

Episode 2 – Text 1

LEWIS AND CLARK NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL

by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of Interior (2012)

Description of Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail

The Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail is approximately 3,700 miles long, extending from Wood River, Illinois, to the mouth of the Columbia River, near present day Astoria, Oregon, following the historic outbound and inbound routes of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

The trail connects 11 states (Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, South Dakota, North Dakota, Montana, Idaho, Washington, and Oregon) and many tribal lands. The trail was established by Congress in 1978 as part of the national trails system (NTS) as one of four original national historic trails. Today, visitors can follow the approximate route of the Corps of Discovery (Lewis and Clark Expedition members) by exploring the trail using a variety of transportation methods and interpretive means.

Before going on review these vocabulary words and definitions

Identification – finding out what something is

Protection – being kept from harm or loss

Interpretation – the way something is explained

Public use – shared with all peoples

Preservation – keeping something in its original state or in good condition

Purpose of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail

Purpose

The purpose of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail is to commemorate the 1804 to 1806 Lewis and Clark Expedition through identification; protection; interpretation; public use and enjoyment; and preservation of historic, cultural, and natural resources associated with the expedition and its place in U.S. and tribal history.

Selected Themes

Encountering Indigenous Peoples

The Corps of Discovery, diverse in their cultures, experiences, and skills, explored vast lands and participated in diplomatic encounters with Indian nations. They traded with, learned from,

and depended on friendly relations with over 50 tribes throughout the course of the journey. The American Indians they encountered had been living on the land for thousands of years and had complex societal, political, economic, and spiritual structures in place. The Indian people shared their food, knowledge, and skills with the Corps of Discovery, thus ensuring their survival and the successful completion of their mission.

The Corps of Discovery was charged with making contact with American Indian tribes during their journey and establishing trade relationships with these groups. Without the help and support of numerous tribal groups, the expedition would not have survived in the rugged North American interior. The theme, “Encountering Indigenous Peoples,” tells the story of first encounters between a growing nation and the indigenous inhabitants who had lived on the land for thousands of years.

Unity through History

The Lewis and Clark Expedition marks a significant time in the nation’s history. Some call it an epic event leading to prosperous growth of a young nation while others characterize it as having huge disruptive impacts on the viable and rich indigenous cultures. Listening to each other with respect, the nation can unite through an understanding of multiple perspectives of the collective history of the United States.

The historic events of the Lewis and Clark Expedition weave together numerous perspectives and interpretations of the first encounters between the growing nation and the tribal nations inhabiting the land. Commemorating and sharing the stories of the Corps of Discovery expedition through the creation of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail provide an opportunity to explore and share these perspectives providing a better understanding of the past. Through the theme, “Unity through History,” the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail provides an opportunity to listen to and respect the multiple perspectives that mold the collective history of the United States.

Traces of the Past Observed Today

The Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail provides opportunities to glimpse the past, learn from history, visit tribal nations, and explore the landscape.

The Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail is a tangible link to the nation’s past and enables exploration of the cultural landscape with a newfound respect and appreciation for the legacy of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. The trail also provides an opportunity to visit contemporary tribal nations, understand their traditions, and gain respect for their relationship with these lands. The theme, “Traces of the Past Observed Today,” utilizes the historic resources of the trail to increase understanding and appreciation of the past.

Excerpts from: National Park Service, U.S. Department of Interior. (2012, September). *Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Foundation Document*. Omaha, NE: Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail. (Taken from pages 4,7,9,11).

Full Foundation Document is available at <http://www.nps.gov/lecl/parkmgmt/index.htm>