



*Meriwether
Lewis*

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



William Clark

“Clark on the Yellowstone”

Billings, MT Signature Event

July 21-25, 2006

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 “Clark on the Yellowstone” was designated as the thirteenth of these Signature Events. The event was held at Pompeys Pillar, roughly 30 miles northeast of Billings, MT. The weather for the event was extremely hot and dry with daily temperatures above 100 degrees for 3 of the four days. In spite of the oppressive heat, there were an estimated 50,000 people that attended the 4-day Signature Event.

In addition to Ken Wilk and myself, Corps personnel that worked in one or more of the venues at this Signature Event included: Tim Bischoff and Charlie Deutsch (MVS); Rick Magee (MVP); Pat Kline, Gene Herrmann, and Larry Spisak (LRP); Jon Carlson and Patti Williams (NWP); Jeff Boutwell, Ed Shirley, and Robby Henderson (SWF); Craig Rockwell (NWW); Brian Westfall, (MVK); Jay Vanhooose, Susan Maynard, and Bob Cifranic (all LRH); Kathleen Bennett (SPA); Dave White and Dan Sandersfeld (both NWK); Susan Martin (SAW); and Jean Hixson and Jamie Kordack (NAE);. Volunteers for the event included Susie Kline (formerly LRP); Rich Deline; and members of both the Lewis and Clark Illinois Detachment (Dennis Nichols, Don Ferricks) and Frontier Army Living History Association (Jim McElhinney, Jeff Bender, John Steinle, Jim Hebb) and speakers BG(Ret) Hal Stearns, Amy Mossett, and Hasan Davis to participate in programming. Also attending was LTC Joel Cross, representing BG Martin, who made remarks during the Opening ceremonies..

The date of the dedication of the new Pompeys Pillar Interpretive Center was made to coincide with the opening of the Signature Event. There was considerable Army presence during the entire Signature Event.

Action: The Corps was involved in many separate venues during this commemorative event. These will be discussed individually below.

COE Exhibit

The Corps was part of a contingent of Federal, state, and local agencies sponsoring an exhibit. The exhibits were set up in a tent on the grounds of Pompeys Pillar. The Corps

exhibit consisted of six parts: (1) a 3-panel exhibit backdrop of Lewis and Clark expedition, the results of the expedition, and the current mitigation efforts underway to restore the environment along the rivers (2) a display of the Discovery Box; (3) prints of the Michael Haynes painting commissioned by the Corps; (4) a naturalist center displaying a variety of plants and explanations of plant identification; (5) a “trading center” and (6) an information table that contained a variety of COE brochures.

All COE Park Rangers and volunteers took turns manning this event. Because of the extremely hot weather and because the tent was in an open area with no shade, the exhibit area was only moderately busy every day. In all, there were 2455 interpretive contacts made at the exhibit booth.

Corps Encampment

Members of the Corps’ Captain Lewis’ Company as well as members of the Illinois Detachment and the Frontier Army Living History Association provided costumed interpretation (1803 Army) at the event site. Participating in this endeavor were Jeff Boutwell, Robby Henderson, and Ed Shirley (all SWF); Pat Kline, Larry Spisak, and Gene Herrmann (all LRP); Jon Carlson (NWP); Tim Bischoff and Charlie Deutsch (both MVS); Rick Magee (MVP); and Ken Wilk (NWK). Also participating were members of the Frontier Army Living History Association (Jim McElhinney, Jeff Bender, John Steinle and Jim Hebb) and members of the Illinois Detachment (Dennis Nichols and Don Ferricks). During the 4-day event, 17,500 interpretive contacts were made in camp.

Located under a stand on cottonwood trees near the Yellowstone River, the encampment illustrated the military aspects of the expedition and included mending clothes, making moccasins, fiddling, cleaning guns, etc. Unfortunately, because of the “high fire danger” category, no campfires were allowed. Therefore, cooking and casting lead balls were not undertaken at this event. However, the various stations did give the general public more of an accurate idea what the L&C encampment might have been like. Furthermore, the men took it upon themselves to present informal programs on topics such as the Army uniforms, music, plants found during the expedition, and the issuing of the whiskey ration and evening parade. These became a highlight of the day and people planned their visit to attend these programs.

On one morning, the Captain Lewis’ Company marched to the base of Pompeys Pillar for a photo opportunity. Many of the visiting public stopped to take pictures of the men at this unique setting.

Artifact Tent

Because of the popularity of displaying artifacts at other events, the Corps team developed an artifact tent in which there were a variety of items (primarily medical supplies, topographical instruments, and writing implements) from the 1800-1810 time frame as well as animal pelts that would have been seen and collected by the expedition. The exhibit was manned by Craig Rockwell dressed as Capt. Clark and assisted by uniformed Park Rangers.

This venue was set up very near the exhibit tent. Unfortunately, this was another venue that suffered from the high heat and no shade. Only 1,716 interpretive contacts were made.

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. During the Signature Event, all COE park rangers worked at the keelboat exhibit. They provided interpretive talks and information to both dignitaries and members of the public. This resulted in approximately 1,608 interpretive contacts.

Tent Of Many Voices (TOMV)

Associated with Corps II, TOMV has a small stage for presentations and seating capacity of 150. The Corps representative who spoke during this Signature Event was Larry Spisak (LRP) on the "Music of the Expedition" In all, Larry had 87 interpretive contacts.

Stewardship Stage – Stewardship Stage: During the Signature Event, the area between exhibit tent and artifact tent was set aside for a variety of Federal, State and local speakers. The Corps had several representatives that participated in this venue. Speakers included Larry Spisak (LRP) and Rick Magee (MVP) ("Music and Dance of the Time" Susie Kline (formerly LRP) ("Eastern Legacy); Jeff Boutwell (SWF) ("Trade Goods"); Kathleen Bennett (SPA) ("A Boy born to Adventure"); Tim Bischoff (MVS) ("George Drouillard"). These presentations resulted in a total of 300 interpretive contacts.

Main Stage – Several speakers were brought in by the Corps for presentations on the Main Stage. These speakers who portrayed BG William Clark, Sakagawea, and York , respectively, included BG(Ret) Hal Stearns (former Deputy Adjutant General, Montana National Guard; Educator and Western Historian); Amy Mossett (National Coordinator for Tribal Involvement with the National Council of the Lewis & Clark Bicentennial and member of the North Dakota Governor's Lewis and Clark Advisory Committee); and Hasan Davis (Director, Empowerment Solutions; Chair, Kentucky Juvenile Justice Advisory Board; Vice-Chair, Federal Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee). In total, these 3 people made 5500 interpretive contacts.

Indirect Contacts: In the course of the Signature Event, newspapers and television reporters contacted several Corps representatives. In all, 11 indirect news contacts were made.

Lessons learned

1. The venues were arranged in clusters that made it very easy to move people from one venue to the next. All of the necessary amenities were close by and made for a very agreeable event.
2. The hot weather did not diminish the number of people attending. Plenty of ambulances and EMTs were available so if there was a problem, it was easily rectified. The Command Center, located in the old BLM office, was air conditioned and was also used to cool off those that were susceptible to the heat.
3. The fact that the exhibit tents were in the direct sun was unavoidable. The only problem noted was the dust because of the extremely dry conditions. However, after noting it on Saturday, the event organizers had the National Guard and BLM employees come out several times during the day to water down the grounds. The only place that was really dusty was the inside of the exhibit tent. Although a hand sprayer was used several times, it just didn't put down enough water to really help that much.
4. The information signage was great at this event – from electronic signs on I-94 out of Billings coming to the site to locations within the event area. In addition, there were plenty of Boy Scout manning information stations in several areas. This was a huge benefit to the visiting public as well as those working the event.
5. The layout of the venues (encampment and tents) could not have been arranged better for attracting folks to them. The openings for the exhibit tent, history tent BLM tents and many others all opened toward the Corps II keelboat. TOMV and the 3 vendor tents all opened toward the new BLM Interpretive Center.
6. The hospitality areas for the many event workers were very much appreciated in the high heat. Water, Gatorade, and food were available at all times. In addition, tubs of ice water were available to soak handkerchiefs or “chill collars” to help battle the heat while working.
7. At the first meeting, situational awareness issues were discussed with all team members present. This enabled team members to get on the same sheet of music and speak with a unified voice when asked questions regarding local issues. Even if they could not answer the issues, they knew who they could ask for additional information. In addition, car assignments were made so no one would be left behind. The only problem came when the event closed early on Monday because of threatening weather. Some were afraid of being left and rode back with others instead of assigned cars. These created some anxiety in the vehicles still waiting for their riders. I need to do a more thorough job of explaining the procedures for inclement weather at the introductory meetings.
8. Having plenty of people to staff each venue allowed folks to take frequent breaks to interact, look around at the other venues and cool off. In addition, if someone wasn't feeling well, there were others around to cover.
9. This event made excellent use of volunteers to accomplish tasks in all areas of the event. Organizers had over 100 volunteers working throughout the event. The

volunteers were friendly and knowledgeable about the event and the area. They went out of their way to assist visitors and participants, alike.

Future outcome: The next Signature Event will be New Town, North Dakota in August 2006. Much of the planning for this event is still underway. It is doubtful that the Corps will be asked to have the amount of participation as in Billings.

Final thoughts: This was another event that highlighted the military aspect of the expedition. All of the tribes of Montana were included during a procession at the Opening Ceremonies. It was a great example of balance in presenting both the “Euro-American” side and the native perspectives of the expedition.

All in all, the event was a huge success. Even though Mother Nature didn’t cooperate with cooler temperatures, the event was well marketed and visitors came in spite of the hot weather. All participants worked well with the organizers to ensure the event went off smoothly and visitors enjoyed themselves, learning something along the way.

Jeannine M. Nauss
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