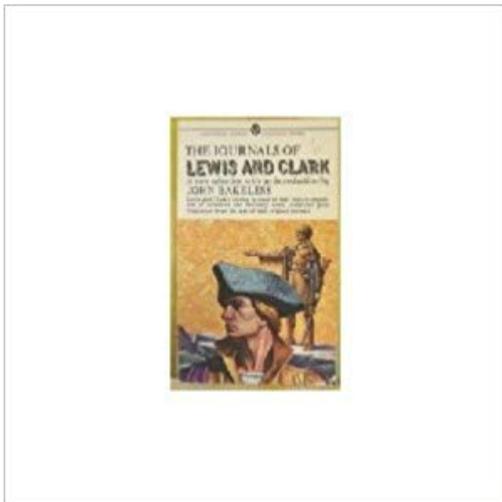


The Journals of Lewis and Clark (Mentor Series) by John Bakeless, Meriwether Lewis



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Reviews of the The Journals of Lewis and Clark (Mentor Series) by John Bakeless, Meriwether Lewis

Danrad

I enjoyed the content of the book that was here, and find the story fascinating. However, I was looking for the actual full journals of Lewis and Clark, not this abridged version containing less than half of the document. There are several other abridged versions available, and they generally make it clear in their descriptions, if not subtitles, that they are abridged. This version does not indicate in any way that it is abridged, but it is very much so, and this seems intentionally misleading. It seems calculated to get people like me, who are looking for the whole thing, to buy this one among the many options. Now I will give this copy away and buy the 8 volume set edited by Thwaites, as it appears to be the only full version published.

While the editor implies in the introduction that he left out mostly useless or repetitive stuff, this isn't so. For example, if you are interested in the descriptions of the daily lifeways of the American Indians, you won't find it. Although some such information is incidentally included, the wealth of careful description that Lewis made in this regard were intentionally left out, as were many of his interesting descriptions about wildlife. This book is a condensed version of the parts of the journals that were deemed more exciting. That has its merit. But the title and description suggest a completeness that is not here.

Ballardana

Interesting in that it takes the actual notes of Lewis & Clark and allows them to tell the tale. There is some editing to move the narrative along, and some explanations when deemed necessary. I've read other accounts of the Expedition, so I thought it was time to compare with the original. Nat. Geo. does a nice job. My only big complaint is that more maps should have been included, esp. since many of the areas were unnamed or had different names than now, but also, I enjoy following along on a map to see the trip in my mind's eye.

Friert

Outstanding, it's amazing what they accomplished, remember, there were no McDonald's, no Hotels, no Highways, NOTHING. Few Men today could make such a trip, and then there were the Indians, which for the most part were friendly and in fact, they never could have made to the Pacific and back without help from the Indians and guides working for the fur trading outfits. Just an Amazing story.

Vudozilkree

I kept an older version of this John Bakeless book on my nightstand for many months at one time in my life; rereading it over and over again as one of the most intriguing travel adventures ever written - by anyone, anywhere - and Bakeless did not tamper with it much, preferring to keep it in its original state which is why I chose to read his editing of the famous manuscript. There is nothing to compare with the real thing; the adventure straight from the amazing pen of Captain's Lewis and Clark. Here is just a sample of the beauty of thought and feeling Lewis managed to put down on paper in and around the other pressing details of his day and often in discomfort - regarding the Great Falls area of present day Montana:

"... below the falls at a little distance, a beautiful island, well timbered is situated in the middle of the river. In this island, on a cottonwood tree, an eagle has positioned her nest, and a more inaccessible spot I believe she could not have found, as neither man nor beast dare pass those gulfs...." (pg 182)

"....it continued to rain moderately all night. The river bottoms afford all the timber in this country, and are filled with innumerable little birds that resort thither either for shelter or to build their nests. When the sun began to shine this day, they appeared and sang most enchantingly...." (pg 167)

".....one of the most beautiful and picturesque countries ever beheld, through the wide expanse of which innumerable herds of living animals are seen, while its lofty and open forests are the habitations of myriads of the feathered tribes that salute the ear of the passing traveler with their wild and simple yet sweet and cheerful melody....." (pg 168)

This is far, far more than simply an accounting of the expedition of the Corps. of Discovery searching for the Northwest Passage under the order of President Thomas Jefferson. It is not only a glimpse into the minds of the men who championed the Expedition, but brings to us the unspoiled view of magnificence; the wild, wide open splendor that once was the territory of The Louisiana Purchase - and farther West, unexplored as yet by any but the few French traders/trappers and the Native Americans who called it Home. But perhaps even more importantly, it is clear demonstration of what can be accomplished when people put aside their differences and concentrate on the task at hand.

Lewis writes with intense, bright feeling; Clark is more reserved and taciturn. My own natural preference, because of this, became the writings of Lewis. The reader, if possessed by any depth of imagination, feels as though standing at the shoulder of this remarkable, sensitive man as he writes and describes with awe the staggering numbers that comprised the herds of buffalo spreading across the plains; the grizzly bears that roamed unfettered on the same plains, not confined to mountains; the Gray Wolf as he followed the herds; the vast, wide open prairies of grass and sage; the Dakota villages of the Mandans, Native people, simple, open and as one with the natural world, untouched by the dire events that were about to come upon them; the Great Falls of Montana as they reach the mountain country; the chance and very fortunate meeting of the expedition with Sacajawea's brother, Cameawait as they were about to enter the peril of the mountain passage without horses or enough of anything else. The success of the Corp. could have ended there, were it not for Sacajawea and Cameawait and their family ties. You see it all as though in a time warp through the visual pens of the two Captains as they travel, taking specimens of things yet unseen back East, taking gps measurements without aid of the same quality of instruments used today, yet surprisingly accurate against the figures under higher technology.

Their company consisted of whites, a black, and Indians and points in between with the mingling of the diverse cultures seemingly undertaken successfully and matter-of-factly, while maintaining order and discipline. They undertook this dangerous journey and managed to coexist in honor to it's end, losing but one man, giving credit where credit was due to an Indian woman, and brought even her child safely back with them. I confess I have an idea of my own regarding the illness of Sacajawea ("the Indian woman is very ill") and the "absence of the menses" that Lewis treated, but since Historians shy away from it (or have never brought to bear thought about it in depth), so shall I.

Thirty miles out of Billings, Montana, lies the spot on the Yellowstone River where the Corp. camped - and where Captain Clark carved his name into the side of the bluff - "Pompey's Pillar". There is a simple yet beautiful visitors center there now. The original campsite is still there with 'old growth' Cottonwoods still standing and exhibiting immense size and as yet still vigorous. The site is haunted, hallowed ground, and is highly recommended by myself as a place to visit, because the spirits of the Corp. of Discovery still seem to reside there; the Yellowstone makes it way between two bluffs, and beneath the Old cottonwoods one can close the eyes and visualize all of them there, as they were then, where the little meadow meets the river. The bluffs are closely bound to the River as it flows serenely through them, and as a result, throws sound back and forth as in "surround sound"; the bird voices are magnified in the treetops until it is almost an out-of-body historical experience - if one thinks hard enough about it while there.

In closing, and while enough can never be said about the importance of these "men of might" and their contribution to our nation, I will mention that I feel Merriwether Lewis was maligned even as he made these vast contributions to his country; I would like to see capable historians re-open and do better research work regarding the mysterious events surrounding his death, and the 'investigation' which I find hard to believe at best, and preposterous at worst. Vardis Fisher, in his 1962 work "Suicide or Murder" comes closest in striving within the limited and often frustrating constraints of "documented facts" and "pitifully undocumented events" to get at the truth.

Biaemi

I read Vardis Fisher's Lewis&Clark story first, but felt like I needed to to see Lewis & Clark's real words. This book, edited by Bernard DeVoto, with a view to be as 'correct as possible' was not as entertaining as Vardis book, for sure! Was good to see where Vardis was pulling my leg for the sake of entertainment. I think it was a good choice to be entertained first then put to memory was the more truthful (albeit less entertaining) version. What kept me reading was the truth of the account and the excitement of the adventure. Very glad to have read this seminal piece of American history. Accounts of the true friends that L & C made with many indian chiefs across the country are

heartwarming (and also how they avoided or thwarted the indian scoundrels).

Westened

This compiled version of excerpts from Lewis and Clark's journals tells the amazing story of their trek across the unexplored western frontier. Much of the excerpts are brief descriptions of the animals, geography, and flora observed in their travels. It is amazing to imagine the country as they saw it. There are also detailed descriptions of several indian tribes they encounter along their travels. The daily descriptions of their travels are brief and to the point making their 2.5 year journey a quick and easy read.

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