

D O C U M E N T S

The Lewis and Clark Expedition

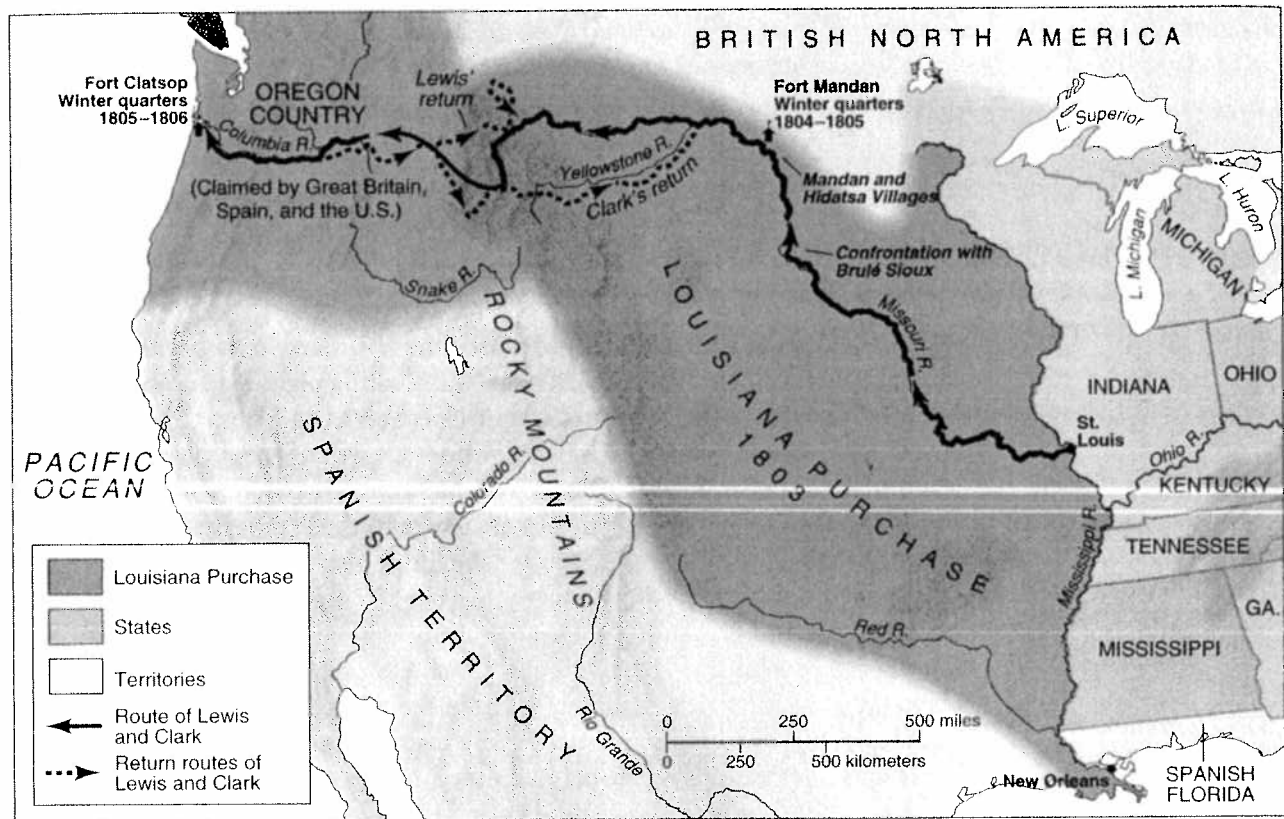


Even before the United States purchased the Louisiana Territory from France in 1803, President Thomas Jefferson was making plans for an American expedition to explore the Missouri River to its sources and from there to the Pacific. The first European to cross the continent north of Mexico was Alexander Mackenzie, a Scotsman in the employ of the Montreal-based North West Company, who traveled in 1793 from Saskatchewan to the Pacific. In 1801, Mackenzie published *Voyages from Montreal*, which not only described his travels but also spelled out his ideas for British settlement in the West. Jefferson read this book in 1802 and it galvanized him to action. In the words of Lewis and Clark scholar James Ronda, “The Lewis and Clark Expedition—Jefferson’s imperial response to Mackenzie’s challenge—began the moment the president read the final pages of *Voyages from Montreal*.”¹ By the time the expedition—led by two Virginians, Jefferson’s personal secretary Meriwether Lewis and William Clark—left St. Louis in 1804, the Louisiana Territory was “American,” and the president was eager to learn what he had acquired.

In reality, of course, the vast territory that lay roughly between the Mississippi and the Rocky Mountains was not American, French, or Spanish, although those nations passed claim to it among themselves. It was Indian country. It was a world in which the presence of British, French, and Spanish traders and the aspirations of competing European nations had been felt for some time, but where Indian people and Indian power were still dominant. The Corps of Discovery, as the Lewis and Clark expedition was known, would have to travel through Indian country, deal with Indian tribes, and develop a working knowledge of Indian politics, as would the American traders, settlers, and agents that Jefferson envisioned following in their wake. Lewis and Clark’s purpose, therefore, was to proclaim American sovereignty over the area, prepare the way for American commerce with the tribes, and gather as much information as possible about this “new land” and the many Indian peoples who inhabited it. The success of the expedition depended on cultivating amicable relations: “In all your intercourse with the natives,” Jefferson instructed Lewis, “treat them in the most friendly and conciliatory manner which their own conduct will permit.”²

On the whole, the expedition succeeded in doing so. The explorers carried

¹“The Lewis and Clark Expedition,” in Colin G. Calloway, *First Peoples: A Documentary Survey of American Indian History* (Boston & New York: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 1999), 233-249.



MAP 4.3 The Lewis and Clark Expedition and the Louisiana Purchase

The Louisiana Purchase (1803) added to the United States an enormous amount of land inhabited by a great variety of Indian peoples. In their expedition across and beyond that territory in 1804–1806, Lewis and Clark encountered many Indians who had plenty of experience dealing with European traders, but for most of the Indians in the West the expedition marked their first encounter with representatives of the new American nation that now laid claim to their lands.

with them flags and gifts to present to Indian chiefs; they met and smoked with Indians in council after council, proclaiming the new era of peace and prosperity that would surely come to the Indians now that their land “belonged” to the Great Father in Washington. Lewis and Clark painstakingly gathered information on the names, numbers, and customs of the tribes they encountered. They experienced only one openly violent confrontation, with Piegan Blackfeet on the return trip. Indian knowledge, guidance, assistance, transportation, and food helped the expedition to the Pacific and back.

The expedition did not get off to an auspicious start. Leaving St. Louis in

June 1804, the explorers headed up the Missouri River—about fifty men, including Clark's African American servant, York, who was to cause quite a stir among the Indians—in half a dozen canoes and two pirogues. They tested their skills at Indian diplomacy among the Otos, Omahas, and Missouris, once-powerful tribes already badly reduced by the ravages of disease. In September 1804, they encountered a band of Brulé or Sicangu Sioux. The Sioux were accustomed to levying tribute from St. Louis traders—Clark called them “the pirates of the Missouri”—and were not about to allow the American strangers to pass upriver to other tribes without exacting some share of their cargo. Eager to demonstrate that the United States would not be bullied, the Americans were equally determined not to concede. There was a tense and ugly scene in which each side stood to arms. Only the presence of Indian women and children and the quick-thinking statesmanship of the Brulé chief Black Buffalo averted conflict. The Americans tossed the Indians some tobacco as a token tribute and were allowed to proceed. But it was touch-and-go. Lewis and Clark had failed in the first serious challenge to their Indian diplomacy. They still had a lot to learn if the expedition was to navigate successfully the turbulent waters of inter- and intratribal politics. A winter in the Mandan villages provided an invaluable crash-course.³

Passing the Arikaras, who had been cut down by smallpox and Sioux attacks from “eighteen fairly large villages” to “three very mediocre ones,” according to French-Canadian trader Pierre-Antoine Tabeau,⁴ the Americans reached the Mandans in the late fall. The Mandan Indians, located on the Knife River near the great bend of the Missouri in present-day North Dakota, were especially crucial to the expedition's plans, progress, and ultimate success. The Mandans and their Hidatsa (also known as Gros Ventres or Minnetarees) neighbors had lived for centuries along the Missouri, their ancestors having arrived there perhaps as early as the eleventh century. By the end of the eighteenth century the earth-lodge villages of the Mandans and Hidatsas formed the hub of a huge intertribal trading network in which Plains Indians exchanged horses and the products of buffalo hunting for guns, trade goods, and agricultural produce. The two tribes lived where the Canadian and St. Louis-based spheres of trade overlapped; traders from the Hudson Bay Company and North West Company competed there with independent traders and representatives of the Missouri Company, a coalition of Spanish merchants in St. Louis.

The tribes also lived where the expanding horse frontier from the southwest met the expanding gun frontier from the northeast. The Mandans and Hidatsas were thus able to distribute horses to their northern neighbors and guns to their neighbors on the plains, “often at a 100 percent markup from their original purchase price.”⁵ Indian traders from deep in the Plains traveled to the upper Missouri villages, then returned to exchange the goods they acquired to other Indian peoples: Crows traded with their Hidatsa relatives and with Shoshonis (also known as Snakes) and Flatheads in the Rocky Mountains;

Cheyennes, Arapahos, Kiowas, Kiowa-Apaches, and Comanches traded at the Missouri villages, with each other, and with Spaniards in the Southwest. Spanish, British, and French-Canadian traders operated in and around the Missouri villages. Tabeau, who lived among the Arikaras in 1803–04 and who met Lewis and Clark, believed that if a trading post was established at the Mandan villages, it “would be a gathering-place for more than twenty nations.”⁶ Unfortunately, the same location and circumstances that made the villages a gathering place of the nations guaranteed that they would be transformed into death-traps when epidemic diseases raced along the trade routes: the smallpox epidemic of 1779–81 hit the villagers hard; there was another outbreak on the Missouri early in the nineteenth century, and the epidemic of 1837 virtually destroyed the Mandans.

Like their neighbors, the Mandans had once inhabited more villages, but in 1804 they lived in just two: Mitutanka (which Lewis and Clark called Matootonha) and, farther upstream: Roptarhee. The expedition passed abandoned Mandan villages before they reached Mitutanka. The Mandans were a shadow of the powerful tribe they had once been and they were under increasing pressure from the Sioux, who appear to have suffered less devastation from epidemic diseases than had their more sedentary neighbors. The principal chief of Mitutanka was Shahaka, Big White; Posecopsahe, Black Cat, was principal chief of Roptarhee. Across the Missouri, along the Knife River, lay the three Hidatsa villages. Surrounded by extensive fields of corn, beans, squash, and sunflowers which the women cultivated and which were the basis of their prosperity and trade, the villages straddling the Missouri River highway comprised a great marketplace and crossroads. The residents were accustomed to visitors—French, English, Scots, Spanish, Crees, Assiniboines, Crows, Cheyennes, Arapahoes, Kiowas—and they were accomplished traders.

The Mandan villages were the first major objective in Lewis and Clark’s transcontinental odyssey. In Mandan lodges, they found shelter from winter on the northern plains and corn to get them through the season. From Mandan people they learned about tribes they could expect to encounter when they resumed their journey westward in the spring. From the Mandans’ Hidatsa neighbors, the expedition was joined by a Shoshoni woman—actually a teenager—whom the Hidatsas had captured in a raid as a child. Sacagawea was married to Toussaint Charbonneau, a French-Canadian trader, who became one of the expedition’s interpreters. She would prove invaluable when the Americans made contact with the Shoshonis in the Rocky Mountains.

Lewis and Clark pinned great hopes on the Mandans as a source of information, access to other tribes, and future trade with Americans. They also hoped to promote an alliance of the Mandans, Hidatsas, and Arikaras against the Sioux. Such a coalition seemed natural to them, but it proved to be more difficult to arrange than simply handing out medals, flags, and fine speeches.

Tribal politics were still in flux after villages reassembled in the wake of disease, and the presence of British and French-Canadian traders in the area complicated things further.

The American captains spent much of that winter gathering information about the tribes of the West. Meanwhile, Mandans and Americans visited back and forth, joined in each other's dances, hunted buffalo together, and together pursued Sioux horse raiders. Members of the expedition slept with Mandan women, and the expedition blacksmith mended Mandan axes and hoes in exchange for corn. During their six months among the Mandans, the members of the expedition produced detailed ethnographic records of the life and culture they observed and got a good introduction to the challenges and pitfalls of trying to apply predetermined American policies in Indian country.

The Lewis and Clark expedition was not a total success. It failed to find a water route to the Pacific—the fabled “Northwest Passage” giving access to the markets of the Far East which had been the dream of empire builders for generations—because none existed. It failed to establish intertribal peace on the Missouri River, and instead cemented Sioux and Blackfoot hostility to the United States. But the winter among the Mandans was one of its high points. They enjoyed good relations with other Indian peoples—the Shoshonis and Nez Percés, in particular—but with no other group did they live so closely, for so long, and on such good terms. The winter spent with the Mandans demonstrated the capacity of one group of humans to coexist harmoniously with another, at least for a time; it was not an experience repeated often in subsequent relations between the United States and the Indians of the West.

Contrast the diplomacy of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark among the Mandans with the diplomacy of Richard Butler and George Rogers Clark (William's older brother) at Fort Finney (see document on pages 194–203) and consider the different circumstances and agenda governing American conduct.

What do the extracts from Lewis and Clark's journal reveal about the nature of intertribal relations on the Upper Missouri? Why were the men of the Lewis and Clark expedition able to maintain good relations with the Mandans during the winter they spent there?

MERIWETHER LEWIS AND WILLIAM CLARK
A Winter with the Mandans (1804–1805)

Mandans

[Clark]

27th of October Saturday 1804

we Set out arly Came too at this Village on the L. S.^o this village is Situated on an eminance of about 50 feet above the Water in a handson Plain it Containes houses in a kind of Picket work.^o the houses are round and Verry large Containing Several families, as also their horses which is tied on one Side of the enterance, a Discription of those houses will be given hereafter, I walked up & Smoked a pipe with the Cheifs of this Village they were anxious that I would Stay and eat with them, my indisposition provented my eating which displeased them, untill a full explination took place, I returned to the boat and Sent 2 Carrots of Tobacco for them to Smoke, and proceeded on, passed the 2d Village and Camped opsd. the Village of the *Weter Soon*^o or ah wah har ways which is Situated on an eminance in a plain on the L. S. this Village is Small and Contains but fiew inhabitants. above this village & also above the Knife river on the Same Side of the Missouri the Big bellies [Gros Ventres] Towns are Situated a further Discription will be given here after as also of the Town of Mandans on this Side of the river i' e' S. Side—

a fine worm Day we met with a french man by the name of *Jassamme*^o

Source: Gary E. Moulton, ed., *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, 11 vols. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986–1997), 3:204, 218, 228, 233–34, 237–39, 242, 244–47, 261, 268–69, 272, 275–76, 289–91, 311–12, 322; 4:7–10. Copyright © 1987 by the University of Nebraska Press. Reprinted with permission of the publishers.

Note: Lewis and Clark recorded their observations in hundreds of pages of leather-bound notebook journals. Over the years, various writers and editors have worked on them: the first was Nicholas Biddle, around 1810, whose additions and corrections are indicated by *NB*. The extracts from the journals reprinted here are taken from the most recent edition, nearing completion after twenty-years' work. The editor of the current edition retained Lewis and Clark's erratic and often ingenious spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. Some words are corrected in square brackets for clarity. Words in italics in square brackets indicate a correction or addition made by Lewis, Clark, Biddle, or an unknown person, shown by *X*. Words in brackets thus < > were scored out by Lewis or Clark but restored by the editor to allow us to follow the writer's thinking.

Publication of *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* will be completed soon with the twelfth and final volume and a comprehensive index. For the story of the project, see Gary E. Moulton, "The Journals of Lewis and Clark: Almost Home," *Montana, The Magazine of Western History* 48 (Summer 1998), 72–79.

^o"L. S." means "larboard side" (i.e., to the left); "S. S." or "starboard side" indicated to the right.

^oPatrick Gass, a member of the expedition, said the village contained forty or fifty lodges.

^oThe Waterson were a division of the Hidatsas.

^oRené Jassaume was an independent trader who had spent ten years among the Mandans.

which we imploy as an interpetr This man has a wife & Children in the Village— Great numbers on both Sides flocked down to the bank to view us as wee passed.

Capt. Lewis with the Interpetr. walked down to the village below our Camp After delaying one hour he returned and informed me the Indians had returned to their village &c., &c., we Sent three (twists) Carrots of Tobacco by three young men, to the three Villages above inviting them to come Down & Council with us tomorrow. many Indians Came to view us Some Stayed all night in the Camp of our party— we procured Some information of Mr. Jesomme of the Chiefs of the Different Nations. . . .

[Clark] 31st of October Wednesday 1804

a fine morning, the Chief of the Mandans Sent a 2d Chief to invite us to his Lodge to recive Some Corn & here what he had to Say I walked down and with great ceremoney was Seeted on a roab by the Side of the Chief, he threw a handsom Roabe over me and after smokeing the pipe with Several old men arround, the Chief Spoke

Said he believed what we had told them, and that peace would be general, which not only gave him Satisfaction but all his people, they now Could hunt without fear, & ther womin Could work in the fields without looking everyy moment for the Enemy, and put off their mockersons at night, [NB: sign of peace undress]. . . .

[Clark]

4th of Novr. a french man by Name Chabonah,^o who Speaks the Big Bely language visit us, he wished to hire & informed us his 2 Squars were Snake Indians, we engau him to go on with us and take one of his wives to interpet the Snake language The Indians Horses & Dogs live in the Same Lodge with themselves. . . .

[Clark]

12th November Monday 1804

a verry Cold night early this morning the Big White principal Chief of the lower Village of the Mandans Came Down, he packd about 100 W. of fine meet on his Squar for us, we made Some Small presents <on> to the Squar, & Child gave a Small ax which She was much pleased— 3 men Sick with the [blank]. . . . The interpetr Says that the Mandan nation as they old men Say Came out of a <Small lake> [NB: Subterraneous village & a lake] where they had Gardins, maney years ago they lived in Several Villages on the Missouri low down, the Smallpox destroyed the greater part of the nation and reduced them to one large Village and Some Small ones, all <the> nations before this maladey was affrd. [NB: afraid] of them after they were reduced the Sioux and other

^oToussaint Charbonneau was a trader and the husband of Sacagawea.

Indians waged war, and killed a great maney, and they moved up the Mis-sourie, those Indians Still continued to wage war, and they moved Still higher, untill they got in the Countrey of the Panias, whith this ntn. [nation] they lived in friendship maney years, inhabiting the Same neighbourhood untill that people waged war, They moved up near the *watersoons* & *winataree* where they now live in peace with those nations, the mandans Specke a language pe-culial to themselves <verry much>

they can rase about 350 men, the Winatarees [NB: <or> the <600, 700> *Wittassoons* or *Maharha* 80] about 80 and the Big bellies [NB: or *Minitarres*] about 600 or 650 men. the mandans and Seaux [X: <Shoe Tribe of Minataras>] have the Same word for water— The Big bellies [NB: or] Winitarees & ravin [NB: & *Wattassoons*, as also the *Crow* (or *Raven*)] Indians Speake nearly the Same language and the presumption is they were originally the Same nation The Ravin Indians “have 400 Lodges & about 1200 men, & follow the Buffalow, or hunt for their Subsistance in the plains & on the Court noi & Rock Mountains, & are at war with the Sioux [and] Snake Indians[”]^o

The Big bellies & Watersoons are at war with the Snake Indians & Seaux, and were at war with the *Ricarees* until we made peace a few days passd.— The Mandans are at War with all who make war on them, at present with the Seaux only, and wish to be at peace with *all* nations, Seldom the agres-sors— . . .

[Clark]

18th Novr. Sunday 1804

a Cold morning Some wind the Black Cat, Chief of the Mandans Came to See us, he made Great inquiries respecting our fashions. he also Stated the Situation of their nation, he mentioned that a Council had been held the day before and it was thought advisable to put up with the resent insults of the Ossiniboins & Christono^o until they were Convinced that what had been told thim by us, <untill> Mr. Evins^o had deceived them & we might also, he promised to return & furnish them with guns & amunitiion, we advised them to remain at peace & that they might depend upon Getting *Supplies* through the Channel of the Missouri, but it required time to put the trade in opperation. The Assiniboins &c have the trade of those nations in their power and treat them badly as the Soux does the *Ricarees* and they cannot resent for fear of lo-seing their trade &.^o

^oThe Hidatsas were also known as Big Bellies (Gros Ventres) and Minnetarees. The Crows were once the same people as the Hidatsas and split off from them, migrating to the Yellowstone valley. They were also known as the People of the Long Beaked Bird, or the Raven. The Snake Indians were the Shoshonis.

^oAssiniboines and Crees.

^oWelshman John Evans was employed by the St. Louis-based Missouri Company.

^oAs James Ronda has pointed out, the Sioux-Arikara relationship was more complex and reciprocal than Lewis and Clark appreciated. Ronda, *Lewis and Clark among the Indians*, 49–50.

[Clark] 20th November Tuesday 1804
 Capt Lewis & my Self move into our huts, a verry hard wind from the W. all the after part of the day a temperate day Several Indians Came Down to Eat fresh meat, three Chiefs from the 2d Mandan Village Stay all Day, they are verry Curious in examining our works. Those Chiefs informs us that the Souix settled on the Missourie above Dog [NB: *Chayenne*] River, threten to attacked them this winter, and have treated 2 Ricares who Carried the pipe of peace to them Verry roughly. whiped & took their horses from them &c. &c. & is much displeased with Ricares for makeing a peace with the Mandans &. &. through us, &. we gave them a Sattisfactory answer. &c. &c.

[Clark] 28th Novr. Wednesday 1804
 a cold morning wind from the N. W river full of floating ice, began to Snow at 7 oClock *a' m* and continued all day at 8 oClock the *Poss-cop-so-he* or Black Cat Grand Chief of the Mandans Came to See us, after Showing Those Chiefs many thing which was Curiossities to them, and Giveing a fiew presents of Curioes Handkerchiefs arm bans & paint with a twist of Tobacco they departed at 1 oClock much pleased, at parting we had Some little talk on the Subject of the British Trader Mr. Le rock Giveing Meadils & Flags, and told those Chiefs to impress it on the minds of their nations that those Simbells were not to be recved by any from them, without they wished incur the displeasure of their Great American Father— a verry disagreeable day— no work done to day river fall 1 Inch to day

[Clark] 29th November Thursday 1804
 A verry Cold windey day wind from the N. W by W. Some Snow last night the Detpt of the Snow is various in the wood about 13 inches, The river Closed at the Village above and fell last night two feet Mr. *La Rock* and one of his men Came to visit us we informed him what we had herd of his intentions of makeing Chiefs &c. and forbid him to give meadels or flags to the Indians, he Denied haveing any Such intention, we agreed that one of our interpeters Should Speak for him on Conditions he did not Say any thing more than what tended to trade alone— he gave fair promises &.^o

[Clark] 30th of November Friday 1804
 This morning at 8 oClock an Indian Calld from the other Side and informed that he had Something of Consequence to Communicate. we Sent a perogue for him & he informed us as follows. Viz: “five men of the Mandan

^oThe Mandans were trying to deter the Hidatsas from visiting Fort Mandan until the Mandans could secure the coveted middleman position in trade with the Americans. Charbonneau was the interpreter. In his account of the incident, Larocque noted “As I had neither flags nor medals, I ran no riske of disobeying those orders.” Reuben G. Thwaites, ed., *Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, 8 vols. (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1904–1905), 1:229n.

Nation out hunting in a S. W. direction about Eight Leagues was Suprised by a large party of *Sceoux* & *Panies*^o one man was Killed and two wounded with arrows & 9 Horses taken, 4 of the *We ter Soon* nation was missing, & they expected to be attacked by the *Souix* &c. &.[ⁿ] we thought it well to Show a Disposition to ade and assist them against their enimies, perticularly those who Came in oppersition to our Councils, and I Deturmined to go to the town with Some men, and if the *Sceoux* were coming to attact the nation to Collect the worriers from each Village and meet them, thos Ideas were also those of Capt Lewis, I crossed the river in about an hour after the arrival of the Indian express with 23 men including the interpeters and flankd the Town & came up on the back part— The Indians not expecting <not> to receive Such Strong aide in So Short a time was much Suprised, and a littled allarmed at the formadable appearance of my party— The principal Chiefs met me Some Distance from the town (Say 200 yards) and invited me in to town, I ord my pty into dft. lodges & . . .

I told this nation that we Should be always willing and ready to defend them from the insults of any nation who would dare to Come to doe them in-jurey dureing the time we would <Stay> remain in their neighbourhood, and requestd. that they would inform us of any party who may at any time be discovered by their Patroles or Scouts;

I was Sorry that the Snow in the Plains had fallen So Deep Sence the Murder of the young Chief by the *Scioux* as prevented, their horses from traveling I wished to meet those *Scioux* & all others who will not open their ears, but make war on our dutifull Children, and let you See that the Wariers of your great father will Chastize the enimies of his dutifull Children the *Mandans*, *wetersoons* & *Winitarees*, who have opend. their ears to his advice— you Say that the *Panies* or *Ricarees* were with the *Sciaux*, Some bad men may have been with the *Sciaux* you know there is bad men in all nations, do not get mad with the *racarees* untill we know if those bad men are *Counteroncd.* by their nation, and we are *Convsd.* those people do not intend to follow our Councils— you know that the *Sceaux* have great influence over the *ricarees* and perhaps have led Some of them astray— you know that the *Ricarees*, are *Dependant* on the *Sceaux* for their guns, powder, & Ball, and it was policy in them to keep on as good terms as possible with the *Siaux* untill they had Some other means of getting those articles &c. &. you know your Selves that you are *Compelled* to put up with little insults from the *Christinoes* & *Ossinaboins* (or *Stone Inds.*) because if you go to war with those people, they will provent the traders in the north from bringing you Guns Powder & Ball and by that means distress you verry much, but whin you will have Certain Suppliers from your Great American father of all those artcils you will not Suffer any nation to insult you &c. after about two hours conversation on various Subjects all of

^oPawnees, but here may mean *Arikaras*, who were related to the *Pawnees*.

which tended towards their Situation &c. I informed them I Should return to the fort, the Chief Said they all thanked me verry much for the fatherly protection which I Showed towards them, that the Village had been Crying all the night and day for the death of the brave young man, who fell but now they would wipe away their tears, and rejoice in their fathers protection—and Cry no more—

I then Paraded & Crossed the river on the ice and Came down on the N. Side the Snow So deep, it was verry fatiguing arrived at the fort after night, gave a little Taffee, [NB: dram to my party] a Cold night the river rise to its former hite— The Chief frequently thanked me for Coming to protect them— and the whole Village appeared thankfull for that measure. . . .

[Clark] 23rd December Sunday 1804

a fine Day great numbers of indians of all discriptions Came to the fort many of them bringing Corn to trade, the *little Crow*, loadd. his wife & Sun with corn for us, Cap. Lewis gave him a few presents as also his wife, She made a Kettle of boild Simnins, beens, Corn & Choke Cherris with the Stones which was paletable

This Dish is Considered, as a treat among those people, The Chiefs of the Mandans are fond of Stayin & Sleeping in the fort. . . .

[Clark] 24 December Monday 1804

Several Chiefs and members of men womin and Children at the fort to day, Some for trade, the most as lookers on, . . .

[Clark] 25th December Christmass Tuesday

I was awakened before Day by a discharge of 3 platoons from the Party and the french, the men merrily Disposed, I give them all a little Taffia and permitted 3 Cannon fired, at raising Our flag, Some men went out to hunt & the Others to Dancing and Continued untill 9 oClock P, M, when the frolick ended &c. . . .

[Clark] 5th of January Satturday 1805

a cold day Some Snow, Several Indians visit us with thier axes to get them mended, I imploy my Self drawing a Connection of the Countrey from what information I have recved— a Buffalow Dance (or Medison) [NB: *medecine*] for 3 nights passed in the 1st Village, a curious Custom the old men arrange themselves in a circle & after Smoke a pipe, which is handed them by a young man, Dress up for the purpose, the young men who have their wives back of the circle <Com> go to one of the old men with a whining tone and [NB?: *request*] the old man to take his wife (who presents necked except a robe) and—(or Sleep with him) the Girl then takes the Old man (who verry often can Scercely walk) and leades him to a Convenient place for the business, after which they return to the lodge, if the Old man (or a white man) returns to the

lodge without gratifying the man & his wife, he offers her again and again; it is often the Case that after the 2d time <he> without Kissing the Husband throws a nice robe over the old man & and begs him not to dispise him, & his wife
 (we Sent a man to this Medisan <Dance> last night, they gave him 4 Girls)
 all this is to cause the buffalow to Come near So that They may kill thim^o

Fort Mandan

[Clark]

7th of January Monday 1805

a verry Cold clear Day, the Themtr Stood at 22 d below o wind N W., the river fell 1 inch Several indians returned from hunting, one of them the Big White Chef of the Lower Mandan Village, Dined with us, and gave me a Scetch of the Countrey as far as the high mountains, & on the South Side of the River Rejone,^o he Says that the river rejone recves [NB: receives] 6 Small rivers on the S. Side, & that the Countrey is verry hilley and the greater part Covered with timber, Great numbers of beaver &c.— . . . I continue to Draw a connected plote from the information of Traders, Indians & my own observation & idea— from the best information, the Great falls is about [NB?: 800] miles nearly west,—

[Clark]

13th of January Sunday (1805)

a Cold Clear Day (great number of Indians move Down the River to hunt) those people Kill a number of Buffalow near their Villages and Save a great perpotion of the meat, their Custom of making this article of life General [NB: see note common] leaves them more than half of their time without meat^o Their Corn & Beans &c they Keep for the Summer, and as a reserve in Case of an attack from the Soues, which they are always in dread, and Sildom go far to hunt except in large parties, about 1/2 the Mandan nation passed this to day to hunt on the river below, they will Stay out Some Days, Mr. Chabonee (our in- turpeter) and one man that accompanied him to Some loges of the Minatarees near the Turtle Hill^o returned, both frozed in their faces.

Chaboneu informs that the Clerk of the Hudsons Bay Co. with the *Me ne tar res* has been Speaking Some fiew expressns. unfavourable towards us, and that it is Said the N W Co. intends building a fort at the *Mene tar re's*— he

^oThe Mandans and other northern Plains people believed that spiritual power could be transferred through sexual intercourse. Young men could acquire the wisdom of old men, the skills of hunters, or the spiritual powers of white strangers by having their wives sleep with them. “Nothing in his cultural heritage prepared Clark to comprehend all this,” wrote James Ronda, “but he had the good sense to make an accurate record of the event.” Ronda, *Lewis and Clark among the Indians*, 131–32. See Alice B. Kehoe, “The Function of Ceremonial Sexual Intercourse among the Northern Plains Indians,” *Plains Anthropologist* 15 (1970), 99–103.

^oClark’s attempt at the French name “Roche Jaune,” i.e., the Yellowstone.

^oA reference to the practice of sharing the game among all the families of the tribe.

^oOn the Little Missouri River.

Saw the Grand Chief of the *Big bellies* who Spoke Slightly of the Americans, Saying if we would give our great flag to him he would Come to See us. . . .

[Clark] 16th January Wednesday 1805
 about thirty Mandans Came to the fort to day, 6 Chiefs. Those Me ne ta rees told them they were liars, had told them if they came to the fort the whites men would kill them, they had been with them all night, Smoked in the pipe and have been treated well and the whites had danced for them, observing the Mandans were bad and ought to hide themselves— one of the 1st War Chiefs of the big belles nation Came to See us to day with one man and his Squar [NB: (*his wife handsome*)] to wate on him [NB: *requested that she might be used for the night*] we Shot the Air gun, and gave two Shots with the Cannon which pleased them verry much, the little Crow 2d Chf of the lower village came & brought us Corn &. 4 men of ours who had been hunting returned one frost'd <but not bad>

This war Chief gave us a Chart in his way of the Missourie, he informed us of his intentions of going to war in the Spring against the Snake Indians we advised him to look back at the number of nations who had been distroyed by war, and reflect upon what he was about to do, observing if he wished the hapiness of his nation, he would be at peace with all, by that by being at peace and haveing plenty of goods amongst them & a free intercourse with those defenceless nations, they would get on easy terms a great Number of horses, and that nation would increas, if he went to war against those Defenceless people, he would displease his great father, and he would not receive that pertection & Care from him as other nations who listened to his word— This Chief who is a young man 26 yr. old replied that if his going to war against the Snake indians would be displeasing to us he would not go, he had horses enough.

we observed that what we had Said was the words of his Great father, and what we had Spoken to all the nations which we Saw on our passage up, they all promis to open their ears and we do not know as yet if any of them has Shut them (we are doubtfull of the Souxs) if they do not attend to what we have told them their great father will open their ears— This Cheif Said that he would advise all his nation to Stay at home untill we Saw the Snake Indians & Knew if they would be friendly, he himself would attend to what we had told him—

[Lewis] 7th February Thursday 1805.
 This morning was fair Thermometer at 18° above naught much warmer than it has been for some days; wind S. E. continue to be visited by the natives. The Sergt. of the guard reported that the Indian women (wives to our interpreters[]) were in the habit of unbaring the fort gate at any time of night and admitting their Indian visitors, I therefore directed a lock to be put to the gate and ordered that no Indian but those attached to the garrison should be

permitted to remain all night within the fort or admitted during the period which the gate had been previously ordered to be kept shut which was from sunset untill sunrise.—

[Lewis]

8th February Friday 1805.

This morning was fair wind S. E. the weather still warm and pleasant— visited by the *black-Cat* the principal chief of the Roop-tar-he, or upper mandane vilage. this man possesses more integrity, firmness, intelligence and perspicuity of mind than any indian I have met with in this quarter, and I think with a little management he may be made a usefull agent in furthering the views of our government. The black Cat presented me with a bow and apologized for not having completed the shield he had promised alledging that the weather had been too could to permit his making it, I gave him som small shot 6 fishing-hooks and 2 yards of ribbon his squaw also presented me with 2 pair of mockersons for which in return I gave a small lookingglass and a couples of nedles. the chief dined with me and left me in the evening. he informed me that his people suffered very much for the article of meat, and that he had not himself tasted any for several days.— . . .

[Lewis]

11th February Monday 1805.

. . . about five oclock this evening one of the wives of Charbono was delivered of a fine boy.^o it is worthy of remark that this was the first child which this woman had boarn and as is common in such cases her labour was tedious and the pain violent; Mr. Jessome informed me that he had frequently administered a small portion of the rattle of the rattle-snake, which he assured me had never failed to produce the desired effect, that of hastening the birth of the child; having the rattle of a snake by me I gave it to him and he administered two rings of it to the woman broken in small pieces with the fingers and added to a small quantity of water. Whether this medicine was truly the cause or not I shall not undertake to determine, but I was informed that she had not taken it more than ten minutes before she brought forth perhaps this remedy may be worthy of future experiments, but I must confess that I want faith as to it's efficacy.— . . .

[Clark]

10th of March Sunday 1805.

a Cold winday Day. we are visited by the Black mockersons, Chief of the 2d Manetarre Village and the Chief of the Shoeman [NB: *Shoe or Mocassin Tr:*] Village or Mah hâ ha V. [NB: *Wattassoans*] those Chiefs Stayed all day and the latter all night and gave us man[y] Strang accounts of his nation &c this Little tribe or band of Menitaraies Call themselves Ah-nah-hâ-way or people whose vilage is on the hill. [NB: *Insert this Ahnahaway is the nation Mahhaha the*

^oThis was Sacagawea. The son was named Jean Baptiste, and accompanied the expedition.

village] nation formerly lived about 30 miles below this but being oppressed by the Assiniboins & Sous were Compelled to move <near> 5 miles the Minitaries, where, the Assiniboins Killed the most of them those remaining built a village very near to the Minitaries at the mouth of Knife R where they now live and Can raise about 50 men, they are intermixed with the Mandans & Minatariers— the Mandans formerly lived in 6 [NB: *nine*] large villages at and above the mouth of *Chischeter* or Heart River five [NB: *six*] Villages on the West Side [NB: *of the Missouri*] & two [NB: *three*] on the East one of those Villages on the East Side of the Missouri & the largest was intirely Cut off by the Sioux & the greater part of the others and the Small Pox reduced the others. . . .

[March 29, 1805]

[Clark]

30th of March Sunday 1805

The obsticle broke away above & the ice came dow in great quantites the river rose 13 inches the last 24 hours I observed extrodanary dexterity of the Indians in jumping from one Cake of ice to another, for the purpose of Catching the buffalow as they float down many of the Cakes of ice which they pass over are not two feet Square. The Plains are on fire in view of the fort on both Sides of the River, it is Said to be common for the Indians to burn the Plains near their villages every Spring for the benifit of ther horse, and to induce the Buffalow to come near to them.

[Clark]

[March 30, 1805]

31h of March Monday 1805 Cloudy Several gangus of Ducks and Gees pass up not much ice floating. All the party in high Spirits, but fiew nights pass without a Dance they are helth. except the—vn. [venereal]—which is common with the Indians and have been communicated to many of our party at this place— those favores bieng easy acquired. all Tranquille. . . .

[Lewis]

Fort Mandan April 7th 1805.

Having on this day at 4 P.M. completed every arrangement necessary for our departure, we dismissed the barge and crew with orders to return without loss of time to S. Louis, a small canoe with two French hunters accompanied the barge; these men had assended the missouri with us the last year as engages. The barge crew consisted of six soldiers and two [blank] Frenchmen; two Frenchmen and a Ricara Indian also take their passage in her as far as the Ricara Vilages, at which place we expect Mr. Tiebeau [Tabeau] to embark with his peltry who in that case will make an addition of two, perhaps four men to the crew of the barge. We gave Richard Warfington, a discharged Corpl., the charge of the Barge and crew, and confided to his care likewise our dispatches to the government, letters to our private friends, and a number of articles to the President of the United States. One of the Frenchmen by the Name of [NB?: *Joseph*] Gravline an honest discrete man and an excellent boat-man is imployed to conduct the barge as a pilot; we have therefore every hope that the barge and

with her our dispatches will arrive safe at St. Louis. Mr. Gravlin who speaks the Ricara language extremely well, has been employed to conduct a few of the Ricara Chiefs to the seat of government who have promised us to descend in the barge to St. Liwis with that view.—

At same moment that the Barge departed from Fort Mandan, Capt. Clark embarked with our party and proceeded up the river. as I had used no exercise for several weeks, I determined to walk on shore as far as our encampment of this evening; accordingly I continued my walk on the N. side of the River about six miles, to the upper Village of the Mandans, and called on the Black Cat or Pose cop'se há, the great chief of the Mandans; he was not at home; I rested myself a minutes, and finding that the party had not arrived I returned about 2 miles and joined them at their encampment on the N. side of the river opposite the lower Mandan village. Our party now consisted of the following Individuals. Sergts. John Ordway, Nathaniel Prior, & Patric Gass; Privates, William Bratton, John Colter, Reubin, and Joseph Fields, John Shields, George Gibson, George Shannon, John Potts, John Collins, Joseph Whitehouse, Richard Windsor, Alexander Willard, Hugh Hall, Silas Goodrich, Robert Frazier, Peter Crouzatt, John Baptist la Page, Francis Labiech, Hue McNeal, William Werner, Thomas P. Howard, Peter Wiser, and John B. Thompson.—

Interpreters, George Drewyer and Tausant Charbono also a Black man by the name of York, servant to Capt. Clark, an Indian Woman wife to Charbono with a young child, and a Mandan man who had promised us to accompany us as far as the Snake Indians with a view to bring about a good understanding and friendly intercourse between that nation and his own, the Minetares and Ahwahharways.

Our vessels consisted of six small canoes, and two large perogues. This little fleet altho' not quite so respectable as those of Columbus or Capt. Cook^o were still viewed by us with as much pleasure as those deservedly famed adventurers ever beheld theirs; and I dare say with quite as much anxiety for their safety and preservation. we were now about to penetrate a country at least two thousand miles in width, on which the foot of civillized man had never trodden; the good or evil it had in store for us was for experiment yet to determine, and these little vessells contained every article by which we were to expect to subsist or defend ourselves. however as this the state of mind in which we are, generally gives the colouring to events, when the immagination is suffered to wander into futurity, the picture which now presented itself to me was a most pleasing one. entertaing <now> as I do, the most confident hope of succeeding in a voyage which had formed a da[r]ling project of mine for the last ten years <of my life>, I could but esteem this moment of my <our> departure as among the most happy of my life.^o

^oJames Cook (1728–79), British explorer of the Pacific

^oLewis committed suicide four years later.

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2. James P. Ronda, *Lewis and Clark among the Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), quote at p. 1.
3. Ronda, *Lewis and Clark among the Indians*. Chapter 2 provides an excellent account of the confrontation with the Brulé Sioux.
4. Annie Heloise Abel, ed., *Tabeau's Narrative of Loisel's Expedition to the Upper Missouri River* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1939), 123–24. Other traders claimed three smallpox epidemics had scythed the Arikaras from thirty-two villages to two before 1795; John C. Ewers, ed., *Five Indian Tribes of the Upper Missouri. By Edwin Thompson Denig* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), 41n.
5. Raymond W. Wood and David D. Thiessen, eds., *Early Fur Trade on the Northern Plains: Canadian Traders among the Mandan and Hidatsa Indians, 1738–1818* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), 3–4; John C. Ewers, “The Indian Trade of the Upper Missouri before Lewis and Clark,” in *Indian Life on the Upper Missouri* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968), 14–34.
6. Abel, ed., *Tabeau's Narrative*, 165.

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