EPISODE 113: LEGACIES OF THE CORPS OF DISCOVERY

In this hour, the legacies of the Lewis and Clark Expedition as the bicentennial of the journey is marked across the nation.

Marilyn Hudson: I think we have to just accept it for what it was, and it was a great camping trip that they kept records on.
Peter Coyote: Join me as we find out how the expedition shaped our nation, and how America is remembering these explorers, after the day’s news.

Optional cutaway for News

Allison Frost: Welcome to a special edition of the Latest Tidings, celebrating more than 100 years of bringing you America’s News. I’m Allison Frost.
The Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition is underway on the West coast of the United States. A half-dozen World’s Fairs have been held in U.S. cities, since Philadelphia celebrated the country’s centennial back in 1876. But this is the first time such an event has been held in a Western city. The foundation for honoring the epic journey of the Corps of Discovery was laid last year, in 1904, when the St. Louis, Missouri World’s Fair marked the Louisiana Purchase, which the Lewis and Clark party explored.
Thousands of visitors have come to take in the sights and sounds at this centennial exposition in Portland, Oregon. The crowds are enjoying beautiful weather, which should last through the fair’s final days in October of this Year of our Lord, 1905.
People from nearly every corner of the country, and indeed all over the globe, have gathered here on the shore of Guild’s Lake in Portland, though most of the people I’ve met seem to hail from Portland itself or from the neighboring states of Washington and California. This site is very near the confluence of two rivers—the Willamette River that runs through the town, and the Columbia, which the Lewis and Clark party itself traversed.
Sponsors of the exposition tell me more than 10,000 people a day are enjoying this celebration of history and commerce. City fathers are expecting even greater numbers as the end of September approaches. That’s when a day billed as “Portland Day” comes around—September 30th.
This is truly a World’s Fair, with 21 nations and 16 states participating. My favorite exhibit so far is
the Japanese display, which I’m told cost that nation one million dollars, though perhaps the expense shouldn’t come as too big a surprise—the silks, porcelains and lanterns presented are spectacular. There have also been demonstrations of fascinating new technologies sure to delight us at the dawn of the 20th century. I have been often reminded of what President William McKinley declared just before he was assassinated at the 1901 fair in Buffalo, New York. “Expositions,” he said, “are timekeepers of progress.”

Perhaps the most breathtaking sight is the bridge over Guild’s Lake, which is covered with electric lights. At night the entire scene is nothing short of dazzling, as these bulbs of glass containing filaments aflame with electric light cover nearly every surface at the Exhibition. This reporter wonders what America’s cities will look like if these lights become widely available.

Incidentally, the exposition buildings are quite impressive. Many were designed by prominent local architects in the style of the Spanish Renaissance, with domes and arched doorways—really quite lovely. For those of us in the press, an exciting new development is on display here. There is a device into which anyone can speak, and the sound of their voice will be recorded on to a wax cylinder. Here’s what it sounds like:

“I’m just talking to hear myself talk I don’t know what to say. . .” (fades)

Allison Frost: I was also witness to another historic event within this centennial fair: the conclusion of the first-ever transcontinental automobile race, which began in New York in May and has just made a grand finish here in Portland.

Of course, all of these events were literally years in the making. Many of the exhibitors began working on their materials as long as three years ago. One of those efforts produced a building being called the world’s largest log cabin, a “Timber Temple,” which displays lumber products from Oregon’s vast forests. You can also see there some striking photographs of Indians by Edward S. Curtis.

Last year, Congress provided for the minting of 250,000 gold dollar coins bearing the likenesses of Expedition leaders Meriwether Lewis and William Clark. At the exposition, they’ve been selling for two dollars each—a wonderful item I’ll be taking home as souvenir of this fair.

Exposition sponsors are optimistic about the proceeds for this event. Some have told me they expect to make profits into the tens of thousands of dollars—quite a remarkable development for a fair such as this. And that’s the final accounting for this special report. From the Lewis and Clark Centennial and American Pacific Exposition and Oriental Fair in Portland, Oregon, I’m Allison Frost with the Latest Tidings, where we’re celebrating more than 100 years of bringing you America’s news, since 1800.

[Program theme music]

Peter Coyote: We all think of Lewis and Clark as opening the American West, as changing the course of American history.

Clay Jenkinson: Maybe so, but it’s hard to believe American history would have turned out much differently if they had perished in the attempt.

[Theme music continues]

Peter Coyote: The Lewis and Clark Expedition left St. Charles, Missouri on May 14, 1804 and traveled 7,689 miles to the Pacific Ocean and back again. The trip took more than 28 months. The expedition
was President Jefferson’s brainchild, commanded by his friend and protégé Meriwether Lewis and his old Army friend, William Clark. It is considered the most successful exploration in American history. Today, we explore the legacy of that journey, both immediately after its conclusion, and for the United States two hundred years later. Our guide is Clay Jenkinson, humanities scholar-in-residence at Lewis & Clark College in Portland, Oregon. Clay, first of all, let’s define what we mean when we talk about legacy.

Clay Jenkinson: Legacy can mean many things in the context of Lewis and Clark. There’s the textual legacy: the thirteen volumes of the journals they compiled and Clark’s outstanding maps. There are artifacts that we still have, from the peace medals they gave to Indian leaders to tools and personal items that they lost along the trail. They left names on the landscape, particularly in today’s Montana. Those are just one type of legacy of the expedition. But there is also the imperial legacy of sovereignty over other peoples and lands, which is part of a long, troubled history of white-Indian relations in the American West. The story that they left us has been another kind of legacy, the subject of a rich mythology that has sprung up about almost every aspect of their journey. In a sense they have given us the bicentennial, which is our opportunity to re-evaluate the story. In particular what has emerged in the last couple of years is an intense focus on Lewis and Clark’s Indian encounters and a heightened interest in the tribal peoples who helped them along the way. I asked Lewis and Clark expert and filmmaker Dayton Duncan; to offer initial thoughts about the expedition’s legacy.

Dayton Duncan: I have the greatest admiration and respect and friendship with many people who want to just relive the Lewis and Clark [Expedition] by getting dressed up authentically in the buckskins and to get out on the river like they did, and to study exactly how did they get a campfire going and what kind of powder did they use. But I think the bicentennial requires more than that. It requires us to ask very basic questions: How have things changed in those 200 years? And why did they change? And are they better or are they worse? And to engage in that debate, that argument, which is what history is about—it’s an argument based hopefully on scholarship and true understanding, but it’s still—the future is really based on the present asking the proper questions about the past.

Marilyn Hudson: Well, is there a legacy, I guess first of all, would be the question. What was the meaning of it?

Peter Coyote: Mandan tribal member Marilyn Hudson.

Marilyn Hudson: And I think everybody has to stop and ask themselves that. Is there, number one, a legacy? I think we have to just accept it for what it was, and it was a great camping trip that they kept records on. Did they change any of the societies that they passed through? No, they didn’t change any societies. Did they make the society better? No, they didn’t. So really, when you look at what is the legacy, really you have to ask, is there a legacy?

Peter Coyote: Many Americans are observing the bicentennial by attending one of fifteen signature events across the country, from the national kick-off at Monticello in 2003 to the anniversary of the expedition’s return to St. Louis in the fall of 2006. At these events, there has been a lot of discussion about the legacy of Lewis and Clark. In fact, Lewis and Clark themselves might be surprised to learn that two hundred years after their journey, these fifteen national commemorations took place. No other bicentennial has triggered such a sustained response to one chapter of American history. Here is an audio snapshot:
Interior Secretary Gale Norton: President Jefferson was ahead of his time. He had the foresight to imagine uncharted territory becoming a nation from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

Hasan Davis: My name is York, just York. It is the name that my daddy carried before me. I was born a slave.

Unidentified woman: Tonight’s performance is the premiere performance of “Lewis and Clark 1804” composed by Dr. Gene Henderson with narrative written by Mimi Jackson. Is Mimi out there?

Dr. Gene Henderson: There’s a theme for each one of the major parts. There’s a theme for William Clark. [Sings] “He’s a leader, William Clark” and that theme plays on for quite awhile….Their journey had lasted 28 months, and they had traveled almost 8,000 miles. They had mapped their journey and recorded their experiences. Great celebrations were held upon their return.

Unidentified man: This is a representation of the iron frame, the experimental boat Captain Lewis took with him. His intentions were to cover this boat with animal skins, and of course (fades)

James Ronda: If we finish the journey in 2006 being the same people that we are now, then what William Clark called “so vast an enterprise” will have failed. Journeys should change us, whether we are natives or newcomers.

[Music fades]

Peter Coyote: Clay, I’ve noticed that almost all treatments of Lewis and Clark, whether in books or on film, put most of the emphasis on the journey to the Pacific. But the return journey gets relatively little attention. How did the nation react to the return of the Lewis and Clark Expedition in 1806?

Clay Jenkinson: They were greeted as national heroes. Upon their return to St. Louis on September 23, 1806, Meriwether Lewis actually held up the mail so that he could send the first news of their safe return to President Jefferson in Washington.

Sir,

It is with pleasure that I announce to you the safe arrival of myself and party at 12 o’clock today at this place with our papers and baggage. In obedience to your orders we have penetrated the continent of North America to the Pacific Ocean, and sufficiently explored the interior of the country to affirm with confidence that we have discovered the most practicable route which does exist across the continent by means of the navigable branches of the Missouri and Columbia rivers.

Meriwether Lewis, September 23, 1806

Clay Jenkinson: President Jefferson was thrilled at word of his protégé’s safe return.

I received, my dear sir, with unspeakable joy your letter of Sep. 23 announcing the return of yourself, Capt. Clarke & your party in good health to St. Louis. The unknown scenes in which you were engaged, & the length of time without hearing of you had begun to be felt awfully.

Thomas Jefferson, October 20, 1806

Peter Coyote: “Unspeakable joy.” Jefferson does sound pleased, and perhaps more than a little relieved.
Clay Jenkinson: Yes. Remember that members of the expedition had been gone for more than two years, and they were entirely out of communication for much of that time. Expedition members could not even know whether their loved ones were still alive or vice versa. There was a banquet held in Washington, DC to celebrate their return (although Clark didn’t attend it, because he was busy wooing his future wife). Members of the Corps of Discovery were compensated handsomely for their participation in the expedition. Lewis and Clark each received 1,600-acre land grants, and the enlisted men received 320-acre grants. We should note that neither Sacagawea nor Clark’s slave York received any compensation, even though they endured all the hardships of the expedition. All the surplus gear was unceremoniously sold off and no attempt was made to organize expedition reunions or to record individual members’ later recollections of what must have been the greatest adventure of their lives. So, the immediate legacy of the expedition was that the exploring party was disbanded and the members returned to their normal lives.

Peter Coyote: Did the animals and Indian artifacts that Lewis and Clark brought back ever wind up in the Smithsonian after it was established in the middle of the 19th century?

Clay Jenkinson: Peter, as you rightly noted, the Smithsonian had not yet been established when Lewis and Clark returned, and there was no national repository for such treasures. Therefore, many of the Indian artifacts and animal and plant specimens were simply scattered. Some artifacts even wound up in P.T. Barnum’s museum in New York City, which burned down in 1865. By the time of the centennial, from 1904 to 1906, most of the material objects of the expedition were lost or forgotten. In anticipation of the bicentennial, Carolyn Gilman of the Missouri Historical Society went on a seven-year hunt for Lewis and Clark artifacts, and put together a traveling national exhibition featuring rare objects from the mission. But there were some objects she just couldn’t track down, like the blue beaded belt that belonged to Sacagawea.

Carolyn Gilman: I searched and searched for a blue belt. I know exactly what kind of belt it was. It was blue beads. It was probably covered with lazy-stitched blue beads. It had a leather substrait and there were these lines of blue beads all over it. And the ironic thing about it is it ends up getting appropriated by the captains when they need to purchase something and it’s the most valuable thing that anybody in the expedition has, and so they end up selling it in order to acquire something that they need.

One of the natives here had a robe of sea-otter skins, of the finest fur I ever saw; which the commanding officers wanted very much, and offered two blankets for it, which the owner refused, and said he would not take five. He wanted beads of a blue colour, of which we had none, but some that were on a belt belonging to our interpreter’s squaw: so they gave him the belt for the skins.

Patrick Gass, November 21, 1805

Peter Coyote: So let’s return to the artifacts that we do have. Perhaps the most important physical legacy that we have of the expedition is the collection of written journals. Why did they survive relatively intact when so many artifacts from the journey were scattered?

Clay Jenkinson: One or two of the original journals are missing, but for the majority, Jefferson recognized their historical importance, and had them housed at the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia. The journals were really only a very rough draft of what Jefferson had in mind. He kept pushing Meriwether Lewis to publish a three-volume account of the expedition. Alas, Lewis was unable to prepare his journals for publication before he killed himself in 1809. At that point, a ghost writer by
the name of Nicholas Biddle was called in to produce a paraphrase narrative of the expedition. But as late as 1816, Jefferson was still expressing his concern about the disposition of the original documents. He did not want them to remain in private hands or to disappear. Jefferson insisted that “the right to these papers is in the government”; and as Dayton Duncan reminds us, the journals remain a lasting gift of this journey.

Dayton Duncan: I think one of the great reasons that the Lewis and Clark story has survived and is so vibrant 200 years later is first because of the journals—make it accessible to all of us to go and read what they saw and what they did in their own words, and it is accessible in another way in that it is a story of not great heroes who we can’t imagine ourselves being. They’re like us, we can almost imagine ourselves with Lewis and Clark. So, it’s accessible emotionally and intellectually.

Peter Coyote: Clay Jenkinson, were the journals always as widely available as they are now?

Clay Jenkinson: No. In fact, the journals lay in obscurity for almost a century until they were re-discovered by Elliott Coues, the first major Lewis and Clark editor after Biddle.

Doug Erickson: The editors you can count on one hand that have actually handled the record of Lewis and Clark. I think part of that is because they’ve come in waves.

Peter Coyote: That’s Doug Erickson, head of Special Collections and Archives at Lewis & Clark College.

Doug Erickson: They haven’t all been assembled at one place in one time right after the initial publication in 1814. So as it comes forward from various attics and various repositories, we shed these new little bits of light on it. And I think Gary Moulton has done an outstanding job of compiling his 13-volume edited work on the journals, which include all of the journals that are known to exist at this time.

Peter Coyote: And we should note that the journal passages you hear quoted in this program come from Moulton’s edition, which is now available online and searchable, so that future generations of scholars can locate material in the journals in mere seconds. Clay, tell us more about Gary Moulton, the editor of the newest edition of the Lewis and Clark journals.

Clay Jenkinson: All modern Lewis and Clark scholars owe a great debt to Gary Moulton, professor of history at the University of Nebraska. He has produced the most comprehensive edition of the journals, complete with maps, introductions and a staggering amount of useful annotation. Plus, there is a booklength index. He started the project in 1979, and the final volume was published in 2001, so this is truly the work of a lifetime. The University of Nebraska edition of the journals will be one of the greatest legacies of the bicentennial, perhaps the greatest.

Peter Coyote: Now let’s test your knowledge of the Lewis and Clark expedition: What is the name of the artist and architect who designed the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, and who has a role today building on the legacy of Lewis and Clark? And coming up next: the lasting impact of Lewis and Clark on tribes they met along the way.

Roberta Conner: When Lewis and Clark traveled in our country, they were measuring and mapping and naming things.

Peter Coyote: I’m Peter Coyote. You’re listening to “Unfinished Journey: The Lewis and Clark Expedition,” on PRI.

[Program Break: Aaron Meyer/Bill Lamb-Unfinished Journey: The Lewis and Clark Expedition Soundtrack (West)]

(Scratchy musical recording)

Peter Coyote: That’s a recording from the website tinfoil.com of a march composed for the Lewis and Clark centennial exposition in 1905. One hundred years after the expedition, entrepreneurs were
starting to recognize the potential for commercial exploitation of the journey, and the four-month exposition in Portland, Oregon featured exhibits by states and companies as well as demonstrations of new technologies, like the wax cylinder recording and electric lights. Over the years, new generations have found ways to capitalize on the expedition. And as correspondent Tom Banse reports, the Heritage Museum in Ilwaco, Washington found enough Lewis and Clark kitsch to put together a whole exhibit.

Tom Banse: It all started about five years ago when a family donated eight gold-rimmed collectible plates to their small-town history museum. The plates depict scenes from the Lewis and Clark Expedition. And they gave Ilwaco Museum collections manager Barbara Minard an idea for how to mark the upcoming bicentennial.

Barbara Minard: People are very enthusiastic because it’s something besides ‘Lewis and Clark slept here.’ Thirty miles down the road, ‘Lewis and Clark slept here.’

Tom Banse: The museum put out a call for other collectibles, souvenirs, knick-knacks, or anything else that latches on to the Corps of Discovery.

Barbara Minard: And people started bringing things in from the attics, from the closets, from the boxes, things that they found on trips.

Fred Mattfield: Some of the things actually are very nice and very serious and very real.

Tom Banse: Exhibit builder Fred Mattfield.

Fred Mattfield: And some of them are utterly dreadful. And you never really know which is going to be which.

Tom Banse: Mattfield and Minard and a corps of volunteers have filled two halls with over 700 objects, none of them actual expedition artifacts.

Barbara Minard: We have such things as the Sacagawea gold coin mouse pad, the Sacagawea candy bar.

Tom Banse: The what?

Barbara Minard: The Sacagawea candy bar—dark chocolate and raspberry. They do mention in the journals how they gathered the wild raspberries and were considered a treat and a delight. Here we have the Sakakawea perfume.

Tom Banse: What does it smell like?

Barbara Minard: Uummm, kind of outdoorsy.

Fred Mattfield: However, the Lewis and Clark gin and vodka labels are a little different, with their matching decanters, including Lewis and Clark. There’s one of York, as well.

Tom Banse: Lewis and Clark might have wished for some of the other items modern-day entrepreneurs
have branded with the explorers’ profiles, like the body lotion, scented “Missouri Mist.” Or the lavender soap.

Barbara Minard: We have one, two, three, four, five, six versions of Lewis and Clark soap on display here. You’d think these were the cleanest guys in American history.

Tom Banse: The museum shows how exploitation of the epic journey started shortly after the explorers returned to civilization and has never let up. In the 1960’s, the buckskin clad crew reappeared as a boy band, “The Lewis and Clarke Expedition.”

(Music: “The Lament of the Cherokee Reservation Indian.”)

Tom Banse: They were a one album wonder. Inspiration also touched the Great Falls Symphony and Symphonic Choir.

(Music: “The object of your mission is to explore the Missouri River...”)

Barbara Minard: We want to leave the value judgment up to the eyes of the people visiting the exhibit. We’ll let you come see, and you decide whether you consider it creative, interesting, unusual, questionable, poor taste. That’s all up to the eyes of the visitor.

Tom Banse: Historical purists may be pleased to learn the descent into kitsch is not complete. Yes, there are posters, money clips, snack foods, beer steins, and Christmas tree ornaments, but no one found a Lewis and Clark snow globe. I’m Tom Banse in Ilwaco, Washington.

Peter Coyote: Well, that’s a walk on the lighter side of the Lewis and Clark bicentennial. (bed music fades out)

Let’s turn to a more serious and important artifact of the expedition.

I compleated a map of the countrey through which we have been passing from the Mississippi at the Mouth of the Missouri to this place. In the map the Missouri Jefferson’s river, the S.E. branch of the Columbia or Lewis’s river, Koos-koos-ke and Columbia, from the enterance of the S.E. fork to the pacifi  c Ociain, as well as a part of Clark’s river and our track across the Rocky Mountains, are laid down by ce-
estial observations and Survey...We now discover that we have found the most practicable and navigable passage across the Continent of North America.

William Clark, February 14, 1806

Peter Coyote: Clay, why was Clark’s map of the West so important?

Clay Jenkinson: In part, because it was so accurate and that accuracy is particularly impressive when you consider that Clark charted the Corps of Discovery’s progress using dead reckoning. Dead reckoning is basically a process of navigation that relies on estimates of speed, time and distance traveled. It’s like eyeballing your way across the continent. It’s a pretty crude technique. But as Lewis and Clark geographer John Logan Allen at the University of Wyoming explains, Clark was up to the challenge.

John Logan Allen: I think Clark had the ability—and this was why he was such a good field
cartographer—to imagine with a fairly high degree of accuracy what the back side of terrain looked like
that he was viewing from the front side. He was able to visualize river course and river direction as if he
were an eagle flying high above the landscape, as opposed to a man in a boat, or somebody walking along
he banks of the river. He just had this ability.

Peter Coyote: Clay, how did this map change the Euro-American view of the western half of the
continent?

Clay Jenkinson: Well, Peter, first of all, Clark’s maps filled in what had been a gigantic white space,
a blank region on the best previous maps. That alone was a great achievement. Moreover, his 1814
engraved map depicts a landscape much more complicated than Jefferson and other 18th century
geographers had anticipated. Clark’s map shows that the American West was going to be a geographic
challenge to travelers and traders, and it put to rest once and for all the myth of the Northwest Passage,
that is, a continuous water route to the Pacific. Here’s Doug Erickson, of Lewis & Clark College.

Doug Erickson: Literally this was a map that was used for almost 50 years as sort of the pre-eminent
map, and that’s the thing that I like to think is the greatest thing that Lewis and Clark gave to their
contemporaries of their generation was this wonderful map because it began to really unfold the
American West, the trans-Mississippi west for the world to see. And it was printed on both continents. It
was used by many people as they came across going westward, from the first fur trappers, American fur
trappers and mountain men that came out of St. Louis right after Lewis and Clark, all the way through
influence on the California, Mormon, and Oregon Trails.

We measured also the width of the 3 rivers at the <forks> confluence of them. We found the north & west
forks of the same width of water 90 yards wide which is Jefferson & Maddison rivers and the south fork
only 70 yards wide which they named Galatin River.
Joseph Whitehouse, July 29, 1805

Peter Coyote: The Jefferson, Madison and Gallatin rivers. Hmmm, could there be a political agenda
there?

Clay Jenkinson: Yes, indeed. Those names recognize President Thomas Jefferson, who dispatched
Lewis and Clark to the West, then-Secretary of State James Madison, and Albert Gallatin who served
as Jefferson’s Secretary of the Treasury. Such names indicate one unmistakable legacy of the Lewis and
Clark journey as any modern map will show. Lewis and Clark were not just naming the West. They
were, in a sense, un-naming it, too. They named natural features after members of the expedition,
girlfriends, political figures. But often enough, they just imposed familiar English terms on the
landscape through which they traveled, terms like Three Forks or Beaver Head Rock. Needless to say,
the places they named with such cultural confidence already had names and stories attached to them by
the peoples who had lived there for centuries. Make no mistake—mapping, and naming, are political
acts.

Roberta Conner: When Lewis and Clark traveled in our country, they were measuring and mapping and
naming things.

Peter Coyote: That’s Roberta Conner, an enrolled member of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla,
who is working with her community to reclaim names in the Columbia River basin.

Roberta Conner: And the consequence of the naming doesn’t mean that they named things and it
wiped out the names that we had for them. The consequence of the naming is it’s part of the act of
discovery, following under the Doctrine of Discovery, which means that the journey was not an innocent
exploration, it was an extension of the Doctrine of Discovery.

James Ronda: We really need now to study very thoroughly the process of geographic naming. It’s one
of the interesting things that’s not been done, is to look very carefully at just how Lewis and Clark, and especially Clark, named places—what names endure, what names are erased, and then what names are inscribed.

Peter Coyote: James Ronda, professor of history at the University of Tulsa, and author of *Lewis and Clark Among the Indians*.

James Ronda: We take the names of distant bureaucrats, lords of the admiralty, American cabinet officials, erase native names and place their names, so that the lines of power now run from the Columbia—Neetchwana, the big river, Columbia—to distant places like London, Paris, Washington, DC, Philadelphia. We’ve changed the lines of power. Few things are more significant in exploration history than the naming process.

Peter Coyote: Rebecca Tsosie is a professor of law at Arizona State University, and executive director of the Indian Legal Program.

Rebecca Tsosie: All those Native place names and the knowledge and wisdom that went along with those, to what extent was that ever conveyed or captured? It’s true they left a few Native place names, but I see they took delight in renaming them after people and events that were important in their culture, and it definitely to me is an appropriation and it’s an offense.

Peter Coyote: That gives us some sense of how tribal peoples felt about the legacy of the expedition.

Clay, what else do Native people have to say today about the Lewis and Clark story on this bicentennial?

Clay Jenkinson: Some tribes want nothing to do with it. Others are taking the bicentennial as an opportunity to tell their side of this story, and to point out that they are still here, trying to maintain a traditional lifestyle that is somewhat distinct from their white neighbors. Still others are fighting for everything from federal tribal recognition to fishing rights. All Indians are living with the consequences of that ‘doctrine of discovery’ that Roberta Conner mentioned earlier, which was the legal construct Europeans used to lay claim to lands and people.

Roberta Conner: As we talk about bicentennial events, we have so many issues about tribal participation being substantive, and meaningful, and not window dressing, because we need to get past the idea that discovery is just discovery, that the Doctrine of Discovery is the imperial behavior of a country that is about to colonize other people.

Peter Coyote: Blackfeet Indian musician and storyteller Jack Gladstone and Gerard Baker, a Mandan-Hidatsa, who is Superintendent of the Mount Rushmore National Memorial offer these additional thoughts about the legacy of Lewis and Clark for Indian nations.

Jack Gladstone: I look at the Lewis and Clark Expedition, and the commemoration of this expedition, not as a celebration but an opportunity for education. We can respond to this in one of two ways—or maybe a collection of both—but we can respond to it with anger, with contempt and with resentment, or we can respond to it with intelligence.

Gerard Baker: There’s a lot of good that can come out of this Lewis and Clark bicentennial. And I’m hoping again the best—bad English here—but the ‘best good’ that comes out of this is that we never forget. We also don’t blame, but we learn. We learn how to protect who we are. We learn how to protect our resources, we learn how to live in harmony.

Clay Jenkinson: Patricia Limerick, a historian at the University of Colorado at Boulder, wrote an important, even revolutionary, book called *The Legacy of Conquest* about the history of the American West. I asked Patty Limerick to reflect about the legacy of Lewis and Clark.

Patricia Limerick: Any person who cannot change her mind should stay out of the field of Western history. Ten or fifteen years ago, expressing my admiration for the Great White Men of Western
expansion was not an everyday activity for me. But I begin with the admission that I admire William Clark and Meriwether Lewis. They were courageous and resilient beyond anything I can imagine. Even in dire circumstances of hunger and exhaustion, they continued to make acute observations of their surroundings, sketching and writing descriptions, and thinking—or, to use Lewis’s word, “cogitating”—all the time. In their collaboration, they give us a world-class model of how two human beings can join together in a common enterprise, avoid getting in each other’s way, exercise their distinctive talents, and provide a group of people with true leadership.

I admire them a great deal. But do I admire them without reservation? No. Admiring them without reservation would be an all-too-effective way of dehumanizing them.

In dealing with the complexity of these people, we are well-advised to steer away from both excessive hero-worship and excessive disillusionment, and instead, to acknowledge and accept the complete package of their mixed characteristics and qualities. And the bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark Expedition offers us a fine opportunity to contemplate and to deal honestly with the complexity of Western history and its legacy to us.

Just as Thomas Jefferson hoped Lewis and Clark would discover a simple water passage to the Pacific, Americans have a long-lasting hope that the West will be the simple region, the region where we can make clear distinctions between the good guys and the bad guys, the deserving winners and the deserving losers. The stories of the Corps of Discovery offer us crucial lessons precisely because they are complicated, and they prepare us to deal with the complexities of our own time.

We are in a direct line of descent, of thought, of experience, of landscape, from Lewis and Clark; they were agents of nationalistic powers, agents of empire, and they are undeniably also our intellectual ancestors and our influential predecessors. Thinking realistically about them requires us to think with equal realism about ourselves. And there is something really quite wonderful about the fact that the animals and plants and landscapes that preoccupied them still preoccupy us. It is a fine situation, for example, and not one to be taken for granted, that the prairie dog is still here to be studied and fought over, with full attention to the complexity of its own being and the complexity of its relationship to other creatures and to its ecological setting.

Most important of all, the subspecies known as western hero is not extinct. Providing my own miniature demonstration of the human capacity for change, I have given up most of my battles against Hollywood westerns and the durable, undefeatable myth of the West. But I refuse to surrender on one count: I will not accept the idea that the opportunities for heroism vanished with the end of the frontier or the petering out of the Old West. Nostalgia is a trap when it suggests that all the adventure, all the exhilaration of discovery, happened back then, leaving contemporary Westerners no other role than reduced and constrained late arrivals.

Western life today features hundreds and thousands of “job advertisements” for people willing to invent and practice new forms of heroism. So imagine the usual paired names of Lewis and Clark, these two very well-known Western heroes, and then imagine a third space, open and ready for occupation, labeled: “Your Name Goes Here.”

Clay Jenkinson: That’s Patricia Limerick at the University of Colorado, one of the new Western historians, reflecting on the legacy of Lewis and Clark.

Peter Coyote: Coming up next: the complexities of creating a modern monument to the Lewis and Clark Expedition.
Maya Lin: I think I started to think of it as identifying the Columbia River as something that once was one of our most abundant life sources of flora and fauna, and then where it is today.

Peter Coyote: I’m Peter Coyote. You’re listening to “Unfinished Journey” on PRI.

[Program Break: Aaron Meyer/Bill Lamb-Unfinished Journey: The Lewis and Clark Expedition Soundtrack (Shenandoah)]

Robert Frost: This is called “The Gift Outright.” A little history of the United States in about 14 or 15 lines.

The land was ours before we were the land’s.
She was our land more than a hundred years before we were her people. She was ours in Massachusetts, in Virginia, but we were England’s, still colonials, possessing what we still were unpossessed by, possessed by what we now no more possessed.
Something we were withholding made us weak until we found out that it was ourselves we were withholding from our land of living, and forthwith found salvation in surrender.
Such as we were we gave ourselves outright (the deed of gift was many deeds of war) to the land vaguely realizing westward, but still unstoried, artless, unenhanced, such as she was, such as she would become.

That’s the history of the United States up to date. [Laughter and applause]

Peter Coyote: What should be the outstanding legacy of the Lewis and Clark bicentennial commemoration? How can our modern-day memorials best express all the elements of the Lewis and Clark story—the first encounters between peoples, the eternal beauty of the land, and what was lost forever and what was gained with this journey. What does this story hold for the future? Renowned artist and architect Maya Lin is trying to turn these elements into art. She is working on architectural and landscape designs for a number of sites in the Columbia River basin, in a collaborative effort between Northwestern tribes and Lewis and Clark commemorative groups called The Confluence Project. The project is anchored in the route that Lewis and Clark took, and each site will feature passages from the journals. But Lin also conferred with tribal leaders, and has brought environmental concerns to bear on these places that stretch from the confluence of the Snake and Clearwater Rivers in the east, to the place where the Columbia empties into the Pacific at Cape Disappointment on the western coast of America. We caught up with Maya Lin and recorded the sound of these waterways to find out more about her vision.

Maya Lin: I think at the very beginning I thought of it conceptually as not seven sites or eight sites. We actually didn’t know at the beginning how many sites it would be. I think the idea was it would be multi-sited. I thought of it as one place, and I thought of it as the place of the river, not so much the Columbia River—give any river a name—but think of a place as not so much a still object, but a moving, flowing,
living space.

We can think of the Lewis and Clark story as something that happened 200 years ago and we can celebrate it or we can look at it in a multitude of ways. And for me at the start of it, the premise was that one, I wanted to change people’s perceptions of what everyone thinks a monument can be, that it exists as one object. I think I started thinking of it as identifying the Columbia River as something that once was one of our most abundant life sources of flora and fauna, and then where it is today. And if you look back then and compare it to today, what has changed, what is still changing?

I think at the Sandy River site, which it wasn’t so much specifically a site Lewis and Clark went to—they traveled by it. But, throughout their travels, they cited every single new bird, every new animal. And so this one I’m envisioning as a bird blind, where each animal and bird is listed in the order in which they—I’m not going to say discovered—but that they cited them for the first time.

I don’t think it’s about a memorial. I see this as almost living history, and a history that we can benefit from knowing. I think what Lewis and Clark can give us insight into what has changed so much in our landscape, for better and for worse. That’s why I don’t see it as a monument. In fact, it’s not that at all. But will it give us a better insight into this place? Will it focus our attention on the Columbia River, the Snake River, the Willamette?

As far as what the journey means to me, we’re still on it. You talk about Lewis and Clark as a discovery of the West. It doesn’t have an ending to me. I don’t even think it has a beginning because this land was inhabited for so many years before Lewis and Clark. It does mark a specific point in time, and we can use it to give us an idea of what that time was, but I think to me it’s about, ‘Hmmm, what is it going to be like in 200 more years?’ And I think it is sometimes good to understand what’s been lost, what is irrecoverable, what is valuable to us, what would we like to repair, what can we seriously do knowing there’s always going to be a balance between how we cultivate the land and live with the land. But I think that’s the question: living with the land versus depleting its sources so that nothing can live after us.

I think the landscapes that I’ve experienced absolutely are going to stick with me for my life.

Peter Coyote: The artist Maya Lin, talking about The Confluence Project in Washington and Oregon. It was Maya Lin, by the way, who designed the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC, so she is the answer to our quiz question earlier.

David Borlaug, president of the North Dakota Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Foundation:

David Borlaug: It means to me—this bicentennial in many ways is so much more profound than the bicentennial of America itself, because that was the story of 13 original colonies that became a nation, these ocean-hugging states. This is the bicentennial of the real America, because it’s the bicentennial of the West.

Peter Coyote: Carolyn Gilman of the Missouri Historical Society.

Carolyn Gilman: I think we’re celebrating Jefferson just as much as we’re celebrating Lewis and Clark. A lot of people might not realize it because what appeals to a lot of people is just the sheer adventure, the men pitted against the wilderness, the encounter with the natural landscape. They love to imagine the wilderness. They love to imagine what America was like before it became the United States. It’s like a glimpse into an unformed continent. Of course, we know that that was not what it was, but it’s a very seductive vision. Despite that, I really think it is looking at that continent through Jeffersonian eyes that
is most appealing.

David Nicandri: There’s a lot more story here than meets the eye.

Peter Coyote: David Nicandri is director of the Washington State Historical Society.

David Nicandri: And in that respect, the journals of Lewis and Clark—although one historian said they’d been mined for everything they’re worth—I hold the completely opposite view. They’re just beginning to be mined for what they’re worth. Once you get beneath the surface appearance of the narrative—much of which we think of the narrative actually being constructed history by subsequent editors and scholars—there’s a great, deeper, richer, if you will, more human, and I submit, even a more interesting history. And there are more stories, more perspectives, and those will only be gleaned through a careful, thorough reading of the journals and the so-called Moulton, or Nebraska issue of the journals—there in all their glory, all 13 volumes—have just opened up this trove of material that historians can now mine for the next few decades.

Dayton Duncan: There are places now that are better preserved than they were four years ago. The White Cliffs of the Missouri, now a national monument. Pompey’s Pillar, now a national monument.

Peter Coyote: Dayton Duncan.

Dayton Duncan: Places that have interpretive centers that weren’t there before, from St. Louis to the Pacific coast are a lot of places that didn’t exist when I first went out on the Lewis and Clark trail 21 years ago that help you understand what this story is about and that draw you into the story and that broaden your knowledge about it. And equally important is just the way that the bicentennial has been undertaken, to let the Indian peoples have a full partnership in what happens and what gets said. Simply the opportunity to say, you need to know two things—one is, we helped them—which is news to many Americans—and the second thing you need to know is what happened to us in the years afterward. I think that’s going to be a great legacy as well that millions of Americans will have a rounder view, more complete view and a more historic view of our history than they had before it began.

Peter Coyote: We cannot see into the future, of course, to know what is yet to be discovered about the Lewis and Clark Expedition and its aftermath, or what the tricentennial of the expedition will look like. We called this program “Unfinished Journey” because the Lewis and Clark story still being written and reinterpreted by new generations. We asked Clay Jenkinson to give us his final thoughts on what we have learned so far:

Clay Jenkinson: So what is the legacy of the Lewis and Clark Expedition? It depends on how you decide to look at it. The Missouri River has been dammed 75 times. The salmon runs in the Columbia are miniscule. Grizzly bears, condors and bison have been reduced to sad remnants of what they were when Lewis and Clark charted the West.

The Sierra Club recently noted that of the 178 plants and 122 animals that Lewis and Clark discovered, thirteen of those animals are on the endangered species list, including the coho salmon, the white sturgeon and the whooping crane. And seven remain on the threatened list, including the Canada lynx. Indeed, the Sierra Club noted that 46 other plants and animals enjoy special state or national protection at the time of the Lewis and Clark bicentennial. Environmental advocates have declared that the Missouri and the Columbia are indeed endangered rivers.

Some of the Indian tribes Lewis and Clark encountered no longer exist. Others are barely hanging on at the beginning of the 21st century. Even those that are seen as doing quite well have a slate of problems that everyone—Indians and non-Indians alike—find daunting. The tribes Lewis and Clark met have come to the bicentennial to report a legacy of conquest, dispossession, relocation, forced assimilation,
resource exploitation, and benign neglect. Were Lewis and Clark responsible for all of this? Of course not. But they are often seen as convenient symbols of what was to follow in their wake through the rest of the 19th century. They opened the door. In the words of Shakespeare, “Hark, what discord followed.” Perhaps it’s easier to assess the immediate impacts of Lewis and Clark. They left names on the land, especially in Montana. They left their DNA behind. Just how many babies were born from connections between men of the expedition and Native women is unknown. They left behind material goods—some lost, some stolen, some traded or given as tokens of American sovereignty. Most of these have simply disappeared. A few have been found—peace medals, perhaps an axe blade cut out by John Shields, Lewis’s branding iron. Today these objects are treated like sacred relics.

Lewis and Clark created lasting impressions. The little evidence we have suggests that they were seen by Indians as overconfident and undergenerous, a little pushy in their incessant speechifying and pretty stingy with whatever lay in the holds of those boats. They also made promises. It turns out they were promises they couldn’t really keep. The captains told the Indians they met that if they cooperated and weaned themselves from other European traders, American trade goods would soon come upriver to improve their lives. In fact, it took 20 years for those goods to arrive in reliable supply and 40 years before the British trade system stopped being the better option.

More positively, they left us some of America’s greatest documents, thirteen stout volumes of their impressions of everything from sea to shining sea. William Clark left us maps that are both fascinating for what they record and what they omit, and works of art, too. Perhaps most importantly, Lewis and Clark gave us what scholar James Ronda has called ‘America’s first great road story.’ These are important legacies and yet it seems likely that if Lewis and Clark had never been born, the history of the American West would have turned out about the same. From the perspective of the fifty-some Indian tribes they met, or from that of the bison, antelope or bighorn sheep, the camas root or cottonwood, from the perspective of the land itself, they were temporary if boisterous guests who left about the same mark on the American landscape as one’s hand leaves as it passes through a basin of water. The expedition seldom strayed more than few miles from the river. And as soon as they passed on, the great American wilderness swallowed almost every trace of their visit.

The more you think about the legacy of Lewis and Clark, the harder it is to come to terms with it. But this much is certainly true: Lewis and Clark gave us one of our greatest national stories, a narrative of almost infinite possibilities for understanding and interpretation. The foundation that they laid 200 years ago has brought to us the biggest, most ambitious and most truly searching of all American historical commemorations. For that, we can be immensely grateful. For the Unfinished Journey, I’m Clay Jenkinson.

Peter Coyote: I’m Peter Coyote. This program was produced by Lewis & Clark College and Oregon Public Broadcasting. The producer is Eve Epstein, audio engineer Steven Kray, associate producer Sherry Manning. Original music composed and conducted by Aaron Meyer and Bill Lamb. The executive producers are Clay Jenkinson and Morgan Holm. Major funding provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Additional funding was provided by the National Park Service and the Jonsson Family Foundation. Support for this program also comes from this station and Public Radio International stations and is made possible in part by the PRI program fund whose contributors include the Ford Foundation and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

To learn more about this series visit opb.org and click on the “Guide to Lewis and Clark.”