

"Reexamining the Lewis and Clark Expedition: The French Connection"

A reexamination of the Lewis and Clark Expedition reveals a significant French connection in the pre-Lewis and Clark era, and to the men on their keelboat and *pirogues*. We have little noted nor long remembered these men.

When the Corps of Discovery's keelboat embarked on its epic journey from Camp Wood, Missouri, to the Pacific Ocean on May 14, 1804, the bowmen were half French and half Omaha Indian. They and the men in the red *pirogue* were all French *voyageurs*, descendants of the explorers and white traders who for many years had defied the Missouri River and knew its denizens as far as the Mandan and Hidatsa villages in North Dakota (today's place names will be used for locations). Lewis and Clark hired these men, the *engagés*, because of their Missouri knowledge, an advantage neither the Captains nor their American soldiers possessed.^{1[1]}

René Robert de La Salle went to the mouth of the Mississippi River in 1682 and claimed the lands it drained, naming the vast territory Louisiana in honor of Louis XIV. Soldier, deserter, outlaw, dweller with Indians, and explorer Etienne de Véniard, Sieur de Bourgmont, followed the Missouri as far as the Platte River in 1714.^{2[2]} Two brothers,

^{1[1]}The bowmen were Pierre Cruzatte and François Labiche, fur traders familiar with the Missouri River. Individuals with French blood born in New France, metropolitan France, or half-French and half Indian (*métis*) will be referred to as French. The word "keelboat" was not used by Lewis or Clark in their Journals, referring instead to the "barge" or the *bateau*. William Clark was actually a lieutenant, a rank of captain having been denied. Nonetheless, Lewis determined he would be addressed as "Captain," the rank ultimately granted by President Clinton in January 2001.

^{2[2]}In 1724 he presented several Indian chiefs and a Missouri princess to the court of Louis XV. They visited Versailles, Fontainebleau, did war dances at the French opera, and were given French clothing. The Princess was baptized at Notre Dame Cathedral and married a French sergeant. Bourgmont was ennobled and lived out his life in Normandy,

Peter and Paul Mallet, leading a small party of eight or nine men in 1739, ascended the Platte River eighty-four miles to the South Fork of the Platte before turning south for Sante Fe. They named the river the "Platte" from the French word for flat--*plat*.^{3[3]}

In the North, villagers at Mandan in 1738 received Pierre Gaultier, le Sieur de la Vérendrye, seeker of the "Western Sea," and his sons arriving from Montréal. Jacques D'Eglise, another explorer in the quest for the Northwest Passage, in 1792 made it from St. Louis as far as the Mandan-Hidatsas. Four years later Welshman John Evans failed in his attempt to find a route to the Pacific and locate the fabled Welsh Indians. Although he went no further than the Mandan-Hidatsa villages, his detailed daily journal and careful map were of great value to Lewis and Clark. (As were several other maps available to them.)^{4[4]} During the eighteenth century French and English traders became familiar figures on the Lower Missouri and valuable sources of information for Lewis and Clark.^{5[5]}

his birthplace. See Frank Norall, Bourgmont, Explorer of the Missouri, 1698-1725 (Lincoln: University Press, 1988); Mari Sandoz, The Buffalo Men, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978) for comments on Bourgmont, pp.93, 108, and her discussion of Vérendrye, pp. 103-128. Denis Vaugeois, America: The Lewis & Clark Expedition and the Dawn of A New Power (Montréal: Véhicule Press, 2005), on Bourgmont, pp. 54-58: on the Mallet brothers, pp. 58-59, on Vérendrye, pp. 59-63.

^{3[3]}James W. Savage and John T. Bell, History of Omaha Nebraska and South Omaha (New York: Munsell & Co., 1894), pp. 10-14.

^{4[4]}President Jefferson on January 1, 1804, provided Lewis a copy Evan's map, writing "It is said to be very accurate." John Bakeless, Lewis and Clark: Partners in Discovery (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1947), p. 109. Lewis took the map along. See Vaugeois, America: the Lewis and Clark Expedition, "Charting the Territory," text and maps, pp. 143-156

^{5[5]}One of them, known as "Old Menard," who lived with the Mandans for some twenty years, was killed by Assinboine Indians a few days before Lewis and Clark's arrival. William Clark, October 25, 1804 entry in the Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, ed., Gary Moulton (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press / University of Nebraska-Lincoln Libraries-Electronic Text Center, 2005),<http://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu/journals.php?id1804-09-25>. Cited hereafter as Moulton. On French fur traders see A.P. Nasatur, ed., Before Lewis and Clark:

Another French connection to the Corps of Discovery alleviated a contentious situation in the Louisiana Territory where Spanish, French, British, and American ambitions clashed. Impelled by losses in Santa Domingo and France's incapacity to exert power over the vast territory, in the spring of 1803 Napoleon sold Louisiana to the United States. In the months preceding the formal transfer of power to the Americans a year later, the French had title to Louisiana, Spain governed, and the U.S. had a claim by cession from the French, but no authority. Planning and preparation for Jefferson's long held dream of exploration of the west was ongoing no matter what country claimed jurisdiction. Napoleon, however, cleared the way for the Americans to remain in the United States when they headed west toward the continental divide.^{6[6]}

Because the Spanish authorities for Louisiana would not grant passports to the Americans (the French and British did) nor allow them on the Missouri River until a formal exchange of sovereignty took place, Lewis and Clark's winter camp was established at Camp Wood (*Dubois*) on the United States' side of the Mississippi.

Illustrating the History of the Missouri, 1785-1804 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002), pp. 1-108; Raymond Wood and Thomas Thiessen, ed., Early Fur Trade on the Northern Plains: Canadian Traders Among the Mandan and Hidatsa Indians, 1738-1818 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), p. 45. Jean Baptiste Trudeau's [Trudeau's] Description of the Upper Missouri," Nasatur, Before Lewis and Clark, p. 381. See Bob Saindon, "Old Menard," We Proceeded On, May 1884, pp. 4-10; Sandoz, The Buffalo Men, writes of two French traders at Hadatsa in 1630-1640 (the "Village of the Bearded Ones)", pp. 3-14.

^{6[6]}Jefferson's Message to Congress, January 18, 1803, "Donald Jackson, ed., Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, 1783-1854 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), pp. 10-13. Uncertainty of jurisdiction is seen in Lewis and Clark carrying passports and letters of recommendations from the French and British ministers in Washington D. C. See François Larocque, The Journals of François Larocque (Fairfield, WA: Y. Falleon Press, 1981), p. 14. See Philip J. Kastor in James P. Ronda and Ronald and Nancy Tystad Koupal, eds., Finding Lewis and Clark, Old Trails, New Directions (Pierre, SD: South Dakota State Historical Society, 2004), pp. 25-27; Denis Vaugeois, America, pp. 91-103.

Crossing the river in May into now acknowledged American territory, they arrived two days later at St. Charles, a community of "about 450 inhabitants principally french."^{7[7]} What are considered misspellings today were common in Clark's era and he was a particularly creative speller as the Journals demonstrate day after day. (He spelled "Sioux" twenty-seven different ways, and Toussaint Charbonneau was not spelled correctly in fifteen tries.)^{8[8]} When the party set out from Camp Wood, Clark notes that it is in the "presence of many of the Neighbouring inhabitants" likely farewells shouting "bon chance, au revoir, à la prochaine!" to the American soldiers entering waters where English was little known and river names and words were tribal or French.^{9[9]}

Across from *Camp Dubois*, anglicized to Camp Wood, was St. Louis, founded in 1764 by Pierre Laclède and Auguste Chouteau, naming their creation for the thirteenth century French King Louis IX, "Saint Louis."^{10[10]} A French trader shortly after settled *Les Petites Côtes* (The Little Hills), which was changed to San Carlos (St. Charles) in 1791 for King Charles IV of Spain. From St. Charles, Lewis and Clark traveled on a river their French predecessors had branded with their language: *Charette Creek, Cul de Sac, Les Mamelles, Isle de Vache, Rivière à la Mine, L'Outre Island, Boeuf Creek, Isle à Beau Soleil, Rivière Jacques*, to name but a few.^{11[11]} Only the Frenchmen on the keelboat

^{7[7]}Moulton, Clark, May 16, 1804.

^{8[8]}Robert B. Betts, "We Commenced Writing, A Salute to the Ingenious Spelling and Grammar of William Clark," <http://www.lewisandclark.org/pages/writing.htm>.

^{9[9]}Moulton, Clark, May 14, 1804. Several of Lewis' French connections accompanied him from St. Louis toward St. Charles: Charles Gratiot, Auguste Chouteau, David Delauney, Sylvester Labadie, De Antoine F. Saugrain, Richard Dillon, Meriwether Lewis: A Biography (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1995), p. 101.

^{10[10]}Nancy Peterson, People of the Troubled Water: A Missouri River Journal (Frederick, CO: Renaissance House Publishers, 1988), pp. 18-20.

^{11[11]}See Richard R. Sutton and Kenneth R. Canfield, eds., The Missouri River: the River

and in the red *pirogue* (a flat-bottomed boat) knew the meaning of these words. The American soldiers, including Lewis and Clark, knew neither French nor the Missouri River.

During the winter months at Camp Wood, the Corps of Discovery's leaders found in French speaking St. Louis friendship and hospitality, plus information and supplies, essential to the mission's success. Economically and socially, the Chouteau family was prominent in French speaking St. Louis, and with translator assistance Lewis used his Jefferson spending authorization to complete the outfitting of his command. Auguste and Pierre Chouteau were Lewis and Clark's hosts on several occasions, and assisted them in their search for maps, fur traders and others who could add to their knowledge of what awaited the Corps of Discovery on the Missouri. In a letter to William Croghan in May 1804, Clark noted the politeness and attention given by the Chouteaus, adding that Pierre's house was their home.

Fur traders' tales of the turbulent Missouri convinced the Captains that additional manpower was going to be necessary to take the keelboat and the *pirogues* the 1600 miles to the Mandan-Hidatsa Villages. In early May the Chouteaus sent Lewis and Clark seven or eight *voyageurs* familiar with the Missouri to Mandan, veterans of its difficulties and dangers. These hired hands, *engagés*, were added to the company of men who would row, pole, and *cordell* upstream.^{12[12]}

Rats Guide to Missouri River History and Folklore (Leawood, KS: Squire Publishers, 1974); John C. Luttig, Journal of a Fur-trading Expedition On the Upper Missouri, 1812-1813 (New York: Antiquarian LTD, 1964). Charettes were small handmade carts; bottom of the sack; the breasts; Cow Island; lead in the stream; Otter Island; Beef Creek; Beautiful Sun Island; James River.

^{12[12]}Jackson, p. 178. David Hawke says eight. David Freeman Hawke, Those Tremendous Mountains: The Story of the Lewis and Clark Expedition (New York:

At St. Charles two more French river men joined the Army as privates, Cruzatte and Labiche, especially valuable because they could serve as translators from the middle to the northern areas of today's Nebraska. Lewis and Clark kept accurate records of their military charges, but lists of the *engagés* are inconsistent. Gary Moulton points out numbers, additions, and discharges, perhaps reflects less careful attention to these hired Frenchmen. In a July 4, 1804, list, Clark recorded the French *engagés* assigned to the red *piroque*:

Battiste de Shone [Baptist Deschamps]
Joseph Le bartee [Liberté]
Lasoness [Baptist Le Jeunesse]
Paul Preemau [Paul Primeau]
Chalo
E. Cann
Roie
Charlo Cougee^{13[13]}

Also mentioned are Pieter Crousatt [Cruzatte], William La Beice [François Labiche],
George Drewyer [George Drouillard], and Mr. Dorion [Pierre Dorion].

Half French and half Shawnee, Drouillard was recruited by Lewis for his prowess as a

W.W. Norton & Company, 1980), 48. *Cordelling* was using a towrope to pull a craft where rowing or polling was unworkable. On the Chouteaus see Shirley Christian's major study *Before Lewis and Clark: The Story of the Chouteaus, the French Dynasty That Ruled America's Frontier* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2004. Jackson, Clark to William Croghan, May 2, 1804, p.178; "Little known Frenchmen," *Vaugeois, America*, pp. 105-116.

^{13[13]}Clark's July 4 list varies from Lewis' Detachment Order of May 26. Moulton. Clark, July 4, 1804. Information on most of these men is scarce. For biographic sketches see Charles E. Clarke, *The Men of the Lewis and Clark Expedition: A Biographical Roster of the Fifty-one Members and a Composite Diary of their Activities* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), Moulton, vol.2., Appendix; Larry E. Morris, *The Fate of the Corps* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004); alphabetical entries by name in Stephenie Ambrose Tubbs and Clay Straus, *The Lewis and Clark Companion: An Encyclopedic Guide to the Corps of Discovery* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2003); Elion Woodger and Brandon Toropov, *The Lewis and Clark Encyclopedia* (New York: Facts on File, Checkmark Books, 2004).

hunter and sign talking skills. Dorion was the first of several Frenchmen hired as interpreters by Lewis and Clark as they proceeded on (to borrow a phrase from Clark). Several times the expedition encountered fur traders coming down the Missouri headed for St. Louis, welcomed for the latest news of what lie ahead. One of them, Pierre Dorion, had lived with the Sioux for twenty years and was talked into going back as an interpreter.^{14[14]} As the Corps traveled further north, Cruzatte and Labiche's language usefulness diminished as they left Omaha territory, necessitating new translators for northern tribes.

When it reached the Arikara villages in northern South Dakota, Lewis and Clark discovered two French traders living with the tribe, Joseph Gravelines and Pierre Antoine Tabeau. Both men provided the Captains information on the Lower Missouri and served as translators during talks with the Arikaras. The Captains hired Gravelines and he went on to Mandan with the expedition.^{15[15]} Now Lewis and Clark needed someone able to talk Mandan and Hidatsa, an English-speaking translator to interpret their words, pass them on in the Indian tongues, then back again. A French trader who had lived in a Mandan village for fifteen years, René Jesseaume, was signed on by Clark, as was non-English speaking Touissant Charbonneau, who lived with the Hadatsas.

Significantly, Charbonneau was married to a Shoshone who had been kidnapped by Hidatsas from her tribal home in the Rocky Mountains when ten or twelve years old and taken to their Knife River village. The Corps of Discovery was going to need horses to

^{14[14]}Moulton, Clark, June 12, 1804.

^{15[15]}*Ibid.*, Clark, October 10-12, 1804. When the keelboat left for St. Louis in April 1805, Gravelines served as its pilot and accompanied an Arikara chief to Washington D.C.

cross those mountains, meaning negotiations with the Shoshones would be necessary to procure them. By hiring Charbonneau, his wife Sacagawea became Lewis and Clark's translator for buying the all-important horses. He came to Lewis and Clark at Mandan in November of 1804 seeking employment as an interpreter and was hired. Changing his mind, he quit the following March saying he would return when he wanted, use as many provisions as he could carry and would not stand the guard. Five days later he apologized "for his foolishness," adding he would be pleased to go along on Clark's terms. Also added to the roster at Mandan as a private was fur trader Jean Baptiste Le Page.^{16[16]}

The expedition was a military one, and Captain Lewis in his Detachment Orders of May 26, 1804, organized his men into five messes (squads) and set forth their duties. In equal proportion they will stand guard duty, pitch tents, make fires, and prepare meals, except for the two sergeants. Deschamps, a corporal, and Drouillard are freed of guard duty, but all other soldiers, "and engaged men of whatever description, must stand guard" and perform "other duty" as to be detailed every evening. Drouillard "will perform certain duties on shore which will be assigned from time to time" Cruzatte and Labiche were assigned to the crucial bowman position, responsible for the keelboat's course and giving warnings of the Missouri's hazards.^{17[17]}

^{16[16]}Dale W. Nelson, Interpreters for Lewis and Clark: The Story of Sacagawea and Toussaint Charbonneau (Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 2003), a more favorable accounting than he usually receives. Richard K. Stenberg, "René Jesseume on the Upper Missouri," We Proceeded On, vol.20, August, 2004, pp. 16-23. Moulton, Clark, November 4, 1804, March 12 and 17, 1805. In the vicinity of the Ionia Volcano (near Newcastle, Nebraska) Clark writes "I took my servant and a french boy and walked on shore." There is neither identification nor further mention of this "french boy." Jean Baptiste, Charbonneau's son, was an infant and it doesn't seem likely Clark would take him ashore. Shannon at eighteen was the youngest member of the party and not a boy. Moulton, Clark, August 24, 1804.

^{17[17]}Moulton, Lewis, May 26, 1804.

The other Frenchmen were assigned to the red *pirogue*, setting them apart for their duty day, their evening meal, and tent locations. Clark mentions the French hands "carelessness" when goods on the red *perogue* were wet, after a rainstorm,^{18[18]} and later he "roughly rebuked," the "higherlins" for complaining about not eating the five or six times a day they were accustomed to.^{19[19]} Sergeant Patrick Gass registered a negative attitude toward the French, perhaps widely shared, but not evident. Writing of the Indian "fair sex," Gass lamented the "severe and loathsome effects of certain French principles. . ."^{20[20]} An image of the *voyageurs* as licentious and profligate, as "morally reprehensible and irresponsible," was not uncommon among Americans.^{21[21]} Other than Gass's reproach, the Frenchmen are rarely mentioned except for a few (Drouillard, Labiche, Cruzatte, Charbonneau). The Journals were not intended to be diaries for inner thoughts or expressions of personal feelings that may have been present. As Gass says, their entries were to record useful information, not stories or anecdotes.

When the men departed St. Charles, their labors and dangers began. Over the next weeks and months the Missouri River confronted them with an array of challenges: huge drifting logs, collections of driftwood, falling banks, quick sand, sandbars, snags, sawyers, swift and changing currents, and obstructions wheeling the boat. Struggling to move upstream against such obstacles, soldiers and *engagés* rowed, poled, cordelled, and occasionally raised their sails. They were crucial elements of the journey because the

^{18[18]}*Ibid.*, Clark, May 28, 1804.

^{19[19]}*Ibid.*, Clark, June 17, 1804.

^{20[20]}*Ibid.*, Gass, April 5, 1805.

^{21[21]}Tanis C. Thorne, The Many Hands of My Relations: French and Indians on the Lower Missouri, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1996), p.161.

Captains could not have moved the keelboat and *pirogues* without their collective strength.

Jefferson's instructions to Lewis and Clark include representing the United States as diplomats and trade representatives to the Indians of the Louisiana Purchase. There were no opportunities to fulfill those assignments until late July, as day after day passed without Indian contact. A new phase of the mission began on July 28 when Drouillard brought to their camp, just beyond Omaha, a Missouri Indian from a small tribe that lived with the Otoes. He stayed the night, explaining that his people and the Otoes were nearby on a buffalo hunt. Seeing an opportunity to initiate their diplomatic activity, Lewis and Clark sent him and Otoe speaking La Liberté to find the hunters and invite them to a meeting.

The Corps moved a few miles upstream and waited for their guests; six Chiefs arrived at sunset on August 2, but without La Liberté. On August 3 the first council with Indians was held (near Fort Calhoun, NE), and Labiche and Cruzatte, and a French trapper (identified as Fairfong plus other spellings) who lived with the Otoes, changing Lewis' English into Otoe then back again from Otoe to English. Speeches, gifts, and military pomp set the pattern for future councils as Lewis informed the Chiefs of United States sovereignty over their lands and trade advantages forthcoming.^{22[22]}

A few days after the First Council, La Liberté and Private Moses Reed are declared deserters, and four men, including Labiche, are sent to bring Reed in dead or alive, to put him to death if he didn't surrender peacefully, and hunt for the missing *engagé*. As a

^{22[22]}Moulton, Clark, August 2-3, 1804. Ambrose, Undaunted Courage, pp. 154-158. On the Councils, see James P. Ronda's important study Lewis and Clark among the Indians (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998).

soldier, Reed is subject to military law, but the Frenchman is a civilian and the draconian order not applicable to him. Six days rest was taken at Fish Camp (near Dakota City, NE), and on August 17th word arrived that the party sent out for the two deserters was coming in with Reed but without La Liberté who had escaped and was never heard from again. Three principal Otoe Chiefs arrived at the camp the following day, and the Captains' duties included not only their diplomatic role in a second council, but also their military obligations as they court-martial Reed and sentence him to four times through the gauntlet and no longer to be considered a member of the party. Talks with the Chiefs began the next day, and the French translators delivered Lewis' message. In return, the Americans listened to complaints of inadequate gifts and discovered the causes of war among Indians were vastly different from their Euro-American experience.^{23[23]}

As the Corps of Discovery traveled further north, its translators' linguistic abilities diminished. At the third council (near Yankton, SD), Labiche and Cruzatte stood aside as Sioux speaking Dorion now was the middle man between the Americans and the Yankton Indians.^{24[24]} When Lewis and Clark moved on, they made a decision they came to regret, leaving Dorion with the Yanktons to convince them to promote peace among the tribes (important for trade), and accept their invitation to visit Washington D.C. and their "Great White Father."

A meeting with the powerful Teton Sioux in late September degenerated into an armed confrontation (near Pierre, SD) between forces unable to communicate verbally.

^{23[23]}Moulton, Clark, August 18-19 1804. Lewis and Clark's perception of warfare was between nation-states over territory and conflicting national interests. For the Indians armed conflict was a matter of horse theft, stolen corn, and personal revenge.

^{24[24]}*Ibid.*, Clark, August 30-31, 1804.

What little exchange that did occur was a nighttime talk between Cruzatte and some Omaha prisoners who told him the Tetons intended stop them. Preparations were made for whatever might happen, and there was little sleep for the white men that night. When a meeting took place, Lewis cut his speech short because there was no competent interpreter. A Teton visit to the keelboat led to insolence, three young men grabbing the *piroque* cable, complaints, and a warning not to go on. Clark drew his sword, the men were called to arms, and the swivel cannon and blunderbusses loaded. Indians stood on the bank with bows strung and arrows out of their quivers. A fight was averted when Chief Buffalo ordered the braves away.^{25[25]}

Coming upon the Arikaras in northern South Dakota, the Corps once more faced the problem of no capable translators. However, the two French fur traders who had lived with the Arikaras for years appeared and became part of the stream from English to French to Arikara and back. Knowing fluent English, French, Arikara, and Sioux, Gravelines and Tabeau eased the discussions with the Arikaras over the next few days.^{26[26]}

For nearly a month the men of the Corps of Discovery labored to move their keelboat and *pirogues* north, finally reaching the Mandan and Hidatsas villages on October 27. They discovered they again needed translators to speak with the Indians, and Charbonneau was accordingly hired a few days later, as was Jesseame, who had lived among the Mandans for fifteen years, had a Mandan wife, and supplied needed information from his experiences on the Upper Missouri River. Another individual joined

^{25[25]}*Ibid.*, Clark, September 25, 1804.

^{26[26]}*Ibid.*, Clark, October 10-13, 1804.

the expedition as a private on November 3 1804, Jean Baptiste Lepage. Little is known about him other than Clark's remark that he took the place of John Newman, who was court-martialed and discharged in October for mutinous comments.^{27[27]}

Thanks to their interpreters, during the Corps of Discovery's winter quarters at Mandan, the officers and their men lived among the Indians in peace and friendship, enjoying their hospitality and assistance, and gathering information on rivers and lands noted on white men's maps as "unknown territory." One evening in February Lewis experienced another sort of "unknown territory" as he stood helplessly by and watched Sacagawea endure a painful delivery of her first child. As an army officer with no experience as a mid-wife, Lewis was assured by *engagé* Jesseaume that the rattle of a rattlesnake would induce birth. With a rattle supplied by Lewis, Jesseaume gave Sacagawea a mixture of broken pieces and water. Ten minutes later she delivered a son.^{28[28]}

The *pirogues* and keelboat left Mandan on April 7, the former heading west with the permanent party to the Pacific, the latter setting off for St. Louis. Five Frenchmen went with Lewis and Clark, privates Cruzatte, Labiche, Lepage, and *engagés* Drouillard and Charbonneau. Several *engagés* had departed in November, now four more left with the keelboat. On the Upper Missouri to the continental divide, from the mountains to the Pacific, Lewis and Clark's men were back to the daily struggle and unprecedented

^{27[27]}Woodger and Toporov, Encyclopedia, p. 189. Mandan Chief Big White agreed to visit Washington D.C. only if Jesseaume and his family went with him. Jesseaume did so, and on December 30, 1806, the Chief met Jefferson. Newman was court-martialed for inciting mutiny and sentenced to seventy-five lashes and "discarded from the party," providing the opening for Lepage. Moulton, Clark, October 14, 1804.

^{28[28]}Moulton, Lewis, February 11, 1805.

obstacles.

From Mandan to the Shoshones and beyond only Drouillard's sign language allowed communication with the many tribes met. Drouillard, writes Lewis, understands the common language of signs, understood by all the Indians they have met.^{29[29]} Sacagawea enabled the Captains to bargain for horses to cross the mountains, with Lewis and Clark speaking in English to Labiche, who translated to Charbonneau, who passed the message to Sacagawea, who then spoke to the Shoshones.

When the Lewis and Clark expedition left St. Charles, they took with them several Frenchmen, the *engagés*. Without them a difficult journey that has been called “The American Epic” would have been immensely more difficult. Their muscle, knowledge of the river and its languages, their woodland skills and talents are part of that "Epic." The keelboat carried twelve to fifteen tons of cargo, the *pirogues* eight or nine. Well fit and strong, accustomed to hardship, the *voyageurs* helped pull and push them upstream. From St. Charles to the Mandan villages, the Corps of Discovery's Americans were on strange waters, waters the *voyageurs* and their predecessors had challenged since the early years of the eighteenth century. Five of them went as members of the permanent party from the Mandan village to the Pacific to confront lands unknown to white men, confront the dangers, endure the hunger and cold, swat the mosquitoes, and walk on the prickly pear cactus alongside the American soldiers.

For his contributions as an expert shot, sign language translator, and woodsman, Drouillard has been ranked "as the most important person in the entire detachment after

^{29[29]}*Ibid.*, Lewis, August 14, 1805.

Lewis and Clark.^{30[30]} Lewis suggested Labiche receive a pay bonus (it was rejected), extolling his essential services as a translator. Despite some problems, Charbonneau earned high marks from Lewis as a cook, especially his *boudin blanc*, white pudding, a stuffed lower intestine filled with salted and peppered meat, flour, boiled and fried.^{31[31]} One-eyed Cruzatte entertained his comrades with his fiddle playing and showed them how to build caches (from the French cache, to hide) to preserve and bury supplies. However, he is most remembered for accidentally shooting Lewis in the buttock while hunting. During the return trip, Cruzatte fired at what he apparently thought was an elk. “Damn you, you have shot me,” Lewis shouted.^{32[32]}

A Montreal correspondent, Richard Hétu, in recognition of their “crucial help as boatmen, hunters, interpreters, and guides,” lauds the Frenchmen as “the forgotten heroes of the Lewis and Clark expedition.”^{33[33]} The Corps of Discovery likely would have succeeded in its epic journey without the *engagés*, but these unheralded Frenchmen are intrinsic to Clark's exaltation: “Ocan in view! O! the Joy!”^{34[34]}

^{30[30]}Dillon, *Meriwether Lewis*, pp. 91, 273; Tubbs, *Lewis and Clark*, pp. 176-77. See Robert E. Lange, "George Drouillard (Drewyer): One of the two or Three Most Valuable men on the Expedition," *We Proceeded On*, May 1979, pp. 14-16.

^{31[31]}Moulton, Lewis, May 9, 1805. .

^{32[32]}*Ibid.*, Lewis, August 11, 1806. Lewis spent the next several days in a canoe lying on his stomach.

^{33[33]}<http://mohumanities.org/programs/manyfaces/presenterindex.htm>.

^{34[34]}Moulton, Clark, November 7, 1805. "Without them [the *engagés*] the Lewis and Clark Expedition could probably not have reached Mandan-or at least not in such good shape," Vaugeois, *America*, p. 116 and p. 244.