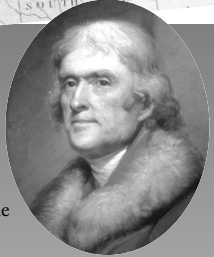


Planning for an Expedition



The Lewis and Clark expedition was the idea of President Thomas Jefferson, a Virginian who had never set foot west of the Blue Ridge Mountains. He had a large library and loved to read. He imagined what the land west of the mountains might look like. As President of the United States, he asked Congress to provide money for a small expedition to travel beyond the borders of the U.S. into French-owned land. When he made the request, he did not know that a major change was coming, one that would double the size of the United States.



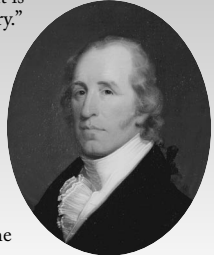
Thomas Jefferson, 1805 by Rembrandt Peale — Collection of The New-York Historical Society



Jefferson chose his personal secretary, Meriwether Lewis, to lead the expedition. Twenty-eight-year-old Lewis was also a Virginian. Family legend says he sent this portrait to his mother before heading west. He wrote to her that "the charge of this expedition is honorable to myself, as it is important to my Country."

Meriwether Lewis, c. 1803 by Charles B.J.F. de St.-Mémin — Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis

Lewis chose his friend and former army commander William Clark to help lead the expedition. Clark had red hair and an easy-going personality. He came from a large, well-known family and grew up in Kentucky. His brother, George, had been a hero in the Revolutionary War. Clark's nephew said of the many portraits painted of his uncle, this one looked most like him. Clark's personality and skills made him a good complement to Lewis.



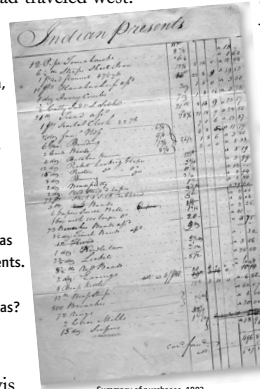
William Clark, c. 1810 attributed to John Wesley Jarvis — Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis

On June 20, 1803, President Jefferson sent Meriwether Lewis a detailed list of instructions for the expedition. One statement outlined the main goal of the trip. "The object of your mission is to explore the Missouri River, & such principal stream of it, as, by its course and communication with the waters of the Pacific ocean ... may offer the most direct & practicable water communication across this continent for the purposes of commerce." *What was the main reason for the expedition?**

*ANSWER: To find a water route across the continent for trade purposes.

In the spring of 1803, Lewis traveled to Philadelphia, then America's largest city, to buy supplies for the expedition. He visited some of the nation's most learned men. These advisors provided suggestions, including titles for a reference library to take on the trip. His traveling library consisted of books on geography, astronomy, mathematics, botany and mineralogy, as well as a four-volume encyclopedia. Bringing along the knowledge of Europe was essential to the mission of discovery. It set Lewis apart from the trappers and traders who already had traveled west.

While in Philadelphia, Lewis purchased a wide variety of supplies. His largest category of purchases was Indian presents. Why do you think that was?

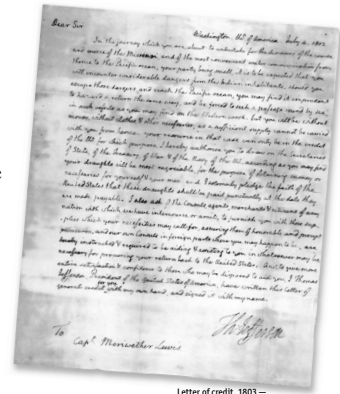


Summary of purchases, 1803 — National Archives, Washington, D.C.

Lewis wanted to show the Indians some of the products made in the United States. These samples were offered for free to entice Indian customers to want American goods. He had limited knowledge of the western tribes, so this led to some guesswork. He also bought gifts to exchange in official meetings, gifts similar to those exchanged by European kings. These items expressed a desire for peace and trade.

In April of 1803, a deal was made in Europe. The French government decided to sell their claim to the Louisiana Territory to the United States. In a formal ceremony in St. Louis on March 9, 1804, Lewis witnessed the official transfer of Upper Louisiana to the United States. His signature on the document to the right shows he was there. Can you find it?

Suddenly much of the land from the Mississippi River west to the Rocky Mountains became U.S. territory. Lewis and Clark would not be traveling through French-owned land after all.

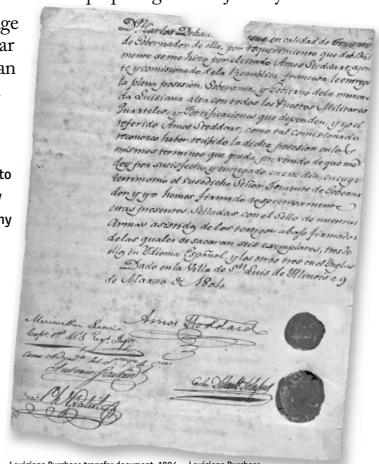


Letter of credit, 1803 — William Clark Papers, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis

This was Lewis' credit card. Signed by President Jefferson, it promised that the United States government would pay for the items that Lewis bought with it. He carried this all the way to the Pacific Ocean and back but used it mostly during his winter in St. Louis before the expedition started.

In fall 1803 Meriwether Lewis and William Clark traveled down the Ohio River and up the Mississippi River. The western boundary of the United States was the Mississippi River; on the other side, France owned the land. The small city of St. Louis was on the west bank of the

Mississippi just below where the Missouri River flowed into the Mississippi. The officials in St. Louis would not allow the expedition members to camp on their soil, so the men built Camp DuBois on American soil in present-day Illinois. There they spent the winter, preparing for the journey west.



Louisiana Purchase transfer document, 1804 — Louisiana Purchase Transfer Collection, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis