

Nebraska History

June 1948

## Book Reviews

*Lewis & Clark, Partners in Discovery.* By John Bakeless.  
(New York: William Morrow and Company, 1947.  
xii+498. pp. Illustrations, map, notes, and index.  
\$5.00.)

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Here is a book! A magnificent theme, handled with exhaustive and painstaking scholarship and woven into a compelling and heart-warming narrative—this is something rare enough in the field of popular historical writing. This dual biography has done splendid justice to its subjects. After perusing the swarm of mediocre or ill-timed or ill-digested popularizations of the West or phases thereof which have swum into our ken lately, a study of *Lewis and Clark* is a bracing experience. It restores one's faith in the belief that historical integrity is not incompatible with historical imagination.

The brilliance of the voyage-and-march to the Pacific Ocean through darkest Louisiana Territory is without peer as an epic of Americanism in action. The lustre of the exploring achievement, the source of inspiration for living Americans who are in the debt of the explorers, lies not so much in the physical accomplishment—though heaven knows this was stupendous—as in the heights to which unfettered minds rose to a unique challenge. Jefferson, the hand of inspiration, Lewis and Clark, the two-bladed sword swinging, piercing, probing into the hostile Unknown, here was democracy at work on a high creative plane. One can imagine a monarch and his ministers tackling the problem. There would be elaborate world-shaking plans. The Man-in-Charge would be the favorite nephew of a favored sycophant. The Army and the Navy would actually run the show, for it would be primarily a military venture. Indians would be slain by the score. Underlings would die by the score. And the expedition would bog down dread-

fully before it even reached Sioux City. No, much better to entrust the mission to two young, unheard-of plebians, commission them as junior officers to please the Army, legislate the measly sum of \$2,500, let them round up a crew of assorted backwoodsmen and proceed with the business of exploring a continent!

Combing a vast array of sources, some never before examined, Colonel Bakeless (a high Intelligence officer in World War II, otherwise Dr. Bakeless of the Harvard English Department) has pieced together a story brimming over with humor, satire, irony, quiet heroism and high adventure which, for my money, is all the more exciting because it is true. He dwells not alone on the expedition (well-known to every school-boy as "the Lewis and Clark expedition," the two heroes being as immutably joined as Damon and Pythias or, more recently, "the touch-down twins" Davis and Blanchard). He tells of the origins, and the pre-expedition and post-expedition lives of Lewis and Clark, and he tells it all in a highly satisfying way. If I may be pardoned the expression, he breathes a lot of life in a field of American history which is about to expire from overdoses of super-romantical literary benzedrine. He does not glamorize the "Corps of Discovery" which had to contend with insects, tedium, homesickness and sheer fatigue, as well as more dramatic things like grizzlies and Blackfeet Indians. He does not make plaster saints out of Lewis, Clark, Colter or any other of the immortal group, but he reveals and interprets their diverse and richly colorful personalities. Some tantalizing unsolved and unsolvable problems he tracks to their very lair, and leaves us tense and frightened just outside the gloom. Was Lewis finally murdered or did he commit suicide? We still don't know, but Colonel Bakeless has his opinions, to which he is well entitled.

No effort has been made to locate with geographical precision the hundreds of Lewis and Clark camp sites. The author points out in the preface that he had no desire or intention to do this. This is one phase of Lewis and Clark

which is still to be done, comprehensively; but I agree that it would have been amiss to attempt it in this book. The purpose here is biography, not geography. Even so, the simple maps accompanying the work are accurate and effective in orienting the reader.

This work invites comparison with *Westward Crossings* by Jeanette Mirsky, reviewed some time since. With her more limited sources Mrs. Mirsky did a creditable job of interpretation, and by making Lewis and Clark only one layer in a "three-decker" her work is not eclipsed by more that that same fraction by this more comprehensive and I think more lively study. The objectives were of course quite different; the net conclusion much the same, to wit: Lewis and Clark and Jefferson made a great team.

In keeping with the high tone of the script, the choice of illustrations is excellent, and represents a lot of research itself. The list of acknowledgements reads like a "Who's Who" of historians, librarians and government officials who live along the approximate route followed by Lewis and Clark, from Jefferson's study to Fort Clatsop, and testifies to the thoroughness of the research job. I like the system of placing the copious research notes at the end, keyed to the page numbers (end-notes instead of footnotes, to avoid scaring the living daylights out of ordinary people who just want to read a good book and don't give a hang where the information came from).

Congratulations to the author, for writing a book that really needed to be written, to the publishers for knowing a good book when they saw one, and to fellow readers whose time spent will be richly rewarded.

*National Park Service*

Merrill J. Mattes

*Pontiac and the Indian Uprising*. By Howard H. Peckham.  
(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947. xix+  
346 pp. Maps and illustrations. \$4.50.)

So far as the present reviewer knows, the present work is the first full length biography of Pontiac, chief

of the Ottawas, since Francis Parkman wrote in 1851. In some ways it is a corrective to Parkman, as Pontiac appears considerably less the hero, considerably less the statesman that one might be inclined to believe upon reading the New England historian.

Mr. Peckham uses a commendably wide range of sources, both manuscript and printed, in addition to many secondary works. The list does not claim to be exhaustive. It is rather curious that C. W. Alvord's masterpiece, *The Mississippi Valley in British Politics*, escaped citation even as background material. However this point need not be stressed, in view of the unquestionable adequacy of the bibliography.

As in any biography of Pontiac, the core of the book is concerned with the siege of Detroit. That siege may have been only an incident in the larger sphere of world war and diplomacy, but, such as it was, it played a not unimportant role in the struggle between France and England for the control of the interior of North America. It was the evil fate of the Indian always to be on the losing side. The Ottawas and their allies were the conservatives of their day. They wished to keep the woods and waterways, the plains and mountains, for themselves and their children as homes and hunting grounds. The French fitted into this scheme, bringing them European goods and whiskey without attempting extensive permanent settlements; the English were home-seekers who cared little for Indians and much for land.

Pontiac does not stand out as a truly great leader—an Indian Cromwell or Washington. He had neither the character nor the ability to sustain such a position. A moderate degree of greatness may have been his, although there are others—Red Cloud and above all Chief Joseph—equally heroic. Pontiac is correctly enough pictured as one led by time and event—by the fact of British-French hostility and the circumstance of war. That he struck too late is

of published sources. Curiously, the especially numerous German Russian settlements in North Dakota are completely ignored.

The editors have been remarkably diligent in their efforts to render the Williams manuscript publishable. They have added an outstanding collection of photographs, drawings, woodcuts, and documents. All footnotes were checked and, when appropriate, expanded to include references to new information or more recently published material. However, almost all additional bibliographical references are to materials treating German-Russians specifically.

Despite its weaknesses and omissions, *The Czar's Germans* is a welcome, attractive book. Professor Williams' lucid prose is clearly organized; the illustrations are superb; the new content of chapters two and three alone make the book worth its modest price. The editors are to be commended for the skill and enthusiasm with which they accomplished their formidable task.

*Frederick C. Luebke*

Dr. Frederick C. Luebke is professor of history, university of Nebraska-Lincoln. He has published widely on Germans in Nebraska.

*Lewis and Clark: Historic Places Associated With Their Trans-continental Exploration, 1804-06.* The National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings, Vol. XIII. By Roy E. Appleman. Series editor, Robert G. Ferris. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1975. \$8.35.)

This is far and away the best work to date on Lewis and Clark because of its impeccable standards of scholarship, its brilliant illumination of the expedition's chronology, characters, and historical significance, and the thorough identification and description of associated historic sites. It represents painstaking research along the 7,000-mile length of the expedition's round trip, including detours, as well as libraries and archives. At the same time it is written in a fluid forceful prose style that contrasts with the carelessness and sloppy rhetoric of most popular writers on the subject.

The high quality of this achievement is all the more amazing because it is an accomplishment of the federal bureaucracy, so much maligned for its expensive mediocrity. The explanation for this glittering gem in the rubble pile of government publications is that it is another all-too-rare product of the highly professional Historical Division of the National Park Service. It is a pity that so few of the hundreds of scholarly reports by these professionals are ever published in quantity in hard-cover editions for the benefit of the general public.

Highlights of the Lewis and Clark expedition are too well known to warrant extensive repetition here. The reader thrills with citizens of St. Louis in 1806, who welcomed the returning heroes who had been given up for dead; and he weeps for Meriwether Lewis, an evident suicide victim of melancholia only three years after his triumph. Most of all the reader is awed by the magnitude of the geographical discovery. The explorers tore away the veils of myth about the American West, and set the stage for a century of conquest.

The author identifies forty-one historical sites or constellations of sites associated with Lewis and Clark, when they moved across the continent. Three of these are in Nebraska: Blackbird Hill, in the present Omaha Indian Reservation; Calumet Bluff, which anchors the dam creating Lewis and Clark Lake; and Council Bluffs north of Omaha, the site of later Fort Atkinson—not to be confused with the city of Council Bluffs, Iowa. (Actually, Lewis and Clark used the singular spelling, "Council Bluff," but the plural form to designate that vicinity soon became common usage.)

Of the forty-one total number of sites on the roll call, only four are in the National Park System: Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, St. Louis; Fort Clatsop in Oregon; Nez Perce National Historical Park in Idaho; and the Big Hidatsa site in North Dakota, which recently became part of the new Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site. A few other sites, such as Sergeant Floyd's grave near Sioux City and the Three Forks of the Missouri, are Registered National Historic Landmarks. The author bemoans the loss of innumerable other Lewis and Clark sites to the heavy hand of modernity—mainly gigantic reservoirs, courtesy of the Corps of Engineers, but also cities, roads, powerlines, cultivation, and river channelization.

This 429-page volume includes eleven excellent maps, 168

beautiful, pertinent, and fully credited illustrations, and 183 footnotes, many in elaborate detail. Instead of a bibliography there is a suggested reading list. However, this publication itself, loaded with systematic and reliable data, should henceforth be regarded as the standard reference work on Lewis and Clark.

*Merrill J. Mattes*

Mr. Mattes is retired from the National Park Service and is the author of *The Great Platte River Road*, published by the Nebraska State Historical Society.

*Kansas, The Thirty-fourth Star, A Pictorial Album.* By Nyle Miller, director, and staff of Kansas State Historical Society. (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 1976. Quarto size, maps, paintings, drawings, photographs, index; 154 pp., \$6.00.)

This beautiful volume is the pictorial valedictory of Director Nyle Miller, who is retiring after forty-five years of service with the Kansas State Historical Society. A careful selection of some 500 illustrations encompasses the prehistoric period, revealed through the paleontologist and archeologist; the centuries of Indian tribal occupation; and the gradual replacement of the aborigine with a European culture. The bulk of the illustrations, of course, extend from the cattleman-homsteading decades to the present—the photographic age.

There is a liberal use of color in panels, for paintings, on maps, and in all photographs taken currently. Hardly a county in Kansas has escaped some pictorial mention. In general the book is chronologically arranged in such categories as The Kansa, Osage, and Pawnee; Early Explorers, U.S. Forts; the Struggle for Statehood; Settlement and Town Building; Home Sweet Home; the Iron Horse; Doctor, Lawyer, Merchant . . . ; Culture on the Plains; Recreation; Manufacturing; Towns and Cities.

Legends accompanying the pictures, and a moderate amount of text matter as well, furnish a running narrative which expands the volume into a convenient outline of the state's history.

In a benediction Miller returns to the one constant in the Kansas experience—grass. For Kansas proportionate to its size has more grass and sky than any state in the Union. He recalls Kansas Senator John J. Ingall's "grass-is-immortal" essay and

one of Editor Rolla Clymer's paeans to the bluestem of the Flint Hills; the two accompanying photographs express Miller's feeling for his state.

Send this book to your favorite Kansan or to anyone who speaks the Kansas language.

*L. G. DeLay*

The reviewer, a Kansan, is Historian for the Society.

*Kansas and the West, Bicentennial Essays in Honor of Nyle H. Miller.* By Forrest R. Blackburn, et al (Kansas State Historical Society, 1976. Illustrations, index, ix, 215 pp., \$8.95.)

It is timely and entirely appropriate that five men connected with the Kansas State Historical Society, four of them staff members, should produce this readable and informing set of eighteen essays in honor of Nyle Miller, who at the end of 1976 retired after forty-five years of service to the Kansas State Historical Society. Miller came to the Society by the newspaper route. He was a linotype operator before he finished college and a natural to become newspaper curator in 1931 in a Society which, with the strong support of the publishers of the state and a magnificent collection of Kansas newspapers, has ever been newspaper oriented.

Miller's twenty-year stint with the newspapers won for him promotion to the office of executive director of the Society in 1951, a position which he filled so effectively that during the years of his incumbency the Society grew mightily in scope and overall outreach. I, a native Kansan, used the Society's tremendous newspaper files both when Miller was in charge of that area and when he was the director of the Society and can testify to the courteous efficient service of the staff members who have been as ready to help as though they had just been waiting to help solve my personal research problems and they have always given freely and graciously of their time and expertise. In his forty-five years with the Kansas State Historical Society Miller made a distinct contribution to his native state and retired with the well-earned plaudits of the Trans-Mississippi professional history fraternity.



already asked, and, if so, the government saw fit to organize an effort to research it thoroughly and published it as a short paper or booklet. Do make use of these well spent tax dollars. Also the source of surplus equipment and other materials listed in section 4 can be very helpful, as you will find the government will offer some of the most unexpected items for public sale. State supported organizations should check carefully within their state system as well as for the distribution of periodically abundant surplus government property.

The final comment I have for Hartman is that it would be most useful to museums to know whether some of the less directly related agencies have in fact made grants to museums, and then to include a list of those institutions that have been successful. When writing grants one can always use a bit of encouragement, and realizing that federal help is not as far away as Washington seems to be for most small institutions would be a great boost.

*ALLAN D. GRIESEMER, reviewer, is the associate director of the University of Nebraska State Museum in Lincoln.*

**Eide, Ingvard Henry**, *American Odyssey: The Journey of Lewis and Clark* (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1979. Preface, introduction, illustrations, bibliography, xxii, 245 pp., \$9.95, paper.)

Described by Professor Ray A. Billington as "one of the epic journeys in the history of exploration," the Lewis and Clark Expedition had a far greater impact on the future of our country than any other authorized by the federal government. Though the significance of this undertaking has long been recognized, not until the last half century, when the government inaugurated its several dam-building programs altering many segments of the route of the "Corps of Discovery," was great interest in it stimulated. Various federal agencies with different objectives made a number of surveys of the trail, in one of which the reviewer participated.

On the 100th anniversary of the expedition, Olin D. Wheeler, a topographer, retraced the route. Although inaccurate in places, his two-volume *The Trail of Lewis and Clark* (published by G. P. Putnam & Sons, 1904; second edition, 1924) showed the trail little changed from what it probably appeared a century earlier.

During the years following the expedition, the Missouri River, which the Lewis and Clark party followed to its headwaters near the Montana-Idaho state line, underwent many changes on the lower river, largely as the result of the seasonal floods, one of the best-

known of which was in 1881. Sites associated with the journey, such as Council Bluff, near Fort Calhoun, Nebraska, were left several miles from the river; others such as Fort Mandan, near Stanton, North Dakota, where the Corps of Discovery spent the winter of 1804-1805, were swept into the channel.

The wildlife along the route has also changed. No longer does the traveler on the Missouri, as did the artist George Catlin in 1832, see "astonished herds of buffaloes, elks, sneaking wolves," grizzly bear, which had no fear of man, and the mountain goat "bounding up and down over the green fields."

With the building of the six mainstem dams, the once rampaging Missouri has been "tamed." From Gavins Point Dam, near Yankton, South Dakota, to Williston, close to the Montana-North Dakota state line, the area is for a large part a gigantic lake which, when the levels of the reservoirs are lowered, leaves ugly mud flats and the tops of large trees exposed. There are numerous recreational areas and summer homes along the lake where the noisy motor boats churn the waters. On the Lower Columbia, where the Lewis and Clark party encountered dangerous falls and rapids, three dams have been constructed to provide easier navigation. In between, the government and private power companies have likewise built dams altering the character of the trail.

Despite the inroads of man wishing to harness these two great rivers for flood control, power, and navigation, there are still large segments of the historic route, such as the Lolo Trail paralleling the Loscha River from the Continental Divide to Weippe Prairie and above the Fort Peck Reservoir to Fort Benton in Montana, where the route still remains largely in its unspoiled and pristine condition.

In his *American Odyssey*, which appeared in hard cover for the first time in 1969, Eide, who is an excellent photographer but makes no claim to being a professional historian, retraced the route and has recorded in a sequence of some 260 photographs the route as it appeared about a decade ago. Accompanying his superb photographs are excerpts from the original journals of the explorers.

The shortcomings of this book are few. The format on the whole is pleasing. In the opinion of the reviewer, the volume could have been greatly improved by several suitable maps interspersed between the photographs keying them in with the location of the places recorded. On the whole, however, this book is an excellent supplement to the published narratives and journals of the expedition.

*RAY H. MATTISON, reviewer, is a former historian of the National Park Service and a former superintendent of the State Historical Society of North Dakota. He is now an historical consultant living in Tucson, Arizona.*

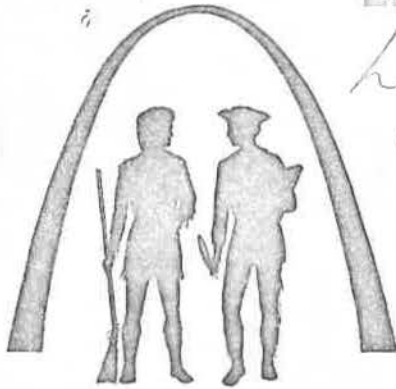
# LEWIS AND CLARK TRAIL COMMITTEE

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## OF MISSOURI



April 15, 1966

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Mr. George B. Hartzog Jr.,  
Director, National Park Service  
U.S. Dept. of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Mr. Hartzog:

At a meeting of the Lewis and Clark Trail Committee of Missouri in Boonville, Missouri, which was attended by three members of the Kansas Lewis and Clark Trail Committee, the Committee voted unanimously to hold a meeting of the Committee in conjunction with Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa and Illinois State Committees and the full State and County Committees of Missouri at the St. Joseph Museum in St. Joseph, Missouri.

It was also voted to ask Dr. Merrill Mattes to appear at this Regional meeting of the Trail Committees to give us an illustrated lecture on "Along the Lewis and Clark Trail with Thomas Hart Benton". I contacted Dr. Mattes and found he was being transferred May 1st, and thus would not be readily available as we assumed he would be when we set up the meeting time and place.

Thus, at the suggestion of the Committee members and at the instruction of the Chairman of the Committee, Mr. James A. Miller, I am writing to ask your aid in obtaining Dr. Mattes as the speaker for our Regional meeting to be held at St. Joseph, Missouri, June 12th, by assigning him to the task. This Regional meeting should be a very important one, because half of the states along the Lewis and Clark Trail will be involved in it. Dr. Mattes's talk would be extremely timely, and would help all of us focus attention on the task that we have ahead of us in supporting the

development of the Lewis and Clark Trail.

We would certainly be very grateful to you if you could give to this request your earnest consideration.

Sincerely yours,

*Carl H. Chapman*

Carl H. Chapman  
Secretary

CHC:dd