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Book Review: The Lewis and Clark Expedition: Then and Now

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The Lewis and Clark Expedition: Then and Now. Edited by David Kvernes. Sioux Falls, SD: Center for Western Studies, 2004. xiv + 208 pp. Illustrations, endnotes, bibliographies, index. \$19.95 paper.

With the bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark expedition in full swing, books dealing with every aspect of the Corps of Discovery are appearing in profusion. Such a book is this one, which offers a collection of papers selected from several South Dakota history conferences spanning from 1998 to 2002. Eighteen authors have contributed articles dealing with a broad array of issues bearing upon the Corps of Discovery.

Some pieces are quite brief, others more substantial. The scholarly quality of the pieces likewise varies. Some rehash well-known events of the trip with little in the way of new interpretation. Some summarize enduring disputes regarding the expedition or its members. John D. W. Guice, for instance, offers a recapitulation of the arguments concerning the oft repeated question: Did Meriwether Lewis commit suicide, or was he the victim of a murderer? Joseph Basile reviews the many difficulties involved in getting the earliest versions of the journals into print. Brad Tennant presents a brief examination of "Sexual Relations of the Lewis and Clark Expedition."

Ronald Laycock analyzes "The Sacajawea of Eva Emery Dye," summarizing the evidence indicating that Dye deliberately cast the famed

"Bird Woman" in her historical treatment as a model to boost support for women's suffrage. Laurinda W. Porter's interesting article addresses the explorers' dealings with Lakota and Dakota people in terms of "honoring and gift giving." Elmer S. Odland nicely details local boosters' two-decade effort to reconstruct Fort Mandan. Two articles are devoted to a famous landmark, the Spirit Mound. Norma Clark Wilson offers a moving aesthetic appreciation of the Mound, while Kent Scribner summarizes a laudable movement to purchase the Mound from local landowners and begin a prairie restoration project at this important site.

Some articles are copiously end-noted, while others include no notes at all. And some display greater fidelity to scholarly conventions than others. In short, the book offers a mixed bag of materials, but it is a worthy reflection of South Dakotans' continuing interest in the expedition. Long-time Lewis and Clark enthusiasts may find little here that strikes them as new. On the other hand, readers less familiar with the expedition will find sufficient materials to stimulate their interest in pursuing the story of the Corps of Discovery further.

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