LEWIS & CLARK & PITTSBURGH

The summer of 2003 marks the 200th anniversary of the start of America’s most famous exploring expedition: Lewis & Clark’s journey from Pittsburgh to the Pacific. Yet, few people today recognize Pittsburgh’s role in this history-changing transcontinental trek. Here’s the thumbnail version of the Pittsburgh connection:

- Ensign Meriwether Lewis comes to Western Pennsylvania to suppress the 1794 Whiskey Rebellion, spending the winter at a small post on the Monongahela near Pittsburgh.

- In 1795, Lewis is assigned to Lt. William Clark’s Chosen Rifle Company – an elite unit of sharpshooters stationed in the Ohio country west of Pittsburgh.

- In March 1801, newly elected President Thomas Jefferson summons Capt. Lewis, stationed in Pittsburgh, to come to Washington as his private secretary and advisor on the “Western Country.”

- As Lewis commissions a keelboat to be built in Pittsburgh on June 19, 1803, he asks his friend William Clark to co-captain the expedition.

- Appointed by Jefferson to lead the exploration of Louisiana Territory, Capt. Lewis arrives in Pittsburgh, the expedition’s staging point, July 15, 1803.

- On August 3, 1803, having received no word from Clark, Lewis requests Secretary of War Henry Dearborn to appoint Lt. Moses Hokee, commanding Ft. Fayette in Pittsburgh (9th and Penn Avenue), as second in command of the expedition.

- Later that same day, the “Lewis & Hokee Expedition” becomes the “Lewis & Clark Expedition” when Clark’s long-awaited letter of acceptance arrives in Pittsburgh.

- At 11 a.m. on August 31, 1803, Lewis launches his just-completed keelboat near Greenough’s Boatyard at Suck’s [Sukes] Run on the Monongahela one mile above the Point.

- Three miles below the launch point, Lewis pulls in at Brunot’s Island and demonstrates his newfangled airgun, which accidentally fires and wounds a woman onlooker.

- Lewis’s corps quickly departs the island, only to be repeatedly stranded on the “ripples” or sandbars near McKees Rocks, where he finally quits for the night. At 8 p.m., after plying his exhausted men with a gill of whiskey, he writes the first entry in the now famous Journals of Lewis and Clark: “Left Pittsburgh this day [and] much fatigued after labouring with my men all day.” An inauspicious beginning for what would become America’s most celebrated exploration – but it all began right here in Pittsburgh, the “Gateway to the West.”
Summer '03 Exhibits
AT THE HISTORY CENTER

REDISCOVERING LEWIS AND CLARK: A JOURNEY WITH THE ROONEY FAMILY OPENING JULY 15

THE YEAR IN PICTURES: IMAGES FROM THE PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE THROUGH FALL

EYE OF THE STORM: UNTOLD STORIES OF THE CIVIL WAR APRIL 4 THROUGH JANUARY 4, 2004

WROUGHT METAL TREASURES FROM THE BLUM COLLECTION ONGOING

ISALY'S DAIRY: KLONDIKES, CHIPPED HAM AND SKYSCRAPER CONES ONGOING

GLASS: SHATTERING NOTIONS ONGOING

HEINZ 57 ONGOING

KIDSBURGH ONGOING

DISCOVERY PLACE ONGOING

PRINE COLLECTION OF WOODWORKING PLANES ONGOING

POINTS IN TIME: BUILDING A LIFE IN WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA, 1750 – TODAY ONGOING

HISTORY CENTER INFORMATION

1212 SMALLMAN STREET, IN THE STRIP DISTRICT, (412) 454-6000
www.pghhistory.org

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$3 for four hours in the lot at 12th & Smallman Streets with History Center validation.

HOURS
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Library & Archives: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday.
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ADMISSION
Members: Free
Adults: $6; Students/Seniors: $4.50; Ages 6-18: $3
Ages 5 and under: Free. Wheelchair accessible.
Café on site. Discovery Place for children.

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Smithsonian Institution

The Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History has created a web site on Lewis and Clark as naturalists. Images of flora and fauna like those discovered on the expedition can be viewed by browsing the collection or through an interactive map. You’ll find the Lewis and Clark link on the Museum of Natural History web site at www.si.edu/history_and_culture

A list of resources for those interested in reading about the Lewis and Clark expedition can be found on the Smithsonian web site at http://educate.si.edu/lessons/lewisandclark/resources.html

Information on regional events commemorating the Lewis and Clark expedition is available on the History Center web site at www.pghhistory.org
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