

Explorers.

Lewis and Clark, the explorers of the Louisiana Purchase 1804-1806.

1The Louisiana Purchase, the western half of the Mississippi River basin purchased in 1803 from France by the United States; at less than three cents per acre for 828,000 square miles (2,144,520 square km), was the greatest land bargain in U.S. history. The purchase doubled the size of the United States, greatly strengthened the country materially, strategically and provided a powerful impetus to westward expansion. The French had reestablished ownership from Spain, who had claimed ownership jointly with France, by promising the King of Spain that the land would not be sold to a third party and a consideration, value unknown. Spain was financially insecure its currency was devalued by the obsession to find gold but only finding vast amounts of silver. The treaty of retrocession, known as the Treaty of San Ildefonso (confirmed March 21, 1801), importantly highlighting the growing and commercially significant port of New Orleans and the strategic mouth of the Mississippi River.

The Mississippi river was of great importance to those American settlers who in the preceding 12 years, had streamed westward into the valleys of the Cumberland, Tennessee, and Ohio rivers. The very existence of these new settlers depended on their right to use the Mississippi River freely and to make transshipment of their exports at New Orleans. The Treaty of San Lorenzo, with Spain, in 1795, allowed the United States to ship goods originating in American ports through the mouth of the Mississippi without paying duty and the right of deposit, or temporary storage, of American goods at New Orleans for transshipment. But in 1802 Spain in effect revoked the right of deposit. President Thomas Jefferson was confronted by the French effectively about to control the Mississippi and New Orleans.

2 Jefferson instructed his Minister in France Robert R Livingstone to negotiate with Maurice de Talleyrand to either guarantee access to New Orleans and the Mississippi or purchase the Louisiana Land. The discussions were going nowhere until Livingstone suggested that America would consider Britain to be a better ally. Napoleon seeing the prospect of a war with Britain and strapped

for cash agreed to sell. The deal was sealed On May 2nd, 1803, backdated to April 30th.

Jefferson said when he addressed the leaders of the expedition, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark. that he, Jefferson had persuaded Congress to pay for the exploration at a cost of \$ 2,500. “The object of your mission is to explore the Missouri River, and such principal stream of it, as by its course and communication with the waters of the Pacific Ocean ... may offer the most direct and practicable water communication across this continent, for the purposes of commerce”. In other words, the Northwest Passage.

We are interested in the explorers, not the journey but there is an excellent series about the journey by one of the great American documentary film makers Ken Burns, Lewis and Clark, was made for PBS back in 1997. PBS America is now available on Freeview catchup.

3 Meriwether Lewis was a Virginian born in 1774. Raised by his parents but after his father died and his Mother remarried stepfather moved them to Georgia. He had little formal education but lived for the great outdoors learning skills of survival. The Cherokee, the local native American tribe respected him and his good relations with them were the basis of his understanding of the various Native Americans that the Corps of Discovery were to encounter on their journey to the Pacific. At thirteen he returned to Virginia to be educated living with his Uncle. Then Joining the state militia and later the Army where he reached the rank of Captain. In 1801 through family and Army colleagues he attracted the attention of the recently elected President Jefferson and became his private secretary and eventually the leader of the group, The Corps of Discovery.

4 William Clark was born in Caroline County, Virginia, on August 1, 1770, the ninth of ten children of John and Ann Rogers Clark. The Clarks were planters in Virginia and owned several modest estates and a few slaves.

Clark did not have any formal education; like many of his contemporaries, he was tutored at home. In later years, he was self-conscious about his grammar and inconsistent spelling—he spelled "Sioux" 27 different ways in his journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition—The spelling of American English was not standardized in Clark's youth, but his vocabulary suggests he was well read.^[7] At the end of the American war of independence, the two oldest Clark brothers made arrangements for their parents and family to relocate to Kentucky

William, his parents, his three sisters, and the Clark family's slaves arrived in Kentucky in March 1785, The Clark family settled at "Mulberry Hill", a plantation near Louisville. This was William Clark's primary home until 1803. In Kentucky, his older brother George Rogers Clark taught William wilderness survival skills. 1789 he joined a local militia force and then joined the regular army finally becoming a 2nd Lieutenant until illness caused his retirement and return to the family plantation at the age of 26. Accepting Lewis's offer he brought his personal slave John who proved to be a good go between the Corps and Native Americans on their route.

In the Fall of 1803, in Kentucky planning turned into action. Men were recruited, those with the necessary skills were often the most difficult but there were only two cases of insubordination on the whole trip. Vast quantities of kit were purchased including especially stamped coins known as Indian peace coins, which re-enforced the message that the native Americans now belonged to Jefferson in Washington. Part of the Manifest Destiny which was to be 'settlers from sea to shining sea'. A version of the concept, which we have come across before, Terra Nullus. Territory without master or in public international law to describe a space that can be inhabited but that does not belong to a state, meaning the land is not owned by anyone. More generally if the land was not tilled, the concept of international law not yet bring a thing, even if there were natives living on the land their land could be taken over as happened with the original settlers on the American East Coast.

The Corps of Discovery, in the early morning of May 14th, 1804, left Camp Dubois the site near Wood River, Illinois. The expedition faced many difficulties not least the boat they had built to carry all the equipment. 50, feet long with a keel. The original plan envisaged a river trip to the Pacific, but this was halted by the Rockies. They saw for the first time the Great plains which contained many birds, animals, plants, and trees not seen before and all recorded in the various logs kept by the Clark and the Corps. Finally, they neared the Pacific. Clark wrote in his journal.

"Great Joy in camp, we are in view of the Ocean, this great Pacific Ocean which we have been So long Anxious to See...and the roaring or noise made by the waves braking on the rocky shores (as I suppose) may be heard distinctly".

5 They then began the return trip again much beset with difficulties which would have been a great deal worse had it not been for the presence of a young Native American woman of the Shoshone Nation called Sacajewa married to a French-Canadian trapper, Toussaint Charboneau. They had signed up to the Corps at the beginning. She was skilled in native languages as well as

how to live off the land. The Corps finally returned to Fort Du Bois 24th September 1806 and after celebrating their success travelled slowly by way of receptions balls and dinners to Washington and a Jubilant President Jefferson. Lewis discussed Clarke's map and described to Jefferson some of the adventures and details of the Corps mission. Congress rewarded the party. The men received double pay and 320 acres of land, the leaders 1600 acres.

Clark immediately married Judith Hancock, they had five children and Clark also served as a guardian to [Jean Baptiste Charbonneau](#), the son of [Sacagawea](#) and [Toussaint Charbonneau](#). The family moved to St Louis Missouri where he was appointed to the post of Government Indian Agent for the west although this position was not made official until President Monroe made it so. Clark was the most important man of Indian Affairs in the West and although he spoke Native languages and attempted to save the Native Americans from settler's diseases by means of vaccination, he nevertheless believed in the absolute right of the settlers to move in and prosper to the detriment of the indigenous population. Clark believed that America should prosper and although he supported the native Americans to the extent that he was "An Indian Lover" he moved nations from their roots re-educated them away from their beliefs and traditions and fully supported the forced removal of Nations to "Indian Lands" He died on September 1st, 1838, aged 68.

Merriweather Lewis the scientist of the expedition was appointed Governor of Upper Louisiana but was unable to take up his post due to family matters and carrying out tasks given to him by the president. When Lewis physically took up his post Lewis discovered that his deputy had been giving jobs to cronies overturning the agreed policy towards the Native Americans making Lewis's life difficult. Agreeing to meet the president Lewis decided to go overland to Washinton after leaving the Mississippi in Memphis.

Here is Wikipedia's version of that fatal journey. In 1809 Lewis, age 35, [embarked](#) for Washington, [D.C.](#), to explain his public expenditures and to clear his name. Leaving the Mississippi River at Chickasaw Bluffs (Memphis, Tenn.), he set out along the [Natchez Trace](#), stopping for the evening at Grinder's Stand near present-day Hohenwald, Tenn., about 70 mi (110 km) from Nashville. There on October 11 Lewis died a violent and mysterious death from gunshot wounds to the head and chest; the circumstances have fuelled a long-standing debate over whether his death was a [suicide](#) or [murder](#). Many scholars believe Lewis took his own life because of depression, [alcohol abuse](#), or failing to marry or to publish. Others [assert](#) that thieves, opportunists, or political opponents murdered him. Another explanation suggests it may have been accidental. In 1848 [Tennessee](#) erected a grave-site marker that in 1925 became

the Meriwether Lewis National Monument. The latest idea is that Lewis was suffering from PTSD and some are trying to get the body exhumed in an effort to solve the puzzle.

5 The Lewis and Clark Expedition spanned 8,000 mi (13,000 km) and 2 years (1804–06), taking the [Corps of Discovery](#), down the [Ohio River](#), up the [Missouri River](#), across the [Continental Divide](#), and to the [Pacific Ocean](#). One death, appendicitis, two court Martials and one dismissed the service. The guns they took were only discharged once in anger. Jefferson estimated it would take his countrymen 100 years to fill the land Lewis and Clark had explored. That was achieved in just 5 years. In many respects the settlers failed to learn the lessons the Corps had learned about relations with the Native Americans leading to decades of tension. **6**

Sources: Britania, The Smithsonian, Wikipedia, *Lewis & Clark Expedition* by Henry Freeman, PBS America.

During the 19th century, references to Lewis and Clark "scarcely appeared" in history books, even during the [United States Centennial](#) in 1876, and the expedition was largely forgotten. Lewis and Clark began to gain attention around the start of the 20th century. Both the 1904 [Louisiana Purchase Exposition](#) in St. Louis and the 1905 [Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition in Portland, Oregon](#), showcased them as American pioneers. However, the story remained relatively shallow until mid-century as a celebration of US conquest and personal adventures, but more recently the expedition has been more thoroughly researched.

As of 1984, no US exploration party was more famous, and no American expedition leaders are more recognizable by name.

In 2004, a complete and reliable set of the expedition's journals was compiled by Gary E. Moulton. Circa 2004, the bicentennial of the expedition further elevated popular interest in Lewis and Clark.