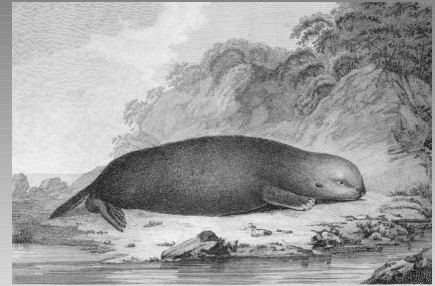


Trade & Property

During their winter on the Pacific Coast (1805-06), Lewis and Clark were in an area that was part of a trade network that stretched around the globe. The Corps of Discovery survived the miserable, damp winter on rotten elk meat, while trying to figure out the challenges of trading with the neighboring Clatsop and Chinook Indians.

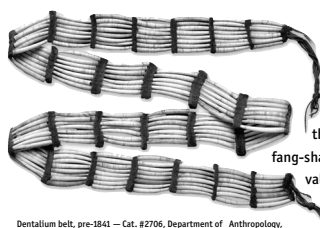
Throughout their journey, Lewis and Clark described the Indian groups they saw as poor. As Lewis and Clark's party came down the Columbia River, they entered the center of a vast trade network where people gathered from far away to trade with each other. They saw huge stacks of dried salmon waiting to be traded. *They were surrounded by wealth, but didn't see it. Why?**

On February 23, 1806, Lewis described the fur of this animal ... "it is the richest and I think the most delicious fur in the world ... it is deep thick silky in the extreme and strong." *What is it?*



A Sea Otter, 1784 by John Webber (from James Cook, A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean) — Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress

Clark nearly gave away most of the expedition's small supply of trade goods in order to get three otter pelts. Commenting on the whites' demand for animal pelts, one Hidatsa Indian stated "The whites are fools to give us valuable articles for such useless trash."



Dentalium belt, pre-1841 — Cat. #2706, Department of Anthropology, Smithsonian Institution, photo by D.E. Huilbert

Currency

These two items were valuable to the Indians on the Columbia River.

Dentalium shells, found on Vancouver Island on the Pacific Coast, were a form of money. The white, fang-shaped shell was called "higua" by the Chinook. Its value was based on size, the larger shells worth more than small ones.

Blue beads seemed to be popular with Indians everywhere they went. Clark said that the Clatsop called blue beads of this type "ti-à, co-mo-shack" which is *Chief beads*. The Chinook wrapped them around their wrists and ankles in strings three or more inches wide. They also wore them in loose strings around the neck and dangling from pierced noses or ears. The beads were a type of wearable money, and often

Indians would not trade for beads of a different color.

Both dentalium shells and beads were strung on strands and traded by the fathom — the length between a man's outstretched arms.

Beads, early to mid-1800s. — University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Neg. T4-2322



"They prefer beads to any thing and will part with the last mouthful or articles of clothing they have for a few of those beads."

William Clark, Nov. 1, 1805



Wedding veil, c. 1890 — Maryhill Museum of Art, Goldendale, WA

This Klickitat wedding veil is literally made of money — dentalium shells, coins and beads. It was ceremoniously removed from the bride's head during a marriage ceremony and given to the groom's family.

For a long time Lewis and Clark couldn't understand why beads and dentalium shells were in such demand. Perhaps the Indians could not understand the Euro-American fascination with little, round metal disks stamped with their leaders' images. Indians pierced Spanish dollar coins like this and used them as jewelry. Such coins would have come by trade from Spanish settlements in California or New Mexico.



Spanish dollar, 1791 — Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis

*ANSWER: People value different things and define wealth in different ways. You may have heard the saying "One man's trash is another man's treasure."



China platter, c. 1793 — Oregon Historical Society, Neg. 001H104237

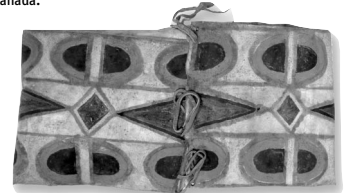
Trade Networks

Indians on the Northwest Coast had had contact with Europeans and Americans for years before Lewis and Clark came along. The Northwest Coast was a stop on a trade route that included places as far away as Boston and China. The American sailors who visited the

Indians here traded for otter skins that were then sold in China for dishes such as this. One of the Boston traders, Captain Robert Gray, bought this dish in China with furs from the Northwest Coast.

The Indians on the Columbia River also were part of a trade network that brought them items from the Rocky Mountains and from the Plains, where the buffalo roamed. It also extended up and down the coast to present-day California and Canada.

The Umatilla Indians were equestrians who lived on the grassy hills south of the Walla Walla River. They traded with tribes east of the Rockies for hides. This is a hide parfleche used as a suitcase for storing clothes or other valuables. It is painted in a style used by the Umatilla Indians.



Parfleche, pre-1900 — University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Neg. T4-2332



Abalone earrings, late 1800s — University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Neg. T4-2318

The Shoshone lived in the Rocky Mountains and were fond of a type of shell found in the Monterey Bay in present-day California. European ships heading up the coast could pick up abalone shells and bring them north, where they were eventually traded to the Shoshones, who made these earrings.

Did You Know?

During the winter at Fort Clatsop a whale washed up on shore. Since most of the men had never seen a whale, a group went to see it, including Sacagawea, who insisted on going along. They found only the skeleton, which measured 105 feet. The local Indians had been busy gathering various pieces of the whale. Clark was able to convince them to part with some blubber and oil, valuable products. He later wrote: "[I] thank providence for directing the whale to us; and think him much more kind to us than he was to jonah, having Sent this Monster to be swallowed by us in Sted of Swallowing of us as jonah's did." January 8, 1806