

# The Return

**A**fter crossing the mountains, the expedition split into three groups to explore more of the land.

Lewis' group met up with several young Blackfoot Indians and camped a night with them. Lewis awoke in the morning to shouts. The Blackfeet were stealing their guns and horses — attempting to gain honor by proving contact with enemies. Not certain what was happening and determined to stop the thefts, Lewis shot one of the Indians and one of his men stabbed another. Lewis' party quickly went on its way.

Finally the three groups met up at the Missouri River, the pathway back to St. Louis. They

were now going with the current and made good time. Soon they began to meet a steady procession of traders traveling upriver to do business with the Indians. Lewis and Clark were anxious for news from the outside world. Little did they realize that their own return would soon be the news story of the season.

*Soon someone spotted a cow on the riverbank. The men shouted for joy at the sight. What did this tell them?\**

The Corps of Discovery arrived back in St. Louis on September 23, 1806.

**D**uring the next few weeks they had a lot of work to complete, including reports to write and finances to settle. The captains held a public sale of the equipment and extra supplies from the expedition. As part of their pay for participating in the expedition, the men received land warrants from the U.S. government entitling each to 320 acres of land.

The party disbanded and the men went their separate ways. After visits with family and

## Oral Tradition

"This is what we talked about when Lewis and Clark came. Well, if they bring too many bad things, maybe we should kill them. But they're going to bring good things with them. What should we do? I'm sure there was this great discussion, 'what should we do with these people? Once we decided they were human beings, that is.' So the decision was made, 'Well, let's treat these people good once. Maybe they're mixed with some other creature that's why they look like they do. They've got eyes like fish; some of them have their faces upside down, and they smell.' And eyes like fish is just the grey and blue eyes, and then the face being upside down. You've got mustaches and beards and they are bald on top. That's what that means. And the smell ... because they didn't bathe themselves. And so this is our impressions of these white people. And we couldn't understand why they called themselves white when they're really not white. They're pale, that's the way we described them."

Allen Pinkham (Nez Perce), 2002

*"About 12 o'clock we arrived in Site of St. Louis fired three Rounds as we approached the Town and landed oppocit the center of the Town. the people gathred on the Shore and Huzzared three cheers... the party all considerable much rejoiced that we have the Expedition Completed and now... we intend to return to our native homes to See our parents once more as we have been So long from them."*

John Ordway, September 23, 1806

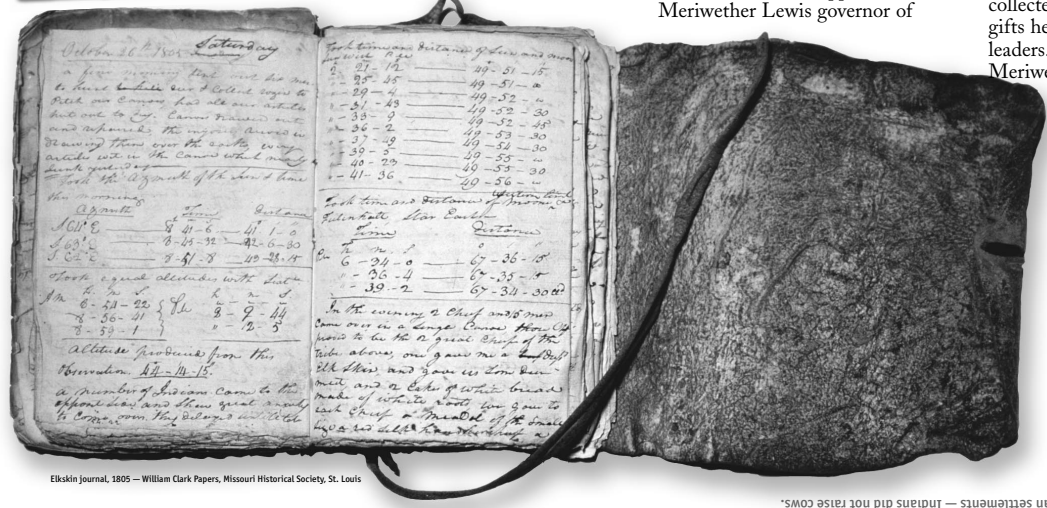
Upper Louisiana Territory. In March of 1808, Lewis moved to St. Louis. Clark also received an appointment. The President put him in charge of the Louisiana Territory's militia and Indian affairs. He, too, moved to the city with his bride Julia. Outliving Lewis by many years, Clark eventually became governor of the Missouri Territory in 1813.

First as Indian agent and then as governor, Clark was directly responsible for acquiring thousands of square miles of land in Missouri and the rest of the Louisiana Territory by treaty. He played a key role in encouraging Indian movement westward as Missouri moved closer to statehood. His home in St. Louis contained a room full of treasures collected on the expedition and gifts he received from Indian leaders. He named his first child Meriwether Lewis Clark.

Today much of what we know about what happened on the expedition comes from the journals that Lewis and Clark and several of their men kept. In this field journal, Clark wrote down his first impressions as he met tribes from the Salish (present-day western Montana) to the Clatsop (Pacific Coast). But the journals reflect the view of the person who wrote them and represent only one of the many stories that make up the larger story of the expedition. Indian oral tradition can help provide other stories, reflecting the view of those standing on the river bank.

*"We met a Captain McClellin ascending in a large boat. This gentleman was somewhat astonished to see us return and informed us that we had been long since given out [up] by the people of the U S generally and almost forgotten. The President of the U. States has yet hopes of us."*

William Clark, September 17, 1806



Elkskin Journal, 1805 — William Clark Papers, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis

\*ANSWER: They were near Euro-American settlements — Indians did not raise cows.