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IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE THIRD SPANISH EXPEDITION

JAMES MACKAY AND JOHN T. EVANS’S IMPACT ON THE LEWIS AND CLARK EXPEDITION

KEVIN C. WITTE

The odyssey that was the Lewis and Clark Expedition continues to capture the hearts of those who love tales of adventure and unknown lands. In light of the current bicentennial celebration that began in 2003 and will continue through 2006, the popularity and aggrandizement of Meriwether Lewis, William Clark, and their Corps of Discovery has never been greater. Clearly, none can deny that they were essential to expanding the geographical horizons of a fledgling nation coming to grips with the rich resources that the vast expanse of the Louisiana Territory would offer. However, lost in the glorification of these intrepid explorers are the exploits of earlier voyagers who contributed greatly to European, and later, American understanding of the Great Plains and the rest of the Trans-Mississippi West. Lewis and Clark were not forced to complete an entire three-year journey through lands unknown. A great deal of credit is owed to those that came before the voyage commissioned by Thomas Jefferson in 1803.

Great Britain, Spain, France, and Russia all played a game of imperial chess across the North American continent during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries. In the midst of this struggle, agents of the respective nations recorded observations and plotted the best means to harness the wealth of these new lands. Late in the eighteenth century, this conflict played out most directly between the British and the Spanish for control of the Upper Missouri region of the Great Plains. The greatest consequence of this clash to directly impact the later Lewis and Clark Expedition was a series of three Spanish expeditions carried out by the Commercial Company for the Discovery of the Nations of the Upper Missouri (hereafter called “Missouri Company”) during the 1790s. The third of
these expeditions, under the command of James Mackay and John T. Evans, reached the Mandan villages of the Upper Missouri in 1796, yielding the most significant and helpful findings later incorporated into the working knowledge of the Corps of Discovery. This analysis addresses the popular mythology surrounding the journey of Lewis and Clark across the North American continent by asserting that they were neither oblivious nor ignorant about what they would face. Instead, Lewis and Clark were well informed and prepared for their journey, at least as far as the Mandan villages, due to personal visits with James Mackay and the maps and journals produced as a result of the Third Spanish Expedition of the Missouri Company.

Previously, this association between the Lewis and Clark Expedition and earlier exploration has been alluded to in many works focusing on Lewis and Clark's journey from 1804 to 1806 and others stressing more directly the pre-Lewis and Clark voyages. This article will attempt to compile the connections established by these scholars, but also expose how the letters, journals, maps, and other sources of the era reveal the very serious contributions James Mackay and John Evans made to the success of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. In no way does this study assert that Mackay and Evans were the only previous explorers to provide geographical knowledge to the Corps of Discovery. There were many others besides Mackay and Evans that made great contributions as well, but the scope of this work necessitates a more limited field of inquiry in order to fully develop the relationship their expedition had with the later triumph of Lewis and Clark's journey.

SPANISH EXPLORATION OF THE UPPER MISSOURI

In order to clarify the impact of the Mackay and Evans Expedition on Lewis and Clark’s voyage to the Pacific and back, it is necessary to establish the background of Spanish exploration during the late eighteenth century. As noted previously, the Trans-Mississippi West during this era was a battleground for imperial supremacy. Principally, this conflict was waged between Spain and Britain. During the early 1790s, reports made their way to St. Louis concerning the increasing British encroachment upon Spanish territory. This advance of the British played into their objective to capitalize on the lucrative trade market of the Missouri watershed. In 1794 the Spanish, fearing increased vulnerability and also hoping to profit from the economic potential of a trade network through the region, formed the Commercial Company for the Discovery of the Nations of the Upper Missouri.

After the establishment of the Missouri Company, the Spanish launched a series of three expeditions to accomplish the dual aims of increasing trade with the tribes of the Missouri and nudging the British out of Spanish lands. The first of these missions fell into the hands of Jean Baptiste Truteau, who was to build a fort and trading post near the Mandan villages, persuade the Mandans to accept the friendship offered by the Spanish, and stop them from trading with British trading companies. Along the way, he was to document observations and interactions with Native peoples and determine the best routes and distances to the Rocky Mountains and beyond. Truteau, departing in 1794, had little success, eventually falling prey to a band of Teton Sioux that confiscated his trade goods. He did escape, but never made it as far as the Mandan villages and returned to St. Louis in 1796.

In 1795 a second and larger expedition departed St. Louis under the command of a man named Lécuyer with the intent of aiding Truteau. Carrying nearly twice the amount of trade goods, it too failed in establishing any sustainable economic partnership with the tribes of the Missouri. Leadership was the greatest problem. Reaching a Ponca village, Lécuyer took “not less than two wives since his arrival at the home of the Poncas, and wasted a great deal of the goods of the Company.” Thus two attempts by the Spanish failed to reach the Mandan villages and were total financial losses.
The Third Spanish Expedition:
James Mackay and John T. Evans

A Scotsman, James Mackay, directed Spain's third attempt. Mackay had previously been under the employ of two British companies, both the North West Company and the Hudson Bay Company, and he traded with the Mandans in 1787. After growing disaffected by his work for the British, he went to St. Louis and became a Spanish subject in 1793. Shortly after, he was chosen to lead the Third Expedition of the Missouri Company. Joining him was John T. Evans, a Welshman, who also swore an oath of loyalty to Spain, hoping to find lost brethren, a light-skinned people whose ancestors reportedly migrated from Wales in 1170. Evans believed these people were the Mandans, who were known to have light-skinned folk among them and speak words that reportedly sounded Welsh.

In Mackay's own words, the expedition's objectives were "to open commerce with those distant and Unknown nations in the upper parts of the Missouri and to discover all the unknown parts of his Catholic Majesty's Dominions through the continent as far as the Pacific Ocean." They were also to construct forts wherever necessary in order to prevent the British from intruding on Spanish trade in the region.

They departed in late August of 1795 with thirty men and four pirogues. Three were filled with trade goods for the Arikaras, Sioux, and Mandans, while the fourth was to be used to continue their journey to the Pacific. Traveling up the Missouri, they reached the mouth of the Platte River on October 14, 1795, left a man to build a trading post among the Otoes, and proceeded into Omaha territory. On November 11, 1795, Mackay and Evans met Blackbird, the great chief of the Omahas. They struck an alliance with him, decided to pass the winter among the Omahas, and built Fort Charles, named after Carlos IV, the King of Spain. Fort Charles was to be the first of a series of forts developed to anchor the vast trade network Spain wished to cultivate.

As the winter of 1795 progressed, Blackbird sent emissaries to the Sioux, Arikaras, and other tribes of the Upper Missouri to convince them to visit Fort Charles and secure for Mackay and Evans unhassled navigation on the river. No reply came from the Arikaras, spurring Mackay to send a party commanded by John Evans to establish relations, secure safe passage, and investigate a reported squabble between the Sioux and Arikaras. Evans set out, reached the mouth of the White River where he encountered a band of hostile Sioux on the hunt, and successfully retreated back to Fort Charles on January 6, 1796. Upon Evans's return, Mackay decided to placate the Sioux through generous offerings of trade items. Yet again, Evans set out on an expedition in which they were originally both supposed to take part. From Mackay, Evans received detailed instructions for what he was to accomplish.

Interestingly, these instructions would look startlingly similar to those issued by Thomas Jefferson to Meriwether Lewis.

Evans was responsible for extensively documenting all aspects of his travels, reuniting with Jean Baptiste Truteau, who it was hoped had already reached the Mandans, ascertaining the extent of British trade in the region, and finally, crossing the Rocky Mountains to reach the Pacific Ocean. It was a tall order that would go only partially realized. Departing on June 8, 1796, Evans's progress was slowed on August 8, 1796, when he encountered a band of Arikaras who made every effort to acquire as many of his trade goods as possible. After a few weeks, he persuaded the Arikaras to let him go, and he arrived at the Mandan villages on September 23, 1796.

The Mandans treated Evans quite differently than had the Sioux and Arikaras. He presented them with medals and told them of their "Great Father the Spaniard who inhabits the other Side of the great Lake." He took possession of an English fort and hoisted a Spanish flag amidst a supportive crowd of Mandans. Initially, his establishment of a Spanish trade presence went quite well. However, his stockpiles of trade goods ran low and the early cooperation of area
British traders quickly turned sour. His greatest conflict arose with a North West Company trader named René Jusseaume. Jusseaume originally cooperated with Evans’s efforts to restrict British trade company involvement in the region, but then began plotting to disrupt Evans’s plans. The ill will grew so heated that Jusseaume persuaded some Natives to attempt to murder Evans. Luckily, Evans had endeared himself to the Mandan chiefs, especially Black Cat, who prevented the assassination from taking place. That attempt having failed, Jusseaume took matters into his own hands, but he also failed due to Evans’s interpreter taking quick action and dragging Jusseaume out of Evans’s house. Jusseaume’s contact with explorers was not over after this incident; he would return to notoriety as a translator for Lewis and Clark.

Despite the great support of the Mandan chiefs, Evans realized that his presence among the Mandans was becoming increasingly difficult to maintain. He had little left to trade, and the British traders promised a steady flow of superior products. Reluctantly, he departed for St. Louis, assuring Black Cat that he would bring guns and ammunition upon a return journey to the Mandans. It was a promise he would not fulfill, which was made known by Black Cat seven years later upon the arrival of Lewis and Clark.

Evans returned to St. Louis in July 1797 after finding Fort Charles abandoned but made no mention of it in his journal. Mackay had arrived two months earlier. The Spanish dream of developing an extensive trade network along the Missouri ended. Despite the failure to achieve the major aims of the expedition, they were both quite well received in St. Louis. Mackay was named commandant of San André del Misuri and later St. Charles, both near St. Louis along the Missouri, and Evans was maintained in the household of Governor-General Manuel Gayoso De Lemos before Evans succumbed to malaria in 1799.

Mackay and Evans’s greatest legacy would be their journals, tables of physical features, and maps that resulted from their expedition. Both Mackay and Evans wrote extensively, and if the Lewis and Clark Expedition constituted the “the writingest crew” in the history of exploration, then Mackay and Evans had to rank close behind. In addition to the journals, Mackay published a manuscript sometime between 1797 and most likely before the spring of 1804 concerning Indian tribes he had studied. They were also both excellent cartographers. Mackay produced a map that depicted the Missouri and its tributaries from the Mississippi to the Yellowstone River. He completed portions on his travels to Fort Charles and then added greater northern detail upon Evans’s return. Evans’s contribution would be even more extensive. He compiled a seven-sheet collection of maps. Six showcased the Missouri from Fort Charles to the Great Bend of the Missouri, while the seventh made a basic sketch of the river beyond the Mandan villages as far as the Rocky Mountains.

With the background and results of the Third Expedition of the Missouri Company under the command of James Mackay and John Evans having been recounted, it is now appropriate to begin assigning linkages between this earlier journey and that of Lewis and Clark during 1804-6. Immediately, one major connection becomes apparent when considering the motives behind the respective expeditions and the instructions given to define the objectives. The similarities are quite striking between directions given to Jean Baptiste Truteau on the First Expedition of the Missouri Company, Mackay’s to Evans, and Thomas Jefferson’s to Lewis and Clark. A second aspect to consider is the importance of Lewis and Clark’s education and preparation at Camp Dubois, which included visits with James Mackay and assistance from John Hay in the translation of the Mackay and Evans journals. In conjunction with this discussion of time spent at Camp Dubois, the discernment of the usability and relevance of Mackay and Evans’s maps and journals must be realized. Finally, the references to Mackay and Evans in Lewis and Clark’s journals must be assessed for the ways in which
which prior knowledge attained in the previous expedition influenced the actions of the Corps of Discovery. In analyzing these major aspects, it will be revealed just how the so-called failure of the Mackay and Evans Expedition led to some of the successes of Lewis and Clark.

**Similar Motives, Common Demands**

During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, exploration often was driven by similar motives and made common demands on explorers. Due to these similarities, a logical conclusion can be drawn that later leaders and explorers endeavored to learn from the expeditions that went before them. Motivation for exploring arose from a variety of sources, including imperial expansion, commercial profitability, and Enlightenment rationality. Granted, the imperial climate had shifted from one of Anglo-Spanish competition during the expedition of Mackay and Evans to that of American legitimacy for Lewis and Clark, but still the pressure remained to stake a claim on and profit from one’s own land.28 The Enlightenment’s influence figured prominently into the language and expectations of those who called for the expeditions.Zenon Trudeau, after the formation of the Missouri Company, proposed that they “send to the country enlightened persons, who would use every exertion to penetrate the sources of the Missouri and beyond if possible to the Southern Oceans.”29 Jefferson also echoed the sentiments of the Enlightenment when he advised Lewis to consider “the interest which every nation has in extending and strengthening the authority of reason and justice among the people around them.”30

In addition, it must be considered that both the Mackay-Evans and Lewis-Clark partnerships involved government-sponsored exploration. Mackay and Evans received their funding and directives from Spanish authorities, while Lewis and Clark were supported by the U.S. government. Both operated along a military model, with a clear command hierarchy, codes of behavior, and predetermined travel plans.31 Those government officials organizing the endeavors elaborated upon this structure with clear instructions of duties. Examination of instructions given to each expedition makes abundantly clear that the desired outcomes were closely related.

In terms of official documentation of the Spanish expeditions, Santiago Clamorgan, director of the Missouri Company, gave each of his three expeditions nearly the same instructions. Jean Baptiste Truteau was the first to receive these on June 30, 1794, and the latter two Spanish expeditions were to offer their support and assistance to the undertakings of Truteau.32 Each expedition was supposed to build upon the efforts of the previous, but because the first and second expeditions were utter failures, Mackay and Evans took on and built upon the objectives set forth by Clamorgan. They had hoped to find Truteau among the Mandan nation on the Upper Missouri. It was from him that they expected to be re-provisioned for an even longer journey across the continent.33 As Mackay found himself unable to leave Fort Charles, he ordered John Evans to carry on the larger objectives of the expedition.

It is interesting to note that the only major deviation of purpose between the Spanish expeditions and that of Lewis and Clark centered on the issues of trade and commerce. Lewis and Clark were supposed to open the area for trade, conduct geographical analysis, and develop a greater understanding of Native needs and wants, but they were not expected to build a trading infrastructure.34 Formal trade relationships on these new American lands would be developed later, as a result of the reconnaissance conducted by the Corps of Discovery. On the contrary, Mackay and Evans, as noted above, were one of three Spanish attempts to directly establish a Spanish trade presence in the Trans-Mississippi West in the hope of staving off British entrepreneurial incursions. However, this difference of economic involvement within their respective imperial climates is where the divergence of aims basically ends.35
The resemblance of purpose between the two expeditions has created an interesting debate among noted historians who have conflicting opinions about whether Thomas Jefferson considered or even had access to Mackay’s instructions to Evans when he composed his letter of directions to Meriwether Lewis. Gwyn Williams, who writes specifically of the Welsh myth of Madoc, claims Jefferson copied directly, while Bernard DeVoto in *The Course of Empire* suggests instead that he may have referred to the earlier document in developing his own plans or just had a general notion of the earlier Spanish objectives because of news and journal extracts that had made their way east. Raymond Wood, in the most recent of these historical contributions, asserts that Jefferson had never seen Mackay’s instructions, nor did they ever reach Lewis in St. Louis. Despite the fact that Jefferson’s possession of Mackay’s document now looks doubtful, this does not reduce the likelihood that Jefferson had the previous expedition in mind when he composed his instructions for the Corps of Discovery.

Although Jefferson’s instructions are clearly not a verbatim copy of Mackay’s, a close examination reveals just how similar they really were. Both made brief assertions of national legitimacy for the exploration of the territory. Mackay placed Evans “under the protection” of Spanish provincial leaders and ordered him to tell every tribe that he has been sent by their “great father” in Spain who wished for their happiness in accord with their cooperation. Jefferson expressed that Lewis and Clark’s mission had been communicated to the ministers of France, Spain, and Britain, entitling the Corps to aid from any traders of those nations. He also articulated a desire in dealing with Natives to “make them acquainted with the position, extent, character, peaceful and commercial dispositions of the United States.”

The explorational scope of each expedition is also identical. Both were supposed to reach the Pacific, taking great care to study the most direct and practical water routes, and link all points of travel to exact longitude and latitude coordinates. The natural sciences were a major component of the expected observations. Mackay ordered Evans to record “all that was remarkable,” including winds, weather, minerals, vegetables, timber, rocks, animals, game, reptiles, and land formations. Jefferson’s list to be monitored by Lewis and Clark included soils, plants, animals (alive, dead, and extinct), minerals, metals, volcanoes, climate patterns, and weather conditions. Another area of great similarity was in their observations of Native peoples. Both cautioned about bellicosity in the face of superior hostile forces. However, they were commanded to engage Native groups peacefully to ascertain the populations of particular tribes, relations with others, languages, customs, religions, political organizations, and all other things relevant to their ways of life. The information and other outcomes of each expedition were far more highly prized than making a stand in a fight that could not be won. One final area of congruence in instruction was Mackay’s and Jefferson’s handling of their party’s return to civilization. Mackay advised taking a different route if possible to yield double the findings so long as it did not endanger the return. Jefferson also recommended additional observation on the return trip but exercised a bit more caution by suggesting that two of the Corps return by sea with copies of all journals and records, even going so far as to list the names of consuls at the Cape of Good Hope that would provide finances for such a long sea voyage.

Obviously, both expeditions operated under many of the same motives and outcomes. True, the imperial climate had shifted from an Anglo-Spanish rivalry during the Mackay and Evans Expedition to a slightly different dynamic of ownership and legitimacy for the United States after the Louisiana Purchase, but the general objectives of geographical discovery and economic assessment with plans for at least eventual commercial development still remained. This is reflected in the similarities of instructions given to the explorers. Jefferson does seem to have clearly in mind the Mackay mission, and maybe even Truteau’s earlier expedition, when crafting his directions for Lewis. Without question, Jefferson’s expecta-
tions for the expedition were clarified by his careful study of these earlier attempts. This is important because it aligns the two missions and shows that because of this close alignment, the findings of Mackay and Evans would be a powerful factor in the preparation and operation of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. It is that preparation for the Corps of Discovery’s departure that now must be scrutinized for connections with Mackay and Evans’s journey.

Camp Dubois on the east side of the Mississippi and opposite from the mouth of the Missouri was the principal site for Lewis and Clark’s preparation during the winter of 1803-4. They camped there because St. Louis and the upper Louisiana Territory had not yet been officially handed over to the United States. Close proximity to St. Louis itself allowed them to harness the awesome geographical knowledge of the city’s inhabitants, recruit a capable crew, and assemble all necessary supplies. Camp Dubois would also be the setting where Lewis and Clark reaped the collective knowledge gained through the efforts of Mackay and Evans.

Clark reveals that the Corps’ first direct contact with James Mackay took place on January 10, 1804. It was a difficult day for Clark, who was not feeling particularly well and blamed “the Ducking & excessive cold” he had suffered the day before. However, despite his discomfort, Clark does announce the presence of “Cap. Mackey,” who just returned from surveying land on the Upper Missouri. Despite no further elaboration in the journals of the meeting that took place between Clark, Lewis, and Mackay, it seems obvious that a fruitful discussion was held.

THE JOURNALS, WRITINGS, AND MAPS OF MACKAY AND EVANS

In actuality, Camp Dubois was the gathering place of a whole host of traders, travelers, and surveyors. Of all these visitors, John Hay, United States postmaster at Cahokia, may have been most significant in making the findings of the Mackay and Evans Expedition accessible to Lewis and Clark. Hay was the man who unlocked the vast stores of insight contained within the journals of Mackay and Evans, which Lewis claims in a letter to Jefferson to have received from Mackay a few weeks before their discussion at Camp Dubois on January 10, 1804. Included in these documents from the Mackay and Evans Expedition were the journals of both Mackay and Evans from 1795 to 1797, Mackay’s “Table of Distances” (a complete listing of natural features up to the White River), portions of Evans’s accounts from Fort Charles to the Mandan villages, and Mackay’s “Notes on Indian Tribes,” an essay completed upon his return to St. Louis. Hay served as a translator because these documents were written in French, and he saw fit to supplement the translations with data from his own travels in Upper Missouri country.

These journals and other documents proved vitally important to the success of Lewis and Clark’s journey. From them they gained keen insight on the cultural, political, and geographical realities of the Trans-Mississippi West. Mackay and Evans made quite clear the rich trade prospects if reliable partnerships were established with both sedentary and nomadic tribes. Of all the tribes, they identified the Mandans as being most receptive. This insight may have played a role in Lewis and Clark’s selection of a winter camp among the Mandans. Other Native tribes were also clearly depicted, sometimes not in the most positive of ways. Mackay and Evans’s journals revealed the tribulations they faced from the Omahas, Arikaras, and the Sioux. These experiences made quite clear the price of passage through the lands of these tribes. The documents also revealed the imperial machinations by the powers of Europe that were being played out on the Missouri. Some of this had subsided by the time of Lewis and Clark’s departure, but it was still something they needed to take into account. Lewis and Clark so readily accepted the value of these writings that it is believed they carried Hay’s translations of them on their journey.

Another document that played an important role in preparing the Corps of Discovery
was Mackay's "Notes on Indian Tribes." This report dealt with Mackay's earlier visit to the Mandans during 1787. In it Mackay revealed burial customs, the construction of earth lodges, patterns of farming and hunting, and a variety of other observations of Mandan life. 54

Written recollections of Mackay and Evans's travels were not the only contributions to the later Lewis and Clark Expedition. Complementing those journals perfectly were three maps developed during the 1790s that came into the possession of Lewis and Clark during their time at Camp Dubois. Antoine Soulard, with the assistance of James Mackay, created one either around 1795 specifically for Mackay and Evans to take along or possibly a bit earlier for Jean Baptiste Truteau. 55 The other two were discussed previously as resulting directly from the Third Spanish Expedition. One, known later as the Indian Office map, was drawn by James Mackay and completed upon the return of John Evans to St. Louis. The final map of the three was actually a series of seven maps that John Evans produced from his journey to the Mandan villages. All played a major role in shaping the geographical awareness of the Corps of Discovery. Through the study of these maps, it was possible to plan the length of various intervals of travel and anticipate interactions with Indian tribes along the way.

These maps came into the possession of Lewis and Clark in a couple of ways. Obviously, they represented the most accurate geographical knowledge to date concerning the region, and therefore copies were circulated from St. Louis to as far as Washington, DC. Of the three, Lewis and Clark's acquisition of the Soulard map is the hardest to pinpoint. Originally drafted in Spanish, the Soulard copy in the possession of the Corps was in English and may have come from a U.S. territorial judge, George Turner, or possibly Soulard himself, although it still leaves the map's translation a mystery. 56 Mackay's map, later known as the Indian Office map, came from William Henry Harrison, then the Indiana territorial governor, at the request of William Clark. In a letter dated November 13, 1803, Harrison informs Clark that a copy of the map was on its way. 57 On December 28, 1803, Lewis sent a letter informing Jefferson that he had received both the Soulard map and Mackay's map of the expanse from the Missouri's mouth to the Mandan settlements. 58 Evans's seven maps came later, directly from Jefferson to Lewis with a letter dated January 13, 1804. 59

The Soulard map, as mentioned above, was either made directly for the Mackay and Evans Expedition or enhanced before their departure. 60 Soulard's production depicts almost the entire North American continent west of the Mississippi and north of thirty-five degrees north latitude. 61 On the Upper Missouri, it portrays the Platte River quite realistically and reveals the names of several tribes west of the Mandan villages. Mackay's earlier involvement during the 1780s in the Northern Plains is the likely means by which Soulard obtained this information, as Mackay is known to have worked with Soulard prior to the Mackay and Evans Expedition. Unfortunately, there was one major problem with the map. Soulard's principal failing was the result of a common predicament that plagued many explorers and cartographers.Latitude was quite easy to determine, but accurate longitude readings were much more difficult. Due to this challenge, his one major inaccuracy is that the east-west portion of the Missouri is elongated, thus distorting the Great Bend and Grand Detour near the Mandan villages. 62 Despite this error, the map still proved somewhat useful to the expedition, as Clark saw fit to have it copied and translated, and he made numerous notes about tribes, distances, and a variety of other notations on his copy. 63 However, its importance did not approach that of Mackay and Evans's maps, which were more accurate and prominent in journal references. 64 Mackay's map proved to be of much greater utility than that of Soulard's. Drawn with a large-scale design not quite as expansive as Soulard's map, it covered the Missouri from St. Charles, Missouri, to the Mandan villages. Part of the original assignment given before their departure in 1795, Mackay's first version only
covered as far as the White River in present-day South Dakota. After Evans returned to St. Louis, it was expanded to reflect his additional travels. It is possible the authorship more fully lies with Evans due to the fact that over half of the map depicts the Missouri above the northern extent of Mackay's travels during 1795-97. Regardless of who deserves more credit for its creation, the map was quite useful to Lewis and Clark because of the detailed depiction of water routes and extensive notations. Soulard provided a decent overview, but this map brought Lewis and Clark closer to being able to anticipate specific river landmarks and Indian encampments. Also helpful were the notations showing Indian settlements, which, except for exaggerating the distance west to the Mandan encampments by 400 miles, were basically correct.

The final set of maps in Lewis and Clark's collection in effect comprised a "road map" for over 700 miles of their journey. Only officially resurfacing from the efforts of Aubrey Diller in 1946, Evans's maps, consisting of seven sheets, depicted the course of the river in exquisite detail and highlighted the settlements of the Omahas, Poncas, Arikaras, Mandans, and Hidatsas. So complete were they that Lewis and Clark made only supplementary maps of the Missouri before they reached the Mandan villages. Six of them form one continuous map from Fort Charles to the mouth of the Knife River using a scale of approximately eight to ten miles per inch. Extensive use of these maps by Clark is evident by the number of his notations and places where he scratched out earlier notes.

The seventh sheet depicts the Missouri from the mouth of the Knife River to the Rocky Mountains. It showcases lands not traveled by Evans, so they must have been described to him while he was among the Mandans. This sheet may have been responsible for fundamentally changing a long-held belief about what one faced in crossing the Rockies. Previously it was believed that the Rockies consisted of one major ridge to be traversed. The Evans map clearly depicts the Rockies as being composed of no less that four rows of ridges. Naturally, this allowed Lewis and Clark to more adequately prepare for what would be a truly arduous portion of their journey.

Evans's maps were the finest that had ever been composed of the Upper Missouri. In fact, their importance and utility would not be diminished until Clark's own map of the western United States was published by Nicholas Biddle in 1814. Clearly, the combination of his seven-sheet map, the Mackay-Evans Indian Office map, and the earlier Soulard map establish without equivocation that the Lewis and Clark Expedition was traveling through well-known territory at least as far as the Mandan villages, and had some basic knowledge of lands farther afield.

In addition to the maps and translated journals of Mackay and Evans, John Hay and James Mackay contributed to Lewis and Clark's success in Indian relations through another preparation at Camp Dubois that is often overlooked. As was mentioned earlier, Mackay and Evans several times ran into trouble with various tribes over trade goods. Hay attempted to utilize his understanding of these earlier Indian interactions by guiding Lewis and Clark in the preparation of gift bags with the goal of helping Lewis and Clark avoid serious harassment during their travels. Aware of the role that water travel would play, he also advised that the gifts be placed into bags made of waterproof fabric. One set of bags was designated for Indians encountered along the way to the Mandan villages, while the other half was set aside for any tribes and "foreign nations" beyond the Upper Missouri. Twenty-one bags were assembled as winter turned to spring in 1804. According to Clark's journal, from April 26, 1804, through the beginning of May, Hay assisted the packing every step of the way, advising what should be placed in each bag for the Otoes, Omahas, Poncas, Arikaras, and Mandans. He recommended a specific bag for Chief Blackbird of the Omahas that included scarlet leggings, a military officer's coat, and an American flag. Much of the background on these tribes came from the observations of Mackay and Evans during their 1795-97 excursion. Even the order in which these bags were
packed revealed the extent of Lewis and Clark's newly expanded understanding of the upper Louisiana Territory.

Interestingly, despite the thorough planning and packing of the gift bags, Clark remained the consummate realist, worrying that they were "not as much as I think necessary for the multitude of Indians thro which we must pass on our road across the Continent." Despite his lack of confidence, Hay's assistance and their exposure to Mackay and Evans's dealings with Indians paid great dividends in establishing friendly relationships between Lewis and Clark's crew and the tribes they encountered.

The preparations during the winter of 1803-4 at Camp Dubois were absolutely pivotal in securing a large portion of the expedition's success. This respite before the Corps' departure allowed them access to the collective knowledge of all traders, travelers, and explorers that called St. Louis home. Visits with Mackay and Hay's assistance with translation contributed greatly to the strategic planning of the expedition and the information gathering on Middle and Upper Missouri tribes and the land between the Indian settlements. The assembling of relevant maps from Jefferson, Harrison, and others allowed them to harness nearly all the geographical understanding of the lands through which they were about to travel. Hays, with Mackay and Hay's assistance and translation, contributed greatly to the strategic planning of the expedition and the information gathering on Middle and Upper Missouri tribes and the land between the Indian settlements.

The most immediate journal references to the earlier Mackay and Evans Expedition are in regard to landmarks or physical features that Lewis and Clark were either able or unable to find. Clark in particular made a number of references that made quite clear he was utilizing the maps, journals, and table of distances from Mackay and Evans. After their departure from Camp Dubois, Clark's first mention of Mackay came on June 16, 1804, while looking for an old fort that had been identified on the Indian Office map as "vieux fort." He was unable to find it, but its mention begins to establish the extent to which the Corps used the materials of Mackay and Evans as a guide. Clark's next reference to Mackay came on July 1, 1804, when he commented on his inability to find any trace of a village of the "Kanseis" Indians that Mackay claimed was located near present-day Leavenworth, Kansas.

On August 4, 1804, Clark revealed a living connection between the Mackay-Evans and Lewis-Clark expeditions. It turns out that one member of the Corps of Discovery, Pierre Cruzatte, also participated in the Third Spanish Expedition. Clark made this known in the journal at this point because the party had just passed an old trading post.

LEWIS AND CLARK REFERENCES TO MACKAY AND EVANS

So far it has been established that Mackay and Evans's greatest legacy was the usefulness of their maps and journals during the preparation for the Lewis and Clark Expedition. However, that claim would serve to elucidate only one portion of the relationship between the two expeditions. The other equally important aspect of the connection between these two adventures can only be ascertained by examining the impact Mackay and Evans had during the journey of the Corps of Discovery. This association shows up most forcefully in the journals and later memoirs of Lewis and Clark. Mackay and Evans's relevance for Lewis and Clark on expedition can be found through an analysis of basic landmarks, cartographic features, and interactions with the various tribes and individuals that both encountered.
house that Cruzatte had staffed near some Otoe villages. Without question, Cruzatte’s involvement enhanced further the knowledge provided by the Mackay-Evans materials.

Both Lewis and Clark made a number of other references in their journals to additional landmarks and physical features previously identified by Mackay and Evans. On August 8, 1804, for example, Lewis noted passing a river identified by Mackay as the “Souix” river. Clark revealed that the Corps of Discovery passed by Mackay’s Fort Charles on August 13, 1804. An unusual reference came on September 14, 1804, when Clark expressed his inability to locate a volcano Mackay and Evans had identified. This seems highly peculiar in light of the absence of such activity in northeast Nebraska, but may have been the result of an inaccurate translation or misunderstanding of a physical phenomenon. Finally, Clark referred directly to Evans on September 24, 1804, when crossing a river near a Teton Sioux encampment and on October 20, 1804, after passing by an old Mandan village that Evans identified.

This litany of Mackay-Evans “spottings” in the journals is not meant to be a comprehensive listing of all the times their names were present. It also does not reveal in great depth just how the materials of the Mackay and Evans Expedition were used directly on Lewis and Clark’s journey. However, it does make quite clear that Mackay and Evans’s earlier mission was constantly on the minds of Lewis and Clark. As a result, they were able to anticipate and confirm a number of locations previously identified in maps, journals, and discussions at Camp Dubois.

THE TRIBES OF THE UPPER MISSOURI

Coupled with the common ties the expeditions shared with regard to landmarks were a number of significant interactions with the same tribes and individuals of the Upper Missouri. As a direct consequence of Lewis and Clark’s enhanced understanding of these peoples, they were better equipped to successfully deal with the tribes and individuals they encountered.

The first place this factor came into play was at the Omaha village of Chief Blackbird. Blackbird played an integral role in attempting to secure safe passage for Evans on his trip to the Mandan villages. However, he also placed high demands on Mackay that kept him from traveling farther with his partner. In fact, Mackay used up most of his trade goods attempting to maintain his friendship with Blackbird and other members of his tribe. Lewis and Clark were well aware of Blackbird’s potential to disrupt or exact a heavy toll on any group of travelers moving through Omaha territory. This awareness was instilled in them by their study of the journals but also by John Hay when he helped them prepare the special gift bag in hopes of enticing Blackbird to treat them well. Despite this wise planning, Lewis and Clark arrived too late to take full advantage of their well-intentioned gifts. Blackbird had died in 1800 of smallpox and was buried on a bluff overlooking the Missouri. Always aware of how gestures might appear to the Natives they encountered, Lewis and Clark visited Blackbird’s mound on August 11, 1804, and affixed a white flag bordered with red, white, and blue.

Lewis and Clark’s aplomb in dealing with Indian contact was tested under much greater duress as they moved north into Teton Sioux territory. In 1796 Evans had been forced to retreat from a Sioux band and then eventually sneak past them on his way to the Mandan villages. By 1804 the Sioux bands were still the most feared of the Missouri River tribes. Lewis and Clark’s major altercation began on September 24, 1804, after one of their horses was stolen. In this situation it would have been quite easy for a hot-tempered or poorly prepared band of explorers to act rashly and bring the entire wrath of the Sioux nation down upon them. Instead, they handled the situation with the proper mix of diplomacy and action. A council was held between the explorers and the tribal chiefs. Gifts of medallions, a U.S. flag, laced uniform coat, hat, certificates, and a number of smaller items were given to placate the chiefs and principal warriors of the tribe.
They also invited the chiefs to come aboard their boat to see the air gun and other curiosities. It was going well until whiskey was offered to the Indians. As the alcohol began to take effect, negotiations took a turn for the worse. Clark was forced to draw his sword, and his crew readied for battle. This unwillingness to back down gave the Indians pause, established the Corps of Discovery as a group worthy of grudging respect, and led to somewhat cordial relations until the Corps' harried but successful departure on September 28, 1804. Without question, the Sioux encounter could have been much more destructive to the success of the expedition, but fortunately their prior knowledge of the Sioux aided Lewis and Clark's efforts to avert disaster.

Just as the Mackay and Evans materials portrayed the potential treachery of the Sioux, in much the same way they also exposed the agreeable nature of the Mandans. Mackay and Evans had spoken glowingly of the Mandans, calling them "in general people as good as they are mild who lay great value on the friendship of the Whites." Lewis and Clark had hoped to find a similar reception to that encountered by Evans. The senior chief, Black Cat, had been a close friend of Evans but had been in a state of dismay that Evans had never returned as promised. This left Lewis and Clark with the challenge of pledging a more lasting bond with the Mandans. Understanding the apprehension felt by the Mandans as a result of Evans's unfulfilled promise, Lewis and Clark made every effort to "advise them to remain at peace and that they might depend upon Getting Supplies through the Channel of the Missouri, but it required time to put the trade into operation." As the cold winter settled in, Lewis and Clark continued to engage in this Indian diplomacy but found increased respite from this delicate work as their need to provide food, clothing, and shelter for the men took priority.

Interactions with Indians posed some of the most serious challenges to the success of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Fortunately, they had been briefed thoroughly about the intricacies of dealing with most of the tribes from the mouth of the Missouri to the Mandan villages. Because any major misstep could have spelled doom for the expedition, knowledge of Mackay and Evans's experiences with these tribes improved the odds significantly that Lewis and Clark would surpass the scope and distance traveled by the earlier expedition.

CONCLUSION

In light of all available evidence, it becomes clear that an expedition nearly unknown to the American collective memory did uncover vital geographic and Native cultural data that had a major impact on the voyage of Lewis and Clark. James Mackay and John T. Evans may not have accomplished their aims of reaching the Pacific and securing trading rights for Spain, but their journals and maps, and the advice given by Mackay during personal visits to Camp Dubois, played a pivotal role in the later success of the Corps of Discovery. It is important to note that while these findings do adjust the magnitude of credit and accolades heaped on Lewis and Clark, in no way do they diminish the significance of what Lewis and Clark accomplished. They still were responsible for one of the most ambitious and extensive studies of a geographical region ever conducted. Instead, the exploits of Lewis and Clark are clarified and placed into the context of a larger movement of nationally sponsored exploration of lands beyond the Mississippi. Within this context, it is readily apparent that Lewis and Clark were able to complete the first portion of their voyage across much of the Great Plains more skillfully, and thus had a better chance for successful completion of the entire journey. Their intensive study of Mackay and Evans's earlier expedition enabled Lewis and Clark to effectively prepare for a continental crossing, navigate more easily due to excellent tables and maps, avoid and defuse Indian troubles, establish a successful winter camp at the Mandan villages, and gain some insight into the lands beyond the Upper Missouri. In analyzing the relationship between the Third Spanish Expedition
of the Missouri Company and the Lewis and Clark Expedition, further light is shed on the attribution of discoveries and explorations of unknown lands and peoples in history. With this in mind, the Lewis and Clark Expedition takes its rightful place not as a journey into the complete unknown but instead as a case of standing on the shoulders of giants that came before and being able to see and travel farther.

NOTES


9. Ibid., 42-45.


11. DeVoto, Course of Empire, 374-75.


16. Ibid.

17. Quaife, Captain Mackay’s Journal, 196.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid., 197.

20. Ibid., 197-98.


22. Ibid., 133.


25. Orser leaves open the option that Mackay may not have finished the manuscript before the departure of the Corps of Discovery from St. Louis in 1804. Charles Orser Jr. and James Mackay, “The Explorer as Ethnologist: James Mackay’s ‘Indian Tribes’ Manuscript with a Test of His Comments on the Native Mortuary Customs of the Trans-Mississippi West,” Ethnohistory 30 (Winter 1983): 16. On the other hand, Wood in his more recent work Prologue to Lewis and Clark (6) asserts that Clark and Lewis had access to it before their departure. The journals of Lewis and Clark do not mention it specifically, but it will be shown later that they did seem to be well versed in Indian culture and behavior.


32. Clamorgan’s Instructions, Before Lewis and Clark, 2:583-87.

33. Mackay to Evans, January 28, 1796, Before Lewis and Clark, 2:410-11.


35. Wood, Prologue to Lewis and Clark, 65.

36. Gwyn A. Williams, Madoc: The Making of a Myth (London: Eyre Methuen, 1979), 164; DeVoto, Course of Empire, 422.

37. Wood, Prologue to Lewis and Clark, 7.


41. Mackay to Evans, January 28, 1796, Before Lewis and Clark, 2:410-11.
42. Jefferson's Instructions, Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, 62, 63.
43. Mackay to Evans, January 28, 1796, Before Lewis and Clark, 2:411-12; Jefferson's Instructions, Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, 64.
44. Mackay to Evans, January 28, 1796, Before Lewis and Clark, 2:413-14.
46. Christian, Before Lewis and Clark, 3.
49. Lewis to Jefferson, December 28, 1803, Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, 155.
50. Wood, Prologue to Lewis and Clark, 6; Quaife, Captain Mackay's Journal, 200-10.
52. Extracts of Mr. Evans's Journal, Before Lewis and Clark, 2:495-99.
53. Ronda, Lewis and Clark among the Indians, 12.
55. Ronda, Lewis and Clark among the Indians, 13; Wood, Prologue to Lewis and Clark, 46.
56. Wood, Prologue to Lewis and Clark, 59.
58. Lewis to Jefferson, Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, 155.
60. Ronda, Lewis and Clark among the Indians, 13; Wood, Prologue to Lewis and Clark, 46.
64. Wood, Prologue to Lewis and Clark, 60.
65. Ibid., 134-35.
68. Wood, Prologue to Lewis and Clark, 139.
70. Wood, Prologue to Lewis and Clark, 140-42.
71. Ibid., 139.
74. Wood, Prologue to Lewis and Clark, 151.
75. Ronda, Lewis and Clark among the Indians, 14.
77. Ronda, Lewis and Clark among the Indians, 14.
79. Ronda, Lewis and Clark among the Indians, 9-10.
80. Ibid., 12.
82. Moulton, Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, 2:304-5.
83. Ibid., 2:336-40.
84. Ibid., 2:445-47.
85. Ibid., 2:460.
86. Ibid., 2:475-78.
88. Moulton, Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, 3:109, 186.
90. Ronda, Lewis and Clark among the Indians, 14.
94. Williams, Madoc, 170; Ronda, Lewis and Clark among the Indians, 90.
96. Ronda, Lewis and Clark among the Indians, 98.