

# Lewis & Clark's Missouri T O T H E P A C I F I C

PART 6 OF A SERIES OF EIGHT NEWSPAPER IN EDUCATION FEATURES

AS THE EXPLORERS CONTINUED up the Missouri River past present-day St. Joseph, they encountered their first camp of Indians and held their first council with Indian leaders from the Otoe and Missouri tribes. They set up an awning to provide shade, dressed in their uniforms, prepared their gifts, and invited the Indians for a meeting. This procedure would be repeated many times as they traveled upriver.

Continuing on, they entered the territory of the powerful Sioux Indians. The Sioux territory spread all the way from present-day Wisconsin west to the Rocky Mountains. The Sioux sought to control traffic on the river and were not about to let the expedition upriver to provide guns and trade goods to their rivals and enemies. After a tense stand-off with the Teton Sioux, the expedition continued.

As the days got shorter and the air became colder, they decided to build a winter camp near the Mandan Indians in present-day North Dakota. They spent a cold winter in Fort Mandan enjoying the company of the nearby Indians and learning a great deal from them about the land ahead.

They also hired an interpreter named Touissant Charbonneau who, along with his young Indian wife, Sacagawea, would travel with the expedition.

When the warmer weather came, it was time to continue on. In April 1805 the party set off again. They sent the keelboat back to St. Louis with a report for President Jefferson, along with animal specimens including the pair of elk horns that the President displayed for many years in his home in Virginia. They also sent back a live prairie dog and several magpies. As they traveled through the treeless land of present-day eastern Montana, they did not encounter any Indians, though the Indians knew they were there.

Finally they arrived at the Great Falls of the Missouri River. Lewis called it "the grandest sight I ever beheld." It took them a month to carry the boats and supplies around the series of five waterfalls. They had to endure heat, hailstorms, grizzly bears, rattlesnakes and prickly pear cactuses that stuck into their feet. They continued on, hoping to get across the Rocky Mountains before the snow came. To do that, they desperately needed horses the Shoshone Indians could provide. It wasn't easy finding a small band of Indians in the vast landscape, but at last they did and the Shoshones agreed to trade for horses.

An old Shoshone called Toby guided the party through the Bitterroot Mountains, where an early snowstorm surprised them. They stumbled out of the mountains onto the high plains and met the Nez Perce Indians. After a short time with the Nez Perce, where they made several canoes, the expedition set out once again on river, traveling down the mighty Columbia to the Pacific Ocean.

On the way, they met many Indian groups and passed The Dalles, a large market area where Indians from miles away came to trade with each other. They decided to spend the winter on the coast and built another fort. This one they called Fort Clatsop after the local Indians.

After a rainy and damp winter they were eager to get home. On the eastern side of the Bitterroot Mountains, the party split into three groups, each going a different way. This allowed them to explore more of the land. The three groups met up again in present-day eastern Montana and continued downriver, stopping briefly at Fort Mandan and the Mandan villages. They were moving with the river's current now and making good time. It would be only weeks until they reached St. Louis.



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Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis  
Photo by Cary Horton



Bear Effigy Pipe  
Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, photo by Cary Horton

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