

Lewis and Clark and Arrow Rock

Lewis & Clark passed "the arrow rock" June 9, 1804, going upstream and on Sept. 18, 1806, on the return downstream.



Capt. Meriwether Lewis (30) and Lt. William Clark (34) in 1804 were sent by President Thomas Jefferson to explore the newly-acquired Louisiana Purchase (became Missouri and 13 other states) and to find an all-water route to the Pacific Ocean. The Lewis and Clark "Corps of Discovery" ranks among the most important expeditions in world history. Forty-five men set out and reached Ft. Mandan in North Dakota. Thirty-three went on to the west coast and returned to St. Louis

in 1806 to the cheers of those who appreciated their feat. The trip took two years, 4 months, 10 days and covered over 8000 miles. One man died from a ruptured appendix. This daring trek, a venture in scientific inquiry, far exceeded expectations and added vital new knowledge of the vast western land, its resources including flora and fauna, and its native inhabitants.

Historical Facts:

Clark's black slave was York. His Newfoundland dog was Seaman.

The Corps vessels consisted of a 60-foot keelboat built in Pittsburgh and two pirogues. Keelboat towed upriver by men. The keelboat returned in 1805.

Native Americans of our area before and after the Lewis and Clark Expedition were the Sauk and Fox (west of Mississippi River and north of Missouri River) , and the Osage (south of the Missouri River), and the Miami Indians.

The central Missouri stretch of river became known as Boonslick, so named because Daniel Boone's sons, Daniel Morgan and Nathan, operated a salt manufactory in Howard Co. as early as 1806.

The Boonslick Road connected the lick to the first territorial capitol of Missouri at St. Charles; Missouri became a state in 1821.

Once the Missouri River flowed close to this bluff, which gives the town its name. Lewis and Clark noted the bluff in their journals of 1804. **They passed by here June 9, 1804, going upstream and on Sept. 18, 1806, on the return downstream.** The keelboat returned in 1805.

This bluff overlooking the valley of the Missouri River has long been a landmark to those traveling its waterways. William Clark saw this area labeled on a French map of 1732. It was called Pierre a Fleche or Prairie of Arrows. Early explorers knew of the Native Americans seeking flint here for their arrowheads and spears. The bluff gave the 1829 town its name.

On June 8, 1804, the Corps of Discovery camped at the lower end of an island just downstream from here. Called the “island of mills” then, and later, Arrow Rock Island, it was about four miles above the mouth of the Lamine River. Here Clark found cached items hidden by hunters. They spent a miserable night for it rained so hard they could not cook their provisions.

The experiences of the Corps navigating this stretch of the lower Missouri River prepared them for the hazards ahead and forged them into a cohesive unit.

On **Saturday, June 9th, 1804**, they experienced “water verry swift”, then Clark records, “we got fast on a Snag Soon after we Set out which detained us a Short time (about ¼ hour).”

After passing the upper point of the island, they observed several “small channels running out of the River below a bluff and Prairie (called the Prairie of Arrows) where the river is confined within a width of 300 yds.” Just past the mouth of Arrow Creek (probably Pierre Fleche Creek), about five miles north of our town, another mishap occurred. In Clark’s words: the Sturn of the boat struck a log which was not proceivable the Curt. Struck her bow and turn the boat against Some drift & Snags which [were] below with great force; This was a disagreeable and Dangerous Situation, particularly as immense large trees were Drifting down and we lay immediately in their Course,...Some of our men being prepared for all Situations leaped into the water Swam ashore with a roap, and fixed themselves in Such Situations, that the boat was off in a few minits, I can Say with Confidence that our party is not inferior to any that was ever on the waters of the Missoppie...

William Clark wrote, “we had like to have Stove our boat”. [That was the 60-foot keelboat.]

Thus, in one day, the crew was initiated into several of the wily tricks of this treacherous river.

The 1804 (June 9th) and 1806 (Sept. 18th) observations by Lewis and Clark continued to affect Arrow Rock’s history. Upon their return, Meriwether Lewis was made Governor of the Louisiana Territory. He appointed Clark (1807) principal Indian agent for all tribes west of the Mississippi River. Clark, like Jefferson and Lewis, believed trade was crucial to developing relations between the U. S. and Native Americans. In years to come when negotiating for their lands and promises of peace, he offered friendly commerce with American traders. He helped negotiate a treaty with the Osage in 1808. They ceded most of their Missouri and Arkansas lands for the establishment of Ft. Osage trading post.

In 1808 after supervising the construction of Ft. Osage upriver, William Clark passed by the area again and noted the bluff was a “handsome spot for a town”. He made several references to “delightful lands” around here. Indeed, the trading post and fort at Ft. Osage was relocated here in 1813 and called Sibley’s Fort. Wm. Clark became Governor of Missouri Territory in 1813. He helped mediate the Missouri question (Kansas admitted as a free, state Missouri as a slave state, Missouri Compromise -1820).

Wm. Clark served as territorial governor until Missouri became a state in 1821.

His Jeffersonian view (peace and negotiation with Indians for trade alliances) conflicted with the Jacksonian philosophy of the general public (eradication of Indians), his political life became more difficult. He lost a run for first Missouri Governor (also was in Virginia with his ill wife during much of campaign). Many felt he appeased the Indians too much.

From 1811 to 1927, a ferry crossing was located in this area. The town of Arrow Rock, platted in 1829, developed into a thriving shipping point on the river, indeed “a handsome spot for a town”.