

For release week beginning March 19:

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 March 25: Fort Clatsop to Clatskanie, Oregon.

Highlights: Rain, hail and wind continue to keep the men penned up inside as they prepare to leave Fort Clatsop earlier than originally planned. The captains issue certificates of good conduct to visiting chiefs along with lists of the men in the Corps of Discovery and their mission. They turn over their winter “huts and furniture” to friendly Clatsop chief Coboway. Two rifles are repaired by their gunsmith and the captains praise themselves for bringing extra parts that guaranteed their firearms were always in working order over the past two years. At 1 p.m. on March 23, the Corps says farewell to Fort Clatsop and push up river. Over the next two and a half days they travel over 45 miles through islands along the south shore of the Columbia to the Clatskanie River area, occasionally hunting and trading with native villagers along the way.

Words from the Journals: Final physical descriptions of local Clatsop Indians include the process for flattening the heads of infants, customary clothing, jewelry (beads and bracelets of copper and iron), and even how men and women wear their hair (“loosly flowing on the back and shoulders, divided in center and behind the ear on each side”). They also record the words used by local tribes to describe white visitors like the Corps (“cloth men” or blanket people). Regarding family life in the region, the captains notice more equality in male and female roles: “The men of these nations partake of much more of the domestic drudgery than I had first supposed...they collect and prepare all the fuel, make the fires, assist in cleansing and preparing the fish and always cook for feasts and the strangers who visit them.” Other men’s chores apparently include building homes, canoes and wooden utensils. However, men and women share responsibilities for taking care of the canoes. On an optimistic note after months of gray days, Capt. Lewis writes “Altho’ we have not fared sumptuously this winter and spring at Fort Clatsop, we have lived quite as comfortably as we had any reason to expect we should...” Despite the rough weather, Lewis notes: “the leafing of the hucklebury reminds us of spring.”

Today’s connections: According to Lewis, body piercings were also the fashion 200 years ago on the lower Columbia, particularly dentalium shells through the nose with shells suspended by string. Dentalium shells, then an extremely valuable trade item, were harvested off the shores of today’s Vancouver Island.

Bicentennial events in the Pacific Northwest: Mike Carrick, expert on firearms carried by the Expedition, will make two free public presentations over the next week: 11 a.m. Saturday, March 25 at Tualatin Heritage Center, 8700 SW Sweek Drive, and again at Troutdale Historical Society, Saturday April 1 as part of a day-long commemoration of the Corps’ visit to the Sandy River area. For a schedule of re-enactors following the return route, including several descendants of original Corps of Discovery members, see www.lewisandclark.net They welcome visitor questions about what it’s like to travel the river in dugout canoes today following 1800 Army camp routines (with a few modern touches). The National Park Service traveling exhibit moves on to Grand Ronde March

25-April 2 hosted by the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde. See <http://www.lewisclarkandbeyond.com/schedule> for a daily schedule of performances.

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.