

NEWS

HEADWATERS HERITAGE MUSEUM

P. O. BOX 116

THREE FORKS, MONTANA 59752

Corner of Main and Cedar ***** E-mail - threeforksmuseum@aol.com

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JOHN COLTER

John Colter was born in 1774 or 1775 near Staunton, in Augusta County, Virginia. He lived there until about the age of five when his family moved to Maysville, Kentucky. His family was of Scottish stock. He grew up to be a farmer and was 5 feet 10 inches tall with, it is recorded, piercing blue eyes. He was a bit shy but had a quick mind. He will be remembered as an excellent hunter.

Colter's first trip to the Three Forks area was made with the Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery. He was a member of that expedition's "nine young men from Kentucky." Captain Meriwether Lewis appointed John to the group in 1804. His services as a trapper, hunter and guide were well utilized during the two and half year journey. On August 17, 1806, as the Corps was headed home and at the Mandan village, he requested permission to be released. His request was approved, and he joined up with two other trappers, Joseph Dixon and Forrest Hancock of Illinois, to return to Montana. That fall the three partners trapped, but when they reached the Three Forks region on the upper Missouri the men had a falling out and parted ways.

In 1807, Colter was at the trading post established by Manuel Lisa, who was the first trader that followed in the footsteps of Lewis and Clark. That trading post, north of the confluence of the Yellowstone and Big Horn Rivers, was the next stepping off place for Colter. He and George Drouillard, serving as lieutenants for Lisa, explored most of Montana and Wyoming trying to drum up business with the Indians for the post. It was during this time that John Colter became the first white man to see the beauty and wonders of Yellowstone National Park. Many thought the tales he told of the park were just his imagination. "Colter's Hell," near Cody, Wyoming is named after him.

In 1808, Colter was with a party of Crow and Flathead Indians on a hunting expedition between the Madison and Gallatin Rivers, near the headwaters, when the Blackfeet attacked them. As the story goes, there were some 1500 Blackfeet and 800 Crow and Flathead. Colter was wounded in the leg during the battle, which disabled him so bad he could not stand. He had crawled to a small thicket and fired on the attackers from a sitting position. The battle ended in a stalemate, but the Blackfeet had seen Colter kill one of their own. From that day on he was on the entire tribe's hit list, so to speak.

In 1809, John Colter and John Potts were sent back to the Three Forks area to trap with the Andrew Henry outfit out of Fort Manuel Lisa. Aware of the hostile Blackfeet in the area, the pair would set their traps at night and take them up early in the morning, remaining concealed during the day. They were looking after their traps early one morning in a creek about six miles from the branch of the Missouri called Jefferson's Fork. They were ascending in a canoe when they heard a great noise resembling the trampling of animals; but they could not ascertain the fact, as the high, perpendicular banks on each side of the stream impeded their view. Colter thought it to be Indians, and Potts was sure it was buffalo. In a few minutes their doubts were removed by a party of Indians making their appearance on both sides of the creek, to the amount of five or six hundred. It was at this point that Colter dropped his traps out of the canoe and into the creek fearing he would be, in the least, robbed. The above was written by John Bradbury in his book *Travels in the Interior of America (1819)*. Other versions of this initial encounter vary. Thomas James wrote in *Three Years Among the Indians and Mexicans (1846)* that there were 800 Blackfeet and they were on the Jefferson River.

The story, of course, gives the details about the killing of Potts, stripping Colter and making him run for his life. The run was apparently made from the creek (*Willow Creek*) to the Madison River where Colter dove under a raft of drift timber (*James describes it as a beaver house*) against an island. He stayed there until nightfall when he swam down river and headed for the Bozeman Pass and on to Fort Manuel Lisa on the Big Horn. When he arrived there seven or more days (*James has the trip as eleven days*) later he was not even recognized by his fellow trappers. That is a short and quick narration of the story of his famous run for his life.

The main point of this article is to try and pinpoint to a certain degree the location of the Potts killing and the capture of Colter and which direction he ran. It is a strong possibility that the creek was Willow Creek, as it is the only creek with perpendicular banks on both sides. The Willow Creek Canyon is located a few miles south of the town of Willow Creek. Adding to the point, the Jefferson River itself does not have high perpendicular banks on both sides anywhere near the area. Willow Creek Canyon starts below the dam and runs for a few miles. Even to this day it has several beaver dams along that stretch of the creek. Before the dam was constructed and Harrison Lake formed, three major creeks came together in the canyon. They were Norwegian, North and South Willow Creek, which were all fed from the Tobacco Root Mountains to the west. Also, the canyon would have been considerably longer than it is now, as the lake covers two pre-existing canyons. From the east edge of the canyon it is almost exactly six miles across an open, prickly pear covered prairie to the Madison River, which was also described by Bradbury.

In combining pieces of both the Bradbury and James versions, I came to the conclusion that John Colter and Potts were probably on the Willow Creek trapping beaver when raided by the Blackfeet. Colter had in the winter made a shortened trip back to try and recover those traps he pitched overboard as the Blackfeet came onto him and Potts. In the winter, after he assumed all the Indians were in winter quarters, he retraced his steps to the Gallatin. He had just passed a gap in the mountain and made a camp for the night. He had started a fire to cook a little buffalo meat and heard a noise by the river. He heard the cocking of guns and jumped over the fire and took off toward the mountain, hearing shots as he fled. He rested the next day and then immediately returned to Manuel's Fort. Perhaps someday in the future some of those traps Colter dropped overboard will be found along the creek.

Dave Miller

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Some 25 million people will make the journey following the historic Lewis and Clark route of discovery, and we want Three Forks to be ready. This is our opportunity to be part of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial activities for the next few years.

Our organization is in the process of contributing to that celebration by taking on the project of placing a statue of the expedition's interpreter, Sacajawea.

A committee has been formed to oversee the Sacajawea Project. The following goals have been established:

1. Press release.
2. Send information packets to artists and others to submit their ideas.
3. Choose a design.
4. Kick off fund raising project.
Goal-\$50,000
5. Approve contracts.
6. Construction.
7. Dedication.

The Sacajawea Statue Project is to be completed by July 2004.

For additional information, donations and possible volunteers, write to:

Statue Project
P. O. Box 116
Three Forks, MT 59752
or call
406-285-4778

We hope that all the citizens and businesses of Three Forks and surrounding areas will support this much-needed memorial to one of the most honored, important members of the expedition.

The Sacajawea Statue Committee members are: Paul and Jeanette Hetu, Dave Miller, Larry Laird, Ralph Wilcox, Rod and Charlotte Frick, Gene Townsend, Jack Heebner and Robin Cadby-Sorensen.

Paul Hetu, President

HISTORY BOOKS FOUND!

Two boxes of Headwaters Heritage History books were found and are for sale. There are only 18 books and are priced at \$50.00.

Memberships

Katie Wilcox, membership chairperson, states that the three most popular memberships are:

LIFE.....\$125.00

SUSTAINING.....\$25.00

(Five consecutive annual payments = Life Membership)

ANNUAL.....\$5.00 Individual-\$8.00 Family

Membership forms are available at the museum or from any member/officer. Questions can be directed to Katie at 285-6771.

We welcome new members and invite them to attend our monthly meetings.

If you have not submitted your annual or sustaining dues for 2003, please mail to P. O. Box 116, Three Forks, MT 59752.

☺ Katie

**ENCOURAGE YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS TO JOIN
THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

Welcome to new life members

Michael Lane

Jim and Kathie Satake

QUILT RAFFLE

Hand crafted by Roberta Williams
with embroidered historical dates

Tickets for sale
\$1.00 each or 6 for \$5.00
May be purchased from museum or
Historical Society members

Drawing will be held on
September 5, 2003
at the regular meeting of the Historical Society
Need not be present to win

INVITATION TO SUBMIT NEWS

Anyone wishing to contribute to this newsletter is more than welcome. Letters, news, historical information, or other items of interest can be submitted by the end of August 2003 for the fall issue.

CURATOR'S COMMENTS

The number of visitors to the museum the month of June was 689. That is up 180 from last year at this time. Tourists came from all but six states and from New Zealand, Germany, Denmark, Canada, and Singapore.

Their impression of the museum is shown by the comments written in our registration book, such as "In my view, best museum we have seen at Lewis and Clark sites we have been." Madison, WI....."Very nice! Exhibits fantastic!" Cambridge, MD..."Thanks for keeping heritage alive and safe." Watertown, WI..."The barbed wire was wonderful." Garfield, WA...and many more.

Our season runs from June 1 through September 30. However, this year the museum will be available throughout the "off season" months by calling 285-3644.

Thanks go to Boots and June Myers for cleaning the museum in the month of June. Historical Society members have volunteered to clean each month. Norma Miller purchased and planted the flowers beneath the tree in front. Surely looks pretty!! Thanks!! Dave and Norma both put in many hours putting out the newsletter. Dave reports this is his last issue. That means this is OUR last issue unless someone steps up to the plate and takes on that job.

Hostesses are true to form again this year. A great crew---always dependable---they take good care of the museum by dusting the cases daily and other clean up jobs as needed. Most importantly, they are good with the visitors, friendly and informative. Anyone interested in volunteering, please call.

Speakers at the orientation this year were Ralph Denoski, Plant Manager at Trident, and Ed Fenlason, author of Hills by the Headwaters. Katie Wilcox provided refreshments.

Cleanup day in May was completed with a crew of 14 volunteers in a little over an hour! It is true that many hands make light work.

This year looks like a good one...bring your family and friends to see the exhibits.

Robin Cadby-Sorensen

DUGOUT CANOE

Last fall, the museum was the recipient of a dugout canoe crafted by Art Director, Jim L. Ward and his crew for Black Dog Films of Bozeman. The canoe was one of two used in the documentary film, "The Search for Lewis and Clark."

The cottonwood trees used to make the canoes came from the KG Ranch near Three Forks. Owners Paul and Kaye Doddridge and Black Dog Films donated one of the canoes to our museum where it is on display in the backyard. The other canoe was donated to the Museum of the Rockies.

Ralph Wilcox, Paul Hetu, and Rod Frick gave assistance to Wendell Ewen and Charles Brown of the City Office in moving the canoe to its present location. The canoe weighs approximately 2000 pounds and is 21.6 feet long.

Wheels were then added to axles and mounted under the canoe by Ralph Wilcox and son, Ed. They made the wheels from a cottonwood donated by Larry Wilcox. Chuck Williams provided poles to connect the axles. Bill Don Brainard helped Ralph replace the mast which had been stored in the Sorensen Honey building over the winter.

Jim Ward recently provided the museum with several photographs and a description of building the canoe from picking out just the right tree to actually floating the canoe at the ponds. This has been assembled into a booklet and is available to see on the main floor of the museum. Last fall, after the canoe had been moved, Jim gave a presentation on its construction held at the Methodist Church Annex.

As you can see, it takes a lot of volunteer help to get a project completed. All the efforts of the people involved are appreciated, and the canoe is a great addition to our collection of artifacts.

Robin Cadby-Sorensen, Curator

MONCRETE PLANT - LOWER MADISON

In August, 1915, the concrete plant at Moncrete station between Three Forks and Logan was destroyed by fire. The origin of the fire was not known. The fire spread rapidly, and the building and contents were a total loss. This plant had originally cost about \$65,000, and the fire resulted in \$20,000 worth of damage. The plant was rebuilt and about to reopen in June, 1916. However, Mr. Pomeroy Vreeland, the manager at the time, was called into service by the Montana National guard for Mexican service. The plant produced cement blocks and bricks used in many homes in this end of the valley. The plant also shipped sand and gravel for use in concrete foundations, sidewalks, etc.. Mr. Vreeland did return from service but was killed by Buford Webb in late 1919. The plant never operated again.

SACAJAWEA DOLLAR PROCLAMATION

Mayor Gene Townsend has issued a proclamation that the Sacajawea dollar is the official coin of Three Forks. The proclamation will be read at the Festival of Discovery, July 26. He hopes that merchants and citizens will use the dollar more in their business transactions. The museum has been giving the dollar coin in change for the past two years and tourists love it! Many have never seen one! Hopefully, they will remember Three Forks when they use their dollar elsewhere.

NEW ITEMS IN THE GIFT SHOPPE

New books include a Lewis and Clark cook book, a beautifully illustrated story of Seaman the dog, Montana Memories about Jim Ward's pioneer grandmother, a book of poems about the Lewis and Clark Expedition and a Lewis and Clark Expedition Illustrated Glossary.

There are chimes, welcomes signs, key hooks and fobs, puzzles, wall hangings, lamps, walking sticks, dolls, dogs, maps, post cards, a nice variety of note cards, trivets, candles, Lewis and Clark Bicentennial pins, compass-whistles, money clips, belt buckles, mugs, and many more items.

Your dollars spent in the Gift Shoppe go towards supporting the museum.

THANKS TO SCOTT KOELZER & HIS CREW

A big thank you to Scott Koelzer and his crew for replacing the cement blocks over the two front windows at the museum and repointing the mortar. This has been needed for several years. It took Scott's crew many hours to finish their work. The Historical Society thanks them for their volunteer work.

NEW TO THE MUSEUM.....

- ...Photographs of Dance Brothers Palace Bar donated by Don Dixon
- ...1959 calendar from the Lark Café donated by Monte Parker
- ...Baby's belly band (to bind umbilical cord) and undershirt
Donated by Jeanette Steingruber Hetu
- ...Bible titled "Den Hellige Grift" donated by Boots Myers
- ..."Red Devil" Cement for sale sign donated by Boots Myers
- ...Photo of Milwaukee Road Freight #203 donated by Floyd Archer
- ...City Drug Pharmacy ledger donated by Mary and Brandon Hardin
- ...Horse collar, harness and bridles donated by Chuck Williams
- ...Milwaukee Road train list slips donated by Elsie Rice
- ...Hatbox donated by Nell Thomas' daughter, Nancy Bekke
- ...Photographs of Trident cement plant on loan from Dave Miller
- ...School diplomas of Ralph M. Wilcox and Vera Van Horssen
Donated by Ralph Wilcox
- ...Prayer rug of Minnie Van Horssen's donated by Ralph Wilcox
- ...Doll and rocker donated by Phyllis Norman
- ...Wood Burning set donated by Kerin Kemmerer
- ...Children's home permanent hair curlers donated by Pearl Kilman
- ...A collection of books on Montana donated by John T. Cadby

PECK'S FISH

Betty Wilcox has given the museum Gift Shoppe a new supply of post cards with a picture of Peck Bacon and his famous 29-½ pound fish caught in 1966 at Wade Lake. She had the information on the card updated. There are some folks who come into the museum solely to see "The Fish"!

"RERUNS"

Recently Elaine Chor donated picture frames to the museum, as did Melvin Hamilton about a year ago. Usually they are being sold at a garage sale, and when they find out the frames will go to the museum, they are happy to donate them. If you are getting rid of your old frames, call 285-3644 or 285-4778 and they will be picked up. Frames of all sizes can be used.

Another item that people do not know what to do with are old 3 ring binders. We can use them, too! Large and small, it doesn't matter.

A paper cutter would be a great asset if anyone has one to offer.

Thank you!!

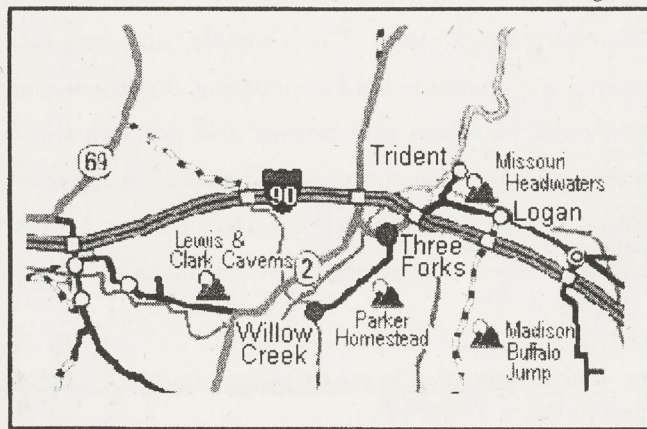
RODEO PARADE

The theme for the Rodeo Parade this year is "*Sacajawea at the Three Forks*." It is hoped that all cars will be off Main Street and no water will be thrown about so that it will be a safer and better parade. Without the water fights more people will enter their animals which helps make a rodeo parade a RODEO parade!

THREE FORKS AREA Festival of Discovery

Featuring the Lewis and Clark Honor Guard

An event for the Whole Family



6a.m. to 10 p.m. Saturday, July 26, 2003

Three Forks, Montana

Take I-90 to Three Forks, exit 278 turn south and follow the signs.

Summary of Scheduled Events

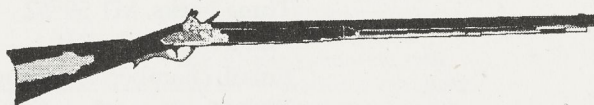
- Lions Club Breakfast 6:30am-10:30pm
- VFW Flag Presentation at Veteran's Park
- Sacagawea Dollar Proclamation by Mayor Townsend
- Lewis and Clark Honor Guard at Milwaukee Park 6am-5pm
- Lewis & Clark Heritage Foundation Program & Children's Activities at TF Library Green
- Arts and Crafts Fair at Sacajawea Hotel
- Shuttle Buses Friday and Saturday

Other Events on Friday, July 25:

- Author Colleen Sloan @ Magpie Books
- Willow Creek Art Walk - Willow Creek, MT
- Lewis and Clark Caverns Summer Speaker
- Outdoor Theatre-Whitehall, MT

Other Events on Saturday, July 26:

- Tobacco Root Golf Tournament:
Headwater Golf Course, Three Forks, MT
- Headwaters State Park Summer Speaker,
Hal Stearns: Headwaters Park
- Lewis and Clark Room: Three Forks Library



Activities: 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

A formal ceremony, beginning at 8am, features VFW Flag Presentation, rousing music and an official Mayoral Proclamation. Throughout the day Lewis & Clark Trail Heritage Foundation is sponsoring an information trunk overflowing with replicas and historical memorabilia. Scheduled speakers in Milwaukee Park will present a range of topics including Native Americans, Montana History and Nature. Be at the Headwaters Museum for your Journey of Discovery treasure hunt. The Three Forks Library Green is the site for many children's activities, including making fry bread. The Arts and Crafts Fair at the Sacajawea Hotel presents a wide variety of creations by artisans and craftsmen from near and far. Refreshments are available from vendors and local eating establishments.

Lewis and Clark Honor Guard* Encampment: 6 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Imagine walking through the Lewis and Clark campsite and actually talking with members of the expedition! You can do this during the Three Forks Area Festival of Discovery at the Lewis and Clark Honor Guard Encampment, near the Headwaters of the Missouri River. Honor Guard members present first-person accounts of expedition members they have researched. For example, you may find Clark, Lewis, Sacajawea, Droulliard, and York all dressed in authentic costumes and conducting day-to-day activities that took place during the original 1804-1806 expedition. Watch members skin beaver and prepare the meat or sew leather moccasins using sinew. Listen to historical presentations on such topics as the medical aspects of the expedition, firearm usage, and the natural history of the Missouri Headwaters area. Be certain to stop by the popular trading blanket. Children are invited to bring items to trade with expedition members for treasures of the period: such as beads, necklaces and pouches.

*The Lewis and Clark Honor Guard is a non-profit division of the Portage Route Chapter of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation. Nationally known for authentic interpretations, the Honor Guard appeared in the Ken Burn's documentary film *Lewis and Clark: The Journey of the Corp of Discovery*.

Three Forks Area

"Three Forks" refers to the three rivers, which Lewis and Clark named the Jefferson, Gallatin and Madison in honor of President Jefferson and his Secretaries of Treasury and State. Located in the Gallatin Valley, the Three Forks area includes the city of Three Forks, the town of Willow Creek, and up the Jefferson River toward Whitehall, along the Gallatin River toward Logan, up the Madison toward Harrison. Lewis and Clark named Willow Creek "Philosophy River". The Hidatsa Indians captured Sacajawea, a Lemhi Shoshone, near Three Forks. Five years later she returned with the expedition, acting as a guide and interpreter for the Corps.

The expedition camped for three days at the Missouri River headwaters during the last days of July 1805 and spent several more days moving through and exploring the area. The Three Forks Area Festival of Discovery commemorates this part of the journey. Come see firsthand what the members of the Corps of Discovery noted in their journals!

For More Information, please send a self addressed stamped envelope (legal) to one of the following organizations:

Three Fork Area Historical Society

PO Box 116

Three Forks, MT 59752

406-285-4778

Email: threeforksmuseum@aol.com

Three Forks Chamber of Commerce

PO Box 1103

Three Forks, MT 59752

Phone: 406-285-4753

Email: chamber@threeforksmontana.com

Website: www.threeforksmontana.com

MEMBERSHIPS

The membership board in the Museum continues to grow each year. Many on the board have now passed from this earth, but not from our hearts. We are proud to display those names as well as those that are still present.

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Call 285-3644 or 285-3347 for Appointment

Museum Phone 406-285-4778

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ARRANGEMENTS ANYTIME
e-mail - threeforksmuseum@aol.com

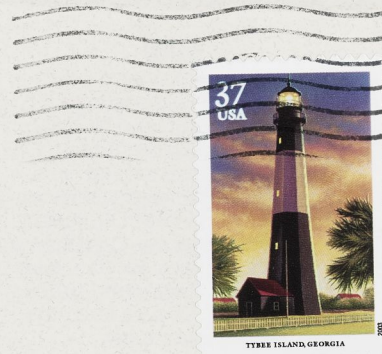
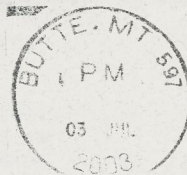
LOCAL EVENTS OF 2003

- Jul 18-19th Three Forks Rodeo & Parade.
406-285-4753
- Jul 26th Three Forks Area Festival of Discovery
406-285-3644
- Aug 7-9th Montana Antique Aircraft Association Fly-in.
406-285-6949
- Aug 8-10th Rockin the Rivers concert
406-285-3871
- Aug 16th Classic Auto Show - Sacajawea Hotel
406-285-3860
- Sep 30th Headwaters Heritage Museum last day today. By appointment
other times. 406-285-3644.
- Dec 6th Three Forks Winter Stroll.
406-285-4753

Headwaters Park - Speaker Series - Saturday evenings 7 pm
June 14 - August 30th
Lewis & Clark Caverns - Speaker Series - Friday evenings 8 pm
June 6 - August 29th

SCHEDULES MAY CHANGE - CHECK BEFORE MAKING PLANS

**THREE FORKS AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
HEADWATERS HERITAGE MUSEUM
P. O. BOX 116
THREE FORKS, MT 59752**



**SUPPORT THE MUSEUM
VISIT THE GIFT SHOPPE**

Mr. & Mrs. Bud Lilly
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Manhattan MT 59741