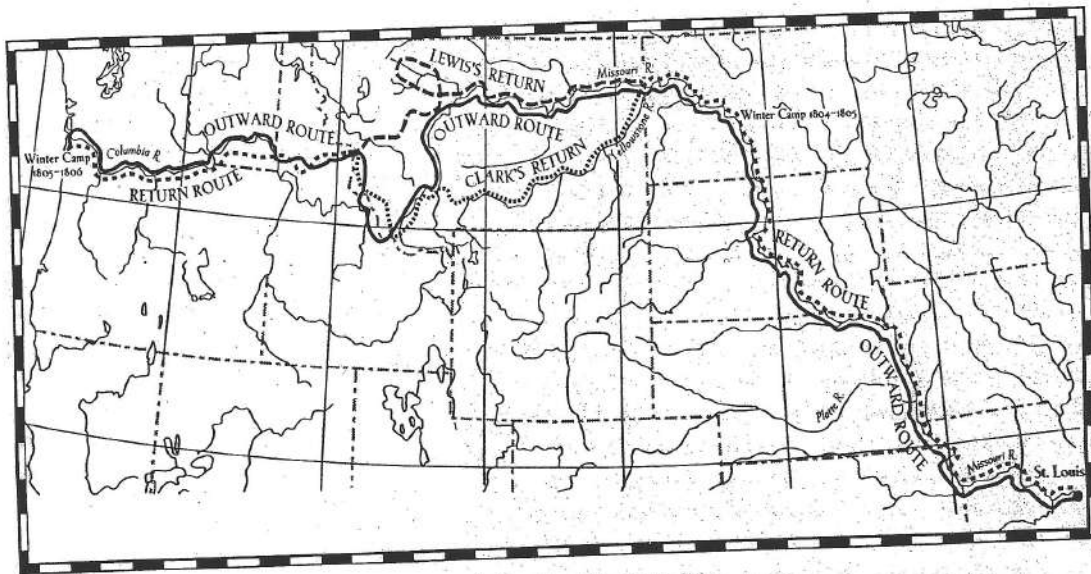
They discovered that Clark's servant York greatly interested the Indian groups they encountered, since none had seen a man with black skin before. Indian women rubbed his arms and cheeks, tried to peer down his trousers, and pressed him for sexual services to such an extent that he often complained of fatigue.

The captains hired a French interpreter, Toussaint Charbonneau, who brought along his wife Sacagawea, a young woman who had been forcibly taken from her Shoshone band by the Hidatsa (Minataree) some years before. Sacagawea's baby boy, Jean Baptiste, was two months old. Charbonneau turned out to possess less skills than the leaders had hoped, but Sacagawea recognized landmarks and provided information about possible routes when the party reached the Three Forks area. Before they set off again on April 7, 1805, from the Mandan villages, the captains sent the keelboat back to Saint Louis, along with two men expelled for disciplinary reasons.

Now the party traveled in the two pirogues, an additional six canoes, or on foot beside the river. They passed the "river which scolds all others," but not before Lewis determined that the swollen stream, now called the Milk River, was not the miracle passageway to the Pacific, despite contrary advice from the men. The meticulous Lewis studied the creekbeds of both the Milk and the Missouri, observing that the Missouri had more stones that might be seen in a waterway that had its source in the mountains.

By the time the expedition arrived at the Great Falls on July 9, its members had seen their first elk,

Bozeman and the Gallatin Valley



Route of the Lewis and Clark expedition.

bison, and grizzly bear. They had been bitten by their first western "musquetoes." (The pesky mosquito was spelled nineteen different ways in William Clark's journals.) Lewis, no champion speller himself, reported the "musquetoes extremely troublesome to me today nor is a large knat less troublesome, which dose not sting, but attacks the eye in swarms and compells us to brush them off or have our eyes filled with them."⁷ They also had learned the backbreaking job of portaging their goods around rapids and through increasingly swift streams with numerous channels. They were surprised at the height and spread of the mountains, some still covered with late-summer snow.

On July 22, Lewis wrote: "The Indian woman recognizes the country and assures us that this is the river on which her relations live, and that the three forks are at no great distance. this peice of information has cheered the sperits of the party who now begin to console themselves with the anticipation of shortly seeing the head of the missouri yet unknown to the civilzed world."⁸ Sacagawea recognized the chalky cliffs where her people gathered white powder to paint their faces and their horses. Lewis and Clark hoped they would soon meet her relatives, or any Shoshone band with sufficient horses to trade for the overland trip to the Snake River and along the Columbia drainage to

the Pacific Ocean. Lewis ordered "canoes to hoist their small flags in order that should the indians see us they might discover that we are not Indians, nor their enemies . . ."⁹

William Clark reached the Three Forks first. He went ahead with Robert Frazier, brothers Joseph and Reuben Fields, and Charbonneau, arriving at the forks of the Missouri on July 25. The men's feet were in terrible shape from stepping on the thorns of prickly pear cactus. Despite their discomfort, Clark reported in his journal that it had been "a fine morning":

we proceeded on a few miles to the three forks of the Missouri those three forks are nearly of a Size, the North fork [Jefferson] appears to have the most water and must be Considered as the one best calculated for us to assend Middle fork [Madison] is quit as large about 90 yds wide. The South fork [Gallatin] is about 70 yds wide & falls in about 400 yards below the middle fork those forks appear to be very rapid & Contain Some timber in their bottoms which is verry extincive.¹⁰

He took note of burned areas to the north: "the Indians have latterly Set the Praries on fire, the Cause I can't account for." He spied the track of one lone horse, also the sign of many elk, beaver, and otter.¹¹

After a breakfast of venison, Clark left a note for Lewis and took his party up what he called the north fork of the Missouri. He left two men whose feet were the most painful (one was Charbonneau) and climbed to the top of a mountain, but found no Indian sign. On the way down, hot and thirsty, he drank from a cold spring and, almost immediately, he reported later, became ill. Even so, the tough captain hiked cross-country from the Jefferson to the Madison. At some point, the hapless Charbonneau fell into some water and Clark was obliged to fish him out.

Lewis and the others arrived at the Three Forks two days later, July 27. Always the naturalist, Lewis noted the intense blue color of the broken limestone cliffs and a number of bighorn sheep. As he reached the mouth of what he called the southeast fork, the Gallatin, he wrote in his journal:

... the country opens suddenly to extensive and beautiful plains and meadows which appear to be surrounded in every direction with distant and lofty mountains; supposing this to be the three forks of the Missouri I halted the party on the Lard. shore for breakfast. and walked up the S.E. fork about a mile and ascended the point of a high limestone cliff from whence I commanded a most perfect view of the neighbouring country. From this point I could see the S.E. fork about 7 miles. it is rapid and about 70 Yards wide. throughout the distance I saw it, it passes through a smooth extensive green meadow of fine grass ...¹²

In order to give the men a rest and to wait for Clark's return to the spot where he had left the note, Lewis halted the party. While the company aired and dried their goods, Lewis made notes of the probable latitude and longitude of the area.

Sure enough, Clark returned, but with a high fever. He took to a brush shelter with chills. Lewis suggested a dosage of Dr. Rush's Thunderbolt pills. Taking advantage of Clark's indisposition, the men made new moccasins, shirts, and leggings from deerskin, and tended to their aching feet.

On Sunday, July 28, Lewis and the ailing Clark made some decisions. Lewis wrote:

Both Capt. C. and myself corresponded in opinion with respect to the impropriety of calling either

of these streams the Missouri and accordingly agreed to name them after the President of the United States and the Secretaries of the Treasury and state having previously named one river in honour of the Secretaries of War and Navy. In pursuance of this resolution we called the S.W. fork, that we meant to ascend, Jefferson's River in honor of that illustrious personage Thomas Jefferson, the author of our enterprise, the Middle fork we called Madison's River in honor of James Madison, and the S.E. Fork we called Gallitin's River in honor of Albert Gallitin. the two first are 90 yards wide and the last is 70 yards, all of them run with great valocity and thow out large bodies of water. Gallitin's River is reather more rapid than either of the others, is not quite as deep but from all appearances may be navigated to a considerable distance. Capt. C. who came down Madison's river yesterday and has also seen Jefferson's some distance thinks Madison's reather the most rapid, but it is not as much so by any means as Gallitin's. the beds of all these streams are formed of smooth pebble and gravel, and their waters perfectly transparent; in short, they are three noble streams. there is timber enough here to support an establishment, provided it be erected with brick or stone either of which would be much cheaper than wood as all the materials for such a work are immediately at the spot.¹³

Lewis also noted in his journal that

Our present Camp is precisely on the spot that the Snake Indians were encamped at the time the Minnetares of the Knife R. first came in sight of them five years since, from hence they retreated about three miles up Jeffersons river and concealed themselves in the woods, the Minnetares pursued, attacked them, killed 4 men 4 women a number of boys, and mad prisoners of all the females and four boys, Sah-cah-gar-we-ah or Indian woman was one of the female prisoners taken at that time; tho' I cannot discover that she shews any immotion of sorrow in recollecting this event, or of joy in being restored to her native country; if she has enough to eat and a few trinkets to wear I believe she would be perfectly content anywhere.¹⁴

By Monday, July 29, Clark had recovered, and

he and Lewis agreed that the Jefferson River was surely the way to the mountains where the expedition might meet Sacagawea's people, the Shoshone, and secure horses for the overland trip to the Columbia Basin. They traveled up the Jefferson for a week but, by August 8, Lewis determined that to follow the waterway farther would not be productive. He left Clark to nurse his now-ulcerated feet and, taking Drouillard, Shields, and McNeal, climbed the Beaverhead Mountains to cross the Continental Divide at Lemhi Pass. Here they saw some Indians, but they slipped away from the explorer and disappeared.

Finally, the four men were able to convince a small band of Indians through sign that they should go with the party to the place where Clark and the rest of the expedition were camped. They would receive gifts, they would see with their own eyes a man with black skin, and they would be reunited with a woman from their band. With utmost caution they came, following their chief Cameahwait. Sacagawea, upon seeing members of the band approach, "began to dance and show every mark of the most extravagant joy, turning . . . and pointing to several Indians . . . sucking her fingers at the same time to indicate they were of her native tribe."¹⁵ When she recognized chief Cameahwait as her brother, she "ran and embraced him, throwing over him her blanket and weeping profusely. The chief was himself moved, though not in the same degree."¹⁶ The man to whom Sacagawea was promised in her infancy was part of the chief's band and, although he claimed she was his wife by right, he did not want her since she had had a child by another.

The expedition traded for Shoshone horses and "proceeded on," as both Lewis and Clark said repeatedly in their journals, to travel over Lolo Pass and then downstream to the Pacific Ocean before winter set in, an arduous and sometimes frightening trek. Thomas Jefferson's Corps of Discovery had completed the first half of one of the most amazing expeditions in the New World, lauded and studied two hundred years later.

The party started back toward the States on March 23, 1806. William Clark was the only captain to return to the Gallatin Valley the following summer. Meriwether Lewis took his group through

the Missoula Valley and east toward the Great Falls of the Missouri, bound for the mouth of the Yellowstone. Sergeant Nathaniel Pryor was charged with bringing horses through the mountains to the Three Forks. Clark, Sergeant John Ordway, and a few other men took a wild canoe ride down the still-swollen Jefferson River, traveling ninety-seven miles the first day, quite a different experience from the arduous pulling of canoes upstream the year before. On Sunday, July 12, all met at the Three Forks, including Pryor and the horses, and the group was again divided.

Ordway and ten of the men were to follow Lewis down the Missouri, a relatively pleasant canoe ride, except for the "musquetoos." Clark was left with York, Sergeant Pryor and eight privates, Charbonneau, Sacagawea, the now-eighteen-month-old Jean Baptiste, forty-nine horses, and one colt.

The group was bound for what many called the Roche Jaune or Yellowstone River. To spare the sore feet of the horses, the party camped the first night, July 12, a mere four miles from the three forks, at a spot near the present town of Logan. The next day, as the relaxed group ambled east across the Gallatin Valley, they saw elk, deer, beaver, antelope, wolves, and otter on the bottomlands. Overhead, they watched wheeling eagles, hawks, crows, and wild geese. After considering a more northerly route leading east, Clark said in his journal that he deferred to the judgment of another: "The indian woman who has been of great Service to me as a pilot through this country recommends a gap in the mountains more south which I shall cross."¹⁷

Clark's party had some difficulty crossing the Gallatin River in several places as they moved east, due to swift currents and beaver dams. The leader wrote that he saw old sign of buffalo but none of the animals themselves. "The Indian woman informs me that a few years ago Buffalow was very plenty in those plains & vallies quit as high as the head of Jeffersons river, but few of them ever come into those vallys of late years." Further, "the Shoshones . . . are fearfull of passing in-to the plains."¹⁸ Perhaps the Blackfeet had something to do with that.

On the evening of July 14, Clark's group camped on high ground at the mouth of Kelly Canyon at the east end of the Gallatin Valley. After

breakfast on Tuesday, July 15, the party broke camp and followed an old buffalo road, then crossed Jackson Creek and went over what is now Bozeman Pass. They arrived at the Yellowstone River near the site of present-day Livingston in the early afternoon.

They then continued down the Yellowstone to its junction with the Missouri, where they joined the rest of the party in mid-August. Indians along the way celebrated the expedition's leaving the

country by stealing a good number of its horses, much to Sergeant Pryor's embarrassment. All seemed anxious to return to Saint Louis. As they said good-bye to Charbonneau and Sacagawea, Clark vowed to the couple that he would educate their son Jean Baptiste (Clark called him "Pomp") when he was grown. Years later, he remembered his promise. ■