

Lewis and Clark Expedition, Newspaper article, 1805

LEXINGTON, (Ken.) June 18.

The party of discovery, under the command of Captains Lewis and Clark, left the mouth of the Missouri on the 19th day of May 1804. An express with despatches from their winter quarters, which left them the 14th April, has returned to St. Louis. By the express, letters were received from Captain Clark to his correspondents in Kentucky. A gentleman from Jefferson county, has obligingly favoured the editor of the Kentucky Gazette with the following account, which he obtained from one of the men who returned with the express, and from letters from some of the party. They fortified themselves in November last, on the bank of the Missouri, 1609 miles from the mouth, by actual measurement, in latitude 47, 21 north; called then Fort Mondane, after a nation of Indians who reside in the neighbourhood, and who have been very friendly to them.—On their passage up, they were delighted with the beautiful appearance of the country for about 200 leagues, or to the mouth of the river La Platte, which comes in from the south; after which, to their winter quarters, it is described not to be so fertile. The person who brought the despatches, speaks of the opening made by the river, being about one mile wide with high cliffs on each side. The bed of the river occupies about a fourth part of it, the remainder of the bottom is entirely composed of coarse sand, covered with cotton wood. This bottom is continually giving way either on one side or the other, and gaining on the opposite side. The cliffs in some places are covered with red cedar, which, with the cotton and a few small black ash trees, is the only timber described to be in that country.—From the heights there is not a tree or twig to be seen, as far as the sight can extend, or as they have explored. Out from the river the land goes perfectly level, with but few exceptions—and the plains covered with grass. They passed the mouths of a number of streams, the most of which had names given by the French—One they have named Floyd's river, to perpetuate the name of a young man, of their party. Named Charles Floyd, who died much regretted on the 20th August.

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Buffaloes are said to be in great numbers, and of large size—Two description of deer are described; those resembling the common kind of this country being larger, and the tails 18 inches long, and the hair much longer on their bodies; the other kind having a black tail. Elks and goats are numerous. The grouse, or prairie hen, are in plenty; and before the closing of the river in the fall, water fowls in abundance. Fish scarce, and those principally of the cat kind. Some of the white bear skins, had been brought to the fort by visiting Indians from higher up; but the party had seen none of those animals. The Indians keep horses, which are used entirely for the chase, and in war.

From such information as they have received of the country above, it is about 600 miles to the great falls, which are made by a hedge of mountains, called

Rocky Mountain, in which it is presumed the Missouri terminates. At their winter quarters the river is nearly a quarter of a mile wide: is equally as muddy as at its mouth, and has continued its rapidity with very little alteration, as high as they have gone, though it has become considerably more shallow, so that they will not be able to take their large barge any higher. From what information they have obtained of the course of the upper part of the river, the most are at the Northwardly part.—From where they wintered to the falls, is nearly a South course. The description given by M'Kenzie, of the head waters of the river, is accurate.

They have sent on to the President of the United States, an accurate journal, with a map of the country through which they passed.

Six of the party were sent back—the party now consists of 28 men, exclusive of the two officers. They have enjoyed perfect health—not one having been sick, except the unfortunate young man before mentioned, and he was taken off in a few hours with a cramp in his stomach. The greatest friendship has existed with the party; and the men who have returned, speak in the highest terms of the humanity, and uncommon pains and attention of both the captains, Lewis and Clark, towards the whole of them; and that they left them in good spirits fully convinced that they would winter on the Pacific Ocean.

They were told of six nations of Indians they would have to pass, before they would arrive at the falls, from only one of which they apprehended any difficulty—they are called the Snake tribe, and reside high up.

Curiosities of different kinds; live beasts, birds, several boxes of minerals, a pair of uncommon rams horns, from the rocky mountain, scions of a new discovered berry, called the buffalo berry, &c. have been brought on by the returned party, and deposited with the commanding officer at St. Louis, to be sent by him to the President.

We expect in a few days further particulars relative to this interesting voyage.

Citation: Norfolk Gazette and Public Ledger, July 19, 1805, Library of Virginia