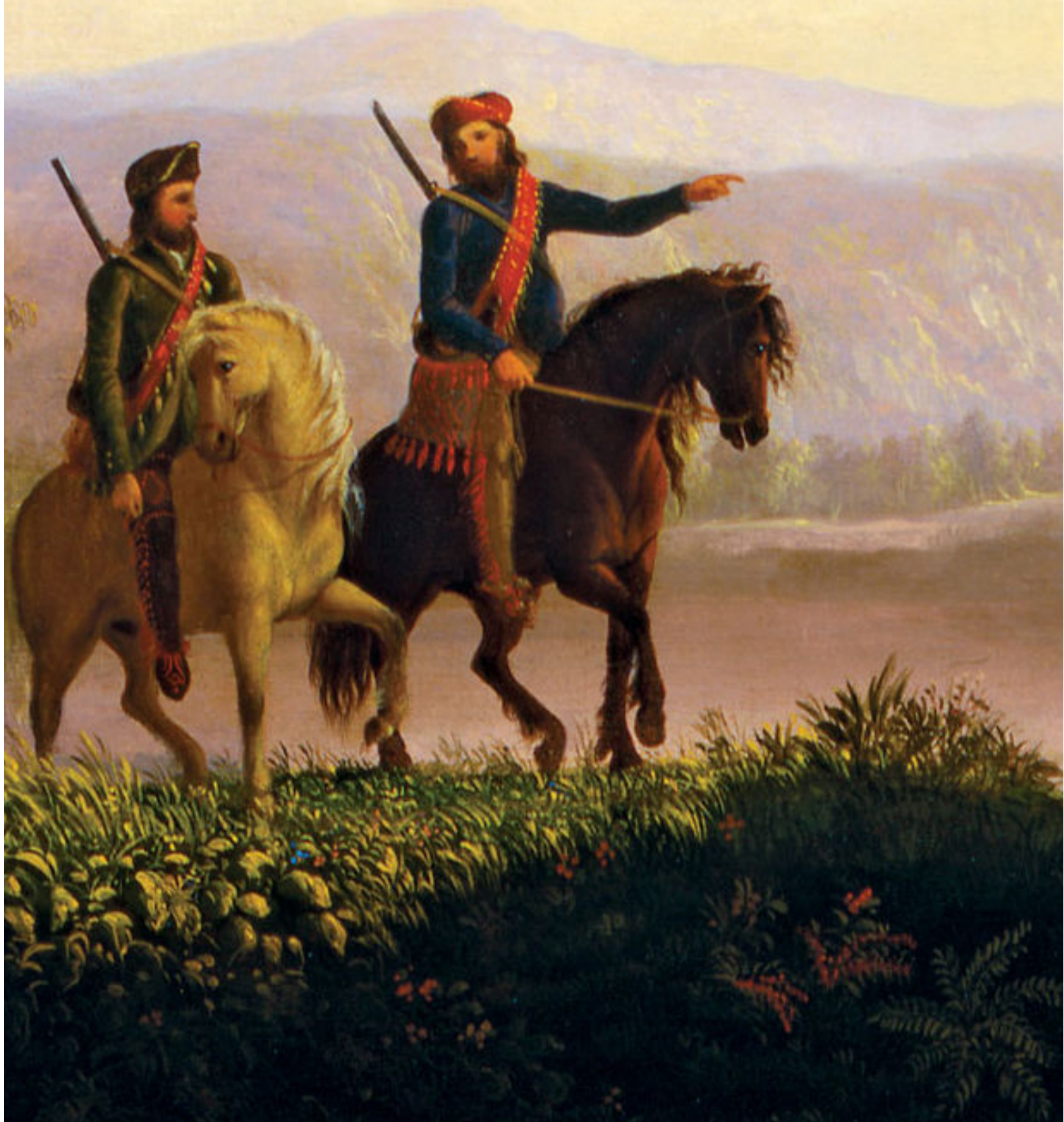


Lewis & Clark and the Corps of Discovery: A Primary and Secondary Source Research Guide

By: Phillip B. Visnansky



Lewis & Clark and the Corps of Discovery: A Primary and Secondary Source Research Guide

By: Phillip B. Visnansky

www.clementinesnest.com
author@clementinesnest.com

(c) 2014 by Phillip B. Visnansky. All rights reserved.
Cover Photo: The Lewis and Clark Expedition by Thomas Burnham, 1850.

Table of Contents

Summary of the Corps of Discovery	4
Primary Sources	6
Secondary Sources	8



Summary of the Corps of Discovery

On May 14, 1804, a collection of men pushed off the shore of the DuBois River above St. Louis and made their way to the Missouri River. Camping on an island four-and-a-half miles upstream, 37 men took the first steps in a journey to explore territory bought from France via the Louisiana Purchase.

President Thomas Jefferson was the political force behind Lewis and Clark's expedition. Inspired by a love of natural history, geography, and early North American explorers, Jefferson ceased on the influence of the presidency to request Congressional funding for the Corps of Discovery in January, 1803.

Selecting Meriwether Lewis to lead the Corps of Discovery, Jefferson entrusted the young captain to pick his sidekick. Lewis quickly decided on William Clark. The two joined forces on the Ohio River.

After making their way to St. Louis, the Corps of Discovery winters on the Dubois River. A military camp, Lewis and Clark spent much of their time in St. Louis while Sergeant Ordway maintained command over Camp Dubois.

After leaving Camp Dubois in May, 1804, Lewis and Clark's men battled the Missouri River as they traveled upstream. Consuming thousands of calories a day, the men rowed, poled, and pulled their boats.

Their first winter was spent at Fort Mandan among the Mandan Indians in present-day North Dakota. It was during their stay at Fort Mandan that Sacagawea and her husband, Toussaint Charbonneau, joined the Corps of Discovery.

On April 7, 1805, Lewis and Clark left Fort Mandan to continue their journey up the Missouri River. According to Gary Moulton, history was made as Lewis and Clark were the first white explorers to enter this area. By fall 1805, the Corps of Discovery had trudged over the Rockies and were heading toward the Pacific Ocean on the Columbia River.

On November 7, 1805, Clark wrote his famous words as the Pacific Ocean was first seen: "Ocian in view! O! the joy." By December 7, a site was picked for the expedition's third winter camp – Fort Clatsop. For the next three-and-a-half months, the rain soaked coast would be the Corps of Discovery's home.

The homeward bound journey began on March 23, 1806. After an arduous trek back over the Rocky Mountains, the expedition was back on the Missouri River.

Having the current on their side, Lewis and Clark made great time on their way back to St. Louis. They reached their starting point on September 23, 1806.



Primary Sources

Researchers focusing on the Corps of Discovery are blessed by the work of Gary E. Moulton and Donald Jackson. These two men have published the vast majority of primary source documents available regarding the Corps of Discovery. Moulton has edited the definitive version of the Lewis and Clark Journals while Jackson has combed archive after archive to bring together various pieces of correspondence concerning the expedition. More importantly, Moulton's version of the Lewis and Clark Journals are available on the University of Nebraska's website.

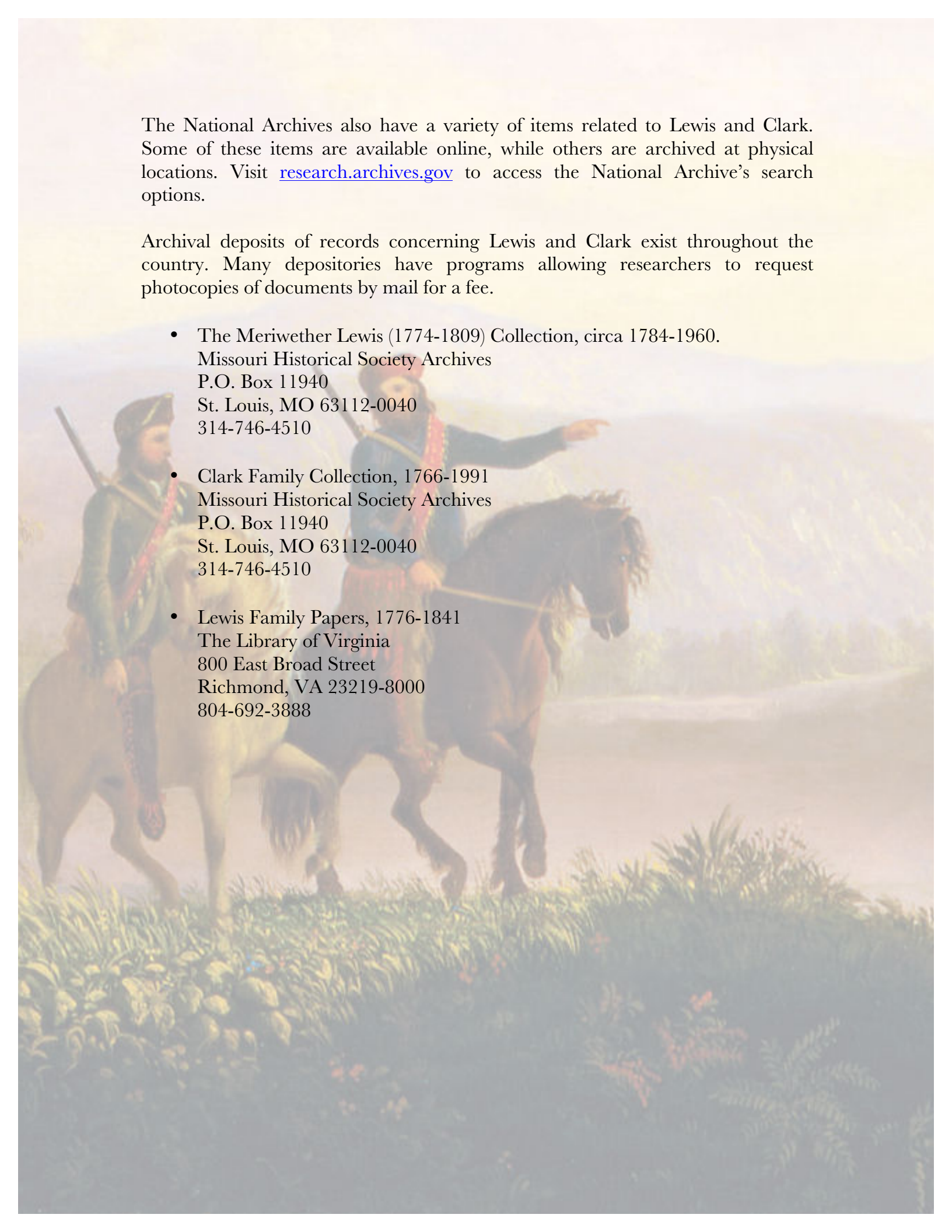
- Moulton, Gary E., ed. *The Definitive Journals of Lewis & Clark*. University of Nebraska Press, 1986.
 - This resource can be located on the web: <http://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu/index.html>
- Jackson, Donald, ed. *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*. University of Illinois Press, 1978.
- Holmberg, James J. ed. *Dear Brother: Letters of William Clark to Jonathan Clark*. Yale University Press, 2002.

Numerous other versions, including abridged editions, of the Lewis and Clark journal are available.

- Moulton, Gary, E. ed. *The Lewis and Clark Journals: The Abridgement of the Definitive Nebraska Edition*, University of Nebraska Press, 2003.
- DeVoto, Bernard, *The Journals of Lewis and Clark*, Mariner Books, (1997).

Thomas Jefferson was the Corps of Discovery's benefactor and the Library of Congress and other institutions have digitized a significant number of his documents. These documents are an invaluable resource in researching Lewis and Clark, especially if one is unable to locate a copy of Jackson's work.

- *The Thomas Jefferson Papers: The Thomas Jefferson Papers, 1606-1827*. Library of Congress, Web. 24 Feb. 2014: http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/jefferson_papers/.
- *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy, Yale University, Web. 24 Feb. 2014: http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/jeffpap.asp.
- *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Digital Edition*. University of Virginia Press, University of Virginia, Web. 24 Feb. 2014: <http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/TSJN>.
- *Papers of the War Department*. George Mason University, Web. 24 Feb. 2014: <http://wardepartmentpapers.org/index.php>.



The National Archives also have a variety of items related to Lewis and Clark. Some of these items are available online, while others are archived at physical locations. Visit [research.archives.gov](https://www.research.archives.gov) to access the National Archive's search options.

Archival deposits of records concerning Lewis and Clark exist throughout the country. Many depositories have programs allowing researchers to request photocopies of documents by mail for a fee.

- The Meriwether Lewis (1774-1809) Collection, circa 1784-1960.
Missouri Historical Society Archives
P.O. Box 11940
St. Louis, MO 63112-0040
314-746-4510
- Clark Family Collection, 1766-1991
Missouri Historical Society Archives
P.O. Box 11940
St. Louis, MO 63112-0040
314-746-4510
- Lewis Family Papers, 1776-1841
The Library of Virginia
800 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219-8000
804-692-3888

Secondary Sources

In addition to the considerable library of accessible primary sources, innumerable secondary sources exist covering the Corps of Discovery.

- Lewis, Meriwether and Paul Allen. *History of the Expedition Under the Command of Captains Lewis and Clark*, Bradford and Inskeep, 1814.
 - This work borders the boundary between a primary resource and a secondary source. While *History of the Expedition* is based on the journals maintained throughout the expedition, it was compiled after Lewis and Clark returned and was published five years after Lewis' death. It was the first official account of the Corps of Discovery's trek to the Pacific Ocean and back.
- Ambrose, Stephen E. *Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West*, Simon & Schuster, 1996.
 - The late Stephen Ambrose has his critics and because of plagiarism charges, some of his works must be fairly evaluated. However, *Undaunted Courage* remains a wonderful account of the Corps of Discovery from its genesis in Jefferson's mind to the publication of the first account of Lewis and Clark's journals in 1814.
- Ronda, James P. *Lewis & Clark Among the Indians*, University of Nebraska Press, 1984.
 - *Lewis & Clark Among the Indians* is a thematic book, focusing on the Native American history of the Corps of Discovery.
- Peck, Dr. David J. *Or Perish in the Attempt: Wilderness Medicine in the Lewis & Clark Expedition*, Farcountry Press, 2002.
 - *Or Perish in the Attempt* presents an often overlooked aspect of Lewis and Clark's journey – a medical history.
- Christian, Shirley. *Before Lewis and Clark: The Story of the Chouteaus, the French Dynasty that Ruled America's Frontier*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004.
 - *Before Lewis and Clark* focuses on the Chouteau family and their decades long presence in St. Louis. This is a great work that develops the history of the Missouri River in the years before Lewis and Clark made their famous voyage.
- Jones, Landon Y. *William Clark and the Shaping of the West*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004.
 - This work delves into the history of William Clark with a focus on his role in developing the American West. While Lewis committed suicide in 1809, Clark served as a governor of the Missouri Territory and as Superintendent of Indian Affairs.

- Ambrose Tubbs, Stephenie and Clay Straus Jenkinson. *The Lewis and Clark Companion: An Encyclopedic Guide to the Voyage of Discovery*, Henry Holt and Company, 2003.
 - Authored by Stephen Ambrose's daughter, *The Lewis and Clark Companion* is a great resource for understanding the minute details of the expedition's journey west.
- Kukla, Jon. *A Wilderness so Immense: The Louisiana Purchase and the Destiny of the America*, Anchor Books, 2004.
 - Without the Louisiana Purchase, Lewis and Clark's expedition would have faced significant difficulties as it traveled land owned by France and administered by Spain. *A Wilderness So Immense* covers the history of Louisiana Territory and the negotiations that led to its purchase by the United States.

