

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Great Plains Quarterly

Great Plains Studies, Center for

1988

Review of The Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition, Vol. 2, August 30, 1803-August 24, 1804, The Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition, Vol. 3, August 25, 1804-April 26, 1805, and The Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition, Vol. 4, April 7-July 27, 1805

Richard A. Bartlett
The Florida State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly>



Part of the [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#)

Bartlett, Richard A., "Review of The Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition, Vol. 2, August 30, 1803-August 24, 1804, The Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition, Vol. 3, August 25, 1804-April 26, 1805, and The Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition, Vol. 4, April 7-July 27, 1805" (1988). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 508.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly/508>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Great Plains Studies, Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Quarterly by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition, Vol. 2, August 30, 1803-August 24, 1804. Edited by Gary E. Moulton. Thomas W. Dunlay, Assistant Editor. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press and the Center for Great Plains Studies, 1986. Illustrations, preface, appendices, sources cited, index. i+612 pp. \$40.00.

The Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition, Vol. 3, August 25, 1804-April 6, 1805. Edited by Gary E. Moulton. Thomas W. Dunlay, Assistant Editor. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press and the Center for Great Plains Studies, 1987. Figures, preface, sources cited, index. ix+544 pp. \$40.00.

The Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition, Vol. 4, April 7-July 27, 1805. Edited by Gary E. Moulton. Thomas W. Dunlay, Assistant Editor. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press and the Center for Great Plains Studies, 1987. Figures, preface, sources cited, index. ix+464 pp. \$40.00.

In 1983 appeared Volume 1 of a projected eleven volume compilation of the journals of the Lewis and Clark expedition. The first volume turned out to be an atlas, which came as something of a surprise to many scholars; yet the quality of the work—the editing, the

annotations, and the incredible state-of-the-art graphics—commanded praise from the academic community. The thought that lay behind the atlas as Volume 1 was that it would furnish a working tool for those studying all the remaining ten volumes. The great question remaining was, what of the quality of the textual volumes to come?

In 1986 Volume 2 was issued, followed shortly, but with a 1987 imprint, by Volumes 3 and 4. The three cover the period from Lewis's departure from Pittsburgh on 30 August 1803 to the Corps of Discovery's arrival at the Three Forks of the Missouri, 27 July 1805. The reader therefore joins the expedition prior to the establishment of Camp River Dubois, participates in Lewis's and Clark's activities in and about St. Louis through the winter and early spring of 1803, and gains a sense of participation, of being there, from the beginning. One experiences the routine, the exhausting day-after-day struggle up the Missouri, the exhilaration at the constantly changing scene, as Lewis and Clark and their men gradually advance up Big Muddy to the Mandan villages. We feel the heat of summer and the cold winds portending winter; we observe flocks of ducks scudding southward. And finally the expedition reaches the Mandan villages, where Fort Mandan is constructed. Again a routine is established. The reader feels the numbing cold, senses the long

conversations about the route ahead to the Pacific, meets with Charbonneau and the pregnant Sacagawea, and notes the birth of their son. And the reader shares the relief and elation when the grass turns green, and the Corps, minus a few men heading back to St. Louis, paddle up the Missouri for the unknown vastness of the great Northwest. One feels with Lewis and Clark the apprehension over the routes—up the Yellowstone or the Missouri, the Marias or the Missouri, the Jefferson, Madison, or Gallatin

Editor Gary Moulton and his assistants had to present the reader with an abundance of rather complex explanatory and informational material that they chose to include, quite sensibly, in Volume 2. In the "Introduction to the Journals" (pp. 1-54) the editor has an essay on "The Journal-keeping Methods of Lewis and Clark." Additional space is allotted to a history of "The Editing and Publishing of Journals." A separate section, "Editorial Procedures," explains the present methodology. At the end of Volume 2 are three appendices with more background information. All of this material is necessary if *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* are to be definitive.

Having dispensed with the introductory and prefatory matter, and the appendices, what about the text? It is superb. "The primary goal," writes Moulton, "is to present users with a reliable text that is largely uncluttered with editorial interference." And the goal has been attained. Most readers will probably do as this reviewer does: read the journals and check the footnotes and consult the atlas as well as the many fine maps and illustrations running through the narration. By the time the Corps of Discovery has reached the mouth of the Kansas River, 390 miles up the Missouri, the expedition has taken on its own personality and it has become difficult for the reader to put down the books. The accompanying notes locate (as best as is today possible) geographical locations, identify flora and fauna, and even explain Lewis's and Clark's descriptions of local geological phenomena. It is hard to

envison more authoritative, thorough annotations.

The imaginative reader expands Lewis's and Clark's brief notations in order to derive the full dimensions of their experiences. Mention of a prairie fire that "passed our Camp last about 8 oClock P.M. it went with great rapitidity and looked Tremendious" (Vol. 3, p. 211) challenges the imagination. The notation of 6 November 1804, "we wer awoke by the Sergeant of the Guard to See a northern light . . . and appeared to Darken and Some times nearly obscered . . . many times appeared in light Streeks, and at other times a great Space light & containing floating Columns which appeared [to] opposite each other & retreat leaveing the lighter Space at no time of the Same appearance" (Vol. 3, p. 230) is Clark's tortuous description of the mysterious aurora borealis.

In editing Volume 4 Moulton, aware that the long journey of exploration precludes any person's ability to be an overall authority, has used the specialties of two men, Robert N. Bergantino for the geology and Lawrence L. Loendorf for the archaeology described or discussed in the journals. Beginning with this volume the editor has also made extensive use of United States Geological Survey maps. One wonders if the high standards so admirably adhered to in the earlier volumes have been maintained in this one. It is a pleasure to report that there is no lapse of quality, care, precision, thoroughness, or proofreading. Volume 4 is equal to the earlier ones in all the essential qualities.

"We proceeded on," Lewis and Clark often stated in their journals. They "proceeded on" in the face of accidents, sickness, inclement weather, and the constant mystery of what lay beyond. The charge to Gary Moulton and his aides, and to the supportive institutions funding this meritorious project, is likewise to "proceed on."

RICHARD A. BARTLETT
Department of History
The Florida State University