

The Truth about
Sacajawea

Kenneth
Thomasma



Autographed

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Sacajawea, a sixteen-year-old Shoshoni Indian girl, and her husband, Toussaint Charbonneau, were hired on as guides and interpreters when the Corps of Discovery led by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark left their winter quarters in the center of North Dakota and began their epic trek to the Pacific Ocean.

Jean Baptiste Charbonneau was about eight weeks old when his mother strapped his cradleboard on her back and the journey began. Young mother and infant endured many hardships on the history-making trip.

The physically abused young mother proved to be "indispensable" to the success of one of the greatest explorations in all of American history. Her negotiation skills, translation abilities, awareness of Indian culture, familiarity with the territory and its flora and fauna, and her almost daily provision of roots, berries, and herbs made her a respected member of the group.

Since the end of the expedition, much has been written about this amazing teenager. Unfortunately most of the writings are full of myth, legend, and historically inaccurate information.

Confusion about Sacajawea's valuable role evaporates when the source of the facts about her—The Lewis and Clark Journals—are consulted. The two captains wrote much about her contributions as they carefully and precisely documented all events of the expedition.

The Truth about Sacajawea is an accurate paraphrase of the journal accounts that mention Sacajawea or "the Squar," as she was often called. This entry-by-entry approach allows readers to experience what the explorers wrote about Sacajawea. Between the journal accounts is a short commentary and brief synopsis of events that took place between the entries.

The concise, clear, and accurate account of the twenty-one months Sacajawea spent with Lewis and Clark is a reliable picture of this quietly resourceful teenager and the enormous contributions she made to this famous expedition.

*Sacajawea
(Best Wisher)*

Ken Thomasma

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Agnes Vincen Talbot, Illustrator

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Gary E. Moulton, editor of *The Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition* (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), has graciously allowed me to use his material as the basis for my paraphrase of the entries that contain a reference to Sacajawea.

Dr. Moulton has also generously given permission to use three of his maps that document the expedition's route to the Pacific Ocean.

To
**Sacajawea's descendants
the Lemhi Shoshoni people**

**At a critical point
August 13—31, 1805
in Lemhi Valley, Idaho
the Lemhi Shoshoni sold horses to the explorers
and provided them with a guide
to make it possible for the expedition
to cross the Rocky Mountains
and continue on to the Pacific Ocean.**

Lewis and Clark made many promises in return for the help of the Indian people. The Lemhi Shoshoni were promised peace and prosperity from the great white chief. Along with the Nez Perce people on the Columbia River drainage, the Lemhi Shoshoni provided essential assistance to the expedition.

One hundred years after Lewis and Clark left the Lemhi Valley, the Lemhi Shoshoni people were forced from their ancestral lands and moved two hundred miles south to the Fort Hall Reservation.

Now the Lemhi Shoshoni people dream of a return to their sacred homeland. There they want to establish the Sacajawea Cultural Interpretive Center. When visitors come in 2003-2006 to celebrate the bicentennial of the epic journey of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, the Lemhi Shoshoni want to be there to welcome them.

The proper recognition of Sacajawea, her descendants, and all Indian women will become a reality. Grandview Publishing is donating the profits from this book to help these dreams come true.

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*A Message from
The Lemhi Shoshoni People*

*W*e, the Lemhi Shoshoni, have our unique ideas regarding Sacajawea of Lewis and Clark fame. We view Sacajawea as a representative member of our culture. We are proud she used special skills to help Lewis and Clark survive in the early 1800s.

Sacajawea's mother nurtured her from birth. As the young girl grew, her mother expertly and carefully taught her daughter to find and preserve food, make clothing, construct shelters, care for children, and pack for travel to distant hunting grounds. As Lewis and Clark learned, Sacajawea had a great many skills. They also learned she was able to stay calm and act wisely during life-threatening times. Her expert care for her firstborn child made an impression on them.

Like all of us, Sacajawea was molded by her family, her tribal members, and her experiences. To us she represents all that is good about our people, the Lemhi Shoshoni. Some native people criticize Sacajawea for helping the majority culture travel through our lands and eventually dominate us completely. However, we realize Sacajawea was only eleven years old when she was captured by enemy warriors and taken away to be sold into slavery. She was a teenager when Lewis and Clark enlisted her and her husband to help them travel to and from the Pacific Ocean.

The explorers came to Sacajawea first and eventually to our people with glowing promises of peace and prosperity. How could sixteen-year-old Sacajawea or our people foresee what the future actually held for them and all native people? We know Sacajawea

did what she thought was correct. We know from all the words written about her that she was an outstanding human being. Surely we cannot blame this young Shoshoni mother for the inability to see into the future.

In 1812 the clerk at Fort Manuel wrote in the log book, "This evening the wife of Charbonneau, a Snake* squaw, died of putrid fever. She was a good and best woman in the fort."

Thus we honor Sacajawea for who she was—not for what she did to help Lewis and Clark. We know she was a good woman and a fine mother. For these things we proudly want the world to know Sacajawea is Lemhi Shoshoni.

We are happy that for the first time people can read a book that tells exactly what Sacajawea did during her twenty-one months with Lewis and Clark.



Representing the Fort Lemhi Indian Community
Rod Ariwite
January 1997

*The term *Snake* is used when referring to Shoshoni Indian people. It is believed it came into use as a result of sign language. When signing basket weaving by a hand movement, the sign was misread as a snake slithering along.

Preface

When Sacajawea's descendants, the Lemhi Shoshoni of Fort Hall, Idaho, searched for written material about their famous ancestor, they could find nothing suitable to submit to a major Idaho newspaper for background information.

Although so much has been written about Sacajawea (there is even a book which analyzes all the books written about her), a natural history association in Wyoming refuses to sell any books about Sacajawea because they do not pass the test for accuracy and authenticity. Even encyclopedias print incorrect information about her. The cliché, "Don't believe everything you read," certainly applies to Sacajawea. The casual reader will be confused by all this misinformation and will draw false conclusions regarding this teenage Indian mother who traveled with the famous Lewis and Clark Expedition.

In the early 1990s, when I became closely associated with the Lemhi Shoshoni people, I felt the need for a book which will give them and other readers a clear picture of exactly what Sacajawea did during her twenty-one months with Lewis and Clark.

The entry-by-entry approach allows readers to experience what the explorers wrote about Sacajawea. They were the only people who recorded the facts. I accurately paraphrased the entries made by the two captains and their sergeants. Following the entries is a short comment. You may or may not agree with my comments which are recorded only to stimulate thought. Draw your own conclusions. My main purpose is to allow the reader to have the facts in a direct concise format.

Often days or even months elapse between journal entries concerning Sacajawea. To fill in the gaps, I have provided a brief synopsis of events and progress of the expedition as it proceeds toward its goal. These three segments—entry, comment, and synopsis—combine to form a complete, clear picture of Sacajawea and her contribution to American history.

What happened to her after the expedition will always be a topic of much controversy. So will the exact spelling, pronunciation, and meaning of her name. In the Hidatsa Indian language her name is Sakakawea, or Bird Woman. This name is preferred by citizens of North Dakota. The Sacajawea spelling is preferred by Sacajawea's descendants, the Lemhi Shosoni. Irving W. Anderson, nationally recognized expert on the Charbonneau family, has researched the name controversy and feels the most correct spelling is Sacagawea. Out of respect for Sacajawea's descendants, I have elected to use the "j" spelling.

But these issues seem insignificant when compared to this young Lemhi Shoshoni's quiet resourcefulness, her dedication to her firstborn child, and her invaluable contributions to the success of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.



William Clark



Meriwether Lewis

Setting the Stage

For over twenty years a great American had an obsession. Thomas Jefferson longed to know what natural wonders lay west between the Mississippi River and the Pacific Ocean. As a member of the American Philosophical Society, Jefferson and his fellow members wanted to send an expedition to the Pacific Ocean and return. Jefferson was involved in at least three attempts between 1783 and 1800, but none of these efforts materialized.

In 1801 Thomas Jefferson became the third president of a very young United States of America. The new president employed twenty-seven-year-old Meriwether Lewis as his private secretary. In 1802 the president asked young Meriwether to head an expedition from the St. Louis area westward. Jefferson wanted Lewis to explore the Missouri River to its source, find a passage over the mountains, and float the Columbia River drainage to the Pacific Ocean.

Preparations for the grand adventure began almost immediately. First Jefferson and Lewis agreed that a second in command should be chosen in the event something should incapacitate either leader. William Clark, four years older than Lewis, was selected for his military and frontier experience.

The expedition would be organized as an official United States Army unit. The two leaders would be army captains to their men, even though a military red-tape blunder prevented William Clark from receiving that official rank. The project would be called "The Lewis and Clark Expedition."

Captain Lewis immediately prepared for his monumental assignment. He boned up on astronomy, medicine, ethnology,

edible plants, and natural history. He made comprehensive lists of supplies, clothing, equipment, medicines, and Indian trade goods. Congress appropriated \$2500 for supplies and Indian trade goods. Lewis arranged for construction of a large keelboat to help carry the 3500 pounds of cargo and the crew. The recruitment and training of men would be ongoing from August 1803 through the next winter.

At first the plan was to explain the expedition as merely a literary venture to seek knowledge and enlightenment. This approach would be taken to pacify the Spanish and French authorities who might question the American government's motives for such an endeavor. But in the spring of 1803 Thomas Jefferson closed a deal with the French and made the great land buy now called the Louisiana Purchase. The expedition took on another dramatic purpose. The new goal would emphasize geographic discovery leading to eventual claims on all lands west of the Mississippi River.

The historic expedition was launched up the mighty Missouri River on May 14, 1804. Constant struggles against the powerful current of the Missouri River, hazardous sandbars, snags, and unpredictable weather marked the first season of travel. There were also discipline problems with a few men, a dangerous encounter with Teton Sioux warriors, and the tragic death of Sergeant Charles Floyd from a ruptured appendix.

Covering approximately 1,510 miles in 164 days of travel, on October 25, 1804, the expedition arrived at the Mandan-Hidatsa villages near present-day Bismarck, North Dakota. There on the banks of the Missouri River were five small Indian settlements: two Mandan and three Hidatsa. Men who were involved in fur trading also lived there. Traders and trappers not employed by the companies were called free traders. On November 3, 1804, construction began on Fort Mandan which would serve as winter quarters for the expedition for the next five months.

The very next day, November 4, 1804, a pregnant teenager, Lemhi Shoshoni Sacajawea, walked on to the world stage with her husband, Toussaint Charbonneau. Now the cast of characters is poised for the most dangerous phase of the expedition, the crossing of an unknown and uncharted wilderness.

The Corps of Discovery flotilla will be launched as soon as the ice on the Missouri River breaks up in the spring.

Follow the journal entries about Sacajawea, the Lemhi Shoshoni woman. Discover exactly what she contributed to the overall effort.

The Journal Entries

*Sunday, November 4, 1804 Captain Clark
A French-Canadian, Toussaint Charbon-
neau, visits the two explorers. He wants to hire on as
an interpreter and guide. Although he has two
Shoshoni Indian wives, the explorers engage
Charbonneau and one of his wives who would be
needed to interpret the Shoshoni language when the
explorers entered that territory.*

This short entry marks a dramatic turn of events for the expedition. The hiring of Charbonneau and his young Shoshoni wife would prove to be a stroke of good fortune and good judgment.

❖ During the winter the captains meet with traders, Indian leaders, and fur company personnel. They glean as much information as they can about the upper Missouri River, the mountains, and any hint of a water passage to the Pacific Ocean.

Settled in their fort, the men set to work constructing canoes from large trees in the area. Although the average night time temperature is zero or below, Indian men regularly spend the night in the open covered with a buffalo skin. Seemingly they suffer no ill results.

On December 7, Captain Lewis leads a buffalo hunt resulting in the killing of eleven buffalo. The next day nine buffalo are killed. The men eat only the tongues and leave the rest for scavengers. They say they are living off the fat of the land.

Monday, February 11, 1805 Captain Lewis

About 5 P. M. Sacajawea, one of the wives of Charbonneau, gives birth to her firstborn, a fine boy.

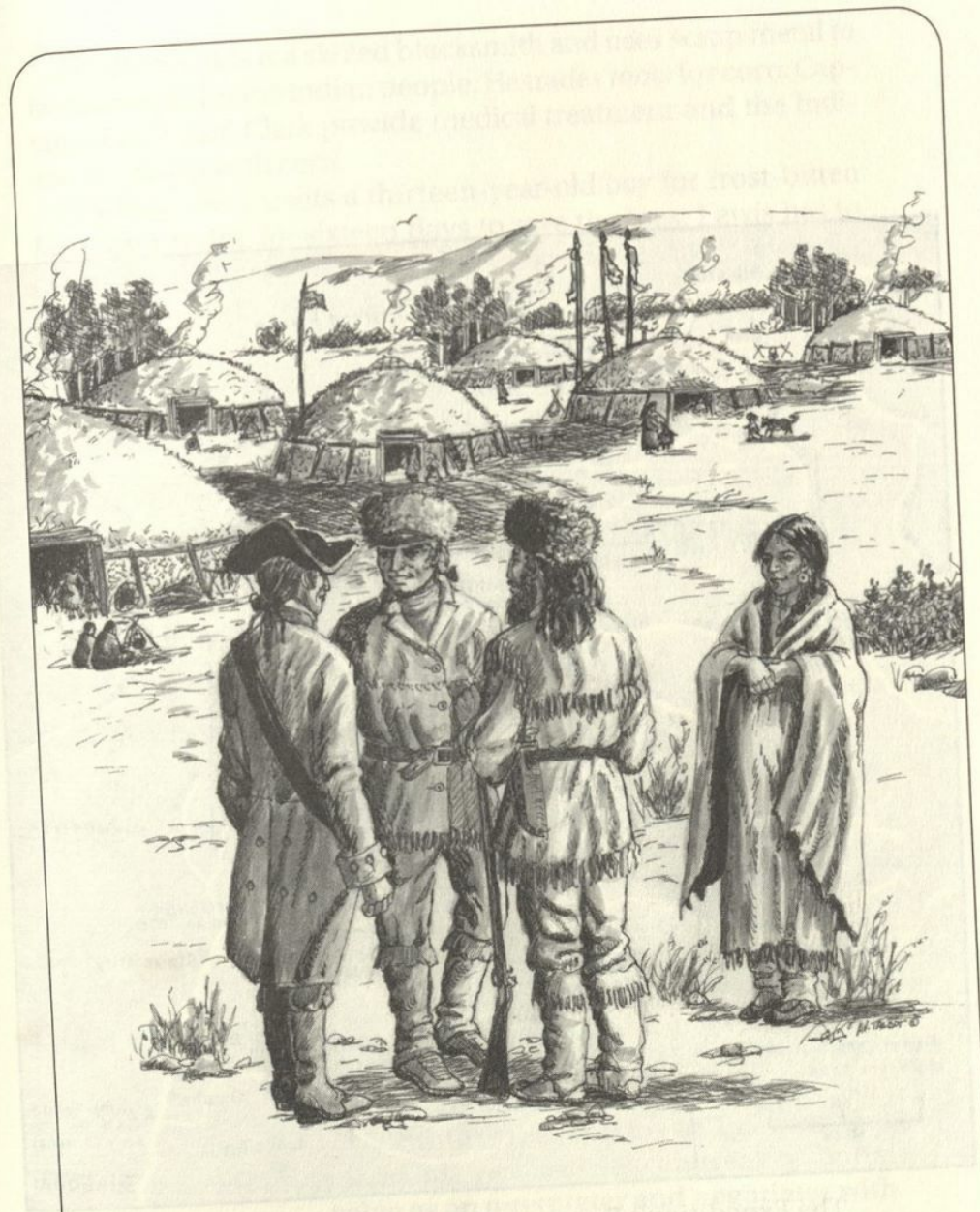
It was a tedious labor, marked with violent pain.

Rene Jessaume, a free trader Lewis found living with the Mandans, tells Lewis that a small amount of the rattle from a rattlesnake will hasten the birth.

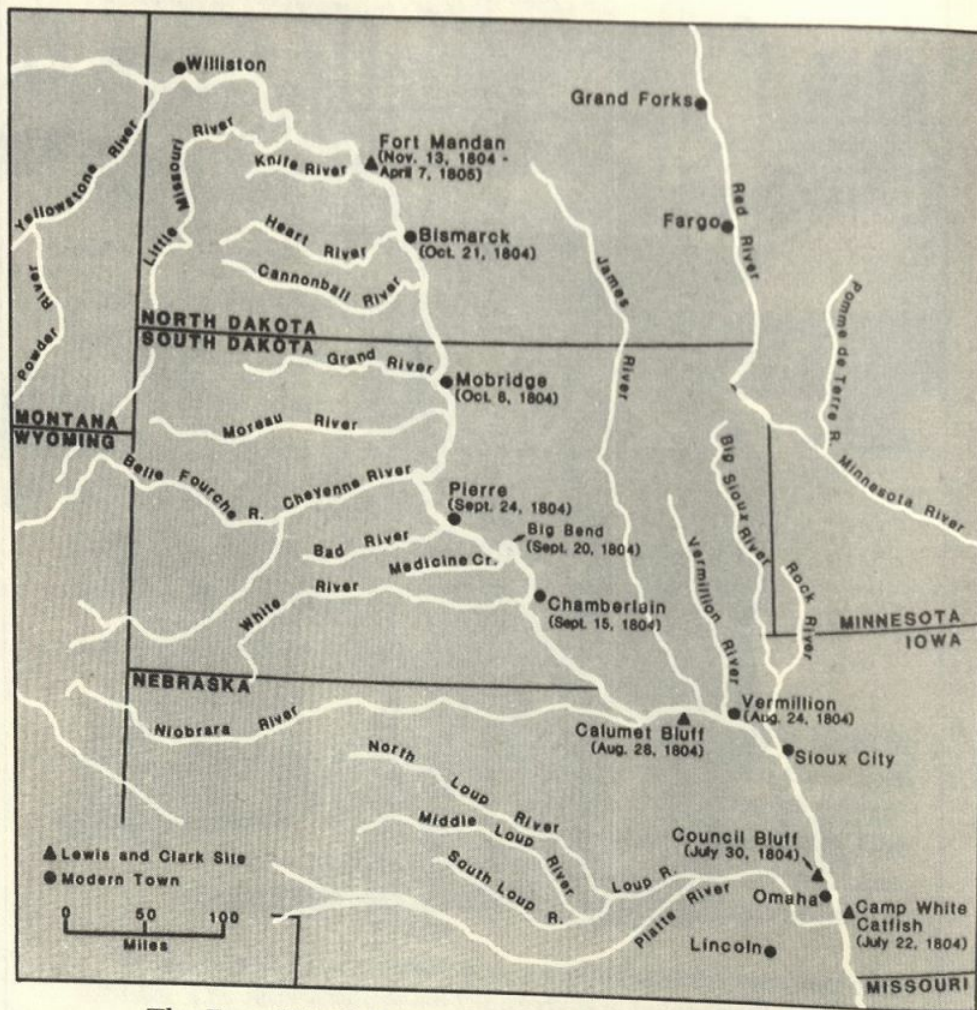
Captain Lewis has such a rattle. He gives it to Jessaume who breaks off two rings of the rattle, grinds them up, mixes them in water, and gives the drink to Sacajawea. Ten minutes later she gives birth to Jean Baptiste Charbonneau. Lewis isn't sure the rattle truly helped with the birth, but feels the remedy might be worth further study.

Sixteen-year-old Sacajawea gave birth to Jean Baptiste at Fort Mandan on a clear cold day. The infant would be carried by Sacajawea all the way to the Pacific Ocean. She would prove to be a diligent mother and caregiver under trying and hazardous conditions.

❖ The captains keep written records of the daily weather conditions. The temperature on many days is below zero with dangerous windchills of sixty to eighty degrees below zero. The Indian people bring their horses into their lodges during the most severe weather. As winter settles in on the fort there is very little hunting success. Trading goods and services for corn helps the expedition survive during the winter.



Captains Lewis and Clark engage Toussaint Charbonneau as an interpreter and guide. Sacajawea, Charbonneau's wife, watches as the men negotiate. Mandan Indian homes are in the background.



The Expedition's Route, August 25, 1804–April 6, 1805

Private Shields is a skilled blacksmith and uses scrap metal to fashion tools for the Indian people. He trades tools for corn. Captains Lewis and Clark provide medical treatment and the Indians pay them with corn.

Captain Lewis treats a thirteen-year-old boy for frost-bitten feet. After trying for sixteen days to save the toes, Lewis has to amputate them to save the boy's life. No surgical tools are available, so Lewis probably uses a handsaw.

Monday, March 11, 1805 Captain Clark
A problem arises between the explorers and Charbonneau. Charbonneau may back out and leave the expedition, taking Sacajawea with him. He is being given the night to decide whether or not he is going on with the explorers. They suspect interference from the fur-trading companies who want to protect their control of the fur trade by sabotaging the expedition.

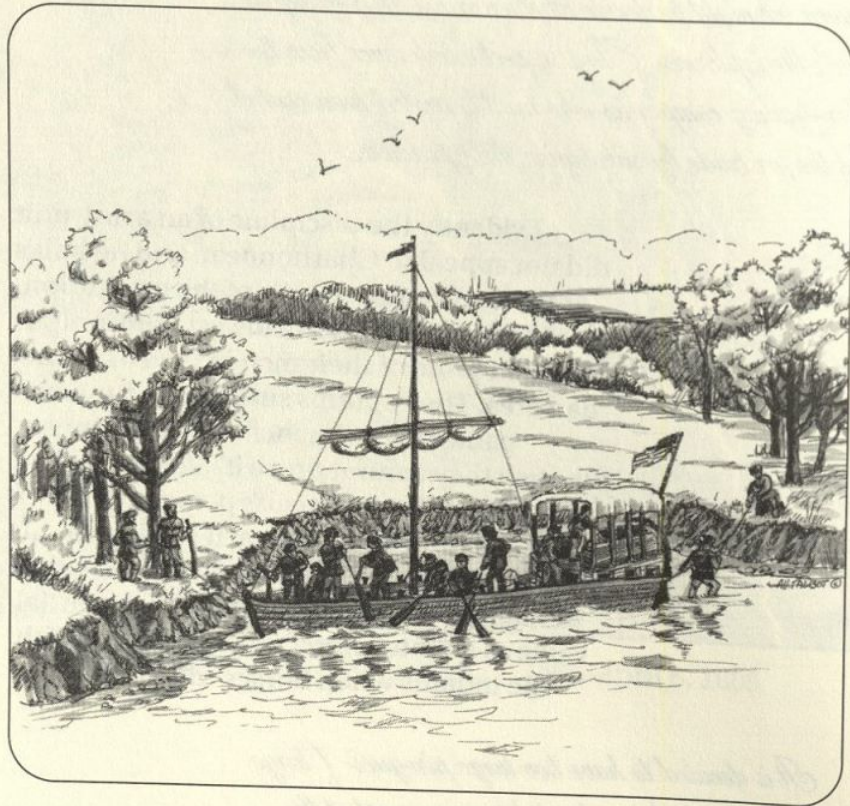
Evidently the discipline of an army unit did not appeal to Charbonneau and he balks at the duty requirements of the expedition. The Hudson Bay and Northwest Fur Companies had some of their men in the Fort Mandan area. The captains suspect the fur companies are influencing Charbonneau, although they cannot prove it. Most evidence points to Charbonneau's personal preferences as the problem area. It is believed he thinks the captains will give in to his demands because of Sacajawea's potential value as an interpreter and negotiator with the Indians when horses will be needed.

It is decided to have two large pirogues (large canoe-like boats) constructed to carry most of the

heavy cargo. The cumbersome keelboat can be sent back to St. Louis.

Tuesday, March 12, 1805 Captain Clark

Charbonneau decides to quit the expedition. He does not like the prospect of having to stand guard duty. He does not want to be told which personal items he will be allowed to take. If he didn't like any man, he wanted to be free to quit. Charbonneau's demands are unreasonable, and because the agreement made was verbal, he is free to leave.



The keelboat

Tuesday, March 12, 1805 Sergeant Ordway
Charbonneau and his family move out of Fort Mandan. He erects his buffalo-hide lodge nearby.

Should this abrupt separation become permanent, the course of history will be changed dramatically.

❖ The weather turns mild and the river begins rising. The men are busy shucking corn and bagging it for the trip. Work on the canoes is stepped up as the ice on the river begins to break up.

Sunday, March 17, 1805 Captain Clark

One of the French-speaking men has a message from Charbonneau who now promises to do everything the explorers demand of him if he may rejoin the expedition. He is sorry for his foolishness. In a face-to-face meeting with the captains Charbonneau agrees to all the terms of employment and is taken back into the service of the United States of America.

It is believed that Francois Labiche delivered Charbonneau's message. The meeting between the explorers and Charbonneau must have been a dramatic, emotional one and takes place just three weeks prior to the launch of the flotilla for the journey up the Missouri River. The restoration of Charbonneau indicates how much the two captains want Charbonneau and Sacajewea's services.

❖ As the weather continues to warm up, the captains closely monitor the breakup of the ice on the mighty Missouri River. Final preparations for departure are almost completed. All the information about the upper Missouri River country that can be obtained is gathered from every possible source, including Indians and trap-

pers who are in the Fort Mandan area. The captains spend hours and hours with the Mandans and Hidatsas talking about peace.

Tuesday, April 1, 1805 Captain Clark

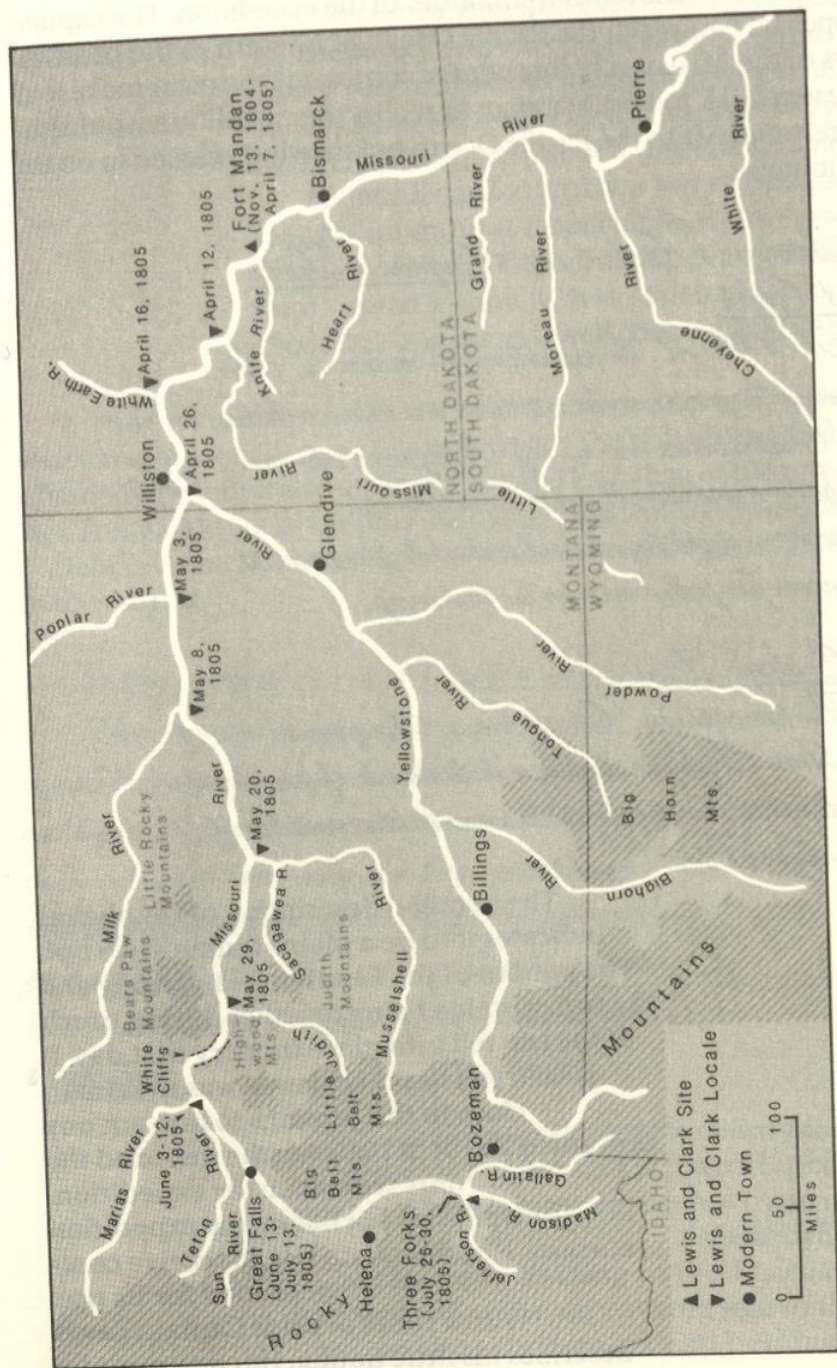
Preparations begin to break camp and head up the Missouri River. Charbonneau will take his two wives with him. Charbonneau speaks to his wives in Hidatsa. That means Sacajawea will speak to Shoshoni people in their language, translate it into Hidatsa for Charbonneau who will translate it into French for Labiche, and Labiche will translate it into English for the captains.

This is mysterious. Was Charbonneau planning to take both wives? Did language difficulties cause a breakdown in communications. Did something happen between April 1 and 7 that resulted in only Sacajawea accompanying the expedition? Nothing was written to solve this mystery. What might have happened if both of Charbonneau's wives made the journey?

❖ The coming of spring is welcomed by all the explorers. Never had they lived through such a cold and hazardous winter. Now they are excited and eager to be on their way to the unknown. Every night Cruzatte takes out his fiddle and the men dance for hours.

During the final week in Fort Mandan, the weather is cold and rainy. Last-minute preparations are completed for the keelboat's trip back to St. Louis. The two pirogues are ready for loading. Six other canoes are ready to launch. The river is free of ice.

Thirty-one men, one woman, and one infant make up the party to the Pacific Ocean. Included are the two captains, three sergeants, twenty-three privates, interpreter Drewyer who is an expert in Indian sign language, Captain Clark's slave York, and the Charbonneau family.



The Expedition's Route, April 7-1805

Lewis writes President Jefferson a long letter describing the situation and plans for the remainder of the expedition. The captain hopes he can reach the Pacific Ocean and return to the headwaters of the Missouri before winter comes, maybe even make it all the way back to Fort Mandan. In reality the expedition would just barely make it to the Pacific Ocean before winter closed in on the mountains.

Sunday, April 7, 1805 Captains Lewis and Clark

At 4 P.M. the expedition gets underway. The names of the people in the expedition are listed, including Charbonneau and his wife Sacajawea who carries her two-month-old son in a cradleboard.

After a short day, the red and white pirogues and six canoes are pulled over for the first camp.

Captain Lewis

The two captains, Charbonneau, Sacajawea, and Jean Baptiste sleep in a shelter made of tanned buffalo hides sewn together with sinew to fit around the cone-shaped lodge.

The detailed description of the shelter indicates it to be a plains Indian style tipi. The pattern of the Charbonneau family and the two captains being together during much of the trip fell into place the very first day. It is believed that Sacajawea was to remain close to the captains to prevent any unwanted incident between the men and the only woman in the expedition. The tipi wore out before the expedition returned. Charbonneau would receive compensation for its use. With a sense of pride Captain Lewis describes his little flotilla. He contemplates

the great mission he and his small contingent are embarking on and expresses his anxiety for the safety and success of each member as they venture into an uncharted wilderness. Lewis said this had to be the happiest day of his life. He even mentioned that his flotilla of six small canoes and two larger pirogues, though not quite as respectable as the vessels of Columbus and Captain Cook, nevertheless were viewed by him with as much pleasure as those famous men viewed their sailing ships.

❖ The first mishap occurs on April 8. High winds whip up the water and one small canoe fills with water. The only thirty pounds of gunpowder not sealed against water and half a bag of biscuits get wet. This would not be the only encounter with trouble on the river.

Detailed descriptions of plants and creatures begin to appear in the entries.

Tuesday, April 9, 1805 Captain Lewis

When they pull over for supper, Sacajawea immediately searches for food. She takes a sharp stick and begins digging in the ground near small piles of driftwood. She knows mice hide large quantities of roots in these locations. Soon Sacajawea gathers a good supply of what Lewis calls edible wild artichoke roots and a detailed description of the root appears in the journal.

It did not take long for Sacajawea to demonstrate her skill at gathering edible plants. There is some doubt that these roots were artichoke.

Sacajawea's training in food gathering had started at the very young age of three when she would have been helping her

mother pick berries, dig roots, collect seeds, and dry meat. By her teen years she would be an accomplished food gatherer. Teenage Sacajawea would already possess all the skills of a working woman and be expected to bear and raise children at the same time.

Indian women were the fabric of their culture. They worked from dawn to dark gathering food, preparing it for storage, scraping and curing hides, erecting shelters, making bedding and clothing, caring for children, and accompanying hunters to help butcher the kills made.



While her young son sleeps, Sacajawea gathers roots near the base of the woodpile. Almost daily she enriched the menu with berries, herbs, and roots.

❖ Almost immediately the explorers report attacks by mosquitoes. These pests would be a major source of torment during most of the journey.

Captain Lewis is alarmed by large sections of riverbank breaking away and posing a hazard to the small flotilla. Detailed records of geography, flora and fauna, and the weather appear in his journal. Captain Clark assumes the mapmaking duties.

Saturday, April 13, 1805 Captain Lewis

Under a favorable wind at 9 A.M., two sails are hoisted on the white pirogue. At 2 P.M. without warning a sudden blast of wind hits the craft and rolls it onto its side. Charbonneau, who is at the helm, in sheer panic turns the pirogue broadside to the wind. The boat nearly capsizes. Fortunately the wind lets up for a few seconds. Lewis shouts for Drewyer to take the helm from Charbonneau. The sails are quickly lowered—a lucky escape from disaster.

This accident would have cost them dearly. The white pirogue, the expedition's flagship, was considered their safest vessel.

It carried their valuable instruments, papers, medicines, and the finest merchandise for trade with Indian people. Also on board were both captains, three men who could not swim, and Sacajawea with her baby. Being two hundred yards from shore, a capsizing in the high waves certainly would have meant loss of life.

It is interesting to note that the Charbonneau family is on the safest boat along with the captains and the most valuable cargo items.

This would not be the only incident that indicates Charbonneau's great fear of water.

❖ The expedition made almost one hundred miles of progress the first four days. By April 15 the expedition finally entered unexplored territory.

The men report the first sighting of the whitebear or grizzly. They also tell of seeing an abundance of big game animals: buffalo, deer, elk, and antelope. Hunting is excellent and fresh meat is plentiful.

The discovery of discarded whisky kegs indicates the British practice of using alcohol to induce the Assiniboin people (a large tribe living on the plains of Montana and Canada, and related to the Sioux) to trade with them.

Thursday, April 18, 1805 Captain Clark

After noticing early in the day that the river made a great bend south, Clark and the Charbonneau family cut across by land, a two-mile walk, and easily arrive at the river before the boats. Because Charbonneau is not feeling well, Clark leaves the family to do some hunting. He is able to bag one deer and one elk.

The meandering river allowed this overland shortcut. Some days the expedition would stop to camp, climb the riverbank, and see the previous night's camp just a short distance back. They would travel ten to fifteen miles by river and gain less than five miles by land. The twisting river added many miles to the journey.

❖ The explorers come upon the first burial platform. Prairie Indians bury their dead in dead trees or on a platform because they believe the Great Spirit will come and take the deceased to the Spiritland.

The captains observe tons of soil blowing through the air like giant clouds. The power of the wind was impressive. High winds would prove to be life-threatening on more than one occasion.

On April 25 the group made camp on the banks of the Yellowstone River. The area had abundant herds of buffalo, elk, deer, and antelope. The explorers enjoy eating buffalo tongue and bone marrow.

Joseph Fields was sent to explore the Yellowstone River as far as he could go easily. Indian people had reported the Yellowstone River was passable by canoe all the way to the mountains. No record is made of Sacajawea being asked about the Yellowstone River. Had the expedition followed the Yellowstone River, as much as two months' time would have been saved. It is believed Lewis stayed with the Missouri River route because President Jefferson had given orders to follow the Missouri to its source.

Four days later, on April 29, Lewis shoots a grizzly bear which takes off after him. Because the bear is slowed by his wound, Lewis is able to run one hundred yards, reload the gun, and fire off a fatal shot. The ferocity of the great grizzly bear would astound the men again and again.

Tuesday, April 30, 1805 Captain Clark

At sunrise, when Clark and the Charbonneau family start out on land, Sacajawea finds a currant-like bush which she says produces a delicious fruit. She says there were many bushes like this in the mountains.

Taking the time to record this incident is another indication that the explorers were impressed with Sacajawea's knowledge of edible plants. Back in the Lemhi Valley her skills would have been commonplace and not worthy of special attention. No doubt the Indian woman enjoyed the appreciation shown by the explorers.

❖ On May 2, snow falls until ten o'clock, reaching an inch in depth. Ice covers the water pails. Buffalo are everywhere. Clark and Drewyer kill a grizzly bear. Although it is hit with ten shots, the great bear is able to swim to a sandbar halfway across the river. It sits there for twenty minutes before it dies. Five balls are found in its lungs and five others are scattered throughout its body.

Wednesday, May 8, 1805 Captain Clark
As Clark and the Charbonneau family walk along the shore, Sacajawea stops and begins gathering roots from the hillside. One root is wild licorice. The captain tastes a second specimen—a white apple root, a kind of breadroot.

Here is another mention of Sacajawea's ability to find food. The addition of roots and berries to the daily diet would be beneficial to the health of expedition members and also that of young Jean Baptiste.

❖ The captains report losing a whole afternoon of travel because of dangerously high winds. The violent winds continue the next morning so the expedition cannot proceed until 1 P.M.

On May 14 six men stalk a giant grizzly bear. They critically wound the animal. The enraged bear charges the hunters, sending four men into the river in the attempt to escape. The maddened bear plunges in after them. Two men who had taken refuge in a canoe quickly reload, fire, and finally kill the great beast.

Tuesday, May 14, 1805 Captain Lewis
There was an even more frightening incident the same day. Toward evening Charbonneau, probably one of the most timid watermen in the world, is at the helm of the white pirogue while the two captains take a customary walk along the shore. A tremendous burst of wind strikes the pirogue broadside while it is under sail. Once again instead of turning the boat into the wind, Charbonneau holds it broadside to the wind. The powerful wind yanks the sail from the hand of the man holding it. The large pirogue rolls on its side.

It would have gone all the way over had the oarsmen not dug in their oars to stabilize the vessel.

Both captains fire their rifles to get the panic-stricken crew's attention and order them to cut the sail loose. The shots are not heard in the roaring gale.

The boat heaves over precariously for thirty seconds.

Just in time the crew lowers the sail and is able to right the pirogue which is filled with water to within an inch of the gunwales and is on the verge of sinking.

Through it all Charbonneau just sits there in shock and cries to his God for mercy. He is unable to take the rudder and correct the vessel's attitude.

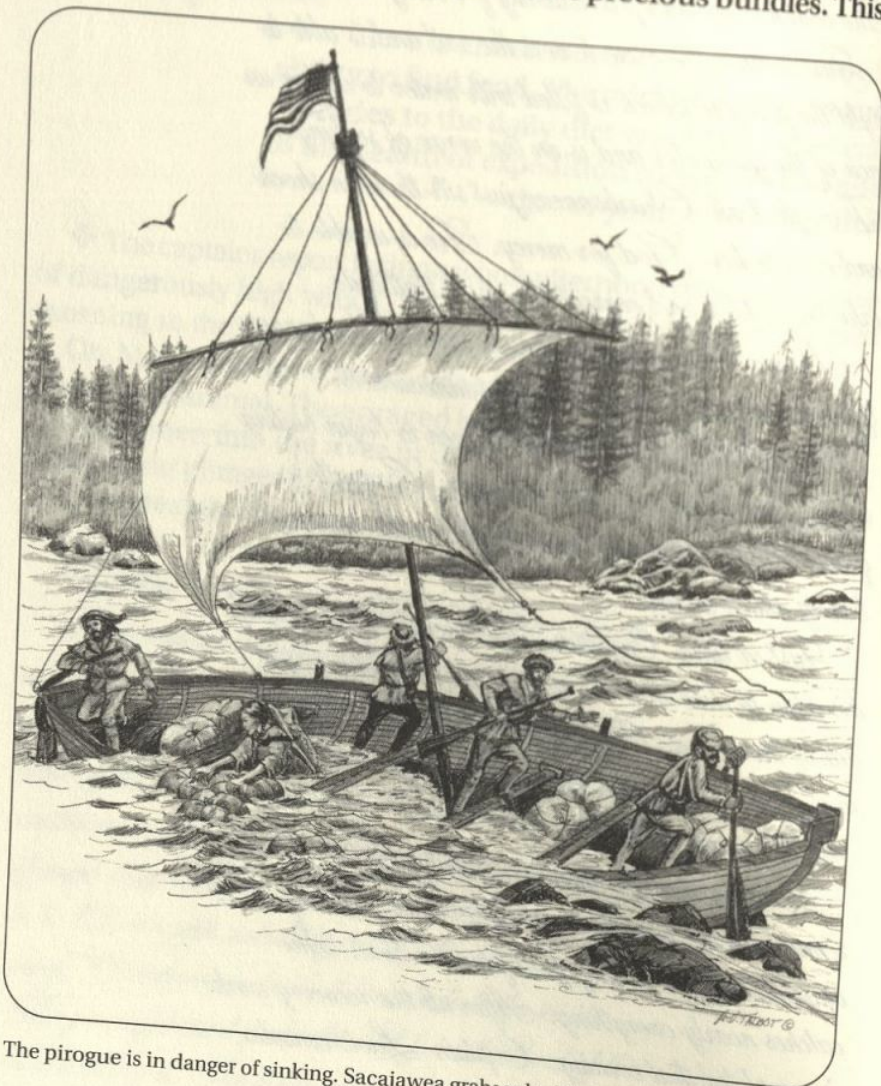
Pierre Cruzatte threatens to shoot Charbonneau if he doesn't act instantly. Charbonneau acts.

Cruzatte also orders some of the men to begin bailing while others frantically row for shore. Cruzatte's quick thinking saves the vessel and it lands on shore barely above water.

Just in time Captain Lewis realizes the folly of his plan to dive into the raging river to swim to the aid of the vessel. The three-hundred yards of high waves and powerful currents most likely would have cost Captain Lewis his life.

During this life-and-death struggle, Sacajawea remains in the back of the sinking vessel grabbing valuable articles as they float from the boat. She catches nearly everything. After all the recovery work is completed that evening, Captain Lewis consoles everyone with a serving of spirits.

This incident happened over 2200 miles from St. Louis. The most precious cargo the expedition had was on this boat. Sacajawea shows her calm and poise in time of great danger. Her life and her son's life is in jeopardy but she maintains her composure and saves many of the expedition's precious bundles. This



The pirogue is in danger of sinking. Sacajawea grabs valuable articles as they float from the boat.

teenage woman hanging over the gunwales of a sinking boat to rescue cargo from the wild river must have been a dramatic sight. Expedition members would certainly be impressed by the actions of the Shoshoni woman.

❖ The next day, May 15, is spent trying to dry the soaked cargo. A cloudy and damp day slows progress.

*Thursday, May 16, 1805 Captain Lewis
The day is fair and warm. By 4 P.M. almost everything is dry, repacked, and ready to go. Medical supplies suffered the most damage. Other losses include garden seeds, a small amount of gunpowder, and some culinary items. Sacajawea demonstrated fortitude and resolution equal to that of any man on board the stricken craft. She saved most of the bundles which had been washed overboard.*

This entry leaves no doubt about Captain Lewis's respect for the teenage Shoshoni mother. The same respect must have been shared by Captain Clark and the other men. Mature beyond her years, Sacajawea learned great survival skills in a culture that required everyday use of them.

❖ The explorers report fewer sandbars in the river. It has narrowed greatly and now has a gentle, steady current. There is constant toil against the current, using oars, towlines, and even sails when they can catch a favorable wind.

Captain Clark reports a close call with a rattlesnake.

The expedition is nearing the present-day site of Fort Benton, Montana. One of the least changed sections of the Missouri River, between Fort Benton and Fort Peck, it is today designated "A Wild and Scenic River."

*Monday, May 20, 1804 Captain Lewis
A beautiful stream about fifty yards wide is given
the name Sacajawea or Bird Woman's River.*

Just six days after she rescues critical cargo while under a threat to her life and the life of her child, the explorers honor Sacajawea by naming a beautiful river for her. Bird Woman is Sacajawea's name in the Hidatsa language. Her name is spelled more than ten different ways in the journals.

❖ The explorers report the first sightings of bighorn sheep. They also report seeing mountains on the horizon both north (the Little Rocky and the Bear Paws) and south (the Judith Range) of the Missouri River. As Captain Lewis writes about the great beauty of the snow-capped mountains, he also wonders just how much of a barrier they will be in the attempt to get to the Pacific Ocean before winter sets in.

Wednesday, May 29, 1805 Captains Lewis and Clark

A large abandoned Indian camp is discovered. Moccasins are found in the camp and shown to Sacajawea who says they were not made by her people. She thinks they belong to a tribe living north of the Missouri River and east of the mountains, probably Crow or Blackfeet people.

The captains rely on Sacajawea's knowledge of tribal clothing. She could tell by looking at the moccasins which tribe made them. The expedition would encounter no Indian people until they reached the Beaverhead Mountains the middle of August.

❖ The captains describe walls of limestone and sandstone over three hundred feet high (now called the White Cliffs of the Missouri

River Breaks in Chouteau County, Montana). They describe tough going over muddy, slippery, and sometimes sharp rocky bottoms. The white pirogue has another close call when an elkhide tow rope snaps and the vessel bumps into a rock and nearly capsizes.

After one day of extremely painful labor without a complaint from the suffering men, Captain Lewis orders that a dram of spirits be issued to each one as a reward.

The rough terrain tears the old moccasins from the men's feet and time is spent making new moccasins and repairing old ones.

The captains continue their meticulous descriptions of plants, animals, geographic features, weather, and signs of Indian camps. They describe the cache made for cargo because the red pirogue will be left behind, freeing up seven men to assist with the other vessels. When the unneeded stores are buried, Cruzatte takes out his fiddle and plays some tunes. The men are extremely cheerful and sing and dance.

Monday, June 10, 1805 Captains Lewis and Clark

As the expedition nears the great falls of the Missouri River, Captain Lewis suffers from dysentery. Captain Clark reports that Sacajawea is very ill and has been bled to relieve her fever.

This is the beginning of a life-threatening illness for Sacajawea. Bleeding her was probably adding to her problem by causing her dehydration to accelerate. Some of the medical practices used by the captains were effective, but they had only a bare minimum of training and knowledge gained prior to leaving River Dubois. It is amazing that only Sergeant Floyd died during the expedition's travels.

❖ Captain Lewis describes the completion of the cache of surplus items from the red pirogue. They pull the boat ashore on a small island above the waterline and cover it with

branches to prevent sun damage. Their position is near Maria's River, a river that had not been mentioned by Indians when they described the Missouri and its tributaries. Now the captains must decide which of the rivers is the true Missouri.

Tuesday, June 11, 1805 Captain Clark

The weather is cold and windy. Sacajawea is still very sick and has been bled again, which seems to help her greatly.

The report that Sacajawea was helped by the bleeding is questionable. Perhaps other treatments which might have been used at the same time actually helped her, or just a normal improvement might have occurred in spite of the bleeding.

❖ Captain Lewis, who had left with three men to look for the great falls, has an attack of high fever and painful dysentery. He describes boiling chokecherry twigs and drinks a pint of this strong, black, bitter concoction. By 10 P.M. all his symptoms are gone.

Wednesday, June 12, 1805 Captain Clark

Sacajawea's condition has worsened. Because she is so sick, she is moved into the back of the pirogue under the canopy to protect her from the sun. That night her condition is even worse, and she is given some nonspecified medicine.

As Sacajawea's condition worsened, the future of four-month-old Jean Baptiste was in jeopardy. Should Sacajawea die, there was no other woman available to become his caregiver. It must have been disturbing to see the young mother so sick and her tiny baby lying next to her.

❖ Captain Lewis is traveling by land ahead of the boats. He is approaching the great falls area. Again he describes the majesty of the towering snow-capped Rocky Mountains spanning the western horizon. Continually he notes their great beauty. He ponders the formidable obstacle they present to the expedition's need to pass through them and go on to the Pacific Ocean.

Thursday, June 13, 1805 Captain Clark

The morning is clear with some dew. Sacajawea is still very ill and has been given a dose of salts.

Private Whitehouse is ill. Three men are treated for swellings. Sacajawea is no better.

Captain Clark's sick list is growing. Sacajawea's condition is becoming critical and the captain begins to fear for the woman's life.

❖ Captain Lewis describes hearing an agreeable and tremendous roaring sound. From a hillside he can see spray rising from the plains like a huge column of smoke and is convinced he is nearing the great falls of the Missouri River.

The falls are reached by noon and Lewis gives a moving description of them and the grand and sublime spectacle they present.

Friday, June 14, 1805 Captain Clark

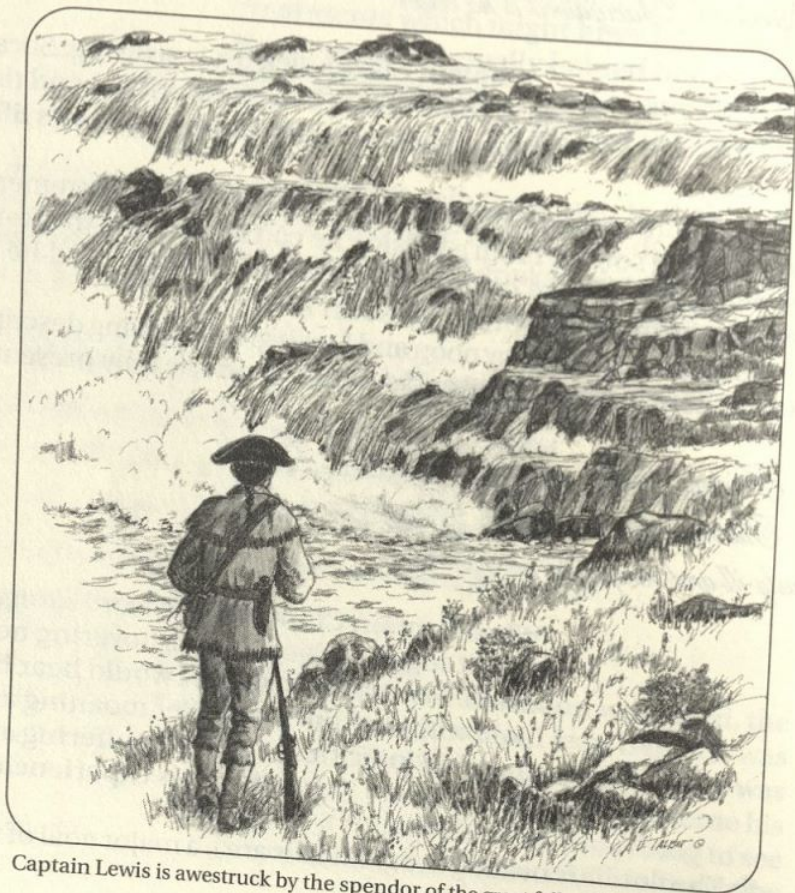
The morning is beautiful. Sacajawea is dangerously ill and complains all night long.

When Captain Clark uses the word *dangerously*, it suggests Sacajawea is hovering near death. Normally Sacajawea would bear her pain without complaint. Her moaning and groaning indicates the severe suffering and pain she is experiencing.

❖ The flotilla is nearing the great falls area, a major goal of the expedition.

Captain Lewis is still out exploring the area. He hurries from one falls to the next, finding each one more beautiful than the one before it. After feasting his eyes on the ravishing beauty of the falls, he rests at a place where he can see the present-day Sun River enter the Missouri River.

He descends a hill and sees a herd of over a thousand buffalo. He shoots a fat calf and plans to leave it for his evening meal. He forgets to reload his rifle. A grizzly bear creeps to within twenty feet of the captain before he sees the beast. With no time to reload and with no trees nearby, Lewis runs for his life. He makes it to the river just in time and turns to face the bear. His spear is at the ready. The bear skids to a stop a short distance from Lewis, turns, and runs off as fast as it had come.



Captain Lewis is awestruck by the splendor of the great falls of the Missouri.

Next Lewis encounters a fierce animal (probably a wolverine) just emerging from its burrow. When the animal crouches to spring at Lewis, the captain places his rifle against his spear which he had planted in the ground to steady his weapon. He fires and the animal retreats into its underground sanctuary.

Three hundred yards away, three bull buffalo came charging at Captain Lewis who holds his ground, his rifle at the ready. The bulls stop one hundred yards short of Lewis, eye the captain, turn, and gallop off.

The day is aptly described as "an enchanting dream of curious adventures."

*Saturday, June 15, 1805 Captain Clark
Sacajawea is sick and despondent. Bark is
applied to her skin which seems to greatly revive her.
By evening Sacajawea is even worse and refuses all
medical treatment. Charbonneau requests permission
to take Sacajawea and turn back.*

This is the first indication that Sacajawea may be giving up. Six days of worsening illness is taking its toll on her mental state. The explorers will ignore Charbonneau's suggestion that he take Sacajawea and the baby and turn back. Sacajawea's only chance to live required that she stay with the expedition.

❖ Captain Lewis, still ahead of the main party, reports good fishing. He wakes up and sees a rattlesnake coiled next to a tree just ten feet from his bed. The rattlesnake is shot on the spot.

Lewis indicates the long portage would be best made on the south side of the river where there appear to be fewer ravines and smoother terrain.

*Sunday, June 16, 1805 Captain Lewis
When Lewis returns to camp in the early after-
noon, Sacajawea is near death. Four-month-old*

Jean Baptiste is held in the arms of his ailing mother. Lewis is extremely concerned not only for both of them but also for the expedition's need for an interpreter who can speak with the Shoshoni people.

Not far from their camp a sulfur hot spring is found and Lewis remembers that the water from such a hot spring in Virginia was used for medicine.

Sacajawea's pulse is very weak and irregular and Lewis sees twitching in her arms and fingers. Bark and opium are quickly applied to her skin. Her pulse improves. As a last resort, Sacajawea is given large quantities of the sulfur water to drink. Soon her pulse returns to normal, the twitching is greatly decreased, and her pain subsides.

Most of Captain Lewis's entry for the day centers on the treatment of Sacajawea. The presence of a nearby hot spring of sulfur water seems to be most fortunate for Sacajawea. Captain Lewis demonstrates how much he values Sacajawea by his concern for her life. He is concerned for Jean Baptiste should his mother die. The baby's life would have been left in the hands of thirty-one men. Lewis, selfishly, is also concerned for the expedition and the need of having Sacajawea speak with the Shoshoni people when the expedition needs to buy horses and hire a guide to help them through the vast mountain range that looms above them.

❖ Canoes are being readied for the start of the portage around the falls. Captain Clark takes over the portage preparation duties. Captain Lewis remains in camp watching over Sacajawea.

*Monday, June 17, 1805 Captain Lewis
Sacajawea's health is much improved. Her appetite improves and most of her pain has disappeared. She continues to drink large quantities of sulfur water. Full recovery now seems possible.*

What a dramatic change in Sacajawea's health. She even ate some buffalo soup prepared for her by Captain Lewis. According to several doctors who recently read the account of Sacajawea's illness and treatment, the hot sulfur water was a key to her recovery because they felt she had become extremely dehydrated. The sulfur water would be helpful also in fighting the infection.

❖ Captain Lewis orders the five small canoes to be moved two miles up a creek that today is called Portage Creek. There the canoes are taken out of the water and prepared for the overland haul. The white pirogue is emptied and pulled up on land for storage.

As Captain Clark is out scouting the portage route, he nearly slips into the dangerous churning waters of the Missouri River and comes within inches of being washed away to his death.

*Tuesday, June 18, 1805 Captain Lewis
Sacajawea walks on shore for the first time since her illness. Her recovery is speedy as she is now completely free of pain, has no fever, and is eating well. Her treatment is being continued and fifteen drops of sulphuric acid are added to her noon medicine.*

Captain Lewis did not neglect his medical treatment of Sacajawea. His personal attention, detailed writing about Sacajawea's daily

condition, and the amount of time dedicated to helping her indicates his high regard for her as a valued member of the expedition. He certainly must have been relieved to know Sacajawea would survive to care for her baby and serve as an interpreter when the expedition met the Shoshoni people.

❖ Captain Lewis describes the hiding of the white pirogue in dense willows above the water line and also the caching of excess supplies.

Captain Clark is overseeing preparations for the gruelling portage around the great falls.

*Wednesday, June 19, 1805, Captain Lewis
Sacajawea continues to improve. She gathers large numbers of white apples and eats them raw.*

Unknown at the time to Lewis, she also ate lots of dried fish. Her fever and stomach pain return. Lewis is disgusted with Charbonneau for letting Sacajawea eat these things because he had ordered that she eat only certain foods until she had fully recovered.

Sacajawea is given doses of saltpetre to make her perspire and thus break her fever. At 10 P.M. she is given thirty drops of opium which allows her to get a good night's sleep.

Here is a classic case of a patient not following the "doctor's" orders. Captain Lewis holds Charbonneau responsible for his wife's relapse. Captain Lewis's medical instructions would have been given to Labiche in English. Labiche would have passed them on to Charbonneau in French.

Charbonneau would have told Sacajawea in Hidatsa. There could have been a breakdown in communications, or Sacajawea could have gone off on her own and ignored the Captain's instructions.

❖ The portage work proceeds. Baggage is repacked in manageable bundles. The men mend their moccasins. Gunpowder packages are improved and resealed. Axles are fashioned from trees. Crude wheels are made from larger trees.

The portage will be long and tedious.

*Thursday, June 20, 1805 Captain Lewis
Sacajawea is free of pain and fever and seems headed for full recovery. She walks along the shore and even goes fishing.*

The relief of Captain Lewis is evident. Only four days ago Sacajawea was on her deathbed. The captain had to be pleased with his success in saving the young mother's life.

❖ The explorers report killing eleven buffalo. The meat is being dried for use during the long portage. Captain Clark returns with his report on the portage route and worries about the reaction of the Shoshoni people to the expedition. He writes that the most perilous part of the journey lies just ahead.

On Friday, June 21, all is ready for the twenty-five day portage.

Saturday, June 22, 1805 Captains Lewis and Clark

Both captains and most of the men will make the first trip over the portage route with a canoe and baggage. Three men and the Charbonneau family are left to tend to the remainder of the canoes and baggage.

Each portage trip was long and strenuous. Twenty-six men labored hard to roll each canoe loaded with baggage on the wheels and axles fashioned from trees. The men left behind were probably ill or disabled. Their job would be to protect the remaining canoes and baggage. Sacajawea would not be involved in the actual portage.

❖ Ground chewed up by buffalo hooves and hardened into sharp ridges make the men's feet sore and prickly pear cactus tear through their moccasins.

One day with a favorable wind, a sail is hoisted and gives great assistance to the struggling men. The captains say now they are dryland sailors.

The captains report plenty of fresh meat and large quantities of trout are caught.

Every day ends in complete exhaustion. Each foot of progress toward the end of the portage demands backbreaking labor. At every rest stop the men lie down and instantly are sleeping. They toil through hot sun, rain, and driving winds. The men are becoming a close-knit unit pulling together to reach the same goals. Captain Clark said they did difficult work cheerfully and without complaint.

For almost two weeks while the portage labors continued, Captain Lewis stays at the end of the portage route supervising the construction of his iron-frame boat named Experiment. Three men: Joseph Fields, Sergeant Gass, and John Shields are selected to construct the boat. Hides would be stretched over an iron frame to make a boat capable of carrying lots of gear and would ride high in shallow water.

Saturday, June 29, 1805 Captain Clark
The day begins with heavy rain and then turns fair. Clark takes his servant York and the Charbonneau family on a trip to the falls. Later the wind becomes extremely violent and is followed by rain, hail, lightning, and thunder.

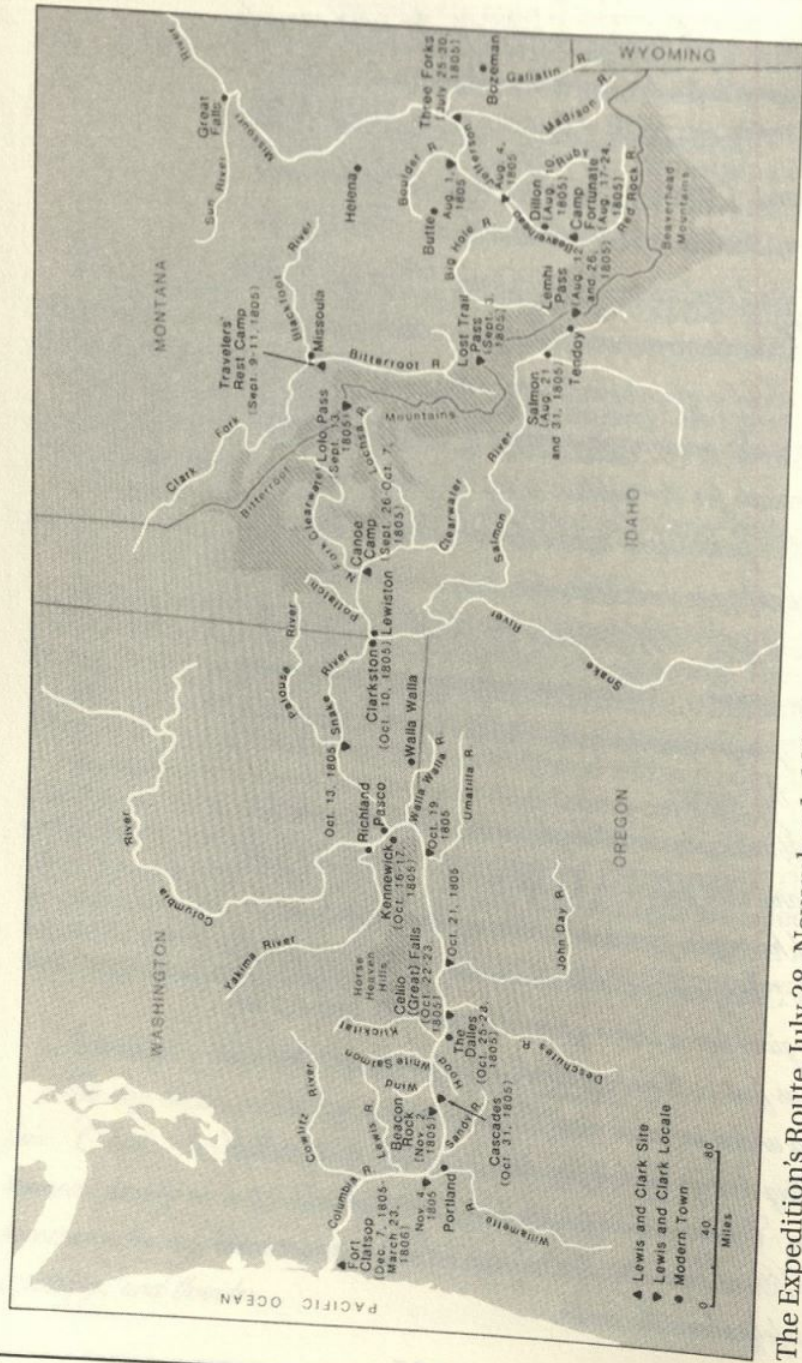
It is too wet and slippery to walk the portage so Captain Clark decides to return to the river camp to retrieve some notes he might have lost.

The Charbonneau family and his servant York accompany Clark back to the camp. As they near the river, threatening clouds bare down. Fearing the violent wind and approaching storm, Captain Clark leads Charbonneau and Sacajawea into a deep ravine about a quarter mile above the falls. They take shelter under overhanging ledges of rock. It seems safe enough for the captain to lay his gun, compass, and other possessions under the overhanging ledges.

The light rain soon turns into a torrential downpour of rain and hail. Water from the cloudburst begins to fill the ravine. Without warning raging water comes at the group, driving rocks and debris as it thunders down the ravine.

Standing in waist-high water, Clark grabs his gun and shot pouch in his left hand. With his right hand he begins frantically climbing the steep bank. As Sacajawea climbs above him, Clark occasionally gives her a shove upward because the water is rising as fast as they can climb. Sacajawea has her baby under one arm and Charbonneau is above, pulling her up by her free hand. At the most critical time, Charbonneau freezes in a state of shock.

Without his help, Clark and Sacajawea scramble to safety above the water.



The Expedition's Route, July 28–November 1, 1805

The water is fifteen feet deep with a fiercely powerful current. Had they been swept away, they would have entered the Missouri River just above a waterfall with a drop of eighty feet.

Losses sustained by the group are: Charbonneau's gun, his shot, his powderhorn, and a tomahawk; Clark's umbrella, a gun-cleaning rod, a compass, and other items; Sacajawea lost Jean Baptiste's clothes, his cradleboard, and his bedding. Everyone is extremely cold.

York is on the plain where he had gone off to hunt buffalo just before the storm hit. He had not seen the others enter the ravine and is desperately searching for them.

At the river camp, some men are cut and bruised by the torrential hailstorm. The group dries as best it can, warms up, and is rewarded by a dram of whisky issued by Captain Clark.

Once more Charbonneau's fear of water and his ineptness during emergencies is apparent. Captain Clark, at the risk of his own life, rises to the occasion and saves Sacajawea and her baby.

Sacajawea must have had Jean Baptiste out of his cradleboard and was probably nursing him or changing his clothes just before the flash flood hit. This would explain the loss of the baby's cradleboard, clothes, and bedding.

This brush with death and loss of possessions is a vivid example of the hazards faced by the expedition all along their wilderness trek. For Indian women and their young, sur-