

# Lewis & Clark's Missouri

## THE EXPEDITION BEGINS

PART 1 OF A SERIES OF EIGHT NEWSPAPER IN EDUCATION FEATURES

**W**HEN EXPLORERS LEWIS AND CLARK ARRIVED IN MISSOURI in December 1803, it wasn't even Missouri. It was French-owned, Spanish-governed land called Upper Louisiana. Most of the people who lived there had no connection to any European country. They were Native Americans who had lived on the land for centuries.

Lewis and Clark were on a mission to explore a vast area of land from the Mississippi River all the way to the Pacific Ocean. President

Thomas Jefferson had come up with the idea. The President had long been curious about the West — the geography, the different animals and plants, and especially the people who lived there. Americans knew very little about the area. So the President convinced Congress to fund an expedition to explore the land. He wanted to find

out if reports of a northwest water passage to the Pacific

Ocean were true. And, as President he also recognized the importance of future trade with Indians in the region. In February 1803, Congress approved the expedition and the plans began.

Jefferson appointed his personal secretary, Meriwether Lewis, to lead this expedition, entrusting him with making all the necessary preparations for a journey that would last several years. Lewis worked to recruit men, purchase supplies, commission boats to be built, and to learn

about everything from medicine and botany to navigation and Native

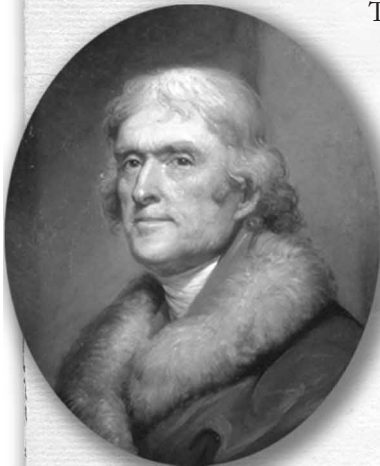
American culture. He also made a big decision that forever changed the name of the expedition in the history books. In June of 1803, Lewis wrote to William Clark, his former army commander, asking him to help lead the expedition. Clark accepted and today the expedition is commonly called Lewis and Clark's expedition. The skills, personalities, knowledge and experience of each man comple-

mented the other's and resulted in a solid leadership for the expedition. Their skills would prove useful in the months and years to come when dealing with a variety of different situations.

In the spring of 1803, a new twist occurred and the expedition became even more important. The United

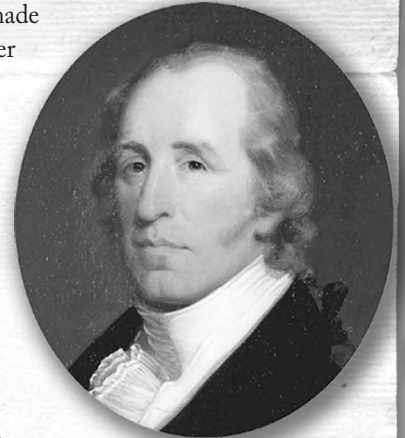
States secretly purchased the Louisiana territory from France in what has been called

one of the best real estate deals in history. This increased the size of the United States considerably and made it even more important to explore who and what occupied the land west of the Mississippi. By the time the Louisiana territory was officially transferred to the United States the following March, Lewis and Clark were in the St. Louis area with a full corps of men ready to head west up the Missouri River.



**Thomas Jefferson**

*Painting by Rembrandt Peale, 1805  
collection of the New-York Historical Society*



**William Clark**

*Oil on canvas, ca. 1810, attributed to John Wesley Jarvis,  
Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis  
Photo by Cary Horton*



**Meriwether Lewis**

*Pastel on paper by Charles B.J.F. de Saint-Mémin, ca. 1803, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, photo by Mark Gulezian, Quicksilver, Washington, D.C.*

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Missouri Historical Society, visit  
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