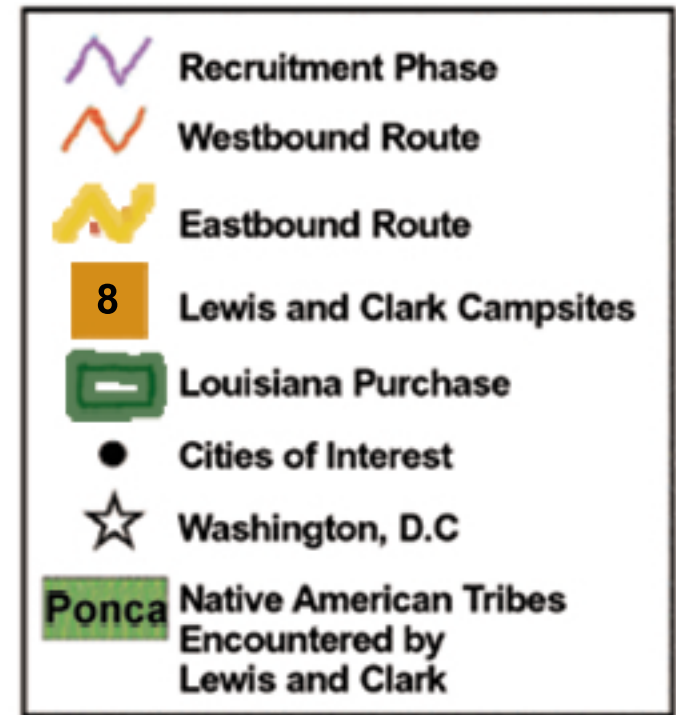




President Thomas Jefferson secretly wrote to Congress asking for an appropriation of \$2,500 to finance an expedition to explore the Missouri River. He was interested in finding possible routes to the Pacific Ocean and establishing trading partners with the Indians. Congress passed this request into law on February 23, 1803.

Meriwether Lewis and a party of eleven men left Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in a large keelboat and traveled down the Ohio River.

Lewis arrived at Clarksville, Indiana, and probably on the next day joined William Clark, York, and a number of men (known as the "nine young men from Kentucky").

After writing at Camp Dubois, Clark wrote in his journal: "I set out at 4 o'clock P.M. in the presence of many of the Neighbouring inhabitants, and proceeded on under a gentle breeze up the Missouri..." Meriwether Lewis and Indian-language interpreter George Drouillard joined the party several days later.

After spending the winter at Fort Mandan (in modern North Dakota), the keelboat under the command of Corporal Richard Warfington returned to St. Louis with a shipment of Indian artifacts, live animals, reports, and scientific samples for President Jefferson, while the main party under Lewis and Clark set out for the West.

Sacagawea was reunited with her Shoshone family at the party's Camp Fortunate in modern Montana. She helped to negotiate for horses needed by the Corps of Discovery to cross the Continental Divide.

Still almost 20 miles from the Pacific coast, the Corps may have been mistaken in their assumption that they were in sight of the ocean. Later in the month, Lewis and Clark took a vote on where to build their winter encampment—Fort Clatsop. In the true spirit of democracy, all members of the party participated in this vote—including York, Clark's enslaved servant, and Sacagawea.

The Corps left Fort Clatsop and gave it to Coboway, a Clatsop chief. After having to wait for the snow to melt before crossing the Bitterroot Mountains, the Corps made excellent time on their eastern return trip.

Clark named a large rock pillar Pompey's Tower (now Pompey's Pillar on the Yellowstone River in modern Montana) after Sagagawee's son. Next to some Indian rock drawings, Clark inscribed his name and the date. Still visible today, this nineteenth-century graffiti is the only physical evidence of the Corps' journey.

Lewis had a fight with the Blackfeet and two of the Indians were killed. A few days earlier he had been at the party's most northern point, Camp Disappointment, on the Marias River in modern Montana.

The Corps of Discovery safely arrived in St. Louis. Lewis wrote to Thomas Jefferson, "we have penetrated the Continent of North America to the Pacific Ocean..."