



Exhibition will Re-create Jefferson's 'Indian Hall'

When Meriwether Lewis, fresh off his epic journey, returned to the East in the fall of 1806, his party included Sheheke, a chief of the Mandan tribe from what is now North Dakota. From Washington, President Thomas Jefferson wrote to Lewis en route:

“Perhaps while in our neighborhood, it may be gratifying to him, and not otherwise to yourself, to take a ride to Monticello and see in what manner I have arranged the tokens of friendship that I have received from his country particularly as well as from other Indian friends: that I am in fact preparing a kind of Indian hall.”

The Thomas Jefferson Foundation is extending a similar invitation for 2003.

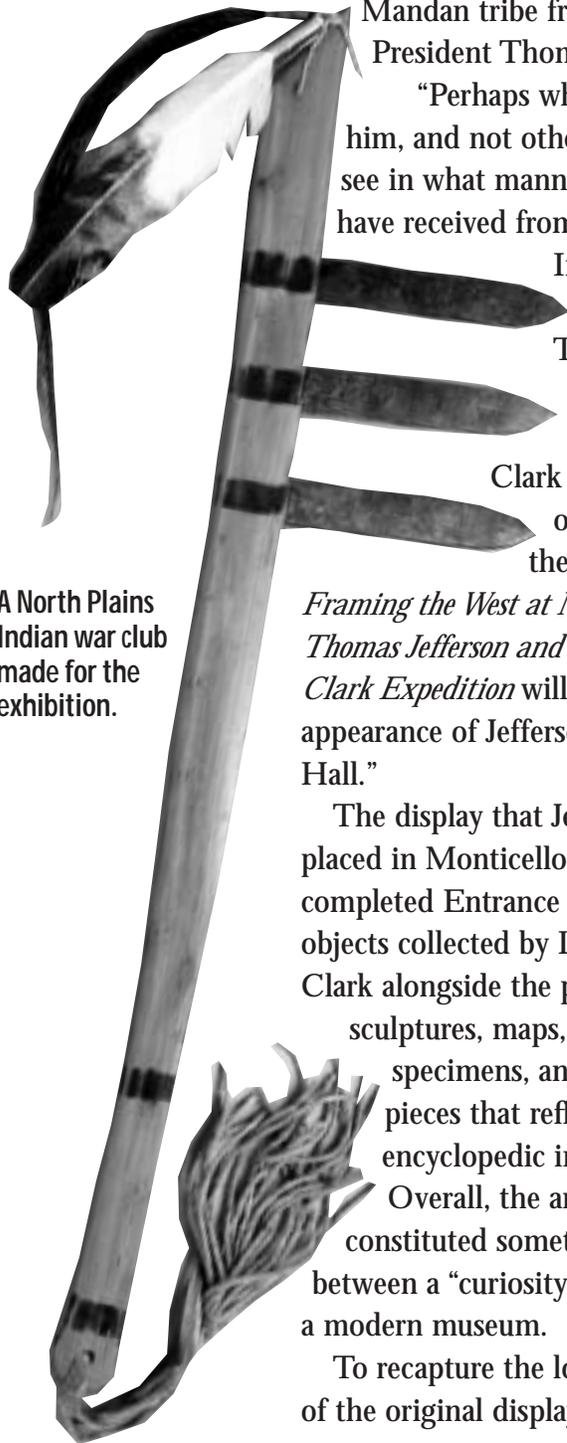
The centerpiece of the Foundation's Lewis and Clark bicentennial observance, the exhibition

Framing the West at Monticello: Thomas Jefferson and the Lewis and Clark Expedition will re-create the appearance of Jefferson's "Indian Hall."

The display that Jefferson placed in Monticello's newly completed Entrance Hall featured objects collected by Lewis and Clark alongside the paintings, sculptures, maps, natural specimens, and other pieces that reflected his encyclopedic interests.

Overall, the array of objects constituted something in between a "curiosity cabinet" and a modern museum.

To recapture the look and feel of the original display, *Framing the*



A North Plains Indian war club made for the exhibition.

TJF/Edward Owen

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MONTICELLO



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Charles Spohn

"Framing the West at Monticello" in the Entrance Hall.

West at Monticello will include articles from Monticello's collections, items on loan from other institutions, and historically accurate Indian objects made by Native American artists using traditional methods and materials.

The exhibition will open Jan. 16 and remain in place through-out the year.

"This installation will offer a look at the expedition through the lens of Jefferson's vision and stewardship," said Elizabeth Chew, associate curator of collections and curator for *Framing the West at Monticello*. "It will highlight what the materials collected by Lewis and Clark contributed to the existing knowledge of North America—its native people, vegetation, animals, etc.—and give visitors insight into what motivated Jefferson to form such a display and what meaning it had for him and his contemporaries."

The effort to re-create the "Indian Hall" presented one significant challenge. Despite extensive research over many years, the whereabouts of the objects in Jefferson's original Indian collection are unknown. Monticello, however, has turned this obstacle into an opportunity to involve contemporary Native Americans in the exhibition. The Foundation has commissioned Indian artists working in traditional media to create new pieces, based on primary source documentation of what was displayed at Monticello and study of surviving objects in other

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collections. Among the American Indians fashioning objects for the exhibition are Butch Thunderhawk and his students in the tribal arts program at United Tribes Technical College in Bismarck, N.D.; Jo Esther Parshall, Dennis Fox, and Mary Elk, all of New Town, N.D.; and Joel Queen of Cherokee, N.C.

To complement the installation in the Entrance Hall, Lewis and Clark-related objects will be placed in other rooms of Monticello. Among these will be original objects on loan for at least parts of the year, including three codices of the Lewis and Clark journals, plant specimens collected by the explorers, documents relating to Jefferson's planning and execution of the expedition, the copy of Nicholas Biddle's 1814 *History of the Expedition under the Command of Captains Lewis and Clark* that Jefferson presented to William Clark, Lewis' air rifle, and Clark's compass.

Additionally, the guided tours of the house in 2003 will focus on Jefferson's integral involvement with the expedition. Monticello interpreters will use the "Indian Hall" display and the additional objects to discuss the expedition in the wider historical and social context of Jefferson and his times. The themes will include Jefferson's fascination with the West; his political, commercial, and scientific aims in commissioning the expedition; the journey's immediate effects; and its many legacies.

"The exhibition and interpretive focus on Jefferson and Lewis and Clark will provide visitors with a new and very different experience in the coming year," Chew said.

As for Lewis and Chief Sheheke, there is no evidence that they accepted Jefferson's invitation to see the "Indian Hall." The display did, however, impress many of those who visited Monticello in the early 19th century.

"But that which excites the curiosity of visitors, is the rich museum, which is placed at the entrance to the house," wrote August Levasseur, who accompanied the Marquis de Lafayette on his 1824 visit. "It contains offensive and defensive arms, clothes, ornaments, and utensils of the different savage tribes of North America; the most varied and complete collection that has ever been made."

The hope is that *Framing the West at Monticello* will create similarly favorable impressions.

COMMENTS?
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