

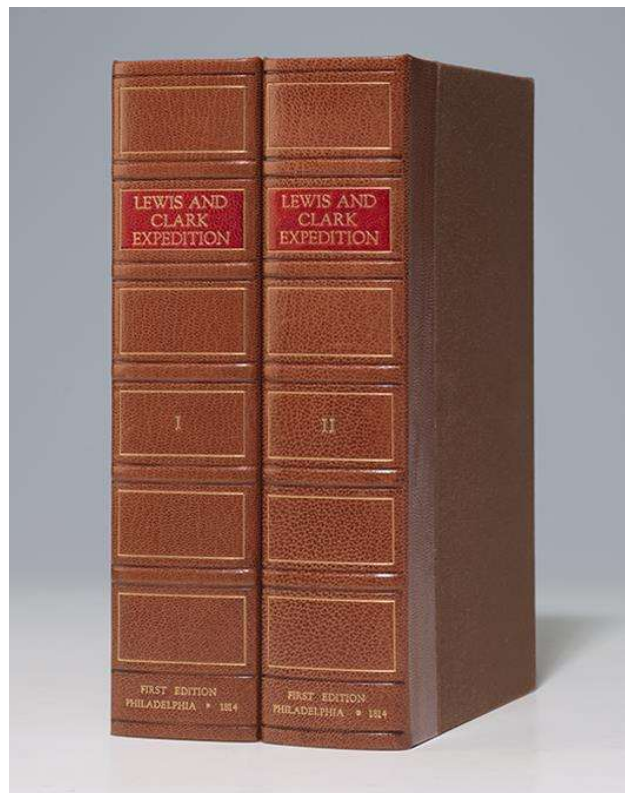
"History of the Expedition Under the Command of Captains Lewis and Clark, to the Sources of the Mississippi, ..., to the Pacific Ocean, Performed During the Years 1804, 1805 and 1806", (published 1814), prepared for the press by Paul Allen: A Canonical Publication

Curated by Stephen A Batman

Thursday, March 13, 2025

Summary of this Particular Rare First Edition

Lewis and Clark, History of the Expedition Under the Command of Captains Lewis and Clark, 1814





HISTORY
OF
THE EXPEDITION
UNDER THE COMMAND OF
CAPTAINS LEWIS AND CLARK,
TO
THE SOURCES OF THE MISSOURI,
THENCE
ACROSS THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS
AND DOWN THE
RIVER COLUMBIA TO THE PACIFIC OCEAN.
PERFORMED DURING THE YEARS 1804—5—6.
By order of the
GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES.
PREPARED FOR THE PRESS
BY PAUL ALLEN, ESQUIRE.
VOL. II.
PHILADELPHIA
PUBLISHED BY BRADFORD AND INSKEEP; AND
ARTH. H. INSKEEP, NEW YORK.
J. Maxwell, Printer.
1814.

LEWIS AND CLARKE'S EXPEDITION

UP THE MISSOURI.

CHAP. I.

The party set out on the expedition and pass Wood river—Description of the town of St. Charles—Osage Woman river—Gassade and Osage Rivers described—Character of the Osage Indians—Curious traditional account of their Origin—The party proceed and pass the Mine river—The two Charitons—The Kansas, Nodawa, Newahaw, Neeshabatoos, Little Nemahaw, each of which are particularly described—They encamp at the mouth of the river Platte—A particular description of the surrounding country—The various Creeks, Bays, Islands, Prairies, &c. given in the course of the route.

ON the acquisition of Louisiana, in the year 1803, the attention of the government of the United States, was early directed towards exploring and improving the new territory. Accordingly in the summer of the same year, an expedition was planned by the president for the purpose of discovering the courses and sources of the Missouri, and the most convenient water communication thence to the Pacific ocean. His private secretary captain Meriwether Lewis, and captain William Clarke, both officers of the army of the United States, were associated in the command of this enterprize. After receiving the requisite instructions, captain Lewis left the seat of government, and being joined by captain Clarke at Louisville, in Kentucky, proceeded to St. Louis, where they arrived in the month of December. Their original intention was to pass the winter at La Charrette,



**THE CORNERSTONE OF AMERICAN EXPLORATION: EXCEEDINGLY RARE
FIRST EDITION IN ORIGINAL BOARDS OF THE DEFINITIVE ACCOUNT OF THE
LEWIS & CLARK EXPEDITION, THE MOST IMPORTANT EXPLORATION OF THE
NORTH AMERICAN CONTINENT, WITH SCARCE AND IMPORTANT LARGE
FOLDING MAP**

Exceptionally rare first edition, one of only 1,417 copies printed, of the definitive account of the most important exploration of the North American continent, with the famous large folding map of the course of the expedition and five in-text maps.

"First authorized and complete account of the most important western exploration and the first of many overland narratives to follow" (Howes L317).

"American explorers had for the first time spanned the continental United States and had driven the first wedge toward opening up our new far western frontier" (Streeter 1777).

"The importance of exploring this area [beyond the Missouri River] had been evident to Thomas Jefferson as early as 1783... but it was not until twenty years later that Jefferson, then President of the United States, saw the realization of his idea... The purchase of the Louisiana Territory from France in December 1803 greatly increased the importance of the expedition, which finally began its long journey [in 1804]... They wintered in the Mandan villages in the Dakotas and in the Spring pushed on west across the Rocky Mountains and then down the Columbia River to the Pacific Ocean. Returning by the same route nearly two-and-a-half years after they had set out they arrived back in St. Louis in September 1806 to the amazed delight of the nation which had given them up for lost. Though unsuccessful in their attempt to find a transcontinental water route, they had demonstrated the feasibility of overland travel to the western coast" (*Printing and the Mind of Man*, 272).

A number of years passed between the end of the expedition and the 1814 printing of the official account. Lewis had made some arrangements for publication, but upon his suicide in 1809 Clark undertook the project, which was in disarray. "This is the great mystery of Lewis's life. There is only speculation on what kept him from preparing the journals for the publisher, but no one can know the cause for certain, any more than anyone can know for certain the cause of his suicide... When Clark arrived at Monticello [where the journals had been sent], there was apparently some talk about Jefferson's taking over the journals and doing the editing to prepare them for the printer. There was no man alive who had a greater interest in the subject, or one who had better qualifications for the job. But he was sixty-five years old and desired to spend his remaining years at Monticello as a gentleman farmer...

After some false starts, Clark persuaded Nicholas Biddle to undertake the work. Biddle was only 26 years old, but he was a prodigy... Biddle was the perfect choice. He threw himself into the work and did it magnificently... In 1814, the book appeared, titled *The History of the Expedition Under the Commands of Captains Lewis and Clark*. It was a narrative and paraphrase of the journals, completely true to the original, retaining some of the more delightful phrases, but with the spelling corrected. [As a result of the failing health of Dr. Barton, who was to do the scientific volume] Biddle did relatively little with the flora and fauna... For the next ninety

years, Biddle's edition was the only printed account based on the journals. As a result, Lewis and Clark got no credit for most of their discoveries. Plants, rivers, animals, birds that they had described and named were newly discovered by naturalists, and the names that these men gave them were the ones that stuck. Lewis had cheated himself out of a rank not far below Darwin as a naturalist" (Ambrose, 469-470).

"The Lewis and Clark expedition stands as a major event in American history, solidly establishing our title to the vast Louisiana Territory and later to the Oregon country. The explorations revealed a strange and unknown world, full of exciting wonders, and pointed the way to its possibilities for future development" (Downs, *Books that Changed America*, 40). Sabin 855 and 40828. Graff 2477. Wagner-Camp 13.1. Paltsits, lxxvii.

Small three-by-three inch section of map restored in fine facsimile and with repaired four-inch tear near gutter, title page of second volume and several leaves of text with short tears expertly repaired, front free endpaper of Volume I laid in loose, free endpapers absent in second volume, usual browning and foxing throughout, scarce contemporary bindings fully intact and in exceptional condition. A desirable and complete copy of the most important work in American western exploration.

LEWIS, Meriwether and CLARK, William. History of the Expedition Under the Command of Captains Lewis and Clark, To the Sources of the Missouri, Thence Across the Rocky Mountains and Down the River Columbia to the Pacific Ocean. Performed During the Years 1804-5-6... Prepared for the Press by Paul Allen. Philadelphia: Bradford and Inskeep, 1814. Two volumes. Octavo, original three-quarter brown sheep, original marbled boards, original green morocco spine labels. Each volume housed in a custom half morocco clamshell box.

Introduction

"History of the Expedition Under the Command of Captains Lewis and Clark" stands as one of the most significant publications in early American history, documenting the monumental journey that would reshape the nation's understanding of its western territories. Published in 1814, a full eight years after the expedition's completion, this work emerged during a pivotal period in American development. The book was based on the detailed journals kept by Captains Meriwether Lewis and William Clark during their 28-month journey across the continent from 1804 to 1806¹². The expedition itself was commissioned by President Thomas Jefferson shortly after the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, when the United States had doubled its territory through the acquisition of 828,000 square miles of land from France for \$27 million⁷. Jefferson's vision extended beyond mere exploration; he sought to establish American presence in these new territories before European powers could stake their claims, to find a practical route to the Pacific Ocean, and to document the region's biodiversity, geography, and native populations¹⁴.

The publication emerged during a time of growing national identity and expansionist sentiment. The War of 1812 with Great Britain was drawing to a close, and Americans were increasingly looking westward. The economic and political climate surrounding the book's publication was characterized by a young nation eager to understand and exploit its newly acquired territories. Jefferson's instructions to Lewis, reproduced in the book's opening pages, clearly articulated the

expedition's commercial and diplomatic objectives: "The object of your mission is to explore the Missouri River, and such principal streams of it, as, by its course and communication with the waters of the Pacific Ocean, whether the Columbia, Oregon [sic], Colorado, or any other river, may offer the most direct and practicable water communication across the continent, for purposes of commerce"[12](#). This publication would serve not only as a scientific and historical record but also as a blueprint for the nation's westward expansion.

The Author

While the book bears the names of Lewis and Clark in its title, it was actually prepared for publication by Paul Allen, an American poet, historian, and editor. Born in Providence, Rhode Island on February 15, 1775, Allen studied at Brown University, graduating in 1793. He later relocated to Philadelphia, where he served as editor of several publications including "The Port Folio," the "Gazette of the United States," and the "Federal Republican"[3](#).

The path to publication was complex. Although Allen is credited with editing the two-volume history of the Lewis and Clark Expedition published in 1814, the actual author was Nicholas Biddle, a banker who remained unmentioned in the publication[3](#). Biddle's narrative, published in 1814, satisfied scholars' thirst for knowledge about the expedition, though interest in the journey would wane for nearly 75 years before being revived in the late 19th century[10](#).

Allen's career reached its zenith after he moved to Baltimore, where he edited the "Baltimore Morning Chronicle" and joined the Delphian Club, earning the whimsical "clubicular" name of Solomon Fitz Quizz and the title of Professor of Lobology, defined as "the science of endeavoring to do that which is impossible"[3](#). His literary reputation was substantial enough that Thomas Jefferson considered him the country's best prose writer, though contemporary critic John Neal offered a more nuanced assessment, describing Allen as "a showy, eloquent prose-writer—who never thinks, and, if he can help it, never reasons.... His prose is full of poetry—his poetry is miserably full of prose"[3](#). Allen died in 1826 while still serving as editor of the "Baltimore Morning Chronicle"[3](#).

Why this is a Canonical Book

"History of the Expedition Under the Command of Captains Lewis and Clark" must be included in the canon of essential American texts for several compelling reasons. First, it serves as the primary historical record of what is arguably the most significant exploration in American history. The Lewis and Clark expedition fundamentally altered Americans' understanding of their continent and opened the door to westward expansion that would define the nation's development throughout the 19th century.

The book provides an unparalleled window into the early American republic's ambitions, scientific interests, and attitudes toward indigenous peoples and the natural world. It embodies the Jeffersonian ideal of rational inquiry combined with practical national interests. The detailed observations of flora, fauna, geography, and native cultures represent one of the most comprehensive scientific surveys of its time. Lewis identified 178 plants new to science,

including bitterroot, prairie sagebrush, Douglas fir, and ponderosa pine, as well as 122 animals, such as grizzly bear, prairie dog, and pronghorn antelope⁷.

The publication also represents a crucial benchmark in American cartography. William Clark's maps of the expedition's route are considered landmark achievements that guided subsequent generations of settlers, traders, and explorers¹⁰. These maps and notes on routes, landmarks, friendly versus hostile Native Americans, and water sources greatly aided settlers in their trek west, helping families traveling along the Oregon Trail and prospectors making their way to the California gold fields in 1849-1850¹⁰.

Perhaps most significantly, the book played a pivotal role in spurring the concept of Manifest Destiny in the United States. While Napoleon's decision to sell the Louisiana territory sparked initial interest, it was Lewis and Clark's journey and the tales they brought back that truly captivated the nation¹⁰. The narrative inspired pioneers to move into new territories, settling further and further west. Artists followed in the expedition's wake, creating images of beauty and vast wilderness that fueled the national imagination¹⁰.

As a historical document, the book captures a moment of cultural contact between Euro-Americans and numerous indigenous nations, providing insights into early American diplomacy and cross-cultural exchange. The expedition established relations with two dozen Native American nations, without whose help the group would have risked starvation during harsh winters or become hopelessly lost in the Rocky Mountains¹⁴. This aspect of the narrative provides crucial context for understanding the complex history of American expansion and its impact on native peoples.

Five Timeless Quotes

1. "The object of your mission is to explore the Missouri River, and such principal streams of it, as, by its course and communication with the waters of the Pacific Ocean, whether the Columbia, Oregon [sic], Colorado, or any other river, may offer the most direct and practicable water communication across the continent, for purposes of commerce."¹²

This directive from Thomas Jefferson, reproduced in the book, encapsulates the practical, commercial motivations behind American exploration. It reminds us that even our most celebrated national adventures were often driven by economic interests. Today, as we continue to seek new frontiers in space exploration, technological innovation, and global commerce, Jefferson's pragmatic vision resonates. The quote also highlights how geographical knowledge has always been tied to national ambition and economic opportunity, a pattern that continues in our modern global economy.

2. "This little fleet although not quite so respectable as those of Columbus or Captain Cook were still viewed by us with as much pleasure as those deservedly famed adventurers ever beheld theirs."⁷

Lewis's comparison of his modest fleet to those of Columbus and Cook reveals both his awareness of historical precedent and his understanding of the expedition's significance. This

quote speaks to the American spirit of accomplishment with limited resources and the consciousness of participating in history-making endeavors. In our current era of technological advancement, it reminds us that groundbreaking achievements often begin with humble means but great vision. It also invites reflection on the complex legacies of exploration, as both Columbus and Cook have been reinterpreted as harbingers of devastation for indigenous peoples⁶.

3. "We were now about to penetrate a country ... on which the foot of civilized man had never trodden."⁶

This statement reflects the Eurocentric perspective that characterized the expedition and much of American thought at the time. The notion that lands inhabited by indigenous peoples for millennia were somehow untrodden by "civilized man" reveals the cultural biases that shaped American expansion. Today, this quote prompts critical examination of historical narratives and recognition of the sophisticated civilizations that existed throughout North America before European contact. It challenges us to acknowledge the cultural prejudices that have influenced our national story and to develop more inclusive understandings of civilization and history.

4. "I reflected that I had as yet done but little ... to further the happiness of the human race, or to advance the information of the succeeding generation."⁶

This introspective moment from Lewis on his 31st birthday reveals the weight of purpose he felt and his concern with legacy. Despite having traveled thousands of miles on a mission of national importance, he was tormented by the thought that he had not done enough. This sentiment speaks to the American drive for meaningful achievement and lasting contribution. In our achievement-oriented society, it reminds us to consider how we measure success and what constitutes a life well-lived. It also foreshadows Lewis's later struggles with depression, which would ultimately lead to his untimely death.

5. "Ocean in view! O! the joy."⁶

Clark's famous exclamation upon reaching the Pacific Coast captures the pure elation of achievement after tremendous hardship. This simple expression of triumph resonates across centuries, reminding us of the human capacity for perseverance and the emotional reward of reaching long-sought goals. In our complex modern world, this quote celebrates the timeless value of setting ambitious objectives and the profound satisfaction of achieving them. It stands as a testament to the expedition's success in fulfilling Jefferson's vision of finding a route to the Pacific.

Five Major Ideas

1. Scientific Discovery and Documentation

A central theme of the book is the meticulous documentation of previously unknown (to Western science) flora, fauna, geography, and indigenous cultures. Lewis and Clark's expedition represented one of the most significant scientific endeavors of early America. Lewis identified

178 plants new to science, including bitterroot, prairie sagebrush, Douglas fir, and ponderosa pine, as well as 122 animals, such as grizzly bear, prairie dog, and pronghorn antelope⁷. The scientific names *Philadelphus lewisii* (mock orange), *Lewisia rediva* (bitterroot), and *Clarkia pucella* (pink fairy, or ragged robin) stand as lasting tributes to their discoveries⁷. This comprehensive approach to documenting the natural world reflected Jefferson's Enlightenment values and established a precedent for future scientific expeditions. The book serves as both a travel narrative and a scientific catalog, demonstrating how exploration and empirical observation could advance national interests and human knowledge simultaneously.

2. Indigenous Diplomacy and Cultural Exchange

Throughout the narrative, Lewis and Clark's interactions with numerous Native American nations reveal the complex diplomacy that characterized early American expansion. The expedition held councils with indigenous peoples, conducted military parades, distributed peace medals, flags, and gifts, delivered speeches, promised trade, and requested intertribal peace⁷. These diplomatic efforts were accompanied by demonstrations of technology—magnets, compasses, and Lewis's air gun—and invitations for tribal representatives to travel to Washington, D.C.⁷. Most tribes welcomed trading opportunities and provided the expedition with essential assistance, including food, knowledge, guides, shelter, and hospitality⁷. However, some nations, like the Lakota (Sioux) who already had British commercial ties, were less receptive to American overtures⁷. The book documents these varied interactions, providing valuable insights into cross-cultural communication and the early stages of American Indian policy.

3. Cartographic Achievement and Practical Knowledge

The expedition's mapping of western territories stands as one of its most enduring contributions. William Clark's track map of the expedition's route is considered a landmark achievement in American cartography¹⁰. The detailed maps and notes on routes, landmarks, water sources, and tribal territories provided practical guidance for future westward travelers. This information aided settlers traveling along the Oregon Trail and prospectors heading to the California gold fields in 1849-1850¹⁰. Beyond mere geography, the expedition identified locations for future settlements and extended the range and trade relationships for the American fur trade¹⁰. The book thus served as both a record of discovery and a practical guide for expansion, embodying the pragmatic spirit of early American exploration.

4. National Expansion and Manifest Destiny

Perhaps the most profound impact of the book was its role in spurring the concept of Manifest Destiny—the belief that American expansion across the continent was both inevitable and divinely ordained. While the Louisiana Purchase created the opportunity for westward growth, it was Lewis and Clark's journey and the publication of their experiences that captured the national imagination¹⁰. The narrative inspired pioneers to move into new territories, with Louisiana and Missouri becoming the first states admitted to the Union from the Louisiana Purchase in 1812 and 1820 respectively¹⁰. Artists followed in the expedition's wake, creating romanticized images of western landscapes that fueled the desire for expansion¹⁰. The book thus helped transform

abstract territorial acquisition into a compelling vision of America's future that would drive national development throughout the 19th century.

5. Leadership and Perseverance Through Adversity

The narrative details the remarkable leadership of Lewis and Clark and the resilience of the Corps of Discovery in the face of tremendous challenges. Over nearly 8,000 miles and 28 months, the expedition confronted harsh weather, difficult terrain, food shortages, illness, and potential conflicts with indigenous groups⁷. They experienced dysentery, venereal disease, boils, tick bites, and injuries from prickly pear, yet only one man perished over the course of the journey⁷. The successful navigation of these hardships demonstrated the effectiveness of the captains' leadership and the corps' determination. Their journey through the Bitterroot Mountains was particularly harrowing, with Clark lamenting, "I have been wet and as cold in every part as I ever was in my life, indeed I was at one time fearfull my feet would freeze in the thin mockersons [moccasins] which I wore"⁷. The book chronicles these trials and the expedition's ultimate triumph, presenting a narrative of American perseverance that would inspire generations.

Three Major Controversies

1. Representation of Indigenous Peoples

One of the most significant controversies surrounding the book concerns its portrayal of Native American nations. Lewis and Clark's journals, and consequently the published narrative, often reflect the cultural biases of their time. Lewis expressed frustration with "the egalitarian nature of Indian society," noting that "the authority of the Chief being nothing more than mere admonition . . . in fact every man is a chief"². He actively sought to undermine traditional governance structures by "making chiefs"—distributing medals, certificates, and uniforms to chosen men to facilitate future negotiations². The expedition's approach to indigenous diplomacy was fundamentally shaped by Euro-American assumptions about proper political organization.

The narrative also contains problematic language and perspectives, such as Lewis's distinction between "civilized" European Americans and indigenous peoples, which has struck modern readers as racist and reflective of deep-seated prejudices about what constitutes "civilization"⁶. Clark's description of the Lakota as "warlike" and "the vilest miscreants of the savage race" further demonstrates these biases¹⁴. These characterizations have prompted critical reassessment of the expedition's legacy, particularly regarding its role in facilitating subsequent displacement of Native Americans. By 1905, a century after the expedition, "Indians in the Columbia River Basin had lost their land and suffered devastating social and economic changes"⁵. The book's narrative, while valuable as a historical record, must be understood within the context of its cultural assumptions and its role in advancing American expansion at the expense of indigenous sovereignty.

2. Environmental Impact and Resource Exploitation

Another controversy concerns the expedition's approach to natural resources and its role in facilitating environmental transformation. The book details the "immense animal herds" encountered by the expedition, noting that they consumed "one buffalo, two elk, or four deer per day"⁷. This abundance contrasts sharply with the ecological changes that followed American settlement. The narrative's descriptions of seemingly limitless resources contributed to attitudes that would lead to over-hunting, habitat destruction, and species decline in subsequent decades.

The expedition's primary objectives included identifying resources for commercial exploitation and establishing trade networks that would integrate western territories into the American economy⁷¹⁴. Jefferson's instructions explicitly emphasized finding "the most direct and practicable water communication across the continent, for purposes of commerce"¹². This utilitarian approach to nature, while typical of the era, has been criticized by environmental historians for contributing to exploitative attitudes toward western landscapes. The book's detailed catalogs of plants, animals, and minerals served not only scientific knowledge but also commercial interests, providing information that would facilitate resource extraction. This tension between discovery and exploitation remains relevant to contemporary debates about conservation and development.

3. Political Implications and Imperial Ambitions

The expedition and its published account have also generated controversy regarding their political implications and role in American imperialism. The Corps of Discovery operated as a military detachment, with Lewis and Clark asserting American sovereignty over territories that were home to numerous indigenous nations and claimed by other European powers⁵. The Spanish, concerned about American encroachment, sent four armed expeditions to intercept Lewis and Clark, though these efforts were unsuccessful¹⁴. The expedition's diplomatic activities—distributing medals bearing Jefferson's image, raising American flags, and encouraging indigenous leaders to visit Washington—represented clear assertions of U.S. authority in contested spaces.

Critics have argued that the book's narrative, with its emphasis on "discovery" and "exploration," obscures the imperial nature of the enterprise. The expedition was fundamentally about extending American power and preparing for settlement that would displace indigenous peoples. As one scholar notes, "When nations expand, it is nearly always at the expense of other populations"⁵. The captains "offered the promise of inclusion and great economic and political benefits to Indian tribes they encountered, never pausing to question whether the new world they promised might be more destructive than constructive or more unwelcome than welcome by indigenous people"⁵. This aspect of the Lewis and Clark legacy has prompted ongoing reassessment of the expedition's place in American history and its relationship to colonialism and imperialism.

In Closing

Civic-minded Americans should read "History of the Expedition Under the Command of Captains Lewis and Clark" for several compelling reasons. First, this canonical text provides unparalleled insights into a pivotal moment in our national development. Understanding the Lewis and Clark expedition is essential for comprehending how the United States transformed from a coastal nation into a continental power. The narrative reveals the practical challenges, scientific achievements, and human stories that shaped this transformation.

Second, the book offers valuable perspective on our evolving relationship with the natural world. At a time when environmental concerns are increasingly urgent, Lewis and Clark's detailed observations of pristine ecosystems provide both a benchmark for measuring ecological change and inspiration for conservation efforts. Their encounters with now-threatened species and habitats remind us of what has been lost and what remains to be protected.

Third, the narrative illuminates the complex history of relations between the United States and Native American nations. As we continue to reckon with this legacy, Lewis and Clark's accounts of indigenous communities—despite their cultural biases—provide important historical context. Their diplomatic interactions with dozens of tribes reveal both the possibilities for cross-cultural cooperation and the problematic assumptions that undermined genuine partnership.

Fourth, the book demonstrates the power of public investment in exploration and discovery. The Lewis and Clark expedition, commissioned by President Jefferson and funded by Congress, exemplifies how government support for ambitious undertakings can yield tremendous returns in knowledge, opportunity, and national development. This lesson remains relevant as we consider public investments in scientific research, space exploration, and other frontier-expanding endeavors.

Finally, as historian James Ronda observes, "Lewis and Clark matter today because they act as a benchmark by which we can measure change and continuity in everything from the environment to relations between peoples"[9](#). Their adventure reminds us that we are not the first Americans to face difficult choices in troubled times. When honestly told, the Lewis and Clark story "inspires without leading us into simpleminded platitudes"[9](#). It humanizes our history by giving "names, faces and texture to our physical and mental landscapes"[9](#).

For all these reasons, this remarkable chronicle deserves to be read, studied, and debated by every American concerned with understanding our shared past and shaping our collective future. The journey of Lewis and Clark continues to serve as "a map and guide for life on the American road"[9](#).

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