

## CHAPTER 5 LEWIS AND CLARK EXPEDITION (1804-1806)

The Lewis and Clark's expedition changed mapping of northwest America by providing the first accurate depiction of the relationship of the sources of the Columbia and Missouri rivers, and the Rocky Mountains.



 Route of the expedition

The **Lewis and Clark Expedition** (1804–1806) was the first overland expedition undertaken by the United States to the Pacific coast and back. The expedition team was headed by the United States Army soldiers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark and assisted by George Drouillard who was half Shawnee and half French. The expedition's goal was to gain an accurate sense of the resources being exchanged in the Louisiana Purchase. The expedition laid much of the groundwork for the westward expansion of the United States.



Figure 31 John Shields member of Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery

## John Shields

This biography is from a paper by George H. Yater originally presented at the 1991 annual meeting of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation in Louisville and subsequently published in "Nine Young Men from Kentucky," a May 1992 supplementary publication of *We Proceeded On*, the official publication of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation.

### The Nine Young Men from Kentucky

When Meriwether Lewis wrote to William Clark in June 1803 with an invitation to join him on a western expedition, he also requested a favor: regardless of whether or not Clark went, Lewis asked him to begin recruiting the frontiersmen needed to serve on the expedition. Kentucky was fertile ground for the young woodsmen and hunters that Lewis knew were vital to the success of the journey.

Within days of receiving Lewis's invitation, Clark was gathering young men for their Western adventure. Louisville, a major frontier town and supply point, was a perfect recruiting area. Clark was a good judge of men and their abilities. Over the next few months, as he waited for Lewis to reach Louisville, William recruited men that became the foundation of the Corps of Discovery.

William Clark had seven recruits waiting on October 14 when Lewis reached Louisville, and Lewis brought two more with him. These nine men are forever associated with Kentucky in the history of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. After interviewing Clark about the expedition, Nicholas Biddle, author/editor of the official expedition history published in 1814, noted that nine of the men were "robust young American citizens from the neighborhood of Louisville." Clark identified these first recruits as being from Kentucky (although not all of them actually were), and thus in Biddle's history and those that followed it, they entered the annals of this American epic as the "Nine Young Men from Kentucky."



Michael Haynes Historic Art

The Nine Young Men were:

- [William Bratton](#)
- [John Colter](#)
- [Joseph and Reubin Field](#)
- [Charles Floyd](#)
- [George Gibson](#)
- [Nathaniel Pryor](#)
- [George Shannon](#)
- [John Shields](#)

<http://www.lewisandclarkinkentucky.org/people/9youngmen.shtml>

We are not sure when John Shields came to Kentucky. Work by earlier researchers' shows that he was born near present-day Harrisonburg, Virginia, in 1769, the sixth son of Robert and Nancy Stockson Shields, and one of ten brothers and a sister. Harrisonburg, by the way, located in the lovely Shenandoah Valley, is Louisville's twin city in the truest sense of the word. Both Harrisonburg and Louisville were given corporate life in a single act of the Virginia legislature in 1780.1

By then, young Shields was eleven years old. Shortly after, in 1784, the family emigrated to Pigeon Forge in the Tennessee foothills of the Smoky Mountains. Here he learned blacksmithing at a shop owned by a

brother-in-law, Samuel Wilson, and also operated Wilson's grist mill. He was an apt pupil of blacksmithing and his skill proved unusually valuable to the Lewis and Clark Expedition.<sup>2</sup>

By 1790 he was in Kentucky and about that time married a girl named Nancy, family name unknown. The only reference I have been able to find to a John Shields locally is from a session of the County Court on November 8, 1797, when persons named to appraise the estate of a John Williams, deceased, included John Shields. Was he our man? Perhaps, but there is no way to be certain.<sup>3</sup>

In any event, he became a private soldier in the Expedition, even though Lewis had earlier called for only unmarried men. He was, at age 34, the oldest man in the party and was the blacksmith, gunsmith, and all-around mechanic. His work as blacksmith brought in badly needed corn during the winter sojourn of 1804-05 at Fort Mandan. On February 5, 1805, Meriwether Lewis noted in his journal that the party was "visited by the natives, who brought in a considerable quantity of corn for the work the blacksmith had done for them. They are peculiarly attached to a battle ax formed in a very inconvenient manner in my opinion; it is fabricated of iron only." There were several such entries. And on April 8, 1806, Clark noted that: "John Shields cut out my rifle and taught him to shoot very well. The party owes much to the ingenuity of this man, by whom their guns are repaired when they get out of order which is very often."

At the conclusion of the Expedition, Lewis wrote of Shields: "Has received the pay only of a private. Nothing was more peculiarly useful to us, in various situations, then the skill and ingenuity of this man as an artist, in repairing our guns, accoutrements, &c. and should it be thought proper to allow him something as an artificer, he has well deserved it." There is no record that Lewis's suggestion was acted upon. Shields' skill as a hunter comes through the journals, as well. There are at least seventy references to his hunting accomplishments.<sup>4</sup>

As an acute observer of anything new that he had come across, Shields proved a "medicine man" to another Kentuckian on the Expedition-William Bratton. Bratton, as one of the saltmakers on the Pacific Coast, came down with back pains so acute that he could scarcely walk. On the return journey Bratton traveled by canoe or horseback. When the Expedition halted in present-day Idaho at "Camp Chopunnish" to wait for the snow to melt in the high Bitterroots, Shields suggested a treatment for Bratton. He said he had seen men with similar complaints cured by violent sweats.

Lewis detailed the process in his journal: Shields dug a circular hole four feet deep, lighted a fire to heat the surrounding earth, put in a seat and willow hoops across the top to hold blankets. Bratton was placed in the hole and given water to sprinkle on the hot earth to create steam. The steam and plunges into cold water cured the back pain. Lewis added that during the treatment Bratton was given "copious draughts" of a strong tea of horse mint. This was also Shields' idea and he told Lewis he had seen "Sinneca snake root" used when mint was not available.<sup>5</sup>

Following the Expedition's return, Shields spent a year trapping in Missouri with famed Kentuckian Daniel Boone, who was evidently related to him in some way. [Recent research places Shields back home by the spring of 1807.] Upon his return to the Falls of the Ohio area he spent some time with Daniel's lesser-known brother, Squire Boone, in Indiana-in what is now Harrison County some thirty miles west of Louisville. Shields died in December 1809 and is probably buried in the rather neglected Little Flock Baptist Church graveyard south of Corydon, Indiana, in Harrison County. I might note that Squire Boone was, among other things, a Baptist preacher and likely presided at Shields' burial. John and Nancy Shields were the parents of a daughter named Janette who married her cousin John Tipton, a man who became a power in Indiana politics.<sup>6</sup>

#### FOOTNOTES

- Charles G. Clarke, *The Men of the Lewis and Clark Expedition: A Biographical Roster of the Fifty-one Members* (Glendale, Calif., Arthur H. Clark Co., 1970), 53.
- *Ibid.*, 53.
- Jefferson County Minute Book 5:84, November 8, 1797.

- Donald Jackson, Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1962), 367.
- Lewis's Journal, May 24, 1806.
- Clarke, Men of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, 54.

The Hall Family Tree has this relationship.

John Page Shields (1769 - 1815)

**is your 4th great grandfather**

[Jennie Shields \(1762 - 1827\)](#)

daughter of John Page Shields

[Jonathon Hall Tipton \(1816 - 1894\)](#)

son of Jennie Shields

[John Worrall Tipton \(1852 - 1910\)](#)

son of Jonathon Hall Tipton

[Lucy B Tipton \(1885 - 1910\)](#)

daughter of John Worrall Tipton

[Ida Mae Tipton \(1907 - 1984\)](#)

daughter of Lucy B Tipton

[Ernest Lenard Hall](#)

## Teaching With Documents: The Lewis and Clark Expedition

### Background

In 1803 President Thomas Jefferson guided a splendid piece of foreign diplomacy through the U.S. Senate: the purchase of Louisiana territory from France. After the

Louisiana Purchase Treaty was made, Jefferson initiated an exploration of the newly purchased land and the territory beyond the "great rock mountains" in the West.

Jefferson chose his personal secretary, Meriwether Lewis, an intelligent and literate man who also possessed skills as a frontiersman. Lewis in turn solicited the help of William Clark, whose abilities as draftsman and frontiersman were even stronger. Lewis so respected Clark that he made him a co-commanding captain of the Expedition, even though Clark was never recognized as such by the government. Together they collected a diverse military Corps of Discovery that would be able to undertake a two-year journey to the great ocean.

Jefferson hoped that Lewis and Clark would find a water route linking the Columbia and Missouri rivers. This water link would connect the Pacific Ocean with the Mississippi River system, thus giving the new western land access to port markets out of the Gulf of Mexico and to eastern cities along the Ohio River and its minor tributaries. At the time, American and European explorers had only penetrated what would become each end of the Lewis and Clark Trail up the Missouri several miles to the trapper headquarters at Fort Mandan and up the Columbia just a bit over a hundred miles to a point a little beyond present-day Portland, Oregon.

The Lewis and Clark Expedition paddled its way down the Ohio as it prepared the Expedition to be launched officially from Camp Wood, just outside St. Louis, in the summer of 1804. That summer and fall the company of explorers paddled and pulled themselves upstream, northwest on the Missouri River to Fort Mandan, a trading post, where Corps of Discovery set up camp, wintered, and prepared for the journey to the Pacific.

When the spring of 1805 brought high water and favorable weather, the Lewis and Clark Expedition set out on the next leg of its journey. They traveled up the Missouri to present-day Three Forks, Montana, wisely choosing to follow the western-most tributary, the Jefferson River. This route delivered the explorers to the doorstep of the Shoshone Indians, who were skilled at traversing the great rock mountains with horses. Once over the Bitterroot Mountains, the Corps of Discovery shaped canoe-like vessels that transported them swiftly downriver to the mouth of the Columbia, where they wintered (1805-1806) at Fort Clatsop, on the present-day Oregon side of the river.

With journals in hand, Lewis, Clark, and the other members of the Expedition returned to St. Louis by September 1806 to report their findings to Jefferson. Along the way, they

continued to trade what few goods they still had with the Indians and set up diplomatic relations with the Indians. Additionally, they recorded their contact with Indians and described (and at times drew) the shape of the landscape and the creatures of this western world, new to the white man. In doing so, they fulfilled many of Jefferson's wishes for the Expedition. Along the way, William Clark drew a series of maps that were remarkably detailed, noting and naming rivers and creeks, significant points in the landscape, the shape of river shore, and spots where the Corps spent each night or camped or portaged for longer periods of time. Later explorers used these maps to further probe the western portion of the continent.

The Expedition of the Corps of Discovery shaped a crude route to the waters of the Pacific and marked an initial pathway for the new nation to spread westward from ocean to ocean, fulfilling what would become to many Americans an obvious destiny.

Over the next two centuries the new Americans and many immigrants would wash across the central and western portions of what would eventually become the contiguous 48 United States. This wave of development would significantly transform virgin forests and grasslands into a landscape of cities, farms, and harvested forests, displacing fauna such as the buffalo and squeezing the Indians who survived onto reservations.

## The Documents

- President Thomas Jefferson's confidential message to Congress concerning relations with the Indians. Pages: [1](#) | [2](#) | [3](#) | [4](#)  
National Archives Identifier [306698](#)
- [Message of President Thomas Jefferson laying before the Senate the conventions with France for the cession of the province of Louisiana to the United States](#)  
National Archives Identifier: [306460](#)
- [Message of President Thomas Jefferson concerning the cession of the province of Louisiana](#)  
National Archives Identifier [306461](#)
- French Exchange copy of the Louisiana Purchase Treaty--Convention for Payment of Sums Due by France to U. S. [Page 1](#), [Cover](#), [Transcription](#)  
National Archives Identifier [299807](#)
- [Letter to James Madison, secretary of state, announcing that Louisiana was purchased from France](#)  
National Archives Identifier [306704](#)

- [Receipt for wine and kegs purchased by Meriwether Lewis](#)  
National Archives Identifier [300351](#)
- [Receipt for 131 rolls of pigtail tobacco purchased by Meriwether Lewis](#)  
National Archives Identifier [300352](#)
- [List of Indian presents purchased by Meriwether Lewis](#)  
National Archives Identifier [300353](#)
- President Thomas Jefferson's message to Congress communicating the discoveries of the explorers Lewis and Clark. Pages: [1](#) | [2](#) | [3](#)  
National Archives Identifier [306702](#)
- [Photograph: Overlooking the Columbia River at Corbett, near the Cascade Locks on the Lewis and Clark Trail, 1973](#)  
National Archives Identifier [548140](#)
- [Photograph: Early morning view of the Missouri River near Atchison, Kansas, 1974 . The scene was described by Lewis and Clark as having much tall grass and abundant game.](#)  
National Archives Identifier [557091](#)
- [Photograph: Rolling hills in the outskirts of Atchison, Kansas, 1974 . The tall grass prairie was described by Lewis and Clark and painted by George Catlin between 1830 and 1850.](#)  
National Archives Identifier [557087](#)
- [Photograph: Close up of Indian petroglyphs mentioned in the journal of Lewis and Clark located on a limestone cliff at the mouth of the Nemaha River near Troy, Kansas, 1974.](#)



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<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/lewis-clark/>

## Lewis and Clark

### A History and Overview of the Lewis and Clark Expedition to the Pacific Coast

By [Amanda Briney, Contributing Writer](#)

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This nickel features the culmination of the Lewis and Clark expedition.

*Getty Images*

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The lands included in the Louisiana Purchase were those west of the Mississippi River but they were largely unexplored and therefore completely unknown to both the U.S. and France at the time. Because of this, shortly after the purchase of the land President Jefferson requested that Congress approve \$2,500 for an exploratory expedition west.

Once Congress approved the funds for the expedition, President Jefferson chose Captain Meriwether Lewis as its leader. Lewis was chosen mainly because he already had some knowledge of the west and was an experienced Army officer. After making further arrangements for the expedition, Lewis decided he wanted a co-captain and selected another Army officer, William Clark.

The goals of this expedition, as outlined by President Jefferson, were to study the Native American tribes living in the area as well as the plants, animals, geology and terrain of the region. The expedition was also to be a diplomatic one and aid in transferring power over the lands and the people living on them from the French and Spanish to the United States. In addition, President Jefferson wanted the expedition to find a direct waterway to the West Coast and the Pacific Ocean so westward expansion and commerce would be easier to achieve in the coming years.

### The Expedition

Lewis and Clark's expedition officially began on May 21, 1804 when they and the 33 other men making up the [Corps of Discovery](#) departed from their camp near St. Louis, Missouri. The first portion of the expedition followed the route of the Missouri River during which, they passed through places such as present-day Kansas City, Missouri and Omaha, Nebraska.

On August 20, 1804, the Corps experienced its first and only casualty when Sergeant Charles Floyd died of appendicitis. He was the first U.S. soldier to die west of the Mississippi River. Shortly after Floyd's death, the Corps reached the edge of the Great Plains and saw the area's many different species, most of which were new to them. They also met their first Sioux tribe, the Yankton Sioux, in a peaceful encounter.

The Corps next meeting with the Sioux however, was not as peaceful. In September 1804, the Corps met the Teton Sioux further west and during that encounter one of the chiefs demanded that the Corps give them a boat before being allowed to pass. When the Corps refused, the Tetons threatened violence and the Corps prepared to fight. Before serious hostilities began though, both sides retreated. The Corps' expedition then successfully continued upriver until winter when they stopped in the villages of the Mandan tribe in December 1804. While waiting out the winter, Lewis and Clark had the Corps built Fort Mandan near present-day Washburn, North Dakota, where they stayed until April 1805. During this time, Lewis and Clark wrote their first report to President Jefferson. In it they chronicled 108 plant species and 68 mineral types. Upon leaving Fort Mandan, Lewis and Clark sent

this report, along with some members of the expedition and a map of the U.S. drawn by Clark back to St. Louis.

Afterward, the Corps continued along the route of the Missouri River until they reached a fork in late May 1805 and were forced to divide the expedition to find the true Missouri River. Eventually, they found it and in June the expedition came together and crossed the river's headwaters. Shortly thereafter the Corps arrived at the [Continental Divide](#) and were forced to continue their journey on horseback at Lemhi Pass on the Montana-Idaho border on August 26, 1805.

Once over the divide, the Corps again continued their journey in canoes down the Rocky Mountains on the Clearwater River (in northern Idaho), the Snake River and finally the Columbia River into what is present-day Portland, Oregon. The Corps then at last reached the Pacific Ocean in December 1805 and built Fort Clatsop on the south side of the Columbia River to wait out the winter. During their time at the fort, the men explored the area, hunted elk and other wildlife, met Native American tribes and prepared for their journey home.

On March 23, 1806, Lewis and Clark and the rest of the Corps left Fort Clatsop and began their journey back to St. Louis. Once reaching the Continental Divide in July, the Corps separated for a brief time so Lewis could explore the Marias River, a tributary of the Missouri River. They then reunited at the confluence of the Yellowstone and Missouri Rivers on August 11 and returned to St. Louis on September 23, 1806.

### **Achievements of the Lewis and Clark Expedition**

Although Lewis and Clark did not find a direct waterway from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean, their expedition brought a wealth of knowledge about the newly purchased lands in the west. For example, the expedition provided extensive facts on the Northwest's natural resources. Lewis and Clark were able to document over 100 animal species and over 170 plants. They also brought back information on the size, minerals and the geology of the area.

In addition, the expedition established relations with the Native Americans in the region, one of President Jefferson's main goals. Aside from the confrontation with the Teton Sioux, these relations were largely peaceful and the Corps received extensive help from the various tribes they met regarding things like food and navigation.

For geographical knowledge, the Lewis and Clark expedition provided widespread knowledge about the topography of the Pacific Northwest and produced more than 140 [maps of the region](#).

To read more about Lewis and Clark, visit the National Geographic [site dedicated to their journey](#) or [read their report of the expedition](#), originally published in 1814.

### **Suggested Reading**

- [Louisiana Purchase - The History of the Louisiana Purchase](#)
- [A Biography of Explorer Robert Cavalier de la Salle in the United States](#)
- [Lewis and Clark Resources](#)

### **Related Articles**

- [Why Did the Lewis and Clark Expedition Cross North America?](#)
- [Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of t...](#)
- [Timeline from 1800 to 1810](#)
- [Lewis and Clark Timeline for 1803](#)
- [Excavating Lewis and Clark: The Archaeology of an Expedition](#)



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Figure Figure 1