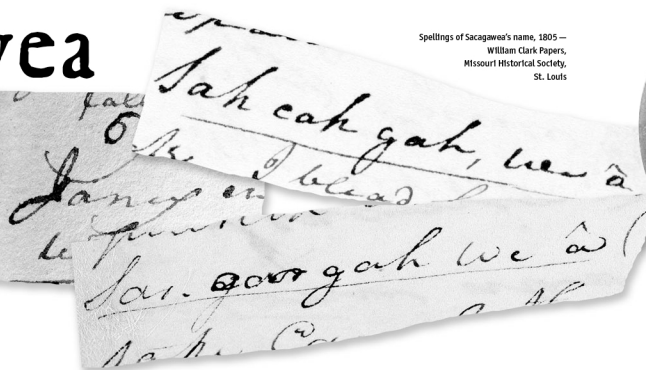


Sacagawea

Who was Sacagawea? During the winter at Fort Mandan, Lewis and Clark met the young Shoshone woman whose name is as familiar as theirs – Sacagawea. They would be shocked that her image made it onto a U.S. coin before their images. She wasn't even an American citizen.

There is no known picture of her drawn while she was alive or by anyone who knew her. Her birth and death dates are not certain. People cannot even agree about what tribe she was from, though most people say Shoshone. A great deal of legend and myth surround her, but the amount of historical



Spellings of Sacagawea's name, 1805 – William Clark Papers, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis



Sacagawea dollar, 2000 – Private Collection

evidence about her remains small. Her main contribution to the expedition was as an interpreter. Lewis and Clark recognized that her knowledge of the Shoshone language would help them communicate with the Shoshone. She became a valued member of the expedition in other ways, helping gather root foods, which

provided a balanced diet, and offering confirmation that the expedition was in the territory of her people, the Shoshone. Her very presence, along with her baby son Jean Baptiste, communicated to Indians that this was not a war party. No war party would have a woman and child with it.

Lewis and Clark never settled on how to spell her name. They often referred to her as the Indian woman or the interpreter's wife (her husband Charbonneau was hired as an interpreter). Clark nicknamed her "Janey." Most historians believe that her name meant "bird woman" in the Hidatsa language.

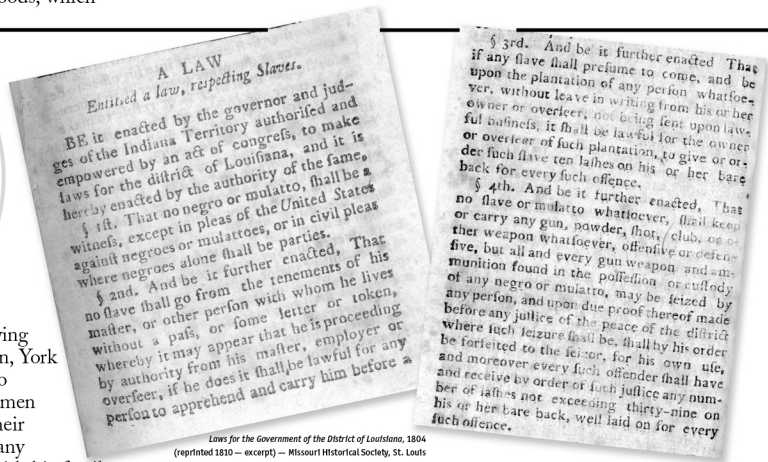
York

York, Clark's slave, was the only African American member of the expedition. Most likely he did not have a choice whether or not to go along. We can only imagine how the trip affected his life. He is mentioned throughout the journals, yet his life remains largely a mystery. No known picture of him exists. From little historical evidence, legends have arisen.

York had tasted freedom in the West. He had traveled outside the United States to lands where the laws of slavery did not apply. How did he feel back in St. Louis? He was still Clark's legal property and was subject to the local slave laws.



Following the expedition, York traveled with Clark to Kentucky, where the men were reunited with their families. York had many adventures to share with his family – of the Hidatsa Indian chief rubbing his skin to see if the dark color would come off, of pretending to be a bear with the Arikara children, and of meeting a young Indian woman named Sacagawea. Since Clark eventually moved to St. Louis, York's new home would also be St. Louis, hundreds of miles away from his family in Kentucky. A slave did not

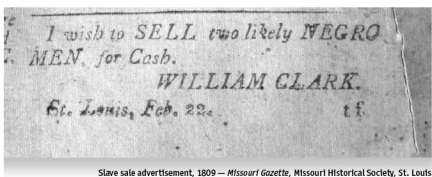


Laws for the Government of the District of Louisiana, 1804 (reprinted 1810 – excerpt) – Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis

What was York's life in St. Louis like? As a slave, he would have been subject to 35 slave codes passed as law for the Louisiana Territory in 1804. Look at several of the codes. What was York prohibited from doing?*

have a choice in such matters. Letters from Clark to his brother Jonathan indicate that York was very unhappy, missed his family, and asked for his freedom. Did Clark ever free York? No one has found any legal documents to say for sure. Ads from St. Louis newspapers show that Clark continued to own slaves after the expedition. The only written

reference to Clark freeing York is in notes written by the author Washington Irving who visited Clark in 1832. Irving wrote that Clark mentioned that he had freed several of his slaves, including York.



Slave sale advertisement, 1809 – Missouri Gazette, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis

*ANSWER: Under this law York could not leave home without a pass signed by Clark. He couldn't carry or use a gun either, something he had done on the expedition.