

Lewis & Clark's Missouri

WINTER NEAR ST. LOUIS

PART 2 OF A SERIES OF EIGHT NEWSPAPER IN EDUCATION FEATURES

CAPTAIN WILLIAM CLARK AND THE CREW arrived in St. Louis under full sail in mid-December, 1803. He recorded in his journal that hundreds came to the riverbank to see them.

Because St. Louis was not yet United States territory and the expedition was a mission of the American government, the Spanish commandant did not allow the Corps to set up camp on the west side of the Mississippi. So the Corps made camp across the river a few miles north in Illinois. They found a spot near

a small stream named Rivière DuBois. From this spot, they could look across the mighty Mississippi to the mouth of the Missouri River, the path they would follow west.

Upon arrival, Clark and his men began constructing shelter in an area they called Camp DuBois. That winter the men spent their time on military drills, hunting and visiting with townspeople, merchants and local Indians. Many people were curious about the group and visitors dropped by often.

Clark wrote in his journal that his men had several shooting competitions with their neighbors. They lost the first time, but several months later, were able to beat the locals. Several of the men spent much of their time hunting deer, turkey and rabbits. Nearby merchants brought them vegetables, cheese, butter and alcohol. The alcohol caused some trouble for the men and several were punished for drinking too much — one punishment was to build a hut for the woman who did their laundry.

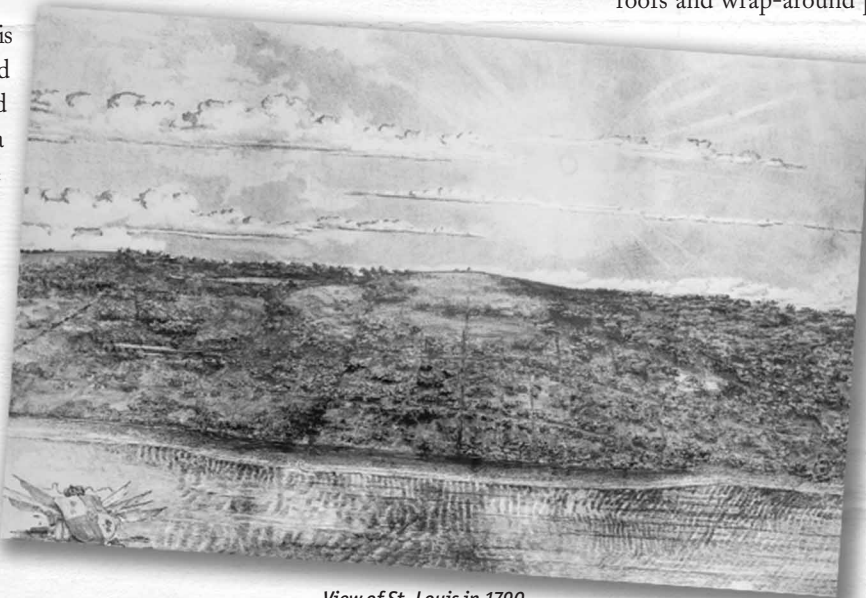
Nearby St. Louis was a small town of just over a thousand people. Some of its houses were three-story, pillared stone mansions, but more common were wood houses with peaked roofs and wrap-around porches. The town's

citizens spoke French and had strong ties to the French cities of New Orleans down the river and Montreal in the north.

Both Lewis and Clark spent part of the winter in St. Louis. The leaders of the town welcomed the captains into their homes. Lewis spent the most time in the city, meeting people and

buying supplies for the trip. His main mission was gathering information and some people suspected he was a spy. He talked with anyone he could find who had traveled up the Missouri to trade with the various Indian tribes.

While Lewis talked with people in St. Louis, Clark kept the men at Camp DuBois busy sawing boards and packing salt pork into kegs. The Captains had quickly learned that one of them needed to be present in camp at all times to maintain discipline. The men of the Corps often fought. Throughout the winter they gradually learned to trust each other and to work together. They trained and drilled and drilled and trained. Clark recognized that the men would need to be ready to face many challenges ahead and would need to act as a unified military group.



View of St. Louis in 1790

Lithograph attributed to Clarence Hobitzelle, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis

SPONSORED BY

MISSOURI HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MISSOURI PRESS ASSOCIATION

EMERSON

AND THIS NEWSPAPER

NEXT WEEK
MEETING
EARLY SETTLERS

Journey through
our state's early history with the
Corps of Discovery. For information about
Lewis & Clark's Missouri,
a touring exhibition organized by the
Missouri Historical Society, visit
www.lewisandclarkexhibit.org.