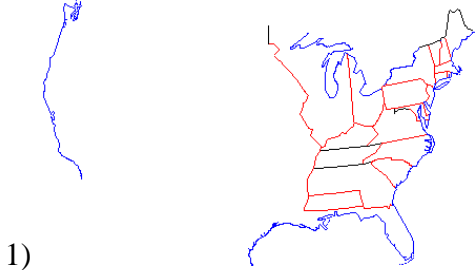


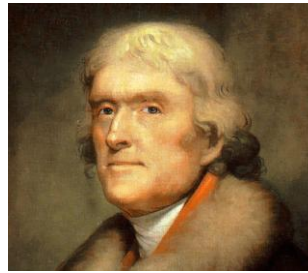
THE EXPEDITION OF THE CORPS OF DISCOVERY.  
*An Overview of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* -by Al Bredenberg  
 Adapted from <http://www.edgate.com/lewisandclark/>

These days, you can fly across the United States in six hours. Even if you have to take a car, you can do it in six days. But imagine what it was like more than two hundred years ago traveling 3,700 miles from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean in non-motorized boats, on horseback, and on foot...



1)

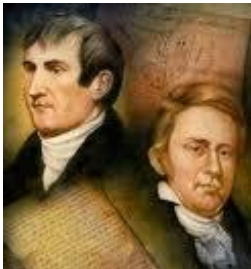
In 1800, the American people lived in the east of the United States. The western boundary of the United States was the Mississippi river. People did not know about the rest of the land. It was virtually unknown and uncharted.



2)



Three years later, in 1803, when Jefferson was President of the United States, the U.S. purchased\* the Louisiana Territory from France. This was a huge tract of over 800,000 square miles, taking in nearly the entire mid-section of North America. This almost doubled the size of the new country. Much of the new territory was unexplored so Jefferson decided to send an expedition up the Missouri River to the Pacific Ocean to find a Northwest Passage, a water route across the country, which would be a great boon to commerce. \*= bought



3b)



3c)



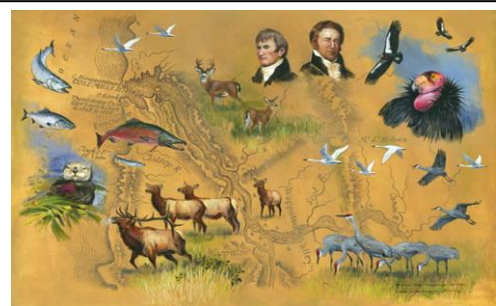
So in that same year, Jefferson commissioned the Corps of Discovery under the command of his trusted private secretary, Meriwether Lewis. Besides seeking the Northwest Passage, Lewis was to map the new territory, assess its natural resources, and make contact with its inhabitants, befriend them if possible. Lewis recruited his friend William Clark as well as a force of over 40 men. The members of the Corps of Discovery were soldiers, but they did not go on the expedition to fight: their purpose was peaceful -- exploration, diplomacy, and science. The expedition started from St. Louis, where the Missouri empties into the Mississippi, on May 14, 1804.

4)



Along the way, Clark oversaw the men and carefully mapped the route...

5)



...while Lewis made scientific observations and collected specimens of animals and plants.

6a)



6b)



6c)



The trip was arduous -- the men lived outdoors, hunted for food, and rowed the keelboat (along with two smaller boats) up the river, often towing the boat from the shore when the current got too heavy or the river became difficult to navigate. They fended off huge clouds of mosquitoes that swarmed around them. They faced difficulties they did not expect: that's why the party made only 12 or 14 miles on a good day.



7)

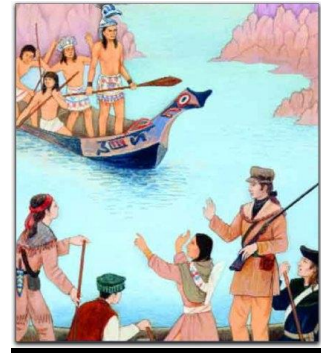


Image: South Dakota CVB



Along the way, the group made contact with Indian inhabitants of the land. The captains offered gifts, met with the chiefs, and made speeches encouraging the Indian nations to make peace with one another and with their new "great father," President Jefferson. Luckily, all were friendly except the Lakota, with whom the expedition had a confrontation that nearly became violent.

8)



During the winter, Lewis and Clark hired Toussaint Charbonneau, a French fur trader, and his wife, a Shoshone woman named Sacagawea, realizing that this woman could help them by acting as interpreter with her people, who lived near the Missouri's headwaters.



10)



The group spent the next months making their way west up the river into territory unknown to white men. They encountered a great profusion of wildlife, including buffalo, wolves, bighorn sheep, and ferocious grizzly bears.

They made their way into present-day Montana, and found the river becoming increasingly impassable, with fierce rapids and waterfalls.



12)



13)



When they finally reached the Missouri's headwaters, they looked for the Shoshones. As it turned out, Sacagawea's brother was chief of the village they first contacted. With her help, the party obtained the horses they needed to get across the mountains.

With the water finally running west, the explorers quickly traveled down the Clearwater, Snake, and Columbia Rivers, reaching the Pacific coastal area in early November, a year and a half after leaving St. Louis.

They built Fort Clatsop, on the south side of the mouth of the Columbia, near what is now Astoria, Oregon, but they did not enjoy a holiday: instead they spent the winter in cold, wet, miserable weather, preparing for the trip back home.



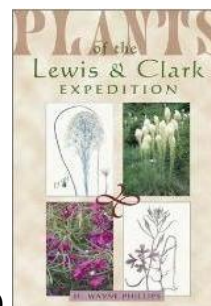
14)

Finally, on March 23, 1806, the Corps of Discovery started on the long journey back.

15)



16)



The men of the expedition were welcomed as heroes. The nation feared they were dead. Remarkably, only one member of the group died (of a ruptured appendix!)

The Corps of Discovery returned with a great deal of knowledge about the new United States territory west of the Mississippi -- the people, the land, the rivers, the mountains, the plants and animals. The expedition made important contributions to the mapping of the North American continent.