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Reuben Gold Thwaites and the Historical Resurrection of Lewis and Clark

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"A map of Lewis and Clark's track, across the western portion of North America from the Mississippi to the Pacific Ocean: by order of the executive of the United States in 1804, 5 & 6" is the official title of this government map. It was copied by Samuel Lewis from William Clark's original drawing.

Reuben Gold Thwaites and the Historical Resurrection of Lewis & Clark

By Matt Blessing

"It is a peculiarly noble work to rescue from oblivion those who deserve immortality."

—Pliny the Younger

Tribute to Reuben G. Thwaites, in The Wisconsin State Journal

Reuben Gold Thwaites, the second director of the Wisconsin Historical Society, first came into contact with the original records of the Lewis and Clark Expedition in early 1893, ninety years after the event. While examining twenty thousand pages of historical manuscripts and three thousand books bequeathed to the Society by his predecessor, Lyman Copeland Draper, Thwaites noticed a slim, worn notebook within a stack of larger journals written by Draper. It turned out to be the original journal kept by Sergeant Charles Floyd, a member of the "Corps of Discovery."

Thwaites probably had to brush up on the history of the expedition in order to verify that Floyd was on the journey. In 1893 most educated Americans viewed the transcontinental expedition as a romantic episode in western



6M Draper MSS

Although Floyd sometimes struggled with his daily entries, he began his journal with a flair, listing his comrades, the date, and even the location of his purchase.

exploration, but what little knowledge they had of it was limited to its two captains, to the near exclusion of other members of the corps. The first official edition of Lewis and Clark's journals, an abridged version edited and published by Nicholas Biddle in 1814, had focused on the most romantic and literary sections of the captains' accounts. In 1893 a retired Army surgeon and respected ornithologist, Elliott Coues, (pronounced "cows") published an annotated edition of Biddle's earlier work. Coues's four volumes highlighted Meriwether Lewis's scientific contributions, while demonstrating the cartographic skills of William Clark.

Coues had also rediscovered the original journals in the vaults of the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia. Unexamined for decades, Coues's "find" no doubt made

him feel that he had done enough sleuthing for original documentary sources. However, some scholars questioned why Coues had not mounted a search for the lost journals of the other participants known to have kept journals, and James Davie Butler suggested in *The Nation* in October of 1893 that “in perusing Coues’s samples, [the] appetite grows. . . The limited edition which Dr. Coues has now issued will soon be exhausted.” Despite these criticisms, scholars reviewed Coues’s edition favorably and many Americans were first introduced to Lewis and Clark by his book. Nonetheless, the expedition remained largely neglected in American classrooms and among general readers.

So when Reuben Gold Thwaites happened upon Floyd’s slim volume among the papers of Lyman C. Draper, even he, although an established scholar and editor, was not familiar with other individuals among the group. In fact, Thwaites’s identification of Sergeant Floyd’s journal among the Draper Papers was to set him on his own journey of discovery, which would enrich the collections of several research repositories, and ultimately enhance the general understanding of the Corps of Discovery in both Thwaites’s time and our own.

Charles Floyd, author of the journal that Thwaites saved from the dustbin of history, was born in 1782, and was one of nine young men from Kentucky on the expedition. In 1801, at the youthful age of nineteen or twenty, he was appointed the constable of Clarksville Township, Ohio, an appointment that reflects both his character and ability. Gary E. Moulton, editor of the most recent volumes of the journals, suggests that Floyd may have been a distant relative of William Clark. Meriwether Lewis regarded him as a “young man of much merit,” selecting him for errands into Cahokia and St. Louis while the undisciplined Corps trained at Camp Dubois along the Wood River in present-day Illinois during

the winter of 1803–1804. In April of 1804, the captains promoted Floyd—along with Nathaniel Pryor and John Ordway—to the rank of sergeant.

Charles Floyd’s fifty-six-page journal lets us hear the voice of a young, semi-literate frontiersman under orders from his commanding officers to maintain such a record. The text documents the struggles of the Corps to ascend the lower Missouri River, swollen with spring runoff from the distant Rocky Mountains. Floyd’s entries typically recorded weather conditions, distances, hunting and fishing (including a haul of 709 fish caught on a single day), and the richness of the Missouri River bottomlands and surrounding prairies. When a certain Private Moses Reed deserted the expedition, Sergeant Floyd recorded details that the commanding officers ignored: “pon examining his nap-Sack we found that he had taken his Cloas and all His powder and Balles, and had hid them out that night and had made that an excuse to Desarte from us with out aney Jest Case.”

Floyd also helped document the party’s encounters with several tribes along the lower Missouri, who, he observed, had recently been weakened by a smallpox epidemic.

Floyd maintained his journal through August 18, when, some 950 miles north of St. Louis, he prepared his final entry. The next day William Clark recorded in his own diary on August 19, 1804, that “Floyd was taken violently bad with the Beliose Cholick and is dangerously ill.” Captain Clark and his slave, York, attended to the hardworking sergeant that evening, unknowingly hastening his death by administering a purgative and using lancets to bleed him. Floyd died shortly after noon the next day, probably the victim of a ruptured appendix. Buried in a riverside bluff near present-day Sioux City, Floyd was the

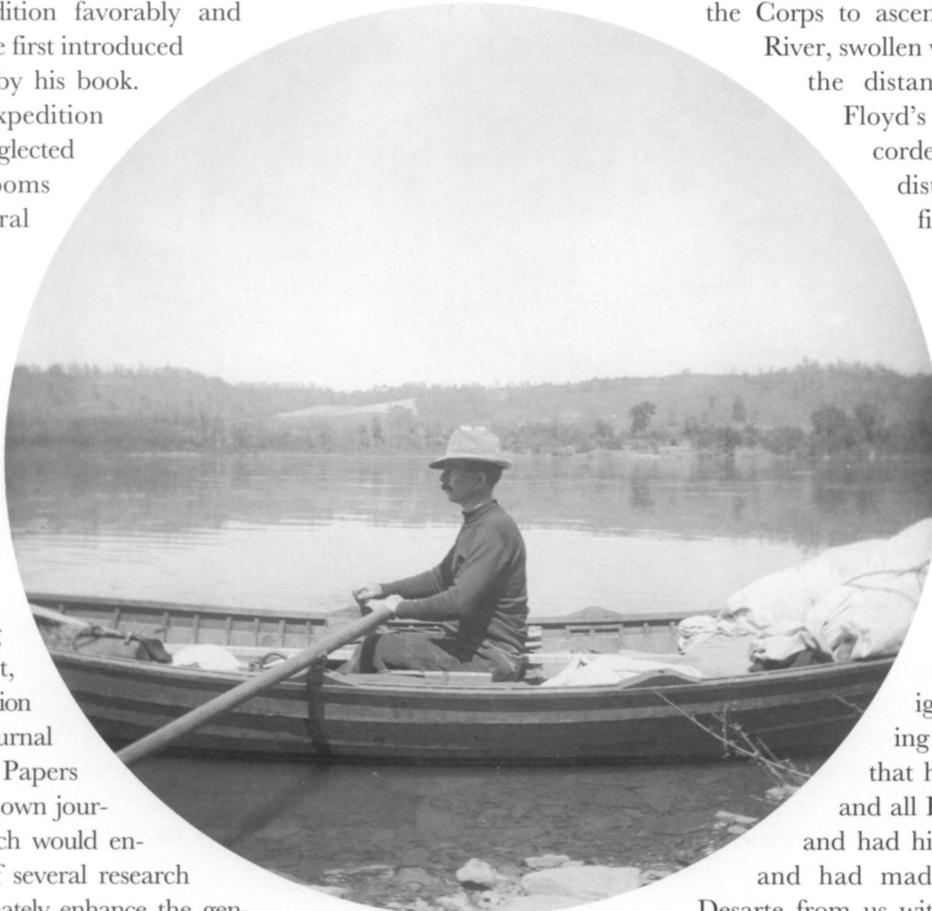


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Thwaites had a passion for retracing historic waterways, and firmly believed that such experiences were important foundations for historical research. Yet in 1903, despite vacationing in Yellowstone and Jackson Hole, Thwaites did not investigate any part of the Lewis and Clark route. The reason is still unknown.

only member of the Corps who died during the expedition.

Just how Lyman Draper acquired the journal of Charles Floyd is open to speculation. A letter to Thomas Jefferson prepared by Lewis in present-day North Dakota in the spring of 1805 suggests that Floyd's journal was sent east with a party from the expedition which descended the Missouri after wintering with the Mandan Indians. Yet although Draper corresponded with Mary Lee Walton, Floyd's sister, their letters from the 1870s contain no mention of the journal. It is possible that William Clark retained the journal, or reacquired it in the years just prior to the publication of Biddle's volumes in 1814. In any case, Lyman Draper was a great admirer of George Rogers Clark, western military hero of the American Revolution and older brother of William Clark. In the 1840s, Draper had acquired a large collection of Clark Family Papers from John Croghan, the brothers' nephew. Josephine

Harper, former manuscript curator at the Historical Society, believed that the Floyd journal may have been mixed with the Croghan materials. Finally, there is a chance that Draper acquired the journal from an unknown person on one of his nine collecting trips to Border States like Kentucky and Tennessee between 1843 and 1852. Like many of his contemporaries, Draper routinely annotated documents or added notes concerning the provenance of individual items, but Sergeant Floyd's journal lacks any such evidence and it is unlikely that the provenance of the notebook will ever be determined. Considering the richness and depth of the Draper Papers, Reuben Gold Thwaites must have been frustrated by the lack of a paper trail.

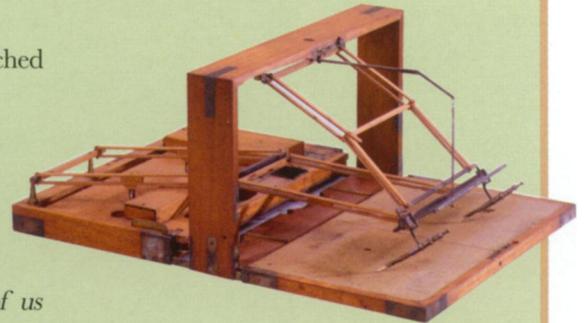
Following his chosen motto, "we aim to be useful," Thwaites quickly made Floyd's twelve-thousand-word journal available to historians. As a result, two months after the dis-

"How Would You Like to Lead Such a Party?"

The papers of George Rogers Clark, which probably included the Floyd diary, offered another documentary source of seminal importance to historians of North American exploration. On December 4, 1783, Thomas Jefferson composed a letter to Clark, thanking the celebrated officer for supplying him with shells and seeds that he had collected in Kentucky. He also expressed hopes that Clark might gather mammoth bones, teeth, and tusks, reportedly to be found near western salt licks in the Ohio Valley. Then, in an almost offhanded tone, Jefferson

reported news of a plan being hatched in England

"for exploring the country from the Mississippi to California. They pretend it is only for knolege. I am afraid they have thoughts of colonising into that quarter. Some of us have been talking here in a feeble way of making the attempt to search that country. But I doubt whether we have enough of that kind of spirit to raise the money. How would you like to lead such a party? Tho I am afraid our prospect is not worth asking the question?"



Special Collections, University of Virginia Library

Jefferson's copying device allowed the nation's third president to make copies of his correspondence, to the delight of future archivists.

channel. I find they have subscribed a very large sum of money in England for exploring the country from the Mississippi to California. They pretend it is only to promote knolege. I am afraid they have thoughts of colonising into that quarter. some of us have been talking here in a feeble way of making the attempt to search that country. but I doubt whether we have enough of that kind of spirit to raise the money. how would you like to lead such a party?

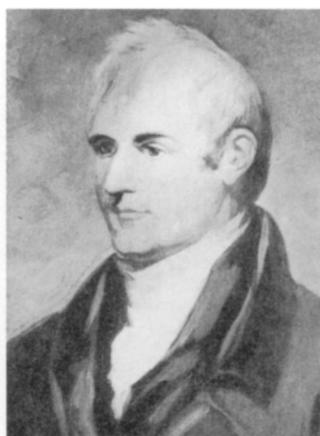
Draper Mss, 52J93

Lyman Draper made notations on many of his acquisitions, and a letter from Jefferson was, apparently, no exception.

Historians were aware of the document prior to the processing of the Draper Collection, since when he wrote it Jefferson had already begun employing the machine he devised to make two handwritten copies of every letter. Jefferson had indexed his copy of the letter as "Bones-Expdn. tow[a]rds Calfa." Although its existence was not a surprise, the Society's original letter documents the first of four aborted plans (three involving Jefferson) to organize an expedition to explore the trans-Mississippi west.



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WHS Name File

Over time, William Clark (left) and Meriwether Lewis (right) have become the central figures of the Corps of Discovery.

covery, the American Philosophical Society asked James Davie Butler, who was one of its members, to edit the journal for publication in the APS's *Proceedings*. It was Butler who had criticized the work of Elliot Coues a few years earlier for its lack of material on the enlisted men who served in the Corps of Discovery. Although a longtime volunteer at the Wisconsin Historical Society, Butler had been stunned to learn from Thwaites of the journal's existence. "Draper," Butler lamented, "who through a generation had known me well, and also of my interest in the discovery of the trans-Missouri, had never spoken to me of Floyd's journal."

Draper apparently had not told Butler, Thwaites, or anyone else about the Floyd diary, and it should be no surprise that it took Thwaites about five years to come across the journal itself. When he took over the role of Society Director (then referred to as "Secretary") in 1887, Reuben Gold Thwaites inherited numerous responsibilities, large and small. First among these was the management of the Midwest's largest historical library, a research collection developed by Draper. Thwaites continued improving and expanding the collections, more than doubling the physical size of the library by the time the new headquarters building on the University of Wisconsin campus opened in 1901. Although intent on modernizing the library, Thwaites also recognized that there was no substitute for "shoe leather fieldwork" when it came to acquiring historical manuscripts. During the 1890s, he scored numerous "collecting coups," adding the papers of Byron Kilbourn, Hercules Dousman, Increase Lapham, Henry S. Baird, Morgan L. Martin, Bishop Jackson Kemper, and James Duane Doty to the Society's collections. Wisconsin history—neglected overall by Draper, who favored documenting trans-Appalachia—became one of Thwaites's specialties.

As if these duties were not enough, in the early 1890s Thwaites began directing preparation of the massive seventy-

three-volume *Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*. Described by historian and Wisconsin professor Frederick Jackson Turner as a collection of "the invaluable monuments" of the French colonial era in North America, it remains one of the most significant historical editing projects in the nation's history. During this project, Thwaites mentored a highly skilled team of translators, transcribers, and editorial assistants. At the same time, he completed *Chronicles of Border Warfare* (a history of settlement in the western Alleghenies that had been partially drafted by Draper) and also wrote two popular biographies of Father Marquette and Daniel Boone. As a result of all these projects, by the early years of the new century Thwaites had established his reputation as one of the nation's preeminent historical editors.

So in 1901, with the centennial approaching and numerous cheap reprints of the journals appearing, the American Philosophical Society (who owned the originals) decided that the authentic text of the journals ought to be published once and for all. Elliot Coues, in preparing his successful 1893 edition of the official narrative, had modernized quotations, inserted a new chapter as if it were part of the 1814 book, and liberally marked up Lewis and Clark's handwritten manuscripts. APS approached the New York publishers Dodd, Mead, and Co., who engaged Thwaites for a sum of \$1500 to carry out the work in time for the centennial.

Thwaites began to work on the journals, which were on loan to the Wisconsin Historical Society from the American Philosophical Society. Each evening, Thwaites made sure to replace the red-morocco-bound journals in the Historical Society's modern fireproof vault. Thwaites's contract with Dodd, Mead and Company required him to produce an edition entitled *The Original Journals of Lewis and Clark*. He initially anticipated that the project would require four volumes, and that publication of all volumes would coincide with the centennial of the expedition in 1904.

Reporting to the American Historical Association after he had completed the project, Thwaites suggested that "The story of the records of the transcontinental exploration of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark (1803–1806) is almost as romantic as that of the great discovery itself." As early as 1897 Thwaites had met some of William Clark's grandchildren. During the winter of 1901–1902 he began systematically writing letters to the descendants of the expedition, inquiring to see if any other enlisted men's journals might have survived. Thwaites wrote to a colleague that this research required "considerable expenditure of time and money." Indeed, in searching for these journals Thwaites had embarked on his own kind of exploration. An archivist venturing outside the walls of the archives, decades ahead of his time, Thwaites was not content to rely upon source material that had been deposited by Thomas Jefferson and

William Clark at the American Philosophical Society. Learning from both Draper's techniques and his own collecting work in Wisconsin, Thwaites was confident that he could unearth more important new documentary sources. He was apparently especially motivated to locate the journal of Sergeant John Ordway. Lewis and Clark indicated that Ordway had maintained a good journal, but it had long been lost to historians.

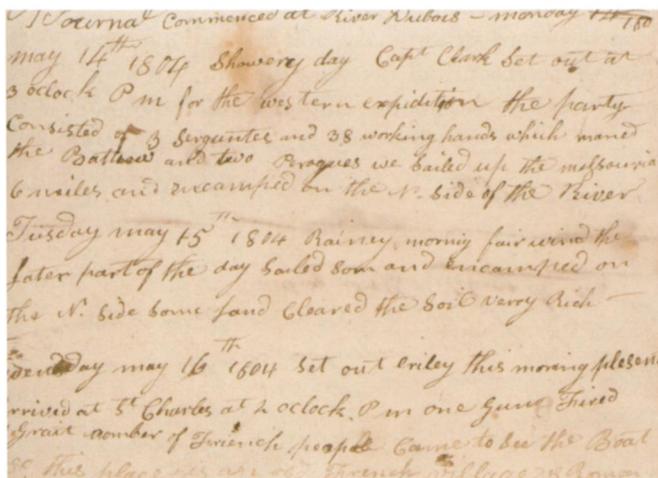
The letter-writing campaign bore fruit in early 1903, when Thwaites learned about a woman in San Francisco who had in her possession the journal of Joseph Whitehouse, the only known documentation produced by a private among the Corps.



Courtesy of the Montana Historical Society

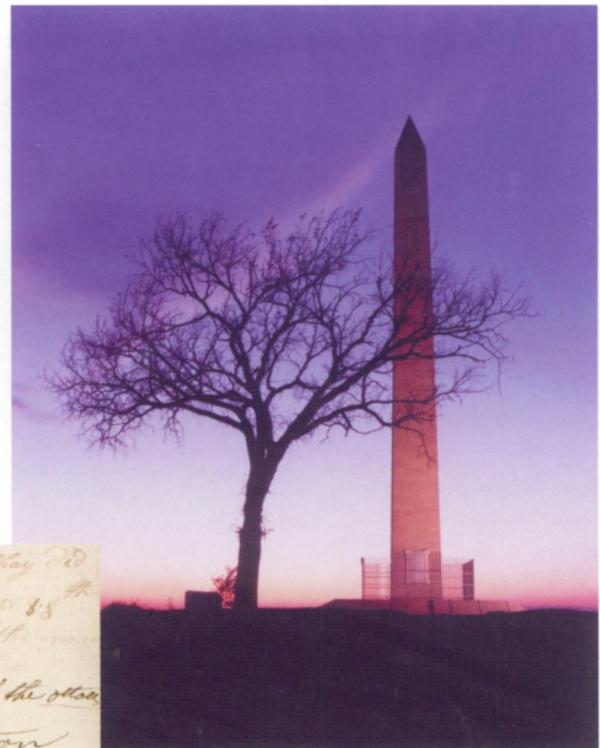
"Lewis and Clark at Three Forks" by Edgar S. Paxson, oil on canvas, 1912, mural in the Montana State Capitol. This image and hundreds like it indicate the level of romance Americans associate with the Corps of Discovery's travels, which, by all accounts, were harsh, exhausting, often frustrating, and for Charles Floyd, fatal.

Bound in rough-tanned elk hide, the 292-page journal included annotations and several short entries by Captain Clark, and these remarks helped to document the journal-



6M Draper Mss

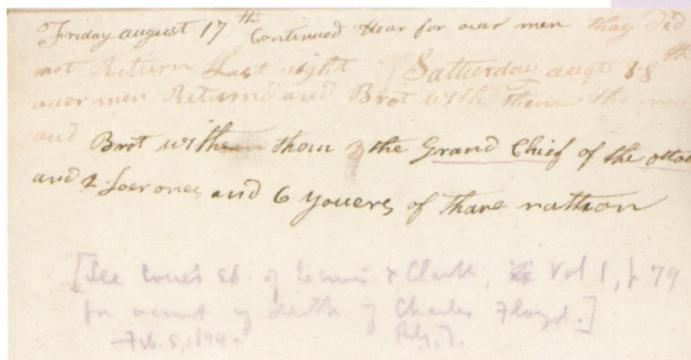
The first page of Floyd's diary (left) packs the first three days of the journey into just a handful of sentences.



© Photo by Jerry Pospeshil

The monument to Sergeant Charles Floyd near Sioux City, Iowa stands 100 feet tall and marks the soldier's gravesite.

At right, the darker ink at the top is the final entry made by Charles Floyd. The writing below was added many years later: "See Coles' ed. of Lewis & Clark, vol. 1, p. 79, for account of death of Charles Floyd. Feb 5, 1894, RGT." RGT is, of course, Reuben Gold Thwaites.



6M Draper Mss

keeping process. Throughout the journal Whitehouse confidently assigned original place-names to numerous tributaries, islands, and other features of the surrounding landscape. Unfortunately Whitehouse apparently never consulted with his officers on these matters and none of his place-names appear on Captain Clark's maps.

Joseph Whitehouse maintained his journal from the official start of the expedition on May 14, 1804, to November 6, 1805. He struggled with language—his spelling was arguably worse than Clark's—and many historians believed that the enlisted man eventually tired of keeping the daily journal. Yet in early 1966 a manuscript written in another hand was discovered in an antiquarian bookstore in Philadelphia. It appears that this "fair copy" had been lost prior to publication in the early nineteenth century. Spanning May 14, 1804, to April 2, 1806, it demonstrates Private Whitehouse's perseverance in maintaining a journal for a full twenty-three months. Both the original journal and fair copy now reside at Chicago's Newberry Library. Thwaites used the original, and Dodd and Mead arranged for the full text of the Whitehouse journal to be included in the expanding editorial project.

By August, 1903, Thwaites learned that his letter-writing had identified more material. Writing to Frederick Jackson Turner, who was vacationing in Maine, Thwaites spoke of "a big find of Lewis and Clark material." What was this find? To his publisher, Thwaites explained almost matter-of-factly how his inquiries about Ordway had led to an "unexpected situation." A century after the expedition, Mrs. Julia Voorhis of New York City still had in her possession additional journals written by William Clark, her paternal grandfather. By contacting her, Thwaites had made one of the great documentary "finds" in the nation's history. However, another version of this find surfaced recently in a doctoral dissertation by Sherri Bartlett-Brown, who describes how novelist Eva Emery Dye tracked down Clark descendants in St. Louis and New York between 1899 and 1901, and found in the possession of Julia Clark Voorhis the large cache of hitherto unknown manuscript material described by Thwaites. After Dye stopped in Madison in 1901 and informed Thwaites of what she had seen, he entered into negotiations with Voorhis, asking to include the newly discovered manuscripts in his edition. Unfortunately, in his introduction and correspondence he allowed it to appear as if he himself had unearthed these crucial materials. In 1923 Dye recollected, "I, at one time, had the credit of discovering those documents."

Mrs. Voorhis and her daughter Eleanor invited Thwaites to their Manhattan home that October. The Clarks apparently had not examined the family patriarch's journals in nearly fifty years, since the time when they had passed from Clark's fourth child and executor, George Rogers Hancock Clark, to his eldest daughter, now Julia Clark Voorhis. The two women brought out five bound journals in all for

Thwaites to examine. Perhaps the most remarkable was a field journal, hand sewn and constructed of elk hide, "its crudity," Thwaites later wrote, "of exceeding interest." The Voorhis materials ultimately found a home at the Missouri Historical Society.

The journals as a body covered a range of information as well as a range of individual perspectives. William Clark, the dutiful army officer, obeying President Jefferson's orders, missed only a handful of journal entries during the two-and-a-half-year expedition. (Lewis, by contrast, perhaps because he was suffering from depression during long stretches of the expedition, often went many weeks without writing in his journal.) Clark's 224-page field notebook recorded the Corps's history from September 11 to December 31, 1805, as the men trekked from present-day Lolo, Montana, to the mouth of the Columbia. During this 110-day span, Meriwether Lewis made only seven daily entries.

Others of the Voorhis journals were crammed with detailed sketches of flora and fauna, unknown to Euro Americans of the early nineteenth century, that the expedition had documented. They also offered additional documentation of the 178 unknown plants and 122 animals that were new to science. Still other journals contained sketches depicting Indian fishing methods, and even the Clatsop Indians' techniques of cosmetic head-flattening. The entries described both the routine and the extraordinary, and featured the captain's infectious enthusiasm and inventive spelling. Perhaps the most famous line among the one hundred fifty thousand words discovered by Thwaites was Clark's rapture as the Corps descended the Columbia: "Ocian [sic] in view! O! the joy." (The entry was actually premature; he had mistaken an estuary for the Pacific itself.)

Mrs. Voorhis also brought forth more than sixty maps, including a cartographic masterpiece depicting the American west that was over nine feet in length! Finally, there was important correspondence, including Meriwether Lewis's letter to Clark of June 19, 1803, offering detailed notes on the purpose of the expedition. In another lengthy letter, Lewis offered Clark co-command of the expedition and concluded by emphasizing his deep respect and affection for him: "I should be extremely [sic] happy in your company. . . ."

Describing the discovery in an issue of *Scribner's Magazine* published in mid-1904, Thwaites suggested that the "ladies themselves were as yet unaware of the full significance of their treasures." Thwaites probably should have been more circumspect in relating this episode in a popular magazine, since negotiating the right to publish extracts from journals in the possession of the business-minded Mrs. Voorhis proved extremely arduous for him and publisher Robert Dodd. Usually unflappable, Thwaites complained to a friend that the women were "conducting a holdup game" for a large sum,

when, in his view, all the material “really belongs to the United States government.” The calm persistence of Robert Dodd, however, eventually led to the inclusion of the journals in the *Original Journals* project.

In 1904–1905, 750 eight-volume sets of *The Original Journals* were published, containing more than 2,700 pages in all and an atlas with 66 maps. Thwaites’s footnotes were sparse compared to those provided by Elliott Coues, but he included a comprehensive bibliography prepared by New York State Historian Victor Paltsits, and a detailed index as well. A limited edition set of fifteen folio-size volumes—containing artwork by Karl Bodmer completed in the 1830s—was also printed. The project received glowing reviews, and popular interest in Lewis and Clark surged. Historians and buffs quickly began referring to the project as “Thwaites.” The *Original Journals* also



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Thwaites’s publishing efforts resulted in increased public attention of the Society’s collections.

offered other writers a complete documentary record. Soon, scores of articles, books, novels, and historical pageants based on the journals flowed forth.

Thwaites, of course, was not solely responsible for the rise of interest in Lewis and Clark. Clearly, the national celebration of the centennial of the expedition in 1904–1906 had an impact as well. Moreover, the professionalization of the historical discipline, in addition to the rise of the biological sciences in the early twentieth century, had an important and longer-lasting effect. Also, the closing of the frontier and accompanying romanticized views about early western exploration undoubtedly contributed to the rise of Lewis and Clark. Nonetheless, just as the historian Stephen Ambrose successfully raised awareness of World War II veterans over the last decade, Thwaites did much to promote the importance of



Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis

In his field journal, William Clark provided an entry nearly every day of the two-and-a-half-year expedition. This proved to be of great value to the government, as well as Clark’s relatives.



6M Draper Mss

The cover of Floyd’s diary was plain but the observations he shared were powerful.



Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis



Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis

Julia Clark Voorhis, the granddaughter of William Clark, and her daughter, Eleanor Voorhis, were pleased to show the papers of their ancestor to Reuben Gold Thwaites, but he underestimated their business acumen when he expected them simply to donate the artifacts to scholarly institutions.

Lewis and Clark. He not only wrote for the scholar, but also penned articles in popular magazines and lectured before diverse audiences.

Thwaites died in 1913, having served as director of the Wisconsin Historical Society for twenty-seven years. Eulogizing him, Frederick Jackson Turner wrote that the newspaperman turned historical editor-archivist had “met and conquered difficulties that proved him an editor of the very first rank. He ferreted out from their concealment missing documents necessary to complete the journals, deciphered the difficult writing . . . mastered the problem of correlating and printing several journals . . . [and] enriched them with a wealth of historical and geographical annotation . . . setting forth the development and historic significance of this epic of American transcontinental exploration.”

Archivists, historians, and editors can all learn valuable lessons from Thwaites. His important collecting work demonstrates just how brief the nation’s history is, and it reminds us that many important documentary sources may remain in the hands of record creators and their descendants. Although his was hardly an innovative technique, it may serve as a model of how archivists, historical editors, and diligent researchers can effectively work as partners in acquiring valuable sources. Indeed, many recent manuscript collections acquired by the Wisconsin Historical Society have been team efforts, including war letters documenting World War II and Vietnam that were identified and sometimes included in the “Voices of the Wisconsin Past” book series. Anyone with an interest in the Corps of Discovery, average citizen or trained professional, owes an immense debt of gratitude to Reuben Gold Thwaites. For exactly half a century, the “Thwaites” edition was the indispensable tool, for anyone with a serious interest in the expedition, including studies of their science, diplomacy, ethnology (topics researchers can now find with a quick internet query) depended on Thwaites. Important caches of additional William Clark Papers were found in St. Paul and Louisville, in 1954 and 1988, respectively. The exhaustive, thirteen-volume edition of expedition journals directed by Gary E. Moulton from 1983 to 2001 provided the inter-disciplinary approach that contemporary scholars required. But if history demonstrates a pattern, additional materials may again surface. In the words of James Davie Butler, the Thwaites and Moulton editions may both be “limited editions,” whetting the appetites of readers of the nation’s “epic poem.” ❧

Acknowledgments

The author expresses his thanks to WHS archivist Harry Miller and Francis Paul Prucha, S.J., for their assistance with this project. He also benefited from suggestions received from members of the Library Council of Southeast Wisconsin-Archives Committee, and from the Colonial Dames of Wisconsin.

For Further Reading

Readers can examine Thwaites’s edition of the Lewis and Clark journals in their entirety at the Society’s American Journeys digital collection (www.americanjourneys.org). In his introduction there, Thwaites explains the history of the journals up to 1904. At American Journeys the Society included seventy scans made directly from the original nineteenth-century Bodmer prints as well as the complete text of the journals. Other Lewis and Clark documents found there include handwritten letters by Thomas Jefferson and Capt. William Clark, the original manuscript journal of Sgt. Charles Floyd, and contemporary magazine and book publications of the expedition’s findings by Lewis, Clark, and Jefferson. Thwaites’s edition of the works of the French traveler Louis Hennepin (1626–1705?), who spent considerable time in Wisconsin, is also available at American Journeys. A exhaustive bibliography of all literature pertaining to the expedition was published after this article was developed, entitled *The Literature of the Lewis and Clark Expedition: a Bibliography and Essays* by Stephen D. Beckham (Portland: Lewis & Clark College, 2003). Lastly, any reader interested in learning more about the involvement of Draper, Thwaites, and Quaipe should read Paul Russell Cutright’s *A History of the Lewis and Clark Journals* (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1976).

About the Author

Matt Blessing is head of the Department of Special Collections and University Archives at Marquette University. He previously worked at the Wisconsin Historical Society as a collection development archivist and in the Office of School Services. Blessing earned master’s degrees in History from the University of Montana and in Library Science from the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee. He and his family enjoy visiting historic sites along the Lewis and Clark Trail.

