

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

# Memorandum

TO : Matthew Ryan  
Archibald

FROM : Matthew

SUBJECT: Attached historical data relates to  
L & C wilderness waterway proposal —  
Missouri Breaks — Montana. It was  
compiled by Aubrey Staves, historian, Yellowstone,  
and this office

(F)  
ma

42a. Lewis and Cla.

DATE: 6/19/63

ryan

## HISTORICAL NOTES ON THE MISSOURI RIVER FROM THE MOUTH OF THE MARIAS TO FORT PECK RESERVOIR

The data contained in this report have been gathered to provide an historical background for that section of the Missouri River between its junction with Marias River and the upper end of the Fort Peck Reservoir. Here the Missouri forces its way through a rugged and relatively wild area, passing down by a succession of rapids through a valley which is in places rocky, compressed and barren, and in others, broad, alluvial and pleasantly timbered with willows and cottonwoods. The essentially step-like character of the river has caused this portion to be known informally as the "breaks of the Missouri." Though now relatively unimportant, this stretch of river has a rich and significant past which is yet within recall in a setting nearly unimpaired to this day.

### - Introduction -

In speaking of the importance of the Missouri River during the period 1805 to 1881, Chittenden said that its history was the history of the country through which it flowed,<sup>1/</sup> and certainly everything was done with reference to it. The Lewis and Clark expedition toiled westward up that sinuous waterway toward the distant Pacific Ocean, and it was the pathway by which they returned to civilization. Fur traders, from Manuel Lisa and Major Henry to the practical end of that business about 1860, moved their supplies and goods up-river, by dug-out canoe, Mackinaw or keel-boat, and finally by the power of steam, returning their furs and robes to St. Louis by the same means. The movement of troops and the establishment of garrisons in the Missouri basin was dictated by availability of river transportation, and the opening of the Montana-Idaho country by the gold miners during the sixties also was founded mainly on Missouri River steamboat transportation. Early settlement was equally dependent upon the river.

Construction of the Northern Pacific and Great Northern railroads during the years following 1881 rapidly destroyed the importance of the Missouri River as an artery of transportation, so that it could be said, at the turn of the century, that its influence upon the western country had ceased to exist. The modern highway system developed since that time has also largely ignored the river, leaving portions of it even more isolated than they were one-hundred years ago, saving here and there something of a past which is today difficult to comprehend.

Fortunately, the statement that "In the most absolute sense its glory has departed, and not a trace is left to remind the modern observer of its former greatness,"<sup>2/</sup> is not quite true of the upper Missouri River. Along the breaks, there are undisturbed campsites of Lewis and Clark, rapids which remember great men of the fur trade era - James Kipp, Louis Dauphin and their like, place names such as Woodhawk Creek, LaBarge Rock and Coal-banks Landing, left from the days of the steamboat men, and, at several points upon the river's banks, are the sites of not-quite-forgotten forts - Chardon and Piegan, of the fur trade, and Camp Cooke, of the Army. So long as the enduring printed word can be related to the timeless natural scene, something of the importance of the Missouri River in the history of the American West will remain within our grasp.

With that in mind, data has been gathered to relate the more important points along 138 miles of the Missouri breaks with their historic past. There has been no attempt to be exhaustive; rather, this is a drifter's view of river history - fleeting and possibly provocative.

- Points Along the River -

Mile 0.0, at the confluence of the Marias and Missouri rivers. The beginning is made at a point of particular significance, of which Captain Clark wrote on June 2, 1805: ". . . to a point between two large rivers one of which is 362 yd and the 2nd or right hand fork is 200 yds wide. encamped on the lar<sup>d</sup> shore opposite the junction of these rivers."<sup>3/</sup> Early the following morning camp was moved to the point formed between the two streams, where the expedition settled down to consider which branch was the Missouri.

As Captain Lewis analyzed their situation on the 3rd, "to mistake the stream at this period of the season, with two months of the traveling season having now elapsed, and to ascend such stream . . . further before we could inform ourselves . . . and then to be obliged to return and take the other stream would not only loose us the whole season but would probably so dishearten the party that it might defeat the objective . . ." <sup>4/</sup> An attempt was made to clarify the situation by sending out two exploring parties, one up each branch, to determine which was the major river. No clear opinion could be formed after five days had been spent investigating both to a considerable distance; so, Captain Lewis courageously undertook the decision on June 8th, "being fully of opinion that it (the right hand) was neither the main stream, nor that which it would be advisable for us to take, I determined to give it a name and in honour of Miss Maria W--d. called it Maria's River."<sup>5/</sup> The lady thus honored was Maria Wood, a young cousin of Captain Lewis.

The other members of the expedition did not agree with Clark's identification of the streams, yet they cheerfully began the construction of an underground "cache" for the safe-keeping of "articles amounting to about one thousand pounds weight." That, and hauling of the large dugout canoe or "perioque" onto the bank, where it could be hidden under brush, occupied the 9th and 10th.<sup>6/</sup> Had the crucial decision been otherwise, how different the outcome of the expedition might have been!

During the years following the passage of the Lewis and Clark expedition, the Blackfoot Indians, whose country lay upon the headwaters of the Missouri, showed such an uncompromising hatred for Americans that the penetration of their territory by trappers was effectively prevented. The animus has been attributed to an unfortunate collision between members of that tribe and an exploring party from the returning Lewis and Clark expedition, but, whatever the reason, the country upon the upper Missouri was closed until 1830.

In that year the American Fur Company obtained a foothold through a brilliant but desperate ruse. An old trapper by the name of Jacob Berger, who had seen service among the Blackfoot peoples in Canada, was dispatched from Fort Union, at the mouth of the Yellowstone, with a small party and presents suitable for concluding a commercial peace. Fortunately, his little party discovered the Indians first and was able to prepare a grand approach to a village of Piegiens. The boldness of the maneuver, with the fact that Berger was recognized by some of the tribesmen, saved the emissaries from "the butcher shop."

A number of the Piegiens accompanied Berger's party back to Fort Union, where the Indians were feted and promised that a trading post would be established the following season at the mouth of the Marias River. Accordingly, James Kipp, a Canadian of German descent and a veteran of the fur trade upon the lower Missouri River, left Fort Union in July 1831.<sup>7/</sup> "with 75 men and an outfit of Indian goods."<sup>8/</sup> After a tedious, up-river voyage the party arrived at "the mouth of the Marias River and selected the point of land between the two streams for the proposed establishment. It was begun about the middle of October,"<sup>9/</sup> and was "called Fort McKenzie."<sup>10/</sup> However, in conformity to a usage of the time, the post was better known as Fort Piegan, from the sub-tribe of the Blackfeet in whose country it was located . . ."<sup>11/</sup>

During the winter of 1831-32, James Kipp did a thriving business with the Indians, then abandoned his rather temporary post in the spring to return to Fort Union with the furs gathered from the upper country. With regard to the destruction of the first Fort McKenzie, or Piegan,

there are two stories which are current: Flandrau says, "the Indians, annoyed because the trading station was closed, burned it after the departure of the traders," <sup>12/</sup> while Maximilian indicates the first fort was deliberately razed, stating that "as the situation at the fort was subsequently found to be unfavorable, Major Mitchell, who succeeded Mr. Kipp, transferred the trading post." <sup>13/</sup> Larpenteur corroborates that, by adding, "The houses at the mouth of the Marias were burned after the company moved to Brule bottom," <sup>14/</sup> where the second Fort McKenzie, or Piegan, was built.

The site at the mouth of the Marias River was not again important until the establishment of steamboat service on the upper Missouri. To briefly trace the development of that mode of transportation, it is notable that the first such boat to operate upon the river was the Independence, which ascended for 200 miles in the year 1819. In the spring of 1832, the Yellowstone, a steamer belonging to the American Fur Company, reached Fort Union at the mouth of its namesake river. But, above that point, little progress was made because the vessels then available were not adequate for the navigation of a stream so beset with sandbars, rapids and varying stages of water.

By the middle of the century, steamboat development had reached a point where a vessel suitable for use on the Upper Missouri was at last available. It was the shallow-draft, stern-wheeler with balanced rudder. Broad-bottomed, drawing as little as eighteen inches of water, with twin engines driving an enormous stern-wheel, and maneuvered by balanced rudders which would remain manageable in the maelstrom created by the wheel, they were probably the most ingeniously efficient craft of their time.

In the spring of 1859, the American Fur Company sent such a boat up the Missouri River. It was the Chippewa, which managed to reach a point only 15 miles below Fort Benton to discharge its freight at Brule Bottom, where the second Fort McKenzie had formerly stood. <sup>15/</sup> The service thus initiated was beset with tremendous difficulties, in fact, the Chippewa made only one more trip before it caught fire and blew up at Disaster Bend; yet, the discovery of gold in Montana and Idaho created a demand for freight transportation which tempted many less serviceable boats into the mountain trade, for "the profits of the upper river commerce were too great to be ignored." <sup>16/</sup>

Beginning in 1864, boats withdrawn from the lower river began to appear above Fort Union, <sup>17/</sup> and enough reached the mouth of the Marias River in succeeding years to make it an important place for the discharging of cargo. This led to an attempt to establish a town at that point to serve as the terminus of a wagon road to Fort Benton. Accordingly,

in 1865, "The Ophir Townsite Company surveyed a town and offered lots for sale. A steam sawmill was purchased and men sent down to get out logs, preparatory to building a town. On May 25, while at work in the timber three miles from the landing, ten men were surprised by a band of Blackfoot Indians and all were massacred. Four of the men were scalped. The Indians made a hasty retreat and crossed the line into British territory . . ." <sup>18/</sup> Steamboats continued to unload freight at the Merias River landing, from whence lighter draft boats moved it up the river to Fort Benton by "double-tripping."

Mile 1.9, Archer's Island. This large island is now attached to the north shore, yet as late as 1909 it presented an obstacle to navigation known as "Archer's bar." It is one of the places where Neihardt came to grief in his boat Atom II during the trip immortalized in the book The River and I. <sup>19/</sup>

Mile 14.8, The Lewis and Clark campsite of June 1-2, 1805. The encampment was made on the small flat on the north side of the river about 0.4 mile above Boggs Island. It was described by Captain Clark, who wrote on June 2nd: "to a grove of trees in a bend, on lar<sup>d</sup> side at the entrance of a run, passing a small Island on the star<sup>d</sup> side at 2 M<sup>s</sup>, above which we encamped on the Star<sup>d</sup> side." <sup>20/</sup> It should be noted that the descriptions of Lewis and Clark are unfortunately complex; in case where a relocation of a site is involved, the text has been supplemented by a careful re-plotting of the courses and distances which were a part of their record. In that manner, it was possible to conform their geographical knowledge to present maps.

Mile 19.7, Coal Banks Landing. This point, at which the Great Northern Railroad's tracks diverge from the river, is reminiscent of one of the major problems of the steamboat men - fuel. Since "the average boat burned about twenty-five cords of hard wood or thirty cords of cottonwood in twenty-four hours' steaming." <sup>21/</sup> the timber along the bottoms was soon reduced to where it was hard to obtain. Hence, efforts were made to utilize the bituminous coal so common along the upper Missouri. According to Captain Grant Marsh, neither he "nor any other of the steamboat men were able to make any use of the native coal deposits." When added to the boiler fireboxes, the coal would redden around the edges without burning. <sup>22/</sup>

Mile 33.4, the Lewis and Clark campsite of May 31-June 1, 1805. The encampment was on the east shore of the river at the mouth of Eagle Creek. Captain Clark describes it in his entry for May 31st as "the upper part of a timbered bottom on the Star<sup>d</sup> side above the entrance of a stone wall creek affording water and 28 yds wide just above the mouth of which we encamped." <sup>23/</sup> Elliot Coues notes that the "Stonewall Creek" of Lewis and Clark "will be found as Key or Key's Creek on some maps and as Eagle Creek on better ones." <sup>24/</sup>

Mile 33.9, LaBerge Rock. An imposing landmark above the west shore, probably named for Captain Joseph LaBerge, the more prominent of two noted brothers who captained Missouri River steamboats. LaBerge was the principal informant of Hiram M. Chittenden during the compilation of his notable work on steamboat history. The two volumes are virtually a biography of Captain LaBerge, who ranked with Captain Grant Marsh among the most capable and fearless navigators of the upper river.

In addition to a captain, most boats also carried one or more pilots (duly remembered by Pilot Rock, at Mile 28.8). The river pilots were a haughty, independent breed, so given to independent decision that many captains were unwilling to leave the pilot house until forced to by utter exhaustion. Captains who were also capable pilots, as LaBerge and Marsh were, considered themselves fortunate.

Mile 37.6, Kipps Rapids, also known as the Eagle Rapids from the spire-like rock near the east shore. Neihardt says that this rapid can be identified from a considerable distance upstream by "a sibilant, metallic note as of a tense sheet of silk drawn rapidly over a thin steel edge," and he adds that it made other rapids they had passed through look like mere ripples on the surface. <sup>25/</sup> The legitimate name of this cascade of white-water was given for James Kipp, who built the first trading post of the American Fur Company in the Blackfoot country. In 1847 he was described as "a hardy veteran, upward of 65 years old, who for many years had had a farm near Independence, Mo., and had made the journey to the Yellowstone and back about 20 times." <sup>26/</sup>

Mile 39.6, Cathedral Rock. A great bluff, resembling a mighty ruin, located on the west side of the river. While Lewis and Clark did not give a name to this particular formation, it is described in the entry for May 31st. <sup>27/</sup> The name is of late origin.

Mile 41.6, Hole-in-the-Wall. Another natural feature on the west side of the river which has received a descriptive name in relatively recent times. Neihardt describes the "Elbow Rapids" at the base of this great rock as "deep and safe - much like an exaggerated mill-race," <sup>28/</sup> but Lt. August V. Kautz, speaking from his experience in 1860 says: "June 30. We passed the Hole in the Wall. We were unable to get up with the Chippewa." <sup>29/</sup> It was one of the places the little steamboat had to resort to the practice of "warping" accomplished by putting men ashore to carry a heavy tow-line to a suitable point above the rapids. There it was attached to a "deadman" buried cross-ways on the beach, and the boat was hauled up the rapids by winding in the line with a capstan, or "steam nigger."

Mile 46.6, Steamboat Rock. A columnar landmark on the bluff north of the river. Its distance from the Gulf of Mexico, by the combined reckoning of the Mississippi River and Missouri River Commissions, was given as 2,215 miles. <sup>30/</sup> The work of the Missouri River Commission in establishing the channel mileage was a boon to shippers, who were frequently victimized by the readiness of captains to over-estimate the freight haul.

Mile 49.0, the Lewis and Clark campsite of May 30-31, 1805. The encampment was made on the north shore nearly opposite Sheep Shed Coulee and 0.3 mile upstream from Pablo Island. It was described by Captain Clark on May 30th, as follows: "to a grove of trees in a bend, on the Lea<sup>d</sup> side at the entrance of a run, passing a small Island on the Star<sup>d</sup> side at 2 M<sup>s</sup>, above which we encamped on the Star<sup>d</sup> side." <sup>31/</sup>

Mile 51.1, Pablo Rapids. The treacherous nature of the upper Missouri, particularly where lower river boats were concerned, was shown when the Marion, commanded by Captain Abe Wolf, went hopelessly aground in the rapids in 1864. Captain Marsh brought the Isella down from Fort Benton, rescued the passengers and freight, salvaged the machinery, and returned to Fort Benton where the unfortunate vessel's equipment was sold. <sup>32/</sup> Wolf Island, one mile below the top of the rapids, may have been named for Captain Wolf.

Mile 54.6, the Lewis and Clark campsite of May 29-30, 1805. The encampment was made on the north shore near the lower end of Sneath Bottom. In his entry for May 29th, Captain Clark says, "to a point of Woodland on the Star<sup>d</sup> side where we encamped for the night." <sup>33/</sup>

Mile 55.4, Arrow River. This is the "Slaughter River" of Lewis and Clark, <sup>34/</sup> taking its name from the buffalo jump passed a few miles downriver, on the north side, and described as "a precipice about 120 feet high, under which lay scattered the fragments of at least 100 carcasses of buffaloes, although the water which had washed away the lower part of the hill must have carried off many of the dead. These buffaloes had been chased down the precipice in a way very common on the Missouri, by which vast herds are destroyed in a moment." <sup>35/</sup> (Probable location of the jump, between miles 59.8 and 60.6, though it could have been at mile 61.6).

Elliot Coues expresses a possibility that the present Arrow Creek may not be "Slaughter River," on the basis of certain maps which have misplaced the stream (Ladlow's and Twining's, in particular). <sup>36/</sup> However, a replotting of the Lewis and Clark courses and distances shows the two to be the same.



Mile 62.5, Deadman Rapids. This is the "Ash Rapids" of Lewis and Clark, receiving its original name from a few ash trees, "the first we have seen for a great distance . . . 37/ The present name earlier appeared in a more sinister form. In 1860, it was "Drowned Men rapid," 38/ while in 1876, the name was used as "Drowned Man's Rapids." 39/ Neihardt, in 1909, knew the place as "Dead Man's Rapids, a very turbulent stretch of water." 40/ But, whether the tragedy was plural or singular, it seems likely the name harkens to some water-accident of the days before the steamboat. Very likely, the unfortunates were voyageurs of low estate - unworthy of specific remembrance where life was held so cheaply.

It is also probable that the ash trees fell to the axe of "That Englishman, Courtney, who runs the woodyard at the head of Drowned Man's Rapids." 41/

Mile 64.0, site of Camp Cooke, established to keep the Missouri River open to navigation. As an outgrowth of the Sioux War which began in Minnesota while the Civil War was in progress, Indians harassed the Missouri River commerce with increasing ferocity after 1863. It was necessary to establish military posts along the upper Missouri River, with garrisons at Fort Buford (at the mouth of the Yellowstone), Camp Cooke (about a mile above the Judith), and Fort Benton, which was the head of navigation.

Camp Cooke, the post with which we are most concerned, was established by Major William Clinton, of the 13th U.S. Infantry, on July 11, 1866. 43/ Buildings were constructed with the inadequate tools and the poor materials at hand, resulting in quarters which were considered scarcely habitable when inspected by Col. D. B. Sackett. They are described as "entirely of cottonwood logs with dirt floors and roofs and no windows, as there were no casings for them and no glass." 44/ The rain soaked through the earthen roofs to form muddy puddles on the floors in the summer, and the winter snows penetrated between the wall logs to blanket the interiors in winter, while fleas and bedbugs were inescapable. Small wonder that the soldiers "grew disheartened and careless of personal appearance, as Colonel Sackett reported, wearing unkempt beards and ragged uniforms . . ." Morale was low, desertions were frequent.

A reinforcement of one-hundred men under Lieutenant Horrigan arrived by the steamer Octavia in 1867, but the voyage generated an international incident when a Fenian extremist among the predominantly Irish soldiers cold-bloodedly murdered a British officer who was traveling as a first-class passenger. 45/ The reluctance of the officers to interfere and see justice done was beyond the comprehension of the boat's crew and the other passengers. Also among the arrivals at Camp Cooke in the summer of 1867 was Mrs. Sarah Elizabeth Canfield, who thought the post better than some, for "she had the companionship of four other officers' wives." 46/

Though Camp Cooke has been characterized as isolated and useless, it had its day of glory. In 1868 the Sioux made life dangerous enough for the little garrison of four companies, totaling about 428 officers and men. 47/ In April the Indians ran off thirty-four horses and mules, and on May 17 the post was attacked by an estimated 2,500 warriors, who were repulsed. 48/ Two days later, a detachment under Lieutenant Edwards fought an engagement with seventy-five Sioux at the mouth of the Musselshell River, while other detachments fought on the Musselshell and Yellowstone Rivers on the 24th, and at Shield's River on June 13th 49/

With improvement in the situation along the upper Missouri, it was considered advisable to abandon Camp Cooke in 1870. It is likely the soldiers who served there were glad enough to see the end of the first permanent military establishment in Montana.

Fort Clagett, the "small Indian trading post, of two log houses," located near Camp Cooke is also gone, 50/ though its former site is indicated on the map.

Mile 65.2, site of Fort Chardon. Across the river and somewhat downstream from Camp Cooke and Fort Clagett, is the location of an older fur-trade fort. Its establishment resulted from a shameful event which occurred at the second Fort McKenzie, on Brule Bottom above the Marias River.

At that post in the Blackfoot country, the trader, Francois Chardon, with the help of a depraved clerk named Alexander Harvey, avenged a small wrong by arranging a massacre of some Indians. The vengeful Blackfeet forced the abandonment of Fort McKenzie in the spring of 1843, and Chardon moved down to the Judith River where he built another post and named it for himself. 51/ It was poorly located for trading, and was in turn, abandoned and burned when Culbertson made peace with the Blackfeet in 1845, allowing establishment of a post near present Fort Benton. 52/

Mile 65.4, Judith River. This stream, which enters the Missouri from the south, has retained its Lewis and Clark name. It was first called the "Bighorn" by Captain Lewis, for the "great abundance of the Argalia or Bighorned animals in the high country through which this river passes," adding, "Cap. C. who ascended this R. much higher than I did has thought proper to call it Judiths River." 53/ The name honored Miss Julia Hancock of Fincastle, Virginia, a thirteen year-old lass nicknamed "Judy." She became the wife of Captain Clark in 1808, bore him five children and died in 1820, at the age of 29. 54/

It was from the mouth of the Judith River in 1837 that smallpox was brought to the Blackfoot people. Alexander Harvey was bringing up the annual outfit for Fort McKenzie (Brule) when a case of the dread disease

broke out in his party. He prudently stopped with the cargo at the Judith, but the Piegans believed they were being duped and insisted that the cargo be brought up. That was finally done and the scourge was loosed among them with terrible results. 55/

Other events which transpired at that place were less deadly. In 1846, the Jesuit missionary, Father DeSmet "travelled eastward from St. Mary's Mission in the Bitter Root Valley with a band of Flatheads. On the Judith River they met their hereditary foes the Blackfeet and due to work of the missionaries a kind of peace was agreed to among them." 56/

Almost on the same spot, nine years later, a more important council was held. It was one of those grand councils intended to convince the Indians that they should take up the white man's way. Specifically, it was an instrumentality of that policy which proposed to gather the wild tribes on definite reservations. The plan was to hold the council at Fort Benton, where all the Indians of the northern Rocky Mountains could assemble to negotiate directly with two commissioners. Isaac I. Stevens, who was also Governor of Washington Territory, came overland from the west with his party, while Alfred Cummings came up the Missouri River with the supplies and presents. But the mismanagement of Cummings so delayed arrival of the cargos that it was necessary to shift the council site downstream to a point the boats could reach sooner. Hence, the last-minute shift to the mouth of the Judith River.

The site is described as "a wide, level plain covered with a noble grove of huge cottonwoods. It was on the left bank of the Missouri, nearly opposite but below the mouth of the Judith . . . The governor's camp was pitched under the lofty cottonwoods, and lower down was the camp of the crew of men who had dragged the boats up the river. They were a hundred strong, mostly Germans, having many fine voices among them, and were fond of spending the evenings in singing." 57/ Cummings, who continued to play the obstructionist, lived on one of the boats.

Representatives of eight tribes were peaceably assembled: "Blackfeet, Bloods, Piegans, Gros Ventres, Nez Perces, Koo-te-nays, Pend d' Oreilles, Flatheads." 58/ The council required ten days, and Chittenden says of it, "The Indians departed with their lavish presents. The era of the fur trader had ended and that of the Indian agent had come." 59/

Mile 65.6, PN Island. This is the "small willow Island" mentioned by Lewis and Clark as opposite the mouth of the Judith. 60/

Mile 66.8, Dog Creek. Lewis and Clark named this stream, which falls in from the south, "Bull Creek from the circumstance of a Buffalow Bull swimming from the opposite side and coming out of the river immediately across one of the Perogues without sinking or injuring any

thing in the Perogue, and passing with great violence thro' our camp in the night making 3 angles without hurting a man, altho they lay in every direction, and it was very dark." <sup>61/</sup> Coues has had his dry little joke over the name change from Bull to Dog by suggesting that some cartographer might win fame by combining the two into "Bulldog Creek." <sup>62/</sup>

Mile 68.8, the Lewis and Clark campsite of May 28-29, 1805. The encampment was on the north side of the river, opposite Bull (now Dog) Creek, and just below the present crossing of the Lohse-FN ferry.

Mile 71.7, Thompson's Creek. It is not possible to agree with Coues that present Birch Creek (Mile 69.3) is the stream Captain Lewis called "Thompsons Creek after a valuable member of our party." <sup>63/</sup> The soldier thus honored was John B. Thompson, not "Thomson," as shown on Captain Clark's chart. <sup>64/</sup>

Mile 72.0, Iron City Islands. The name recalls the steamboat Iron City, which was attacked by Indians while grounded at these islands. The event is undoubtedly one of those typified by the bit of doggerel:

"So there we stuck on that doggone bar  
And in some two minutes found  
There was other folks in that neck o' woods  
That knew we were aground." <sup>65/</sup>

What we know of the Iron City's trevail is contained in Iarpenteur's brief entries at Fort Union. "July 3, 1866. Rubicon arr. from above . . . brought news of the killing of mate of the Iron City by Indians; her whereabouts uncertain," <sup>66/</sup> and, "July 14, 1866. Iron City arr. from above." <sup>67/</sup>

During those troubled years when the Sioux were harassing the Missouri River steamboats, the pilot houses of upper-river boats were sheathed in boiler plate, which gave master and pilot adequate protection, and the passengers were relatively safe behind the boxes, sacks and bails of cargo piled along the bulwarks and railings, but the crew, when working a grounded vessel off a shoal, was always very much exposed.

Mile 75.1, Gallatin Rapids. This formidable stretch of water takes its name from a steamboat accident of a different sort. Again from Iarpenteur's record at Fort Union, "Oct. 6, 1867. Gallatin arr. from above in bad shape, guards all gone, etc.; had been reported a wreck, but got off." <sup>68/</sup>

Mile 80.2, Dauphin Rapids. Lewis and Clark passed up the Missouri at a high stage of water, and therefore missed this mighty obstacle to navigation, where "the channel was narrow, and no rocks appeared above

the surface." 69/ The name seems to have been given in fur trade days in commemoration of a ducking Louis Dauphin suffered there. Of that event, Maximilian says, "We passed several rapids, one of which was called Dauphin Rapid, after one of our engagés, who had fallen into the river at this place." 70/ Louis Dauphin was a famous hunter and guide, who had many hair-breadth escapes, and was killed by the Sioux in 1863. 71/

Returning to Maximilian's trip down the Missouri from Fort McKenzie to Fort Union, it doubtless was one of the most bizarre voyages on the upper river. Despite his royal titles and scientific accomplishments, Prince Maximilian of Wied, fitted into the American West as if he had been born there. Described as "a shabby, toothless, bald, oldish gentleman in a white felt hat and a pair "of the greasiest trousers on the Missouri," " 72/ he had hunted, observed and collected on the outer fringe of civilization, and, in the summer of 1833, was ready to return to his German principality with a large collection of Indian items and live animals. Transportation down the Missouri was provided by "a leaky, overloaded barge . . . crowded with specimen cases and crates containing bears, squirrels and other interesting livestock. Besides Maximilian, his servant Dreidoggele and the artist Bodmer, there were a cook and three young Canadian Boatmen to whom the navigation of the craft was entrusted." 73/ The prince won through to Fort Union with his crazy ark, only to lose the cargo in a steamboat disaster.

As already mentioned, the Dauphin Rapids were a major obstacle to Steamboat navigation on the upper Missouri. Lieutenant Kautz, who was on the Chippewa on its second trip up the river, says, "we got over the rapids (June 29, 1860), and we had to pull the boats over them with roaps . . . as these were considered the worst, we left our Mackinaw boat." 74/ The Mackinaw, a sway-backed barge, built with its deepest draft at bow and stern so that it could be worked over sand-bars more readily, had been brought along to use lightering cargo over the rapids. In the case of the Chippewa and the Key West, it was not needed, but the records of later years show that many steamboats did not manage to negotiate the Dauphin Rapids. During 1869 alone, a considerable fleet was engaged above the rapids hauling up the freight left by less powerful boats; these "double-trippers" were the Cora, Silver Bow, North Alabama, Big Horn, Only Chance, Fanny Barker, Violla Belle, Fenimah, Andrew Ackley, Huntsville, Miner, Silver Lake, and Peter Balen. 75/

Though the evils of steamboat racing were more apparent on the Missouri than on the Mississippi River, the intense rivalry between captains occasionally resulted in a race. One such occurred between two fine boats; the Nellie Peck, Captain Grant Marsh, and the Far West, Captain Mart Coulson. They started from Sioux City with the Nellie Peck slightly

in the lead up to the Dauphin Rapids, where the Far West did better passing that obstacle and thereby gained the lead to Fort Benton. On the downstream run, the Hellie Peck again had the best of it until the cub pilot made a bad guess and grounded the boat. As a result, the Far West reached Sioux City three hours ahead, the winner in a 3,000 mile contest. 76/

Mile 82.1, the Lewis and Clark campsite of May 27-28, 1805. This encampment was on the lower edge of a shallow bottom on the south side of the river. 77/

Mile 92.1, the Lewis and Clark campsite of May 26-27, 1805. This encampment on the south shore above Bird Rapids was described as being in "the upper point of a small grove of timber on lar<sup>d</sup> side where we camped for the night." 78/

Mile 92.4, Bird Rapids. Captain Clark, writing of the events of May 26th, says: "In the evening late we passed a rapid, which extended quite across the river we ascended it by the assistance of a cord & poles . . . in the rapid we saw a Dow Elk and his faun, which gave rise to the name Elk & faun Riffle." 79/ Coues believes the "Elk Rapids" to be the ones now called Lone Pine Rapids, 80/ but a careful plotting of courses and distances traveled by Lewis and Clark on the 26th does not support him.

Mile 96.6, Sturgeon Island. Named for the shovel-headed sturgeon common in the Missouri River.

Mile 100.4, Bullwhacker Creek. This stream, which enters the Missouri River from the north, is the "Turtle Creek" of Lewis and Clark. The original name was given because turtles were found there. Nearby are rapids formerly known as "Burdell's Rapids." 81/

Mile 104.4, Cow Creek. This is "Windsor's Creek" of Lewis and Clark, described as "on the north, 30 yards wide, with some running water and a rocky bed; we called it Windsor's creek, after one of our party." 82/ The monotonously bovine nomenclature of this area (Cow Creek, Bull Creek, Cow Island) was well-established at the time of the Nez Perce War, and it was near the mouth of Cow Creek that the Nez Perce village camped after crossing the Missouri River during the retreat toward Canada. It is about ten miles north along the trail leading up Cow Creek to the place where the Indians captured the ox-drawn supply train and beat off Major Ilges' small detachment of pursuing volunteer troops. 83/

Mile 105.3, Cow Island. Here the Missouri River is quite shoal, with a small rapid, formerly called "Picott's Rapid" just below. 84/ The shoals at Cow Island were such an obstacle that a landing was

early developed there to receive the cargos of boats unable to ascend farther because of low water. It was sometimes known as "Snake Point." 85/

The Shreveport was forced to discharge cargo on the bank at Cow Island in 1863, and in 1864, the American Fur Company's boat put the Indian annuities ashore there, though the Company was under contract to deliver them to Fort Benton. 86/

A classic of salvage occurred at Cow Island in 1869 when the steamboat Tempest was entrapped on the shoals by falling water. The vessel left St. Louis with the "mountain fleet," but the poor discipline of Captain James I. Bissell allowed serious trouble to develop aboard. Liquor was dispensed too freely at the bar, with the result that passengers and crew were more often drunk than sober. Even before Cow Island was reached, a fight at the dinner table resulted in the killing of a passenger by Engineer Evans, with the inevitable taking-of-sides by all.

When the Tempest grounded and was left stranded by the falling waters, captain and crew lacked the will to work free. A messenger was sent to Helena to inform the owners by telegraph of the vessel's plight, and they engaged Captain Grant Marsh at \$400 per month to save their property. Captain Marsh went from St. Louis to Salt Lake City on the newly completed Union Pacific Railway, and from there to Helena and Fort Benton by horse drawn stage. At Fort Benton, he obtained a Mackinaw boat and crew, and then drifted down the river to Cow Island.

Affairs aboard the stranded Tempest were deplorable, with the bar the only efficiently operating part of the boat. Captain Marsh stopped the sale of liquor, put the sobered-up crew to work with his men and "succeeded in working the Tempest out of the shoals." 87/

The method of moving a boat through shoal waters was called "sparring." Spars were "long, heavy timbers resembling telegraph poles, and a set of them, two in number, were always carried on the sides of the boat near the bow ready for use. When she became lodged on a bar, the spars were raised and set in the river bottom, like posts, their tops inclined somewhat toward the bow. Above the line of the deck each was rigged with a tackle block over which a manila cable was passed, one end being fastened to the gunwale of the boat and the other wound around the capstan. As the capstan was turned and the paddle-wheel revolved, the boat was thus lifted and pushed forward." 88/

When the Nez Perce Indians reached Cow Island (their only possible crossing without boats), there was a considerable stock-pile of Army supplies and equipment there, in the care of two civilians and eight soldiers, who had just been joined by a sergeant and two soldiers from a nearby engineering detachment. After effecting an orderly and safe

crossing, two New Perce scouts approached the barricaded white men and asked for food for their people. That was denied and they offered to buy what they needed, but were unable to obtain more than a side of bacon and a half-sack of hardtack. A misunderstanding soon developed and fighting began.

The little garrison was driven to cover, after which the Indians took what they wanted and set fire to the remainder. "We figured it was soldier supplies . . . We had privilege to do this. It was in the War," according to Peopeo Tholekt. <sup>89/</sup> The Cow Island depot was the first opportunity the Nez Perce had had to replace supplies and equipment lost in the Big Hole battle.

Before leaving Cow Island, it should be noted that it was also an embarkation point for miners returning to the States from Montana and Idaho. One returning vessel, the Imperial, took on 300 passengers there in 1867. <sup>90/</sup> Conditions were so bad on the boat, and the passengers became so threatening, that the officers at last abandoned their charge and left the Imperial a derelict.

Mile 109.1, Wood Hawk Creek. This stream, which enters the Missouri River from the west, is reminiscent of those wood shoppers who "braved the peril of the Indians for the sake of selling their wood at eight dollars per cord." Their lives were dangerous, and often short, with at least seven killed by Indians below Fort Benton in the summer of 1867 alone. <sup>91/</sup>

The common sources of wood fuel for steamboats were "rack-heaps," or piles of driftwood; "deadening," or standing dead trees, and cordwood, which was very unsatisfactory, if green. <sup>92/</sup> Boats were always at the mercy of the Indians when "wooding," hence, many expedients were resorted to in order to minimize the danger. Captain LaBarge placed a steam cut-off saw on his deck and carried a yoke of oxen, which he could quickly put shore by a large "staging" to drag a suitable tree aboard. There it would be cut into fuel while the boat was safely underway.

Mile 111.2, the Lewis and Clark campsite of May 25-26, 1805. This encampment was on the south side, a quarter mile above the head of the island which stands against the south shore. <sup>93/</sup>

Mile 117.2, Grand Island. Lewis and Clark took note of this island in their "Courses and distances May 25th 1805," <sup>94/</sup> but did not name it.

Mile 121.8, Lower Two-Calf Island. The island was "so-called because some years since a buffalo cow was killed upon it, having with her two calves, a fact never before observed," (quoted from the Report of an Expedition, 1860). <sup>95/</sup> The several islands found here appear to be the eroded fragments of the large "Tea Island" charted by Lewis and Clark. <sup>96/</sup>



Mile 124.2, the Lewis and Clark campsite of May 24-25, 1805. The encampment was on the south shore, at the upper end of Knox Bottoms. 97/

Mile 127.8, Armell's Creek. This is the "South Mountain Creek" of Lewis and Clark, 98/ which Coues says "is now attempted to be called after some person whose name no geographers seem to know; for he is Arnel, Annel, Amile, Arnal, or Emile, on various maps, and with one "l" or two. In any case I do not see the sense or justice of thus changing Lewis and Clark's names, when as in the instance of . . . "South Mountain," they are absolutely identifiable, and were properly published . . . 'Annell's Creek, 'Forsooth'. Why not Tom's, Dick's, or Harry's? If this river is anybody's it is Lewis and Clark's." 99/

Mile 128.0, Gardipee Bottoms. Probably named for the beautiful half-breed by the name of Baptiste Gardépée." 100/ Gardépée was a famous hunter at Fort Union, and he was concerned in several disgusting episodes at that post, according to Larpenteur.

- Conclusion -

As the waters of the Missouri River merge into the waters of the Fort Peck Reservoir, its history is lost to comprehension in our time. The land which was once the river's verge is drowned-out, and the events of a former time take on the quality of myth, forever beyond the affirmation of the eye. But that portion of the upper Missouri River from the mouth of the Marias River to the Fort Peck reservoir is no Atlantis, but rather a place where history happened yesterday, or the day before; and where the stage lies open to view.