

For release week beginning April 2:

Educator/writer Larry McClure is a member of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation and director of Tualatin Heritage Center. He is following the historic path of the Corps of Discovery until they leave Oregon this spring.

Week ending April 8: Washougal and into Columbia Gorge.

Highlights: Reports from upriver tribes verify the lack of game and salmon ahead, so hunters bring in meat to dry over low-burning campfires for six days. Capt. Lewis astonishes some visitors with his air gun. Local residents point out the Corps missed a large river the captains will later name Multnomah (now the Willamette). Hired for a magnifying glass, a guide leads Clark's small party back downstream overnight to explore the Willamette, going as far up the river as today's St. Johns Bridge area. Journals for this week add descriptions of several tribes and villages (including one at today's Portland Airport), dogwood trees, salmonberries, mountain quail, as well as insects such as ticks, long-legged spiders and butterflies. The captains draw the layout of a typical Upper Chinookan-style plankhouse, a long multi-family dwelling with separate apartments. Hunters capture three black bear cubs which they exchange with local Indians for wapato (popular potato-like bulbs growing in water).

Words from the Journals: Seeking wapato from reluctant sellers at one local villages, Clark throws a piece of "portfire" (a fire starter—its neither crude nor a match, but more of a flash and a pop fire starter) into their fire and it immediately flashes brightly. He then uses a magnet to twirl the needle on his compass. The families are so alarmed they drop several parcels of wapato at the captain's feet and "begged me to take out the bad fire" while "a very old blind man implored his god for protection." Clark quickly regrets this deception, smokes a pipe with them, and pays the women the "full amount" for the wapato.

Today's connections: Clark's forecast of the region's agriculture potential: "Soil of the richest quality." His prediction about the Willamette River will also come true: the water is "Sufficiently deep for a Man of War or Ship of any burthen"(near the Port of Portland's Terminal 4). Home of Clark's guide is a village known as Nichaqwli (nee CHALK lee) near today's Blue Lake Park in Fairview. A monument to this village has been created in a secluded area at the west end of the lake, coordinated by the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, and Metro. Native-designed art pieces suggest village life of the time. Funding sources included Spirit Mountain Community Fund, Regional Arts and Culture Council, Oregon Heritage Commission and the National Park Service among others.

Book of the Week: A fine historical travelogue of the Expedition's journey along the Columbia is Stephen Dow Beckham's Lewis & Clark: From the Rockies to the Pacific, with photography by Robert M. Reynolds.

Bicentennial events in the Pacific Northwest: Re-enactors are continuing their journey upstream in authentic dugouts. You will find they staying at the new Capt. William Clark Park at Cottonwood Beach [Washougal]. Stop by for a visit! For a schedule, see www.lewisandclark.net. Watch www.lcbo.net for other events this spring.

Corps II will be in Stevenson April 6-10.

Special thanks to Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation members, particularly historian Barb Kubick, for assisting with this series. See www.lewisandclark.org. To follow the story, click “200 Years Ago This Week” at www.thejourneycontinues.org. Better yet, read the actual journal entries at <http://libtextcenterunl.edu/lewisandclark/index.html> For Bicentennial activities in Oregon, go to www.lcbo.net. Comments should be directed to education@lcbo.net.