



*Meriwether  
Lewis*

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



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**“DEPARTURE FROM WOOD RIVER”**  
Alton/Hartford/Wood River, IL Signature Event  
May 13-16, 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. The “Departure From Wood River” was designated as the fourth of these Signature Events. The weather for the event of May 13<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> was clear and breezy with temps in the low 50’s with the exception of the evening of May 13<sup>th</sup> where 4.5 inches of rain fell overnight.

As a result of the rain, parking was a nightmare! The nearby farm field that was to be used for parking was a quagmire so buses were hired to shuttle people from an area mall. However, charging \$10 per person for the bus ride did not go over well so many people ended up parking along the highway or nearby roads and walking to the event site.

The event itself was spread over 3 sites – Madison County Speedway in Madison IL, Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center at Hartford, IL and the National Great Rivers Museum (NGRM) at Melvin Price Lock and Dam in Alton, IL.

In addition to Ken Wilk and myself, Corps personnel that worked in one or more of the venues at this Signature Event included: Charlie Deutsch, Dan Camden, MaryAnn Heitmeyer, Norma Hall, Pam Doty, Tim Bischoff (all MVS); Jay VanHoose (LRH); James Teal, Darrell Mitchell, Ernie Lentz, Steve Rodgers (all MVK); Ed Shirley, Jeff Boutwell, Robbie Henderson (all SWF); Craig Rockwell, Jeanne Newton, Pasquale Anolfo (all NWW); Chris Botz, Scott Tichy (both MVP); Shannon Maness (SAW); Heather Burke (SAJ); Dave Quebedeaux (SAS); Gene Herrmann, Pat Kline, Susie Kline, Larry Spisak (all LRP); Jon Carlson (NWP); Kathleen Bennett (SPA); Kevin Ewbank (MVR); Rick Magee (NAE).

**Action:** The Corps was involved in 11 separate venues during this commemorative event – Eve of Departure Kickoff; school programs; COE Exhibit; reenactments at Camp River DuBois; panel moderation; Corps of Discovery 2; the Tent of Many Voices; NGRM demonstrations; NGRM Michael Haynes Art Show; NGRM Speakers; and NGRM support staff.

Eve of Departure Kickoff: The kickoff for the event was to take place on the evening of Thursday May 13 at the Madison Speedway. This was to include a VIP reception followed by, in a ceremony open to the public, an induction of a group of young people into an honorary “Lewis and Clark Company” of the U.S. Army; a free concert by the Oak Ridge Boys; and closing with a performance of the U.S. Army’s “Twilight Tattoo.” Unfortunately, about 2 hours before the event was to start, it began raining very heavily. Although the VIP reception and the induction ceremony performed by Col. Charles K. Williams (St. Louis District Engineer), went on as scheduled, the remainder of the event that night was cancelled because of the heavy rain and thunderstorms. Capt. Lewis Company (COE Park Rangers and lock operators) attended this event in their 1803 Army uniforms and talked to many of the VIP’s in attendance. In total, there were roughly 1000 interpretive contacts made that night.

School Programs: For several months prior to the event, the Corps, in partnership with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, scheduled programming for area schools that were not able to attend the Signature Event. Giving school programs during the week prior to the Signature Event were Pasquale Anolfo and Larry Spisak (Holy Ghost Elementary in Jerseyville, IL); Kathleen Bennett and MaryAnn Heitmeyer (Eunice Smith Elementary 3<sup>rd</sup> graders, Alton, IL); Scott Tichy and Chris Botz (Eunice Smith Elementary 4<sup>th</sup> graders, Alton, IL); Heather Burke and Dave Quebedeaux (Lincoln Middle School, Edwardsville, IL); Norma Hall and James Teal (Madison School, St. Louis MO). All of the programs were very well received. Again, the Corps was the only Federal agencies to go out to the schools to do any kind of programming. These rangers made a total of 1,754 interpretive contacts.

COE Exhibit: The Corps exhibit was part of a contingent of agencies, communities, and vendors sponsoring a booth/exhibit. However, because of the heavy rains Thursday evening into Friday morning, at 8am Friday morning the event was cancelled for the day. Around 10am the event organizers made the decision to open a limited number of venues. However, by that time many of the COE staff had decided to take advantage of the day off and explore St. Louis. After doing a reconnaissance of the event site, we found that the exhibit tent and most of the grounds were full of standing water and mud. After several trips to “the swamp”, also known as the Exhibit Tent, throughout the day to check on conditions, the Corps made the decision to move our exhibit from the main event site up to the NGRM for Saturday and Sunday.

The Corps exhibit had four parts – (1) one backdrop of the historic aspect of Lewis and Clark and one backdrop of the modern army connection; (2) a display of the Discovery Box; (3) an information table that contained a variety of COE brochures; and (4) a “trading center”. Rather than just to have little “give-aways” (pins, magnets, pencils, etc) out for visitors to take handfuls, the items were placed into a brass cooking pot suspended from a wooden tripod. On the tripod was a sign made of wood and leather that said, “Trade Goods – Will trade for information”. This was an attempt to engage more people, especially kids, in the booth to peak their interest in the expedition. In order to get something from the trading center, visitors first had to answer a question related to the expedition.

Although school groups toured the event site on Tuesday through Thursday, the vendors (of which the Corps was considered one) were not allowed to open up their exhibit area. As a result, our visitation numbers were much lower than what they could have been.

The weather made things very difficult for everyone involved on the weekend. On Saturday and Sunday, the agencies and vendors were offered a place to set up their exhibits as “open air” exhibits on a higher spot near the levy. However, as the Corps had already made the decision to move to NGRM on Friday afternoon, we declined the offer.

On Saturday and Sunday, short demonstrations were given at the NGRM to more thoroughly explain about the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Demonstrators during these days included Rick Magee (NAE) – Flags of the Time Period, Larry Spisak (LRP) – Music of the Expedition, Jeanne Newton (NWW) – Journaling During the Expedition, Craig Rockwell (NWW) – Captain Clark, Kathleen Bennett (SWA) – Animals of the Expedition, Kevin Ewbank (MVR) and Heather Burke (SAJ) – both spoke on the Hardships of the Expedition.

Attendance at NGRM was good on Friday, but because the weather had cleared, attendance was way down on Saturday and Sunday. Part of this was because the NGRM portion of the event was not included in either the Press releases or the brochures distributed about the Wood River event. As a result, there were only 1,754 interpretive contacts at the Corps exhibit at the NGRM.

Reenactment at Camp River DuBois – On the grounds of the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center in Hartford, IL is a replica of the fort constructed by the expedition during the winter of 1803-04. During the time of the Signature Event, members of the Corps’ Captain Lewis’ Company as well as members of the Frontier Army Living History Association assisted the Illinois Detachment in providing costumed interpretation (1803 Army) at the reconstructed fort. Participating in this endeavor were Jeff Boutwell, Ed Shirley, Robbie Henderson (all SWF); Pat Kline, Larry Spisak, Gene Herrmann (all LRP); Jon Carlson (NWP); Tim Bischoff, Charlie Deutsch (both MVS); Dave Quebedeaux (SAS); Rick Magee (NAE); and Ken Wilk (NWK). Although the grounds of the event site were soggy after all of the rain, there was nearly always a line of visitors to get into the fort. There were 26,448 interpretive contacts made by COE personnel at the fort in just 4 days.

Panel Moderation – On May 14, Craig Rockwell moderated a panel discussion between BG (Ret) Hal Stearns and James Alexander Thom highlighting the Army aspects and Native American aspects of the Lewis and Clark story. Discussions of this type are fitting contributions to such national events, because they gave the audience insight that cannot be gained through the many Lewis and Clark resources readily available. It would be advisable that the Corps and other Federal agencies help organizers understand that we need more of this caliber of speakers at national events.

Corps of Discovery II – 200 Years to the Future (Corps 2) – The Corps 2 exhibit itself consists of approximately 32 panels with an associated audiotape headset or hardcopy text 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. During the Signature Event, all COE park rangers attending the event worked in their park ranger uniform to provide interpretive talks and information to dignitaries and members of the public visiting the keelboat exhibit. In addition Dave Quebedeaux (SAS), Rick Magee (NAE), Robbie Henderson, Jeff Boutwell (both SWF), Charlie Deutsch (MVS) provided additional interpretation while dressed in a replica of the 1803 Army uniform. Roughly 3,135 interpretive contacts were made at the keelboat replica.

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. Craig Rockwell (NWW), Tim Bischoff (MVS), Rick Magee (NAE) and Larry Spisak (LRP) gave interpretive talks during the Signature Event. Mr. Rockwell, through the eyes of Capt. Clark as an older man, reflected on the expedition. Mr. Bischoff, as George Drouillard, had an audience participation to discuss the difficulty in conversing when the languages were unknown. Mr. Magee spoke on the “Tools of Diplomacy”. Mr. Spisak spoke on the music of the expedition with some audience participation. In total, there were 210 interpretive contacts at the TOMV.

NGRM Demonstrations –From Tuesday May 11 through Thursday May 13, there were demonstration areas set up at the NGRM for schools that had arranged tours to the Signature Event on those days. These programs were roughly 25 minutes long and were intended to teach students more about the expedition. Assisting in this effort were Tim Bischoff (MVS) – George Drouillard; Dave Quebedeaux (SAS) – Diplomacy of the Expedition; Jon Carlson (NWP) – Pvt. Hugh McNeal; Charlie Deutsch (MVS) – Plants of the Expedition; Rick Magee (NAE) – Flags of the Time Period; Larry Spisak (LRP) – Music of the Expedition; Heather Burke (SAJ) – Hardships of the Expedition; Ed Shirley (SWF) – Members of the Expedition; Jeanne Newton (NWW) – Journaling During the Expedition; Jeff Boutwell (SWF) – Accoutrements of the Expedition; Robbie Henderson (SWF) – The Expedition; Kathleen Bennett (SWA) – Animals of the Expedition.

All of these demonstrators received high praise from the students, teachers and the general public that attended them. In total, there were 2,175 interpretive contacts made during this time.

NGRM Michael Haynes Art Show – Arrangements had been made with Michael Haynes, an artist from the St. Louis area, to show his Lewis and Clark artwork. The Corps had commissioned five painting from him for the Bicentennial – “Recruitment at Fort Massac” “Celebration at Independence Creek” “In Pursuit of the Sioux” “Astride the Mighty Missouri” and “Trade at Dismal Niche”. In addition to prints of those 5 paintings, there were an additional 25 paintings depicting a variety of scenes described in the journals or images of the members of the expedition. Mr. Haynes stayed with the art exhibit most of Saturday and Sunday to explain his paintings. As such, a COE ranger was not assigned to this task.

NGRM Speakers – Also at the NGRM, noted Lewis and Clark scholars were brought in on Saturday and Sunday to discuss various aspects of the Expedition. Speakers and their topics included BG (Ret) Hal Stearns (“The Other Members of the Expedition”); Dr. Gary Moulton (“Editing the Journals of Lewis and Clark”); Dr. Ray Woods (“Missouri River – Then and Now”); Michael Haynes (“Art and the Lewis and Clark Expedition”) and Steve Allie (“Uniforms of the Lewis and Clark Expedition”). Approximately 197 people attended one or more of the talks given that weekend.

NGRM Support Staff – Because of the anticipated increased visitation to the NGRM, additional rangers were brought in to support the existing staff. These rangers performed a variety of duties – giving directions, answering questions, giving lock tours, etc. Perhaps one of the most popular draws was “Seymore the Water Safety Sea Serpent”. Kids were just enamored with him and followed him everywhere. Pam Doty (MVS) brought and operated Seymore during most of the event.

### **Lessons learned**

1. The biggest lesson learned is that the Signature Event organizers need to have a contingency plan in case of rain. Many are taking the “rain or shine” attitude but in the case of 4.5 inches overnight, it went from being just “rain” to rather “a deluge and swamp”.

2. We need to better communicate with the organizers. When we arrive each day, we need to find the person in charge and talk with them to see if there are any last minute changes. We need to do a better job of following up when we find out that there may have been a change and finding out what our role is because of that change.

Event coordinators also have to communicate better - with us, with visitors, and among themselves. There shouldn't be separate coordinators for all the different venues. There needs to be one person in charge. Visitors have to know what is going on all over not just in the venues that are obvious.

3. A Corps wrap up meeting was held either every evening or the following morning. Those participating really liked this idea. It gave everyone a chance to talk about the day's events, find out about any schedule changes for the next day, and talk about any problems that arose. Also, it would be good to be sure that the uniformed rangers and the uniformed soldiers mix and don't become two separate groups. Some felt that there should be more presence by FALHA members.

4. Another item that was missing at the event site 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.

5. Many appreciated the free time given. This allowed all COE participants time to see the many facets of the event as well as hear many of the talks available.

6. Perhaps we should make a point of having at least one representative at the Corps II meeting each morning. That might improve the communication and cooperation between us, and make it harder for NPS to forget us!

7. Some felt that the rangers attending the event were not adequately trained. Some of our park rangers indicated that they were a bit disconcerted at being thrown into a site without adequate orientation as to what some of the instruments were (like the sextant), how they worked, and the true significance of why the Corps is so heavily involved in the bicentennial. Some of the rangers did not have any training and had not read much about Lewis and Clark. However, nine L&C Training sessions have been offered nationwide and all participating at this event were given a chance to ask questions about anything pertaining to Lewis and Clark and the Discovery Box at the initial meeting on May 10.

8. There was a suggestion that we need to do as Corps II does, and send out press releases independent of the local organization regarding the appearance of historical interpretation by Captain Lewis' Company, presentations or art shows at slightly off-site museums and other locations, and the like. However, we need to remember that this is a local event supported by the Corps and other Federal agencies. We cannot allow these events to turn into "competitions" between the organizers and the participating agencies. We have seen how that happens when speaking to event organizers about the unwillingness of Corps II to adapt to the event.

**Future outcome:** The next Signature Event will be May 19-23, 2004 "The Adventure Begins" in St. Charles MO. The nature of the Corps and Army presence at this event will be minimal.

**Final thoughts:** The Corps of Engineers contingent was always one of the first to arrive at the event site every morning and one of the last to leave every night. All of the COE participants went out of their way to help out wherever possible. This included assisting other exhibitors getting set up every morning and providing general direction.

Respectfully Submitted,

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