

CHAPTER THREE

THE LEWIS AND CLARK EXPEDITION

The story of the Expedition of Lewis and Clark is one of the most fascinating in the history of Montana. Lewis and Clark were the first white men to spend time studying the land and the people in the place we now know as Montana. The report they made when they returned to St. Louis interested other white men in exploring the West. This began the end of the Indians' way of life and the beginning of Montana's journey to statehood.

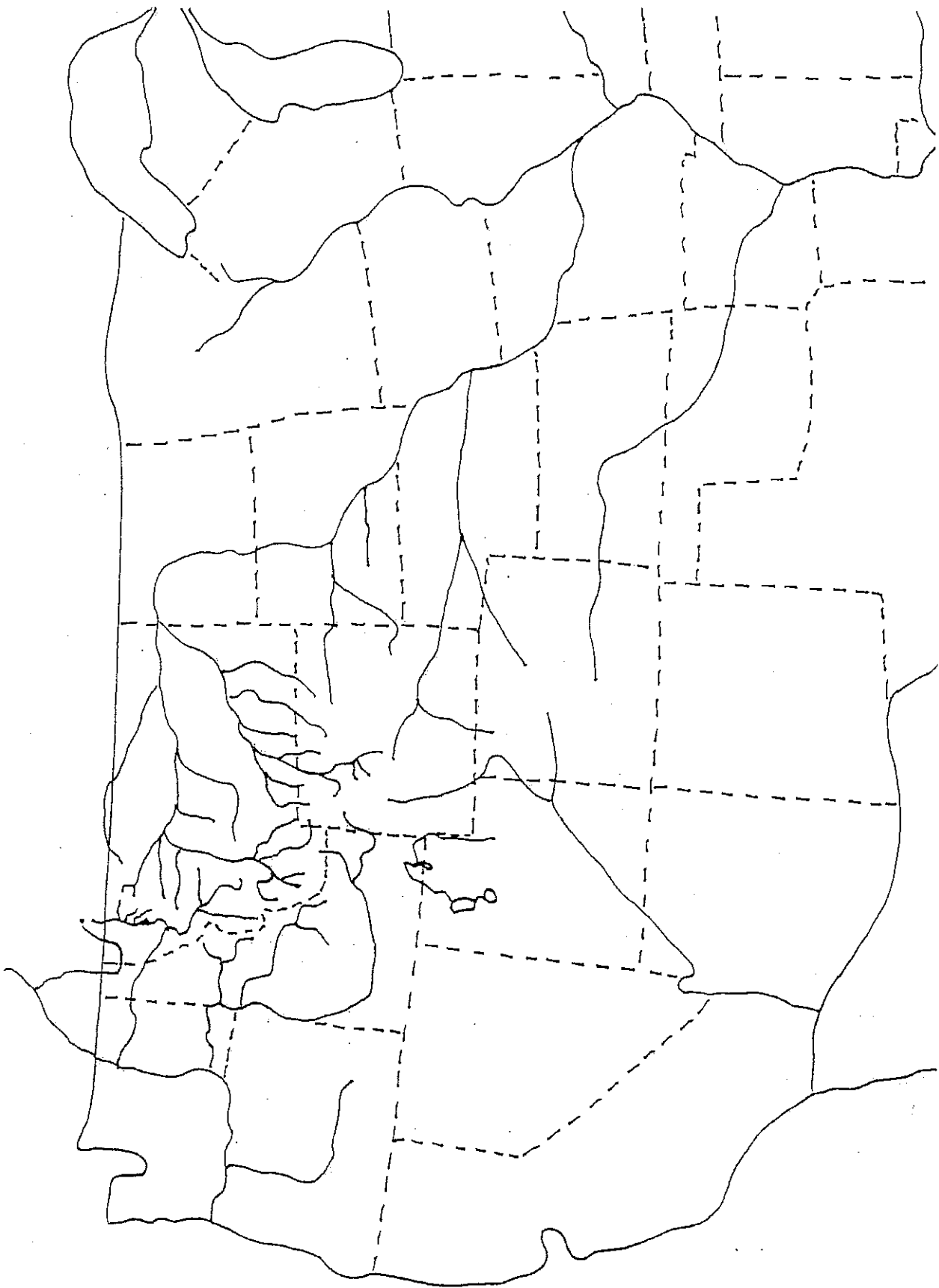
Vocabulary

navigable	pirogue	portage	game
behalf	dugout	ravine	portable
gunsmith	ferocious	spirits	cure
interpreter	foothold	pitch (n)	blubber
keelboat	cache	perpendicularly	bullboat

Locate the following places on the map on the next page before reading this chapter.

Missouri R.
St. Louis, Missouri
Pacific Ocean
Milk R.
Musselshell R.
Judith R.
Marias R.
Sun R.
Three Forks
Columbia R.
Clark Fork of the Columbia R.
Yellowstone R.

Madison R.
Gallatin R.
Jefferson R.
Lemhi R.
Salmon R.
Bitterroot R.
Bitterroot Mountains
Clearwater R.
Snake R.
Blackfoot R.
Big Hole R.
Beaverhead R.



President Jefferson Plans the Expedition

The man who was responsible for the idea of the Lewis and Clark Expedition was President Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson had a dream of exploring the American west and finding a water route to the Pacific Ocean. After the Louisiana Purchase made this dream possible, he chose Meriwether Lewis, a military man who had been his private secretary, to lead the expedition. Lewis chose William Clark, a skilled outdoorsman and mapmaker, as his co-commander.

Jefferson gave the explorers specific instructions of things to accomplish on the Expedition. These were his orders:

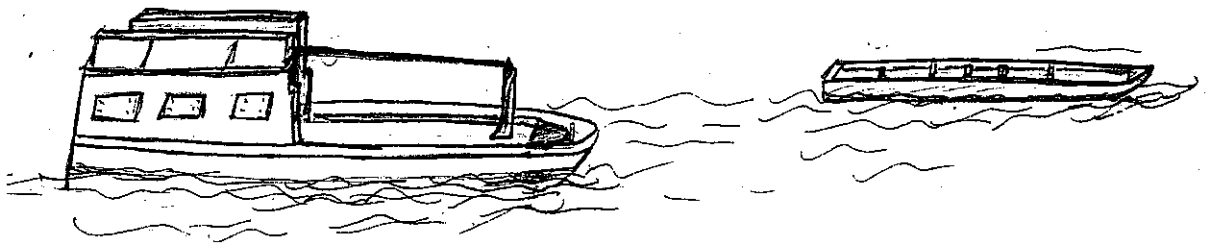
1. To follow the Missouri River west and find if there was a navigable water route, or Northwest Passage, all the way to the Pacific Ocean.
2. To make maps of the land and the rivers.
3. To take notes about all the new plants and animals they saw.
4. To make friends with the Indians on behalf of the United States government.

The Journey

Preparation for the Journey and Departure from St. Louis Winter, 1803 - May 14, 1804

Lewis and Clark's first job was preparing for the Expedition. They camped at Camp Wood in Illinois Territory at the mouth of the Missouri River near the city of St. Louis during the winter of 1803 -1804. During the winter, they collected maps, food, medical supplies, and goods to trade with the Indians. They talked to people to find out about the land they were about to explore. They hired trappers, soldiers, gunsmiths, boatmen and interpreters. One man brought his fiddle to entertain the men. Clark's black slave, York, also joined the Expedition. Lewis also took his big black Newfoundland dog, Seaman.

When they left St. Louis, the Corps of Discovery, as the Expedition was called, traveled in one keelboat and two pirogues. The keelboat was a fifty-five foot long riverboat with a mast, sail, and twenty oars for times when there was no wind. It had a small cabin and ten-foot decks. The pirogues were smaller, flatter boats, like large canoes, which could be sailed or rowed. The red pirogue had seven oars and the white pirogue had six. The Expedition consisted of forty-five people total - Captains Lewis and Clark, York, Sergeants Ordway, Floyd, and Pryor, nine French-Canadian boatsmen, the interpreter Drouillard, and twenty-nine soldiers.



keelboat

pirogue

Up the Missouri and Winter with the Mandan Indians May 14, 1804 - April 7, 1805

The Expedition left St. Louis on May 14, 1804, and began navigating up the Missouri River. On the way, Sergeant Charles Floyd died of an illness which is now thought to have been appendicitis, although Lewis and Clark did not know that at the time. Floyd was the only member of the Expedition to die on the journey.

On the way up the Missouri they met tribes of Oto, Arikara, and Sioux Indians, who gave them some trouble but did not stop them. The Expedition continued to travel up the Missouri River until it arrived on October 27 at a village of Mandan Indians in what is now North Dakota.

The Expedition built a fort to live in near the Mandan Indian village and spent the winter visiting and hunting with the Indians and learning their ways. Here they hired a French trapper named Charbonneau as an interpreter. His wife, Sacajawea, was a 14

year old Shoshoni Indian who had been kidnapped from her tribe a few years before. During the winter, Sacajawea had a son named Jean Baptiste. He was later nicknamed Pomp by Captain Clark.

On April 7, 1805, the party of thirty-three people left the Mandan Village and started up the Missouri River in six dugout canoes and the two pirogues. The party now consisted of the two captains, York, Drouillard, Sergeants Pryor, Ordway, and Gass, Charbonneau, Sacagawea, Baptiste, and twenty-three privates. The keelboat was sent back to St. Louis with the rest of the men and information that Lewis and Clark had collected for President Jefferson about the land, the animals, and the Indians they had seen so far.

Mouth of the Yellowstone and up the Missouri River into Montana April 7, 1805 - June 2, 1805

On April 25, 1805, the Lewis and Clark Expedition reached the mouth of the Yellowstone River, near the border of the land that would become Montana. Lewis described Montana as a "vast plain" filled with wildlife. He wrote that he could not look in any direction without seeing great numbers of deer, elk, buffalo, and antelope. Soon after entering Montana, they had their first encounters with grizzly bears, which they found were far more ferocious than any bears they had seen before. One time it took eight bullets to kill one angry grizzly. Lewis said that he would rather fight two Indians than one grizzly bear. They also had a bull buffalo charge through their camp, and Lewis had a close encounter with a rattlesnake.

As they continued up the Missouri, they came to the mouth of the Milk River. They named it the Milk because of its light color. They named one of the rivers they passed the Judith after Clark's girlfriend, Julia Hancock, whom he later married.

Mouth of the Marias River June 2, 1805 - June 11, 1805

On June 2, 1805, Lewis and Clark reached a place where two rivers came together to form the Missouri. The Indians had told the captains that they should follow the Missouri to the mountains, but the spring runoff had made the rivers so large and

muddy that the explorers could not tell which was the main river. Most of the men thought that the river to the right was the main river, because it was so big. The two captains were not sure, so they decided to explore the two rivers.

Lewis went up the river to the right. Because it continued to get smaller and smaller, he decided it was not the main river and turned around. On the way back, while climbing along the steep banks above the river, one of Lewis's men slipped and was hanging off the cliff by one arm and one leg. Lewis saved his life by telling him to take out his knife and cut a foothold for himself in the cliff so he could pull himself up, which he did.

Clark followed the river to the left, and found that it turned to the south as the Indians had told them that the Missouri would go. When Lewis returned, they decided that the river to the left must be the Missouri. They named the other river Maria's River, after Lewis's cousin, Maria Wood and it became known as the Marias. Before they continued up the Missouri, they cached the red pirogue on an island in the mouth of the Marias River.

Portage around the Great Falls of the Missouri June 11, 1805 - July 3, 1805

The Indians had told Captain Lewis that there was a series of waterfalls on the "river that leads to the mountains," the Missouri. To make sure that they were on the right river, Lewis decided to hike ahead of the men in the boats to see if he could find these big waterfalls. On June 13, 1805, he came upon the Great Falls of the Missouri. He sat on a rock for two hours enjoying the beautiful waterfalls, and called them "the grandest sight I ever beheld."

The rest of the men arrived by boat. Exploring ahead, they found that there were a total of five waterfalls over a distance of seven river miles and knew that they would have to portage all their equipment around the falls.

At the beginning of the portage, they established the Lower Portage Camp. To help them carry the boats and supplies, they made carts. They cut wheels from the trunks of cottonwood trees. Since they decided to cache the white pirogue, which would have been too heavy to portage, they used its mast to make axes. They then cached

the white pirogue. The canoes were put on the carts and they began to transport their baggage.

The actual portage route covered eighteen miles from the Lower Portage Camp to the Upper Portage Camp at the mouth of the Sun River near White Bear Island above the falls. The men had to continue to move between the two camps, pushing, pulling, lifting and carrying the boats and the baggage. Sometimes they used sails from the boats to "sail" the canoes over dry land when there was a wind. The prickly pear cactus had sharp spikes that cut through their moccasins and cut their feet. The sun was hot, they were battered by hailstorms, and the mosquitoes were terrible. The men were so exhausted that when they took a rest they immediately fell asleep.

During the portage, Clark, Sacajawea and Pomp sought shelter in a small ravine during a bad rainstorm. When a flash flood threatened them, Clark saved Sacajawea and Pomp by pushing them up the side of the ravine just as the water rushed by.

White Bear Island July 3, 1805 - July 15, 1805

It took them twelve days to complete the portage around the Great Falls. When the portage was completed, the Expedition rested at White Bear Island at the mouth of the Sun River. They celebrated the Fourth of July, 1805, with a party where they drank the rest of their spirits.

Lewis had carried with him all this way the frame of an iron boat, which he called his "Experiment." He had hoped to use it to continue up the Missouri. They covered the iron frame with 38 elk and 3 buffalo skins, and covered the seams with a mixture of charcoal, beeswax, and buffalo tallow instead of the usual pitch, which was not available because there were no evergreen trees. They put the boat in the water, and, at first, it floated "like a perfect cork." However, the seal mixture did not stick, and the boat began to leak very badly during a windstorm. They had to abandon it and let it sink. Lewis was very disappointed that his experiment had failed. They had to build dugout canoes to continue upriver.

Up the Missouri through the Gates of the Mountains
July 15, 1805 - July 26, 1805

Leaving White Bear Island on July 15, the Expedition continued up the Missouri in eight dugout canoes. On July 19, 1805, they passed through the Missouri River Canyon, which they named the Gates of the Mountains. Captain Lewis described this place in his diary as “the most remarkable cliffs that we have yet seen. These cliffs rise from the water’s edge on either side perpendicularly to the height of (about) 1200 feet. The towering and projecting rocks in many places seem ready to tumble on us.” The sides were so steep that there was no place to land the boats and it was almost dark when they finally got through the canyon and were able to camp.

Three Forks of the Missouri
July 26, 1805 - July 30, 1805

On July 26, the Expedition reached the headwaters of the Missouri River, where three rivers come together to form the Missouri. They named the three rivers the Gallatin, after Albert Gallatin, Secretary of the Treasury; the Madison, after James Madison, Secretary of State; and the Jefferson, after President Jefferson. After resting three days, the Expedition set out up the Jefferson, because it was in the direction of the mountains. Sacajawea, who was a Shoshoni Indian, was beginning to recognize the territory and thought that her tribe might be near. River travel was becoming very difficult because of the shallow and rocky water. The canoes had to be towed much of the time, which gave the men sore feet and was very hard work. They were hoping to find the Shoshoni Indians because they would soon need horses and guides to cross the mountains.

Up the Jefferson and Beaverhead Rivers - Meeting the Shoshone Indians
July 30, 1805 - August 30, 1805

They came to the Beaverhead River and continued up that stream. Sacajawea recognized Beaverhead Rock as a place where she had camped with her tribe, so they hoped to see Indians soon. On August 11, 1805, Lewis, who was exploring ahead of the rest of the party, saw an Indian on horseback. He tried to show that he was friendly, but

the Indian ran away. The next day, Lewis met up with a larger group of Indians who agreed to accompany him to meet the rest of the Expedition. When they met up with the rest of the party, Sacajawea exclaimed that the chief of the Shoshonis, Cameahwait, was her brother! They spent several days with the Shoshonis. Cameahwait agreed to give the Expedition horses and guides to help them cross the mountains. Because of their good luck, Lewis named this place Camp Fortunate.

Clark explored ahead to decide which way to go. He crossed over Lemhi Pass into what is now Idaho and followed the Lemhi and Salmon Rivers. He decided that it was too dangerous to go by water because of the dangerous rapids on those rivers. Meanwhile, Lewis had a cache built for some of their supplies and sunk the canoes in the Beaverhead River in case they needed them later. He and the Shoshones then met up with Clark and finished negotiating for horses.

The Bitterroot Valley - Meeting the Flathead Indians August 30, 1805 - September 9, 1805

On August 30, 1805, Lewis and Clark left the Shoshones. They had a Shoshone guide who they called Toby and twenty-nine horses. They crossed Lemhi Pass and then turned north over the Bitterroot Mountains into the Bitterroot Valley.

On September 4th they met about 400 Flathead Indians. They thought the Flatheads had the strangest language they had ever heard. The Indians were friendly, and gave them another thirteen horses. They continued north down the Bitterroot Valley.

Traveler's Rest the first time September 9, 1805 - September 11, 1805

The Expedition stopped at a place they called Traveler's Rest, in the northern part of the Bitterroot Valley, to prepare to cross the mountains. They went hunting to get food for the trip, but they did not find very much game.

**Crossing the Bitterroot Mountains
September 11, 1805 – September 21, 1805**

They then proceeded west over Lolo Pass through the Bitterroot Mountains. This was the most difficult part of the trip. Winter was approaching and they did not have very much food. They had to go through deep forests, high mountains, and early snow in bitter cold weather. Because they could find little wild game, they were forced to eat some of their horses, portable soup and wax candles to stay alive.

**The Nez Perce Village the first time and down the Columbia River
September 21, 1805 - November 7, 1805**

After they successfully crossed the mountains, the Expedition met the friendly Nez Perce Indians, who agreed to keep their horses and help them to build more boats. They continued in dugout canoes down the Clearwater, Snake, and Columbia Rivers until on November 7, 1805, they reached the Pacific Ocean, a sight that made them very happy. Clark wrote, "Great joy in camp. We are in view of the ocean!"

**The Pacific Ocean and Fort Clatsop
November 7, 1805 - March 23, 1806**

At the Pacific Ocean, they began to build Fort Clatsop and moved into their new home on Christmas Day. They celebrated with a Christmas dinner of spoiled elk meat, spoiled fish, and some roots. The winter at Fort Clatsop was boring and unpleasant for the men. It rained constantly until their robes and clothes were ruined. They spent their time hunting and repairing their clothes and moccasins. To make their diet more interesting and to cure their meat, they made salt by evaporating sea water. One day they had an exciting experience. They went to see a beached whale which the Indians were cutting up, and they were able to get 300 pounds of blubber and a few gallons of whale oil.

**Return up the Columbia and Second Meeting with the Nez Perce
March 23, 1806 - June 15, 1806**

The Expedition left Fort Clatsop to return to Montana and the east on March 23, 1806. They returned up the Columbia River by boat, found the Nez Perce Indians and got their horses back.

**Back over the Bitterroot Mountains to Lolo Hot Springs
and Return to Traveler's Rest
June 15, 1806 - July 3, 1806**

With Nez Perce guides, they crossed the Bitterroot Mountains back into Montana. After they had crossed the mountains, they found Lolo Hot Springs, and took a warm bath. Clark could only stay in the hot water for 10 minutes, and was amazed how the Indians jumped from the hot water to the freezing creek and back to the hot water again! After arriving back at Traveler's Rest, Lewis and Clark decided to split up and return by different routes. They left Traveler's Rest on July 3, 1806.

**Lewis - Return to White Bear Island
July 3, 1806 - July 17, 1806**

Lewis and his group took the northern route back to the Missouri River. They crossed the Clark Fork of the Columbia and then followed the Blackfoot River to the east. They crossed the Continental Divide on July 7, 1806, by what is now called Lewis and Clark Pass and followed the Sun River back to their old camp at White Bear Island, arriving on July 11.

**Lewis - Marias River and Meeting the Blackfeet
July 17, 1806 - August 7, 1806**

Lewis decided to take three men to explore the Marias River, hoping that he would find that it was a navigable water route to the Pacific Ocean. The rest of his men were to wait for some of Clark's party to come down the Missouri in boats, and then meet Lewis at the mouth of the Marias River with the canoes.

Lewis and the men rode horseback up the Marias, but on July 21, 1806, Lewis realized that the Marias did not go into Canada and decided to turn around. He named that place Camp Disappointment. On the way back down the Marias, they met some Blackfeet Indians, who seemed to be friendly. They camped together, but when Lewis and his men woke up, they found the Indians trying to steal their guns. A fight began, and two Indians were killed. Afraid that the rest of the tribe would chase them, Lewis and his men rode over 100 miles on horseback almost without stopping. Reaching the Missouri, they met the men coming down the Missouri, got into the canoes, and continued on down the Missouri.

**Clark- Return to Camp Fortunate and the Three Forks
July 3, 1806 - July 13, 1806**

The Clark party, including Sacajawea and Pomp, headed south from Traveller's Rest. They went up the Bitterroot Valley to Ross Hole and crossed the Bitterroot Mountains near what is now Gibbon's Pass. They went through the Big Hole Valley and stopped at their camp on the Beaverhead River from the summer before, where they found the canoes they had hidden. They continued down the Jefferson to Three Forks. Clark then sent some of the men under Sergeant John Ordway in the canoes down the Missouri to meet Lewis, and the rest of them traveled east with the horses.

**Clark - Down the Yellowstone to the Missouri and Pompey's Pillar
July 13, 1806 - August 3, 1806**

Clark's party followed the Gallatin River, crossed the mountains over what is now Bozeman Pass, and reached the Yellowstone River. They built dugout canoes and started down the Yellowstone after sending Sergeant Nathaniel Pryor with two of the men overland with the horses to the Mandan Village. On July 25, 1806, they came to a large rock formation near the river. Clark climbed the rock and carved his name and the date on it. He named the rock "Pompey's Pillar" after Sacajawea's son, Pomp. Clark's name is still visible on the rock today.

**Reunited at the Mouth of the Yellowstone
August 3, 1806 - August 12, 1806**

On August 3, Clark and his party reached the Missouri River. Because of the mosquitoes and the lack of buffalo to hunt, they left a note for Lewis and continued a few miles down the Missouri to camp. Meanwhile, the Indians had stolen Pryor's horses, and he had returned to the Yellowstone where he and his men had built bullboats and followed Clark down the Yellowstone. Upon reaching the Missouri, Pryor for some reason removed the note which Clark had left for Lewis.

On August 7, 1806, Lewis's party arrived at the mouth of the Yellowstone. Although Pryor had taken the note, the words "W.C. a few miles farther down on right hand side" were written in the sand, so Lewis and his party continued down the Missouri. On August 11, while hunting, Lewis was shot by one of his own men, Cruzatte, who was nearsighted and mistook him for an elk. He lay down in the bottom of the white pirogue, and they continued down the Missouri. On August 12, Clark saw the boats, and was alarmed when he couldn't see Lewis, fearing that he was dead. Finding that Lewis was not seriously wounded, they had a joyous reunion. They continued down the Missouri, and the original party of thirty-three people all arrived back at Fort Mandan.

**Return to St. Louis
August 12, 1806 - September 23, 1806**

Leaving Charbonneau and his family at Fort Mandan, they continued on down the Missouri. When they met some trappers on their way to the Yellowstone, John Colter asked for and received permission to return to the mountains. The remaining twenty-nine members of the expedition arrived back at St. Louis on September 23, 1806. As they told the people in St. Louis and the Eastern United States about their travels, the most significant thing they reported was the large number of beaver and other furbearing animals in the Louisiana Territory. As more and more people headed up the Missouri to trap these valuable furs, the Fur Trapping and Trading era of Montana history began.

Trace the route of the Lewis and Clark Expedition on the map on page 20.