

VIII. Lewis and Clark Maps

Always the man of vision, ever living life as a learning experience, and in all ways attending to the details, Thomas Jefferson sought to prepare the Lewis and Clark Expedition with as complete a cartographical and geographical picture of western lands as possible. Jefferson had his own collection of maps, just as he had his own very substantial library of books, all of which he and Meriwether Lewis used to prepare Lewis for the path through poorly charted Louisiana Purchase lands.

There was another student of maps among them, and that was Albert Gallatin. Gallatin had emigrated from his birth home in Switzerland to Western Pennsylvania. He was already a public voice in the Pittsburgh area by the time of the Whiskey Rebellion in 1794, and is credited with helping to moderate the climate of that conflict. He also was knowledgeable about the Indian tribes of the west, and his writings have been referenced by Elliot Coues (see below). A product of his work with Jefferson and Lewis was a "Nicholas King map" that charted the territory from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Coast, as best as it could be known just before embarking to the west. Gallatin was helping to assemble a composite from different sources, although Paul Russell Cutright (below) allows that it is only conjecture whether or not that was completed.

Mapmaking was clearly a work-in-progress because of the paucity of information at the turn of the nineteenth century. Coues in Vol. II has a foldout tracing of the map sent back by Lewis to Jefferson from Fort Mandan, April 7, 1805. The Corps was yet to enter the least well charted lands of the Louisiana Purchase. A topographical foldout from William Clark, 1814, done well after completion of the Expedition, is in the same volume for comparison. In Vol. I is a "modern" map obtained by Coues in his time from the U.S. Geological Survey. It can be a real treat for the interested reader to pore over these fine examples of cartography in progress. Our mapmakers were incredibly good at what they did.

You can find the map sources for this Chapter VIII in books serving all The Magic Library Card! Lewis and Clark chapters up to now:

- (1) Cutright, Paul Russell, "Lewis & Clark: Pioneering Naturalists," Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press (1989);
- (2) Ambrose, Stephen E., "Undaunted Courage," New York: Simon & Schuster (1996);
- (3) Coues, Elliott, ed., "The History of the Lewis and Clark Expedition," Vol. I - III, New York: Dover Publications (1987 reprint of Francis P. Harper's unabridged 1893 edition);
- (4) Cutright, Paul Russell and Brodhead, Michael J., "Elliott Coues: Naturalist and Frontier Historian," Urbana and Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press (1981).

For those who prefer access to the map story electronically, and wish to seek more background information about the Lewis and Clark Expedition, there is an excellent

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website maintained by the Smithsonian Institution in Washington at www.edgate.com/lewisandclark/. The site illustrates in just one more way how well planned and scientific this historical voyage was, how dependent for success on Jefferson, the Librarian-in-Chief of the country.

Charles B. Greenberg
Board Director, Murrysville Community Library Foundation