



# Jefferson and the West: A Chronology

On Jan. 18, 1803, President Thomas Jefferson sent a confidential message to Congress requesting \$2,500 “for the purpose of extending the external commerce of the U.S.” Though the amount was small, its approval marked the realization of Jefferson’s long-sought dream of western exploration and launched one of the great heroic adventures in American history – the voyage of Lewis and Clark and the Corps of Discovery.

On Jan. 18, 2003, the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation will commemorate Jefferson’s stewardship of this “Journey of Discovery” by recreating the “Indian Hall” in the Entrance Hall of Monticello and by hosting – in partnership with the National Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Council – the public inauguration of the 200th anniversary commemoration of the expedition at Jefferson’s home.

The following is a brief chronology of Jefferson’s exposure to and interest in exploration of western North America prior to the Lewis and Clark expedition.

## Jefferson’s Early Exposure to ‘The West’
















### 1749

Thomas Jefferson’s father, Peter Jefferson, is one of the founding members of the Loyal Company, created to petition for grants of land west of the Allegheny Mountains. Other founding members are Joshua Fry, Thomas Walker, James Maury, and Thomas Meriwether, Meriwether Lewis’ grandfather.

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## *This Issue’s Other Stories*

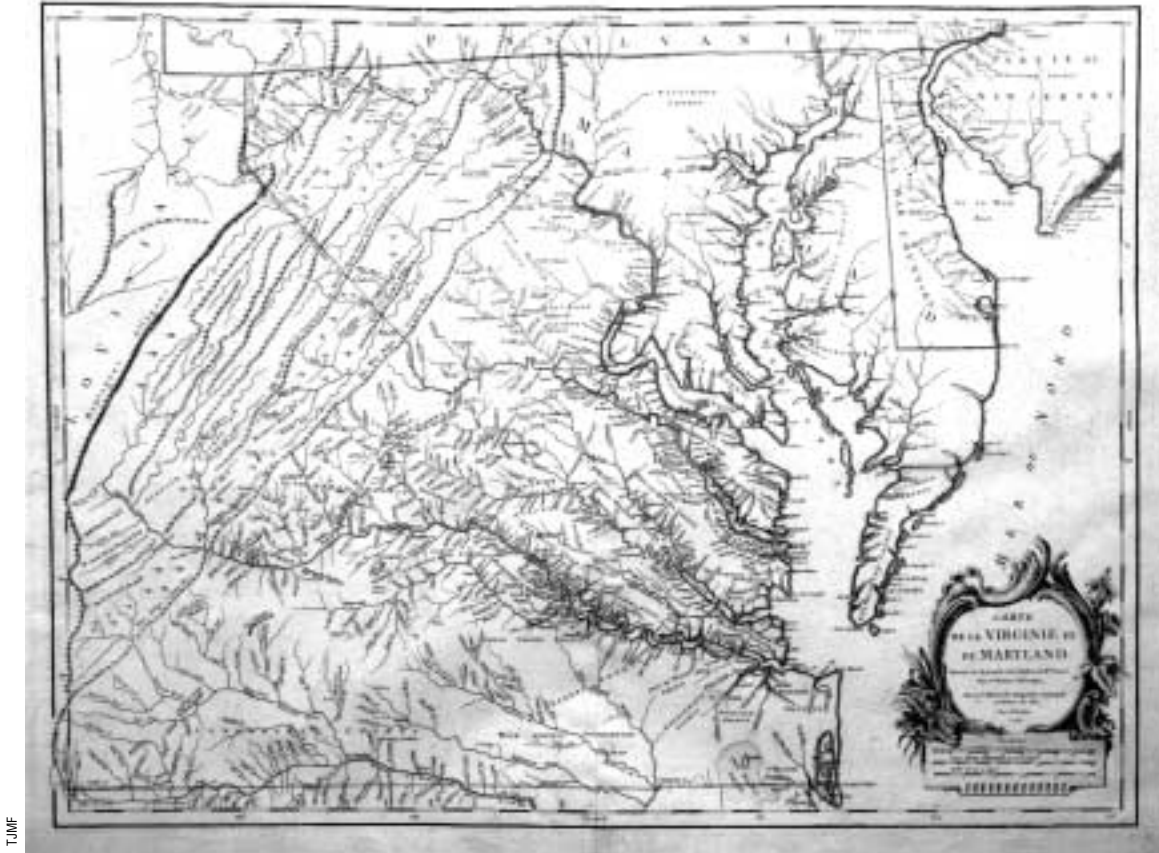
-  DIGITAL ARCHAEOLOGY ARCHIVE
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-  JULY 4 EVENT
-  “MANUAL OF PARLIAMENTARY PRACTICE”
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-  SHADWELL AGREEMENT
-  WINTER TOUR

# MONTICELLO



## Jefferson and the West

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### 1751

Joshua Fry and Peter Jefferson complete their “Map of the Most Inhabited Part of Virginia Containing the Whole Province of Maryland,” the first map of Virginia created from actual surveys.

### 1753

The Loyal Company plans an exploratory expedition up the Missouri River led by Thomas Walker, but abandons the enterprise due to the outbreak of the French and Indian War. Jefferson is 10 years old at this time.

### 1758-60

Following his father’s death, Jefferson attends school at the Rev. James Maury’s, who as a member of the Loyal Company was involved in the planning of the proposed western expedition.

**French version of  
“A Map of the Most  
Inhabited Part of  
Virginia, Containing  
the Whole Province  
of Maryland”  
compiled in 1751  
by Peter Jefferson  
and Joshua Fry.**

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### 1780s

In his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Jefferson includes the Missouri, other western rivers, and points on western geography even though the Treaty of Paris of 1763 excluded the western territory as a part of Virginia.

### Proposed Western Expeditions Before Lewis and Clark

#### 1783

Jefferson approaches George Rogers Clark to lead an expedition to explore the West, provided the money can be raised. Clark declines, but suggests his youngest brother, William, “as well qualified almost for any business.”

#### 1784

Jefferson introduces in Congress the Ordinance of 1784, which set forth the principle that new states could be formed from the western territories and admitted to the Union on an equal basis with the original states.

#### 1786

While minister to France, Jefferson joins in a plan to support American explorer John Ledyard to travel eastward across Siberia, secure passage of a ship to some point on the western coast of North America, then travel east across the continent. Ledyard, however, is arrested in Russia and sent back to Europe.

#### 1793

Jefferson enlists other members of the American Philosophical Society to sponsor André Michaux, a French botanist to “find the shortest & most convenient route of communication between the U.S. & the Pacific Ocean.” But the expedition is abandoned east of the Mississippi because of political intrigues.

– GAYE WILSON

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**COMMENTS? [newsletter@monticello.org](mailto:newsletter@monticello.org)**