



*Meriwether
Lewis*

**US ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
and the
LEWIS AND CLARK
BICENTENNIAL COMMEMORATION**



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“Oceti Sakowin – Remembering and Educating”
Chamberlain, Eagle Butte, Pierre, Fort Pierre, SD
August 27-September 26, 2004
After Action Report

Background: In 2000, the National Council for the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial decided to highlight some of the more nationally significant festivals and events and call them “Signature Events”. These events were to be those of nationwide historical significance, have the potential of high visitation, and be multicultural in nature. “Oceti Sakowin - Remembering and Educating” was designated as the eighth of these Signature Events. The event was held in numerous locations throughout South Dakota.

Corps Venues: All of the Corps’ participation in these events consisted of one or more of the following venues. Venues specific to a location are described under that location.

COE Exhibit: The Corps was part of a contingent of agencies, communities, and vendors sponsoring a booth/exhibit. The Corps national exhibit had five parts – two backdrops (one of the L&C expedition and the other of the modern army connection), a display of the Discovery Box, a display of the prints of the five paintings of Michael Haynes that were commissioned by the Corps, trading post, and an information table.

COE L&C Reenactors: Members of Capt. Lewis’ Company included Corps of Engineers personnel and representatives of the Frontier Army Living History Association as well as members. The reenactors set up a full encampment with a common tent and three shelter tents along with the many accoutrements that would have been taken by the expedition. When in camp, Capt. Lewis’ Company posted front and rear guards, performed daily tasks around the camp (cleaning guns, repairing leather goods, etc), and finished off each day with a “whiskey” ration (water). This was an extremely popular venue.

Corps of Discovery 2 – 200 Years to the Future (aka: Corps 2) – The Corps 2 exhibit itself consists of approximately 32 panels with an associated audiotape headset that discuss Jefferson’s vision; Lewis, Clark, and the members of the expedition; with the remainder depicting the natural resources and the Native American influences on the expedition. In addition, Raystown Lake Project (NAB) constructed and donated a ½-size land-based replica of a keelboat. Visitors were encouraged to come into the keelboat for interpretive programs about the expedition. Rangers worked in their uniforms or their 1803 Army regimentals to provide interpretive talks and information to dignitaries and members of the public visiting the keelboat exhibit.

Tent of Many Voices (TOMV) – This is a venue associated with Corps 2 (same portable generator provides electricity for heat and lighting for both) but separate from it. TOMV has a small stage for presentations and seating capacity of 150.

Event sites:

1. Chamberlain, SD - This event was held August 27-31, 2004 at the American Creek Recreation Area. Weather for Friday, the first day of the event, was cold and rainy but temperatures moderated after that and the weather was quite pleasant. Temperatures were in the upper 70's to low 80s. Estimated total attendance for this event was 7,000. Corps participation was as follows: Tim Bischoff and Charlie Deutsch (both MVS); Larry Spisak, Gene Herrmann and Mike Estock (all LRL); Sandra Cannon and Matt Like (both SPK); Jon Carlson (NWP); Jeremy Thomason (MVK), Wayne Freed (NWO); and Susan Robinson Haney (SWF).

Exhibit: At this event, the Corps exhibit was set up in a tent with several other Federal agencies (BLM, USGS, USPO) National Council, and SD Tourism. During the weekdays, there were numerous school groups that attended as well as members of the general public. Although the population of Chamberlain is only around 2,500, attendance during the weekend was very good. Approximately 2,600 visitors came to see the exhibit.

Encampment: The Reenactment camp was set up between Corps II and the Federal Agency Tent. Captain Lewis' Company of the Corps of Discovery (Ken Wilk (NWK), , Jon Carlson (NWP), Charlie Deutsch (MVS), Larry Spisak (LRP), Tim Bischoff (MVS) and Gene Hermann (LRP) worked together to portray a typical encampment that the expedition would have set up along the route. All camp activities and demonstrations were intended to show that this was an Army endeavor from beginning to end. A guard was posted at the entrance to the camp at all times. The camp was set up according to military customs of the time. Drills and formations were conducted in a military fashion. Reenactors interpreted camp duties such as molding bullets, washing clothes, sewing, writing in their journals, repairing equipment, and practicing the manual of arms. There were roughly 3,400 visitors to the camp.

TOMV – Several Corps representatives were asked to speak in the Tent of Many Voices. Those speaking were: Tim Bischoff, MVS (George Drouillard); Rick Magee, NAE (Recruiting for the Expedition); and Jean Nauss, NWD (Hardships of the Expedition). In all 324 interpretive contacts were made.

Keelboat – COE Park Rangers took turns in manning the replica of the keelboat. They greeted visitors and conducted programs on the replica. Approximately 1,600 visitors received programs on the replica.

2. Pierre/Ft. Pierre, SD– This event was held September 18-24, 2004 The estimated total attendance was 1,500. Weather started out warm and windy and ended up rainy and stormy. Corps participation was as follows.

Exhibit: The exhibit tent was located in Ft. Pierre adjacent to Corps II. This site was across the Bad River from Lilly Park, where the Bad River Gathering activities were

to take place on Sept. 24-26 (to commemorate the expedition meeting the Teton Sioux). The Corps was the only other Federal agency besides the NPS to man an exhibit during the time period. However, the USDA Forest Service was scheduled to man a booth for activities the weekend following (Sept 24-26). Working the Corps exhibit were Wayne Freed (NW0), Norma Hall (MVS), Rob Mills (SWT), and Jan Burton (NWK). Approximately 1,275 visitors interacted with the rangers at the exhibit.

Reenactors: the Captain Lewis' Company encampment was set up at Steamboat Park in Pierre. The members exhibited typical activities showing what army life was like on campaign during the early 1800's and specifically the Expedition. Participating during this portion of the Signature Event were Ken Wilk (NWK), Rick Magee (NAE), Dave Quebedeaux (SAS), Larry Spisak (LRP), and Ed Shirley (SWT). Approximately 130 visitors interacted with these reenactors.

The visitation was expected to be much higher than this. On September 18, the City of Pierre/State of South Dakota dedicated a new Korean War Memorial at the Capital. Overnight, the population of Pierre swelled to double its normal size. With visitors parking in the lots and roadways all around the encampment, organizers assumed that many would stop and see the encampment on the way to the dedication or before they left for the day. Unfortunately, this was not the case.

TOMV: Speaking at the TOMV were the following COE reenactors dressed in their 1803 Army uniforms. Rick Magee (NAE) spoke on "Recruiting for the Expedition". Dave Quebedeaux (SAS) discussed the role of diplomacy during the expedition. Jean Nauss (NWD) spoke on the hardships of the expedition. Jan Burton (NWK) spoke on York. Larry Spisak (LRP) discussed "Music of the Expedition" and played songs from that time period. In all, approximately 275 visitors listened to one or more of the talks.

3. Other event locations: The Corps of Engineers was originally invited to participate at two other sites of this Signature Event: Eagle Butte (Sept 14-23) and Ft. Thompson (Sept 23-25). We contacted organizers of those two sites repeatedly, asking for the exact nature of the participation level and speakers requested for their needs. We waited until two weeks prior to the event and were never contacted by the organizers. So, because of logistical limitations, we opted to withdraw our involvement at these sites. Since that time, we have met with others groups originally invited to participate at these events and found that these groups also withdrew their support because of a lack of event coordination.

Lessons learned:

1. One item that was missing at all of the event sites was a very visible "Events Information Booth" where people could pick up a schedule of the days activities including speakers, special activities and other presentations. We need to work with the event organizers to make these events much more "user friendly".
2. Stringing an event out over 6 weeks, four cities, and half the state of South Dakota was very tough to handle logistically. We had to limit our participation. This event was not well planned by the organizers. Planning didn't start until March of 2004 and was

haphazard at best. Also, because of the late planning, marketing of the event lacked the nationwide punch received by previous events. Even advertisement of the event in the local papers was minimal at best.

3. The lack of planning, marketing, geographic expanse, conflicting events in nearby areas, all played a part in greatly reducing visitor participation in the event. Events like these must be planned in advance and take in all aspects of visitor participation in order to get the most “bang for the buck” for visitors and participants alike.

5. If it were not for the school groups that came to the event sites, visitation would have been cut in half. Schools made up half the visitation to these event sites. Unfortunately, none of the Pierre area schools took advantage of the encampment set up in Steamboat Park.

6. During the Chamberlain portion of this event, we learned that portions of the Sioux Nation were intending to protest the Bicentennial. This extreme faction of Native Americans was aiming their ire at the Discovery Expedition of St. Charles (the reenactors proceeding up the river in replica boats). However, there was talk of physical violence stated by the group of protesters and had organizers and participants worried. A security team of local, state, and Federal law enforcement as well as event organizers and Federal agencies was assembled. A plan was devised and implemented to deal with all possibilities. The protest activities were finally leaked to the media and received press in print, radio, and TV nation-wide (at one count over 80 media agencies were running stories of this including the two national wire services). Although little came of the protest (except that the Native Americans were given a venue to voice their concerns of their treatment over the years), this an indication of the many aspects that we must all consider when planning events of this magnitude.

Future outcome: The next Signature Event will be Circle of Cultures in the Bismarck, ND, October 22-30, 2004. The Corps will have a pivotal role in this event.

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