

CHAPTER 1

# Missouri Almanac



**Couple Eating at the State Fair.**  
(Missouri State Archives)

# Making Missouri American: A Crowded Frontier in the Age of Lewis and Clark

Peter J. Kastor



Meriwether Lewis reached Missouri in 1808 ready to take charge. His goal was simple but hardly easy: to build a society on a frontier that seemed distant, detached, and disorganized from the rest of the United States. To realize this vision, Lewis planned nothing less than a transformation of the local economy, government, and military institutions.

Lewis should have known better. People throughout North America had their own goals when it came to the place that became Missouri. And Lewis, he had spent the winter of 1803–1804 in St. Louis and in western Illinois, during which he observed the entrenched cultural traditions of western residents. From 1804–1806, he had led an expedition that he called the “Corps of Discovery” across the North American West, during which he met people who were themselves interested in Missouri, even from great distances. No sooner did Meriwether Lewis set to work in 1808 than he faced challenges that exceeded his abilities. The very solutions he proposed would actually be his undoing. His close friend and colleague, William Clark, watched the self-destruction that followed with sadness and occasional disbelief. But Clark was busy as well, pursuing many of the same tasks—building a government, fostering prosperity, establishing stability—that so overwhelmed Lewis.

As far as Lewis and Clark were concerned, the primary task in Missouri was to establish American sovereignty in a place that had only recently become American. But the difficulties they faced revealed a quandary: what was Missouri? That was no abstract question at the turn of the nineteenth century. People throughout North America were paying attention to the place that became Missouri. Their attention eventually brought Lewis and Clark to Missouri and helps explain their experiences.

Yet if Missouri is crucial to understanding Lewis and Clark, their own lives are no less important for understanding Missouri. So at the bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, it is particularly appropriate to consider their lives in Missouri. For Lewis, it was a dispiriting period that finally led to his downfall. For Clark, Missouri became a home, the center of public and domestic successes that lasted far longer than the Expedition.

Lewis and Clark also help explain a particular aspect of life in Missouri. They provide a way to make sense of the government that took form in Missouri, and that government is the focus of this essay. While Missouri was the home to rich, evolving forms of culture that reflected the tremendous diversity of its population, the story of government in Missouri in the age of Lewis and Clark constitutes a particularly appropriate way to begin the state’s official manual, a book which, after all, explains that government in its contemporary form.



**Map of Missouri, 1821.**

(State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia)

And the challenges of government two centuries ago may seem quite familiar today. Public officials faced numerous demands with limited resources. The energies of a healthy democracy created a government accountable to its electorate, but also forced officials at all level to navigate potentially explosive political situations. Local officials had to find ways of working with the federal government, a task that remains today but one that was all the more puzzling at a time when the Constitution itself was still a new document. Finally, local residents had their own opinions and expressed them in ways that upset and even frightened public officials, because those opinions seemed likely to upset vital objectives of public policy.

Yet for all those similarities, two centuries ago people faced the bigger question of defining Missouri. The lives of Lewis and Clark straddled four distinct visions of Missouri exemplified by four different terms that people used to define the region: Upper Louisiana, the Louisiana Territory, the Missouri Territory, and the State of Missouri. Lewis and Clark were at the vanguard of the federal government’s efforts to establish its sovereignty in the West. Lewis died in the middle of this process, but Clark remained, motivated by many of the same concerns that had shaped Lewis’ public life. By the time Congress created the State of Missouri with boundaries similar to those which still exist today, those boundaries seemed to be the logical reflection of the world that Lewis and Clark had helped to create. By 1821 people believed there was, in fact, a place called “Missouri.” But creating Missouri required a transformation in population, in government, and in culture. It meant changing a place that

had seemed like the intersection of numerous places into something unquestionably American.

## Upper Louisiana

In 1800, nobody was talking about Missouri. But that does not mean they were not interested in the place that became Missouri. The people who lived there were, of course, deeply invested in the place they called home. Meanwhile, four Virginians—Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, Meriwether Lewis, and William Clark—were eyeing the region as well. Although Jefferson and Madison chose different career paths from Lewis and Clark, all four men found their lives shaped by the same political upheavals, international war, and local conflicts between frontier residents that defined life in Missouri. But they did not use the word “Missouri.” Instead, people used a variety of terms to describe a place that seemed incredibly important but which seemed to defy a single definition. By the late eighteenth century, what became the State of Missouri was the center of a European colony called Upper Louisiana. Even that name was more of a European aspiration than a reality. The place that became Missouri was a crossroads of places with different names and different residents.

As all these people conceived of the place they called home, various terms came to mind. And those many terms are the key to understanding how people thought about the place that eventually became “Missouri.” In the simplest terms, there was no place called Missouri in 1800. There was a Missouri River, of course, and people followed activities on the river with great interest. The river took its name from Indians who the French called “Missouri,” but their numbers had been decimated by European disease and local warfare. The area where the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers met seemed to be the fringe of other places rather than a clear place unto itself. To the north was the Great Lakes region, occupied by numerous Indian villages and the site of vigorous trade between Europeans and Indians. To the east was the Illinois Country, the site of far greater French settlement than the lands west of the Mississippi. To the west of the Illinois Country there was a place that Europeans referred to as Indian Country. Well beyond European control or much of a European presence, the land from the eastern Plains to the Pacific was the site of Indian villages and complex Indian relations.

By 1800, the most powerful people in what became the State of Missouri were the Osage Indians. Europeans often referred to the “Great and Little Osage,” but these titles belied the fact that most Indians lived in a decentralized village system that extended from the Mississippi Valley to the eastern Plains to the Ozark Mountains. The Osage might be powerful, but they were hardly

alone. Indians from the northwest were regular arrivals. Descending the Missouri River from the Central and Northern Plains, they sought their own commercial opportunities in the Lower Missouri Valley. As warfare ravaged the Great Lakes region, the Sauc and Fox Indians of Wisconsin eventually moved to the area that now constitutes northwestern Missouri and southern Iowa. And on the eastern fringes of this region, a growing number of people with European ancestry began to arrive. The largest number of those newcomers were of French descent. Those born in America called themselves Creole, and while Creoles eventually became the largest number of French speaking—or “Francophone”—settlers, they were hardly the entire population. Other Francophone migrants came from Canada, the Caribbean, or France itself. And as the number of Europeans increased, so too did the number of people with mixed European and Indian ancestry, often called métis.

All of these places overlapped in an area that eventually became the State of Missouri. It was typical of the frontiers in North America, a place without clear boundaries or clear forms of power.

The number of Europeans remained small because few Europeans were interested in the region. The place that became Missouri was part of the larger French colony of Louisiana. In real terms, French power was limited to Lower Louisiana, the area immediately surrounding the burgeoning town of New Orleans and the nearby settlements. The rest of France’s possessions in Upper Louisiana, including what became Missouri, remained an area of limited control and even less concern. By the mid-eighteenth century, however, a number of French officials and French entrepreneurs were making the case that Upper Louisiana could create commercial opportunities while reinforcing French security against potential threats from Spanish colonies to the south, British colonies to the east, and Indian villages in every direction.

The solution for all concerned was to create a town. That town was St. Louis, and it started in 1764 as a small trading and administrative outpost easily overshadowed by the larger downriver village of Ste. Genevieve. The men who founded St. Louis are useful examples of the sort of Europeans who came to the intersection of Indian Country and the Illinois Country. Gilbert Antoine Maxent, who organized and helped finance the project, was a Creole. But Pierre Laclède was originally from France. Laclède brought with him a teenager named Auguste Chouteau, who he treated as a stepson since meeting him in New Orleans, Chouteau’s birthplace and Laclède’s first home in America. They envisioned St. Louis as a trading outpost, and focused their energies on creating commercial contacts throughout the Illinois Country and up the Missouri River.



**View of St. Louis from South of Chouteau's Pond, 1840.**

(Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis)

But they would not do so under the French. If 1764 marked the beginning of St. Louis, it marked the end of French rule. France had already lost its Canadian holdings to Great Britain during the Seven Year's War, and at the conclusion of that conflict in 1763, France ceded Louisiana to Spain. News did not arrive until after French officials approved the creation of St. Louis, and the Spanish themselves waited several years before sending officials to take charge. Even when the Spanish did arrive, their impact was limited. The small settlements of the mid-Mississippi Valley required few public officials, nor did the Spanish launch any substantive efforts to attract Spanish settlers. They actually found their greatest success in the United States, where a growing number of Americans from Kentucky decided to try their fortunes in Spanish Upper Louisiana.

So by the end of the eighteenth century, the European settlements on the western banks of the Mississippi shared much of their culture with the more populous Illinois Country to the East. Most people spoke French, observed Roman Catholicism, maintained connections to the French and Indian worlds of the North American interior, and did their best to deal with the strangers who governed them. In the Illinois Country, that meant the United States, which had secured its control over the Old Northwest during the American Revolution. In Upper Louisiana, that meant the Spanish, who were

willing to let the settlers—most of them French in their ancestry and customs—go about their business so long as they did not threaten the stability or the security of the Spanish empire.

Under this arrangement, the French and Spanish settlements remained rough and tumble frontier outposts that attracted only the most hardy—or foolhardy—settlers. That does not mean others outside the region did not care. To the contrary, the region was an area of great interest to observers in other parts of the world.

By 1800, two Virginians in particular were paying very close attention to the eastern fringes of Louisiana. Thomas Jefferson and James Madison situated Louisiana within a broader understanding of the West that would come to define their vision of America's future. The two men came from neighboring counties, and in the tumult of the American Revolution built a close friendship as well as political alliance that lasted for the rest of their lives. That relationship rested on a shared vision of the threats as well as the opportunities facing the republican experiment in America. As early as 1781, Jefferson concluded that "the *Missisipi* will be one of the principal channels of future commerce." And in 1784 Madison gave an indication of just how dangerous foreign control of the Mississippi could be. After a season of record produce on western farms, he informed Jefferson that "nothing can delay such a revolution with regd. to our staple,



**Figure 1** Arrowsmith, *A Map Exhibiting all the New Discoveries in the Interior Parts of North America...* (London: A. Arrowsmith, 1802). Originally published in 1795, this 1802 edition was printed in response to the demand for its detailed information on North America.

(Library of Congress)

but an impolitic & perverse attempt in Spain to shut the mouth of the Miss[issipp]i. agst. the trade of the inhab[itant]s."

Jefferson and Madison believed that the trade in American goods down the Mississippi River and access to the fur trade up the Missouri River would be vital to the survival of their struggling young republic. But Jefferson also had grander visions. An amateur scientist of considerable talent, Jefferson was fascinated with the North American West. He had already launched several unsuccessful efforts to conduct an American expedition into the North American West, and he eagerly consumed the published accounts of European explorers.

Jefferson and Madison brought their concerns with them to Washington in 1801, when Jefferson took office as president and immediately selected Madison as his secretary of state. In Madison, Jefferson had a trusted colleague who shared many of his experiences. But Jefferson was equally eager to cultivate a younger generation of talented young man who would inherit positions of authority from the founding generation. And in his personal secretary, Meriwether Lewis, Jefferson believed he had an ideal candidate.

Lewis was intelligent, committed to the federal union, loyal to the Jeffersonian Republicans, and a Virginian. The last of these qualifications now seems the most troubling, for it suggests some form of corrupt favoritism for Jefferson's home state. At the time, however, it made perfect sense. Jefferson doubted the political sensibilities in other states. He also was most comfortable selecting people who were known to him personally or who he could vet through family connections.

Jefferson first broached the subject of a western expedition with Lewis in 1802. As Jefferson and Lewis set about planning this expedition, Jefferson returned to the question that had intrigued so many before him. What was the place across the Mississippi? He had limited information to use. In 1795, British cartographer Aaron Arrowsmith had released the latest word on North American geography. His map reflected just how little Europeans or Anglo-Americans actually knew about the place that became Missouri.

In some ways, Arrowsmith got it right. The Missouri he portrayed was a place dominated by rivers and by Indians. Even his lettering reflected

the realities of power in the region. While he used big letters to mark of the United States and Louisiana, when it came to the intersection of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers, there were no European or American names. Instead, “Missouris” and “Pawnees” dominate the landscape. Likewise, the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers dominate the natural landscape. This was partly the result of ignorance. Without detailed knowledge of the waterways beyond the Mississippi Valley, Arrowsmith left the landscape blank, in comparison with the intricate network of rivers he drew east of the Mississippi. But if Arrowsmith’s map reflected the extent of his knowledge, he unintentionally provided a highly accurate representation of the way people interacted with their environment. As far as most residents of the region were concerned, the Mississippi and the Missouri were the only rivers that mattered.

Arrowsmith’s map served as a template for Lewis as well as a challenge. Jefferson wanted Lewis to fill in the gaps. He wanted a record of the land west of the Mississippi that would match Arrowsmith’s detail for the East. Plans for the expedition continued. Among Lewis’ first decisions was selecting William Clark to lead the expedition with him. The friendship that emerged between the men is the stuff of legend. So, too, is their collaborative leadership style. Nothing reflected their personal and professional relationships better than the issue of military rank. In 1803 the War Department only allowed Clark to re-enter the Army as a first lieutenant despite promises of a captain’s commission. Lewis ignored this state of affairs and immediate-



**William Clark.**

(Independence National Historical Park)



**Meriwether Lewis.**

(Independence National Historical Park)

ly called Clark his “co-captain” rather than reserve command for himself. Meanwhile, Clark never resented Lewis’ higher official rank despite the fact that Clark was older than Lewis and had, in fact, been Lewis’ commander during the 1790s.

A matter of less common knowledge is the degree to which both Lewis and Clark reflected Jefferson’s vision of good public servants as well as the social profile of the men serving as officers in the United States Army. Lewis and Clark had remarkably similar backgrounds. Both came from Albemarle County, the central Virginia region that was also home to Jefferson and another of Jefferson’s protégés, James Monroe. Like so many members of the Army officer corps, they came from good families in declining circumstances. They had sufficient education to merit commissions and sufficient influence to secure them, but they lacked either the inclination or the ability to enter more lucrative careers. Both had entered the Army in the 1790s, and both wound up in the Old Northwest (now the Midwestern United States). Serving with the military and civilian officials who preserved federal authority in the West proved to be the formative experience for Lewis and Clark. They arrived at the very moment that Indians were forming confederacies of unprecedented power. Clark himself fought at the Battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794, a battle that marked the first significant victory against Indians for the U.S. Army after years in which Indians had crushed or eluded a series of U.S. military expeditions.

By 1800, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark had seen firsthand the overlap of peoples and governments of the kind that abounded where Indian Country and the Illinois Country overlapped. They had also become increasingly committed to federal service. Lewis stayed in the Army, and by 1801 had sufficiently proven both his talents and his loyalties to merit Jefferson's favor. Clark had resigned from the Army in 1798 to take charge of his family's extended landholdings in Virginia and Kentucky. He soon regretted his decision as his efforts to become a planter failed. As a result, he was eager to return to the federal fold and to return to the West in 1803. The expedition that Lewis was planning provided the means to do both. When Lewis asked Clark to join him in July 1803, Clark did not acknowledge his financial problems. Rather, Clark explained that "my situation in life will admit of my absence the length of time necessary to accomplish such an undertaking I will cheerfully join you...and partake of the dangers, difficulties, and fatigues, and I anticipate the honrs & rewards of the result of such an enterprise, should be successful in accomplishing it."

By the summer of 1803, Jefferson's expedition was ready to leave, but it had nowhere to go. Whatever Upper Louisiana might be, its government was clear. Indians may have controlled most of the Missouri River, but the Spanish controlled the intersection with the Mississippi, and this was the place where Lewis and Clark hoped to begin. In 1802, Jefferson sought a passport from the Spanish government that would allow Lewis and Clark to travel through Spanish Louisiana. Jefferson apparently went out of his way to assure Carlos Martínez de Yrujo, the Spanish minister to the United States, that the expedition was no threat to Spain. Yrujo recalled that Jefferson "said that he would give it [the expedition] the denomination of mercantile, inasmuch as only in this way would the Congress have the power of voting the necessary funds." But Jefferson's assurances of his own dishonesty to Congress did little to assuage Yrujo's doubts that Jefferson's intentions were entirely scientific. Besides, whatever the reason for the expedition, Yrujo explained "that an expedition of this nature could not fail to give umbrage to our Government." Yrujo's suspicions were clear. "The President has been all his life a man of letters, very speculative and a lover of glory." To this Yrujo added that Jefferson "might attempt to perpetuate the fame of his administration...by discovering or attempting at least to discover the way by which the Americans may some day extend their population and their influence up the coasts of the South Sea."

American and Spanish officials were particularly suspicious of one another in 1803. In 1800, Spain had returned all of Louisiana—including Upper Louisiana—to France through a secret

agreement known as "the retrocession." Although Spain continued to govern the colony, Americans feared this new state of affairs, particularly when Spanish officials in New Orleans imposed severe restrictions on American trade down the Mississippi in 1802. But neither Spain nor the United States had come any closer to answering a series of vital questions. Exactly what was the place that became Missouri? Was it the eastern frontier of Indian country? The western extent of the Illinois Country or the United States? The southern extension of Canada? Or a northern satellite of New Orleans? The answer was, of course, all of these things. It was a place that people saw in profoundly different ways.

## Louisiana Territory

On June 18, 1803, Jefferson sent a lengthy set of instructions to Lewis, confident that some diplomatic breakthrough would enable the expedition to proceed. The Indians and European settlers of Upper Louisiana went about their business, unaware of Jefferson's plans to send an expedition through the heart of the Missouri Valley. The Spanish officials who governed them were aware, but were convinced that their government would never allow the Americans to proceed. What nobody knew was that a series of conversations over 4,000 miles away had already transformed Missouri's destiny.

Jefferson was hopeful, in part, because in March 1803 he and Madison had dispatched James Monroe to Paris. When the American minister to France, Robert R. Livingston, seemed incapable of soliciting any assistance from France to resolve the crisis on the Mississippi River, Monroe went to Paris as a special envoy with a specific set of instructions. "The object in view," Madison explained in his opening paragraph "is to procure by just and satisfactory arrangements, a Cession to the United States of New Orleans, and of West and East Florida." To achieve this end, Livingston and Monroe could offer \$10 million, a staggering amount of money for the struggling federal government. Madison showed no interest in Upper Louisiana. To the contrary, he repeatedly instructed Livingston and Monroe to remain focused on acquiring only New Orleans and Gulf Coast. His reasons were simple. Like Jefferson and many other American policymakers, Madison believed the first order of business was to secure federal sovereignty east of the Mississippi, not to acquire land further west. In addition, he knew that the West was a difficult place to govern. The United States still had to finish the task of building stable governments within its existing boundaries. It was hardly ready to tackle a similar task beyond the Mississippi.

What nobody in North America knew was that Napoleon Bonaparte had other ideas. By the spring of 1803, he had concluded that France

would never be able to conquer the revolt of slaves and free people of color on the Caribbean colony of Saint Domingue. Meanwhile, Napoleon was preparing for war with Great Britain. Short on cash, eager to dispense with a colony that served no purpose, Napoleon was also well aware of the American concerns about the Mississippi River. As Monroe completed his passage across the Atlantic, Bonaparte made his decision. "I think of ceding it [Louisiana] to the United States," Bonaparte informed Francois Barbé-Marbois, his minister of finance who would begin the actual negotiations. "I already consider the Colony as completely lost, and it seems to me that in the hands of that growing power it will be more useful to the policy, and even to the commerce of France than if I should try to keep it."

A month later French and American negotiations had completed the Louisiana Purchase. The treaty ceded all French territory on the North American mainland for \$11.5 million and an American agreement to forgive \$3.5 million in claims by American citizens against the French government. News of the Louisiana Purchase reached Washington, DC, on the eve of the annual Fourth of July celebrations. While Americans were delighted with the news, few people said much about the acquisition of Upper Louisiana. They were more pleased by the peaceful resolution to the situation that many Americans soon called the Mississippi Crisis.

But the treaty had its problems, not the least of which was the very fact that it included so much land. Worse still was the absence of any wording that established specific boundaries to the cession. So if the Purchase did not even define "Louisiana," it certainly did not define a place called "Missouri." From Jefferson's perspective, one of the few immediate benefits of the Purchase was to remove any European impediments to the Lewis and Clark Expedition. In November 1803 he informed Lewis that "As the boundaries of interior Louisiana are the high lands inclosing all the waters which run into the Mississippi or Missouri directly or indirectly, with a greater breadth on the gulph of Mexico, it becomes interesting to fix with precision by celestial observations the longitude & latitude of the sources of these rivers, and furnishing points in the contour of our new limits." Suddenly the Louisiana Purchase not only made the Lewis and Clark expedition possible, it made it important.

Lewis and Clark arrived on the edge of Upper Louisiana in the winter of 1803, waiting for spring weather and the official transfer of Upper Louisiana to the United States. They were on hand in March 1804 when a formal ceremony marked the end of European rule. Four months earlier, the United States had taken charge in New Orleans with an elaborate ceremony. Events in St. Louis were more modest. Overseeing the transfer of

power fell to Captain Amos Stoddard, a forty-two year-old veteran of the American Revolution for whom promotion in the United States Army had never come as fast as it did for Lewis.

The transfer was an amicable process after all the tension between the United States, France, and Spain. When Stoddard arrived in St. Louis, he was greeted by Carlos Delassus, the lieutenant governor of Upper Louisiana. The man was born in France with the name of Charles De Hault De Lassus, but had moved to the Mississippi Valley, where he secured high office under the Spanish and changed his name accordingly. "I hope you will accept of a Room which is the same one where I reside," Delassus informed Stoddard. "There will be a little impediment between us, because you do not Speack more the Spanish and French tongues than I do the English, but We Will endeavor to supply it by Ynterpreters." Stoddard replied accordingly, explaining that "I consider the civilities bestowed upon me as a favorable omen of our future harmony."

This correspondence set the stage for ceremonies on March 9 and 10, 1804. Now known as the "three flags ceremony," the process of transferring Upper Louisiana included lowering the Spanish flag and restoring the French flag for the briefest possible period before it, too, was replaced by the stars and stripes of the United States. Stoddard addressed the local population, informing them that "the period has now arrived, when, in consequence of amiable negotiations, Louisiana is in possession of the United States." To this he added that he was "directed to cultivate friendship and harmony among you, and to make known the sentiments of the United States relative to the security and preservation of your rights, both civil and religious." Stoddard made it sound so simple, but connecting Upper Louisiana to the United States would prove a daunting task.

Stoddard himself played only a minor role in this process. He was eventually transferred south. Nor did Lewis and Clark dawdle long after the transfer. In May 1804 they began their extraordinary journey to the West. Their lengthy and detailed journals made few references to the place that became Missouri. It was the one part of their trek that had already been surveyed. Of far greater interest—and far greater ignorance—were points farther west. In the two years that followed, Lewis and Clark completed an epic journey across the western two-thirds of North America. They ascended the Missouri River in 1804, wintered at the Mandan villages in North Dakota during the winter of 1804-1805, traversed the Rocky Mountains in 1805 before reaching the Pacific Coast, where they spent the winter of 1805-1806 in the company of the Clatsop Indians. In the spring of 1806 they made a speedy return, reaching St. Louis less than six months after leaving their camp on the Pacific.



an incalculable accession of savage hordes to be vomited on our borders! An entire privation of some of the dearest rights enjoyed by *freemen!* These are the leading features of that political system which you have devised for us."

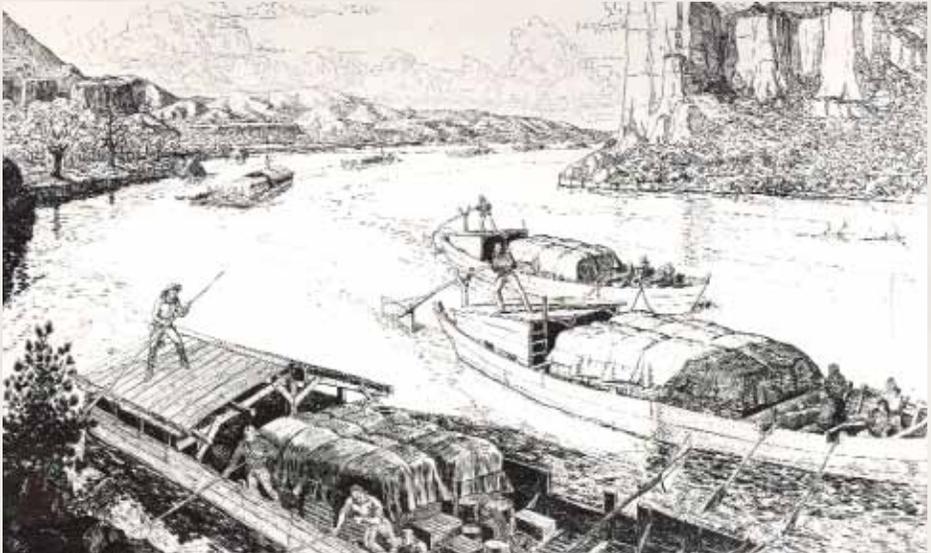
First and foremost in the Remonstrance was the matter of statehood. The United States had already shown that it would create new states from its western frontier, but it seemed to be postponing any statehood for the land acquired through the Louisiana Purchase. "If Congress has a right to divide Louisiana into two Territories last year, they may claim next year the right to divide it into four, into eight Territories. Whenever the population of one of those Territories shall amount to very near the population required by the constitution of the United States, to entitle that Territory to be admitted in the Union as an independent State, Congress may again claim the right to subdivide said Territory."

In the meantime, the District of Louisiana did not even have its own government. The Remonstrance complained that in other territories Congress required governors "to reside in the Territory which he governs...[and to] hold a freehold estate in the same Territory." Now the District of Louisiana would be governed by a man hundreds of miles away with no real connection to the people or their interests.

What the authors of the Remonstrance wanted was simple. They demanded a territorial government of their own. And while they resented being treated differently from other territories, they nonetheless wanted the federal government to acknowledge the region's distinct back-

ground. They wanted public officials who spoke both English and French and wanted public records kept in both languages. They demanded greater defense against Indians. Finally, they demanded written promises that they would be able to continue in the possession of their slaves and that contracts made under Spanish rule would remain in effect. Both were matters of particular importance because the Governance Act of 1804 prohibited the foreign slave trade in the lands acquired through the Louisiana Purchase and federal land laws might call into question the titles of European settlers in Upper Louisiana. In other words, the Remonstrance simply repeated what a lot of white settlers had sought all along: new political and commercial opportunities, racial supremacy, and stronger connections to the rest of the world.

The list of men who signed this document included Auguste Chouteau. Not only was he emerging as one of the leading figures in American Missouri, but his own story, like that of Lewis and Clark, is crucial for understanding this era in Missouri's history. As a boy, Chouteau had been present at the creation of St. Louis. Although not a Creole, by 1804 he was one of its wealthiest residents. He was fifty-four years old, lived in a mansion that commanded the center of St. Louis, and had built a fur-trading empire that extended up the length of the Missouri River. Chouteau's family had prospered as well. His half-brother, Pierre, negotiated with the Indians who were such a vital part of any successful trading venture. Pierre even enjoyed an official monopoly in all negotiations with the Osage. Both Auguste and Pierre were adopted



**Fur Traders in Flatboats, Missouri River.**

(State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia)

by the Osage. Pierre may well have conceived children with an Osage woman, and other members of the Chouteau family were certainly the product of interracial unions.

If Chouteau and his relatives embodied the elaborate systems of "family" in Upper Louisiana, he also exemplified the limitations of the anger expressed in the Remonstrance. American officials soon found they had a ready ally in Auguste Chouteau. He had adjusted easily to changes in government, and was eager to work with political officials so long as they shared his commitment to regional development. Chouteau's outlook provided benefits for all concerned. Jefferson gave Chouteau's family political favor and seemed relieved to have found an influential local citizen who supported the administration's goals. Meanwhile, the office provided obvious advantages for Chouteau's business ventures at the very moment he faced stiff competition from a Spaniard named Manuel Lisa.

Chouteau even hosted a dinner for William Henry Harrison when the governor of Indiana finally came to visit the District of Louisiana. Members of the French-speaking elite were like frontier residents throughout North America. They had ethnic ties that linked them to specific European countries, but they were not diehard Frenchmen or Spaniards or Americans. Rather, they were pragmatists, and they had to be. The frontiers they occupied were isolated and often dangerous. Survival, let alone prosperity, seemed to depend on the ability to build ties with the centers of political power. Yet the eagerness to be more closely tied to the United States did not mute the anger of the Remonstrance. A policy that continued to isolate the District of Louisiana could only promote greater anger, and to officials in Washington local anger meant a weaker union.

The message came through loud and clear. A special Congressional committee explained that "the United States cannot have incurred a heavy debt in order to obtain the Territory of Louisiana merely with a view to the exclusive or especial benefit of its inhabitants, your committee, at the same time, earnestly recommend that every indulgence, not incompatible with the interests of the Union, may be extended to them." The report concluded that "only two modes present themselves whereby a dependent province may be held in obedience to its sovereign State—force and affection." The right choice was clear. The United States would need to coopt the white residents of Missouri, since ruling them by force seemed both morally unacceptable and practically impossible.

The outcome was not everything the residents of the District of Louisiana had sought, but it was close. In 1805, Congress revised the system of government by creating a distinct territory. The District of Louisiana, including the region that became Missouri, now became the Territory

of Louisiana, complete with its own governor and an expanded system of judges. If those claims did not guarantee that the old Spanish land grants would remain in effect, they did provide a means for local residents to get their claims approved once and for all.

Thomas Jefferson also thought he had an ideal candidate for the territory's first governor. Rather than select from the young Virginians who were quickly populating the territorial constabulary, Jefferson went with an old war horse. Brigadier General James Wilkinson was the senior officer in the United States Army and the immediate commander of all western troops. He had been on hand in December 1803 for the transfer of power in New Orleans, and stayed in the Territory of Orleans in the years that followed.

Presidents since George Washington had selected Wilkinson for high appointment because he seemed resourceful and industrious. Wilkinson was certainly a survivor, this at a time when many senior Army officers saw their careers disintegrate. Unknown to Presidents Washington, Adams, or Jefferson, Wilkinson was also a schemer, and, in the end, a traitor. By the time Wilkinson arrived in St. Louis, he was already on the Spanish payroll, providing information on American activities throughout the West. He was in league with Aaron Burr, the former vice president who in 1806 headed west at the head of a mysterious venture that many Americans assumed to be a separatist venture (Burr's specific intentions remain impossible to discern).

Wilkinson was also a poor governor. The territorial capital of St. Louis was becoming home to loud political debates that Wilkinson usually interpreted as personal attacks. What he failed to appreciate were the limitations of the political system itself. The local Francophone elite, eager for public appointments, were colliding with American newcomers also pursuing political opportunities. While some local residents like Chouteau did receive office, most senior appointments went to the Americans. While this appointment policy convinced Francophone residents that Wilkinson favored Americans, few of those newcomers were enamored with Wilkinson. By November 1805, a territorial judge and former Pennsylvania Congressman named John Lucas informed Secretary of the Treasury Albert Gallatin that "it is the misfortune of governor Wilkison [sic] not only to be vain and excessively fond of pageantry, but his unbounded Love of Power makes him also restless."

In June 1806, Wilkinson confided that his enemies "say the thing is done to get me out of the way...God knows why it is done but it is certainly most unexpected." Wilkinson was always astute, but in this case a little too self-pitying. Jefferson had indeed run out of patience with Wilkinson, but not simply because Wilkinson's opponents wrote against him. Jefferson had

hoped Wilkinson would make greater progress toward developing regional politics and trade. Rather than formally remove Wilkinson, Jefferson simply let his commission expire. By that time, Wilkinson had gone south to assume command of federal troops in the Territory of Orleans. And, in an effort to distance himself from Burr, Wilkinson launched an overzealous search for other Burr conspirators.

Jefferson's selection for Wilkinson's successor seemed obvious. Lewis and Clark reached Washington at the very moment that Jefferson lost faith in Wilkinson. So in March 1807, Jefferson submitted a list of nominations for federal office that included Meriwether Lewis as governor of the Louisiana Territory. The list also included a hefty promotion for William Clark. Rather than the long-overdue advancement to captain that Lewis had sought in 1803, Jefferson recommended Clark for lieutenant colonel. The Senate approved Lewis' appointment but rejected Clark's nomination, and much as Clark might claim to be "truly gratified" that the Senate would accept other promotions, it was yet another professional setback for Clark. Once again, however, Jefferson's patronage offered Clark the chance for advancement. The president soon awarded Clark an appointment in the Louisiana Territory as brigadier general in the territorial militia and chief of Indian affairs.

Clark made a speedy trip to the Louisiana Territory, and immediately threw himself into the challenges of coordinating a militia of independent-minded settlers and asserting federal sov-



**Governor Frederick Bates.**

(Missouri State Archives)

eighty over powerful Indians. In May 1807, Clark reported on a complex state of affairs. He had just met with a visiting Mandan chief, and went out of his way to assure that the chief would return "to his Town in Safety. The party will consist of Ensign Pryor and 14 Soldiers, & young Chouteau with 22 men with promotion to trade at the Mandans." Meanwhile, he had more disturbing news about the Osage. A large entourage came to St. Louis, and "their business...was to inform their American father of a Message they had received from the Spaniards, to which seven nations had agreed, and they were invited to be the eight." After this implicit threat of joining a Spanish alliance, the Osage chief complained that a number of officials—including the merchant king Auguste Chouteau and First Lieutenant James Wilkinson, Jr., the general's son,—had committed various infractions of American agreements. Clark reported as well that "a French man was killed near the mouth of the Missouri by a *Saukee* Indian." Clark eventually concluded that "the great variety of interests Concerned in the Indian Trade of this Country and the irregular method which they have been caried it on, is calculated to give the Indians an unfavourable opinion of the American regulations."

Meanwhile, Lewis had yet to return to the West. He went to Philadelphia to make preparations to publish a narrative based on the expedition. He went to Virginia to settle family business affairs. Finally, he made a lengthy transit to St. Louis, reaching the territorial capital in March 1808. Lewis found himself immediately thrown in a world of heated politics, interracial diplomacy, and public administration, which revealed the limits of his abilities. In fact, the very skills that made him such a successful leader of the Corps of Discovery may well help account for the difficulties he faced as territorial governor. Rather than give orders, he had the more difficult task of negotiating with the political and commercial elite. Likewise, the regular contact—and conflict—between Indians and white settlers in the Territory of Louisiana was a far cry from the situation in the far West, where most Indians could afford to be good hosts to short-term guests like the Corps of Discovery.

Lewis seemed to believe that he would be able to master local politics and quickly establish himself as the leading regional figure, only to find himself surrounded by men with far greater experience in the give and take of frontier politics. Some of these men, like Chouteau, attempted to help Lewis learn the ropes, but others resented either his policies or the special influence he enjoyed with Jefferson. First among these opponents was Frederick Bates. As territorial secretary, he was Lewis' immediate subordinate and, in theory, his closest ally. But Bates had also served as acting governor during the extended period

before Lewis arrived in the Louisiana Territory, and was confident in his own understanding of regional affairs. Bates was only three years younger than Lewis, and he also came from a well-connected Virginia family that was seeking its fortune in the West. Bates considered Lewis “an overgrown baby,” and believed that Jefferson’s own personal faith in Lewis as well as the success of the Expedition itself had made the governor “spoiled by...elegant praises.”

While Lewis struggled without much success against his local political opponents, he set out to establish Indian affairs similar to how things had worked on the expedition. He assumed that Indians had to acknowledge federal sovereignty. In this goal he was a typical federal official. But he also respected Indians and recognized that they had legitimate grievances. As the official who would need to implement Indian policy, Clark shared Lewis’ general outlook, and while other American officials had shown similar sympathy for Indians, few had the same track record of dealing with Indians on fair terms.

At least Lewis maintained the collegial ties with the Indians of the upper Missouri River that had characterized relations during the expedition. But many of his efforts proved unsuccessful. His own attempt to use the fur trade as a means of promoting both prosperity and connections with Indians encountered numerous problems. Meanwhile, Lewis’ commitment to honor his promises with Indians continued to anger settlers and land speculators. The Indians themselves also complained about Lewis’ treaties. For example, Lewis’ first major treaty, an 1808 agreement with the Osage, did not age well. Two years later, Lieutenant Eli B. Clemson reported that “the Osage Indians Appear to be much dissatisfied in Consequence of a treaty that was made by Governor Lewis in 1808.” The Osage already had numerous complaints about American settlers and American officials, but they were particularly concerned by the treaty because it did not fully address the complex inter-racial relations. They also believed that for all his efforts to protect Indians, Lewis had failed to craft a treaty that provided sufficient means to restrain white settlers.

By the fall of 1809, Lewis had proven no more successful than Wilkinson. Rather than a center of trade and development, the Louisiana Territory seemed like a gathering storm of political squabbling, racial conflict, and commercial disputes. Worse still for Lewis, his great defender in Washington had retired. In March 1809, Madison succeeded Jefferson as president. While Jefferson was delighted, Lewis had reasons to worry. Madison and Lewis knew and respected each other, but they had never had a close working relationship. As secretary of state, Madison had also become frustrated with Lewis’ performance as governor, and showed little signs of forgiveness when he became president in 1809.

Lewis’ personal life was not any more satisfying than his public career. He had invested personally in his faltering efforts to build the fur trade, and his debts continued to grow. Unmarried at age thirty-five, he was nowhere close to starting the family that indicated a successful, mature leader. He began to drink heavily and took various opiates to treat undescribed illnesses.

The combination of personal setbacks and professional failures apparently overwhelmed Lewis in the fall 1809. As he traveled east to meet with his superiors in Washington, the beleaguered territorial governor committed suicide on October 11 near Chickasaw Bluff, Tennessee. Clark was devastated when he heard the news. “I am at a loss to know what to be as his death is a turble Stroke to me, in every respect,” Clark confided in a letter to his brother, Jonathan. “I wish I could talk a little with you just now.” Clark may have been sad, but like other observers he was hardly surprised. He knew of Lewis’ failures, his despondency, and his increasingly erratic behavior. Writing to Jefferson, by then in retirement at his plantation called Monticello, Madison described things in characteristically succinct terms. “We just learn the melancholy fate of Govr. Lewis...He had, it seems, betrayed latterly repeated symptoms of a disordered mind.”

The challenges that were the undoing of Meriwether Lewis continued to pose the dominant questions in the Louisiana Territory during the years that followed. What lives would incoming American settlers build for themselves west of the Mississippi? What would become of the slaves that a growing number of settlers brought with them? How would Creoles respond to this state of affairs? Likewise, how would Indians contend with the growing population of white settlers? Finally, what role would officials like Meriwether Lewis see for themselves in all this activity?

## Missouri Territory

As far as policymakers in Washington were concerned, all those answers would have to wait. The more immediate problem was creating a stable political leadership. Other territorial governors had served extended terms, and transitions from one to the other had been smooth. Meanwhile, the Louisiana Territory had seen two controversial governors: one left under a cloud of suspicion, the other committed suicide. The solution to this leadership problem that eluded James Madison as secretary of state, continued to dog him as president. The most obvious candidates—Clark and Bates—both refused appointment as governor after Lewis’ death. Madison’s eventual answer was to select Benjamin Howard. A former Kentucky Congressman, Howard reached the Louisiana Territory in 1810. A more adept politician than Lewis and a less controversial personal-

ity than Wilkinson, he brought a necessary calm to the territorial government. By the time Howard reached the territorial capital in St. Louis, local residents were already preparing to demand political change. Once again, however, world events played their own role in shaping the place that became Missouri. Nor was this a coincidence. World affairs and local affairs had always come together in the place that became Missouri.

In 1811, Congress received a petition from the Louisiana Territory which explained that the “sister Territories of Orleans, Mississippi and Indiana, are fast approaching to political manhood, under the Fostering hand of the General Government, while Louisiana with a large and fast increasing Population, have not been admitted to the enjoyment of the same Political blessing.” The petition specifically requested that the Louisiana Territory receive both an elected territorial legislature and non-voting representation in the United States Congress like those other sister territories. The wording of that request may seem a strangely mixed metaphor, but in its own time it made perfect sense. More importantly, it employed the sort of language that people in the Louisiana Territory knew was common to these sort of appeals. Most Americans described politics as a distinctly masculine act, and participating in that system was a mark of manhood. Meanwhile, Americans used the metaphor of a family to ascribe a harmonious relationship to the states, and sisters seemed to suggest an even more affectionate bond.

In April 1812, Congress transformed the Territory of Orleans into the State of Louisiana. In order to prevent any confusion, Congress also changed the name of the Territory of Louisiana to the Territory of Missouri. Although the territory had the same expansive borders, its political system finally began to meet the expectations of local residents. Congress created a bicameral legislature consisting of an elected territorial house of representatives and a legislative council with members nominated by the house of representatives but selected by the President of the United States. As was the case with all territories, the governor would continue to serve at the President’s discretion. Territorial residents still had significant limitations on their political opportunities in comparison to the states, but their status was actually similar to that of other territories. And this was not some pale consolation. The federal government was giving every indication that a state would be created from the Territory of Missouri. The question was simply when.

In 1813, Henry Marie Brackenridge published his own conclusions about the Missouri Territory. After returning from extended travels up the Missouri River in 1811, Brackenridge published a travel narrative that proposed a novel way of thinking about the Louisiana Territory. “Although the executive exercises



**Territory of Missouri, 1812.**

(State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia)

authority out of the Indian boundary, the territory itself cannot properly be considered as extending beyond it.” In other words, in real terms the Missouri Territory ended where Indian Country began. He considered the Mississippi River and 33 degrees latitude to be acceptable eastern and southern boundaries. But he put a western boundary at the Osage villages and a northern boundary at the Sauc and Fox villages, in large part because treaties had established Indian sovereignty over that land. The box that existed between these boundaries corresponds more closely to the current State of Missouri than anybody else had actively envisioned.

It was no ironic twist that Brackenridge’s Missouri was defined by Indians. Much of the power in the Missouri Territory still resided in Indian villages. Secretary of War William Eustis actually saw things in a similar way. In an August 1811 letter to Clark, Eustis observed that “as the Indians observe no boundaries, either in their hunting or depredations, it is necessary that the Agents of Government, should exercise their vigilance in every direction.” This did not mean that the administration would not negotiate with Indians. To the contrary, Eustis explained that Madison “has consented that the chiefs of the Sacs & Foxes and of the Great & Little Osages may visit him at the Seat of Government.” But

both statements reflected the same general policy. The federal government was intent on making clear that it wielded final authority over the people within the boundaries of the United States. Believing that power extended to the far West, the very places that William Clark had visited with the Corps of Discovery, remained self-deluding at a time when Indians continued to dominate much of the continent. Further east, however, on the fringes of the Missouri Territory, it seemed a real possibility.

Eustis wrote with such concern because the nation seemed to face threats in all directions. The United States was in the midst of an extended struggle with Indians in the region between the Ohio River and the Great Lakes. American officials were particularly worried by the militant unification movements that gave Indians both the motivation and the means to challenge the federal government. Under the nominal leadership of Tecumseh and his brother, the Shawnee prophet Tenskwatawa, these Indians had suffered a major setback in 1811 in a battle against federal troops under William Henry Harrison at Tippecanoe. Nonetheless, it was clear that Harrison had not scored an overwhelming victory. Of particular concern to Howard and Clark was the possibility of an alliance with the Indians of the eastern Plains and, worse still, an alliance with the British.

Less than a year after Eustis' alarming letter, and only four days after approving the creation of the Territory of Missouri, Congress declared war against Great Britain on June 18, 1812. The reasons were simple. Members of the administration and Congress were convinced that seizing territory in Canada would be the only way to force Britain to revoke limitations on American trade and to stop pressing American sailors onto British warships. The quick victory that many Americans predicted turned instead into a long series of battlefield defeats. The war consumed the attention of policymakers in Washington, and while most of the battles were fought on the northeastern frontier between the United States and Canada, the war had profound ramifications for the Missouri Territory.

Howard may well have wondered about the wisdom of accepting the post of governor. In the winter of 1811–1812, a series of massive earthquakes with an epicenter near New Madrid had flattened whole towns in the Mississippi Valley. The simple fact that those towns were so small prevented greater destruction, but the earthquake left a general sense of fear in its wake. Then came the news in the summer of 1812 that the Missouri Territory would be going to war against numerous enemies. As he contemplated this state of affairs in January 1813, Howard reminded Eustis that a year earlier "I gave it as my opinion that in the spring succeeding the Indians would be troublesome." When "6 & 700

Indians at once came to our frontier, with a view to overrun the whole Settlements between Missouri & Mississippi," it was only through speedy action by territorial forces that the mission failed. Now it was imperative to make preemptive strikes, not on the more powerful Indians of the Upper Missouri River, but on the more dangerous and potentially belligerent Indians of the Missouri Territory. He advised coordinated efforts on both sides of the Mississippi. When it came to the Missouri Territory, Howard recommended that troops "ought to march from Missouri and strike a blow at the Indians of Fox River."

Like so many other federal officials, Benjamin Howard never found a solution to the numerous challenges of governing the Missouri Territory. In March 1813, he received a commission as brigadier general in the United States Army, and while his military jurisdiction included most of the Territory of Louisiana, Madison once again had to select a new territorial governor. This time he picked somebody with local experience. "Know Ye," read an official government commission, "that reposing special Trust and Confidence in the Patriotism, Integrity and Abilities of William Clark, of the Missouri Territory, I have nominated, and by and with the advice and Consent of the Senate do appoint him Governor in and over the said Missouri Territory." The commission was the standard boilerplate for such documents. Still, it did reflect the emerging consensus in Washington that William Clark was the most capable public official in the Missouri Territory. Clark was loyal where Wilkinson was deceptive, reliable where Lewis was mercurial, civic-minded where Bates was ambitious, and committed to territorial development where Howard seemed eager to leave. In William Clark, the administration finally had a leader who seemed capable of handling the numerous challenges of governing the Missouri Territory. William Clark was also willing. He had refused appointment as governor after the suicide of Meriwether Lewis, preferring instead to focus on Indian affairs. In 1813 he was ready to take charge.

Clark's political advancement coincided with a long-overdue conclusion to his responsibilities from the Lewis and Clark Expedition. In 1814, a Philadelphia publisher released *History of the Expedition Under the Command of Captains Lewis and Clark, to the Sources of the Missouri, Thence Across the Rocky Mountains and Down the River Columbia to the Pacific Ocean performed during the years 1804-5-6 by Order of the Government of the United States*. It was a far cry from the extended scientific treaties that Meriwether Lewis intended to write. Instead, *History of the Expedition* was a traditional narrative that devoted more space to describing what happened on a day-to-day basis than it did to



**Figure 2.** William Clark, *A Map of Lewis and Clark's track, Across the Western Portion of North America from the Mississippi to the Pacific Ocean...* (Philadelphia: Bradford and Inskeep, 1814). (Library of Congress)

examining the cultures, landscapes, and animals that the Corps of Discovery encountered along the way. Clark actually had little to do with this text. Clark recognized his own limitations as a writer as well as the competing demands of his public office. He eagerly surrendered most of the editorial work to Nicholas Biddle, the scion of a wealthy Philadelphia family who later became famous as head of the Bank of the United States but who was a budding writer and editor in the early 1800s. Clark's major contribution was to produce a map that accompanied the book. This exquisite example of the cartographer's art not only emerged from the field notes of the expedition, but also attempted to combine geographic information from a variety of other expeditions. The end result was a map of unprecedented detail. Almost two centuries later, the map also stands up as a remarkably accurate representation of North America.

But where was Missouri in this map? Clark as well as anybody knew that such a place did not exist. He recorded the major settlements—both Euro-American and Native American—in the Mid-Mississippi Valley, but his map situated those people within the massive Territory of Missouri that was Clark's charge. This approach made sense. Clark was not supposed to produce a political map or a detailed description of the peoples near the Mississippi Valley. His job was to describe circumstances further west, and William Clark was always particularly keen on fulfilling his mission in a thorough and detailed manner that did not break from his specific instructions.

Clark could only take limited satisfaction in *The History of the Expedition*. The book did not sell particularly well, regardless of the unprece-

dent detail in its text or the vision of its elegant map. Besides, Clark was busy enough governing the Territory of Missouri during these demanding years. While a British invasion of the Missouri Territory never materialized, threats of Indian war did. Meanwhile, Clark found that the militia he had directed for so many years was inadequate for the demands of war. He joined a chorus of American officials who complained that the concept of citizen soldiers might be appealing, but that those citizens were rarely willing to serve as soldiers.

Despite these problems, the American hold on the Missouri Territory actually became stronger during the War of 1812. American and British negotiators concluded peace negotiations in November 1814, and by the time both countries ratified the treaty the following year, Clark was consolidating his control over the Indians of the Missouri Territory. Similar developments had occurred throughout the frontiers of the union. The treaty of 1814 may have restored the status quo between the United States and Great Britain, but in the Old Northwest, the Gulf Coast, the southwestern frontier, and in the Missouri Territory, the War of 1812 proved disastrous for Indians. The United States Army crushed Indian unification movements and destroyed innumerable villages, either in response to aggressive action by Indians or simply by using the possibility of an alliance with Great Britain as the pretext for pre-emptive strikes.

In the years that immediately followed, Congress made a series of subtle changes to the territorial government in Missouri concerning the political structure, the legal system, and Indian affairs. Throughout this period, however,



**Figure 3. Melish, *Map of the United States of America: with the contiguous British and Spanish possessions* (Philadelphia: 1816).**

(Missouri State Museum)

one important consistency remained. In its geographical scope, the Missouri Territory was still the direct descendant of the District of Louisiana or, for that matter, the old European province of Upper Louisiana. The Territory of Missouri had two known boundaries—the Mississippi River and the border with the State of Louisiana—and two vague borderlands leading to Canada in the North and Spanish North America in the West. An 1816 map by John Melish shows just how ill-defined the West remained.

In many ways, Melish's map was not all that different from Aaron Arrowsmith's 1795 map. Sure, Melish may have replaced "Louisiana" with "Missouri Territory," but he still described a vast territory. Nonetheless, there were important changes. First, Melish imposed clear western and northern boundaries of the type that Arrowsmith did not, specifically because the boundaries between European empires were the subject of dispute. Melish could draw those boundaries because he also benefited from the work of Lewis and Clark and other American explorers who had attempted to describe the West. Instead of the vast emptiness that Arrowsmith and other mapmakers had put in the North American interior, Melish included rivers, mountains, and Indian villages.

This sort of map did not simply reflect what Americans knew about the West. It made an assertion. It claimed that Americans were in control, that they knew the boundaries and the occupants of the West. This sort of information, and this sort of attitude, were necessary preconditions for any move toward creating new governments.

conditions for any move toward creating new governments.

If maps had yet to show a place that looked like other American states, residents of the Missouri Territory were eager to see that it happened. A series of petitions reached Congress in 1818 and 1819. One of these appeals, sent by the territorial legislature, read like a direct followup to the Remonstrance. "Your memorialists feel a firm confidence," read the petition, "founded on the wise and generous policy heretofore pursued by your honorable body...that they need only pray to be incorporated into the Union." Be that as it may, the petition added that "there are many grievances of which your memorialists might complain." Rather than actually make those complaints, the petition would only explain that any unhappiness was not with the United States, but rather with "the form of government under which they live," namely the territorial system.

This kind of document was actually quite common in the 1810s, as a series of territories successfully sought statehood. Frontier residents proclaimed their political maturity, Congress permitted those residents to write a state constitution, territorial residents held a convention for that purpose, Congress voted to admit the new state, and the President eagerly signed the bill into law. What nobody in the Missouri Territory expected was the controversy their own request would ignite. As Congress went through the motions of discussing enabling legislation in 1819, Congressman James Tallmadge of New

York spoke on behalf of a growing number of representatives from free states who opposed any expansion of slavery. He proposed an amendment that would eventually eliminate slavery in the new state, unleashing an explosive debate that consumed Congress in the months that followed. The reasons were simple. As John Taylor, another anti-slavery Congressman from New York, told his House colleagues, "if the few citizens who now inhabit the Territory of Missouri were alone interested in the decision of this question, I should content myself with voting in favor of the amendment...But the fact is far otherwise: those whom we shall authorize to set in motion the machine of free government beyond the Mississippi, will, in many ways, decide the destiny of millions." Even Taylor and Tallmadge's opponents agreed. They recognized that Missouri's future would decide nothing less than the future of slavery and freedom in the United States.

In the end, Congress managed to find a solution that preserved both slavery and freedom, as well as the union itself. The Missouri Compromise permitted Missouri statehood with slavery, so long as a free state of Maine entered as well to provide a rough equality in Congress between the number of free and slave states. In the future, 36° 30' latitude would provide a division between new slave states in the South and new free states in the North. The Missouri Compromise seemed to offer a permanent solution, since it could be extended west as new territories entered the union. And for over two decades it did work until opponents of slavery or its geographic expansion began mobilizing against pro-slavery advocates who rejected restrictions of any kind, including those imposed by the Missouri Compromise.

This maelstrom came as a surprise to many in Missouri. The white citizens of the territory took slavery for granted. They were also thinking in western terms. This was equally true for William Clark as he approved the petition. Clark took pride in his own role as one of the federal officials who had helped keep the nation unified as it created new territories in the West. But William Clark was also a slaveholder. He had, after all, forced one of his slaves, York, to accompany the Corps of Discovery. While Lewis and Clark wrote glowingly about York's performance on the expedition and York himself acquired a rough equality with the enlisted members of the expedition, a return to white settlements meant a return to business as usual. Clark broke his promise to free York after the expedition and seemed to feel betrayed when York demanded his freedom. While Clark eventually freed York, his delays in doing so and his inability to understand York's apparent ingratitude goes a long way toward explaining the state of affairs in Missouri in 1820.

In the decades that followed, Missouri remained crucial to the debate over slavery. Located at the intersection of free and slave states, people who favored and opposed slavery came into constant collision. William Clark observed this change in the national political scene from a distance. Indeed, his own public career was up for grabs. After seven years as territorial governor during which Clark guided Missouri through tumultuous changes, he logically assumed that he had a base of support. But William Clark had never actually run for elected office, and the gubernatorial race of 1820 provided a rough education. He soon found that he lacked the political skills to build a constituency of his own.

Meanwhile, a host of other men had spent years honing their political skills through the very competition for office and advantage that Clark had sidestepped through the consistent support he enjoyed in Washington. Clark had also acquired enemies, including his colleagues within the territorial government, some of whom became more confident accusing the governor of abusing his powers. Those sort of accusations had become commonplace in territorial Missouri, and had been directed at Wilkinson, Lewis, and Howard. But they had real sticking power, and they cast Clark as a federal crony opposed to democratic politics. Clark had also undermined his own support among the growing number of Anglo-Americans through his close relationship with the Creole elite. Long before election day, it was clear that Clark would never carry the new state. Although his name remained on the ballot, Clark withdrew from active campaigning. Surprised and disappointed though he was by the lack of public support, Clark's actions in 1820 preserved both his dignity and his reputation in ways that would cement his stature as a leading citizen of the American West. By removing himself from the sort of vicious political combat that characterized public life in the State of Missouri, he could sustain his image as a public servant who operated above either personal gain or crass electioneering. It was an image that Clark had always sought.

Victory in the 1820 elections went to men who were more comfortable with the reality of democratic politics. Alexander McNair won the race for governor. Four years later, however, Frederick Bates succeeded him and finally took charge of Missouri after so many years as a subordinate. He had refused appointment as territorial governor after Lewis' death because he worried the office would prevent him from pursuing his own business interests. By 1824, his personal finances and political power were both sufficiently secure for Bates to become governor. Bates' younger brother, Edward, became the state's first attorney general, and eventually served as a Congressman from Missouri before



**Thomas Hart Benton.**

(Missouri State Archives)

concluding his public career with service as Abraham Lincoln's attorney general. Edward Bates' successor as attorney general was Rufus Easton, who had first crossed the Mississippi as a territorial judge and whose outspoken politics caused no end of trouble for territorial governors. John Scott, Missouri's long-serving territorial delegate, remained in office, only now as voting member of the United States House of Representatives. Finally, the state legislature selected David Barton and Thomas Hart Benton as Missouri's first senators. Of all these officials, Benton cast the biggest shadow, and remains the most well-known of Missouri's antebellum leaders. But Benton also indicated a profound shift in Missouri politics, away from the questions of Indian trade, territorial administration, and foreign affairs. Benton became an architect of the democratic political culture and sectional disputes that defined antebellum America in ways very different from the early American republic.

Noticeably absent from this list of the state's new leaders were members of the leading families from the colonial era. While some did join the state legislature, few could win election for senior state office, let alone federal office. Others, like the Chouteaus, eschewed elected office altogether, preferring to sustain their influence through wealth and through informal connections with the state's Anglo-American elite.

But Creole families could not ignore the relationship between political and economic change as they watched the state government select a new capital, a decision which could well have

dangerous consequences for the St. Louis elite. Officials selected a temporary home in St. Charles, a short distance from the old territorial capital of St. Louis. More dramatic changes came in 1826, when the state government was ready to relocate permanently to the empty land that eventually became Jefferson City. The decision to move the capital from the centers of population and culture to a rough outpost made perfect sense in the America of the 1820s. Many other states had done the same thing. Rather than seeing these capitals as lying in the middle of nowhere, many Americans believed the capitals could be at center of everything. Equally important, they hoped that state governments would serve all residents and not become beholden to the powerful interests of a particular city or region. Nor did Anglo-American politicians fail to recognize that taking the capital from St. Louis would further erode the power of Missouri's old French merchant elite.

## Missouri

In 1813, Henry Marie Brackenridge had shown considerable insight when it came to the extent of the federal government's authority. He was equally thoughtful when he described the local population. "The whites, consist of ancient inhabitants, and of those who have settled since the change of government. The former are chiefly of French origin; there were scarcely more than three or four Spanish families in this province, and the citizens of the United States, although



**David Barton.**

(Missouri State Archives)

advantageous offers were held out to them, rarely settled on this side of the river." He explained that the French-speaking population still "resided in villages, and cultivated common fields adjacent to them; in the manner of many parts of Europe." Finally, he added that "there were always good reasons to apprehend the attack of Indians." But Brackenridge saw changes. "For the past three years, the settlements have been increasing rapidly. The American mode, of living on detached farms, has been adopted by a number of the French inhabitants."

William Clark contributed to those changes, both in public office and in private pursuits. Clark did not actually retire after his term as territorial governor ended in 1821. In fact, he only returned to the sort of work that had occupied most of his public career. He never resigned his post as Indian agent, and also enjoyed a brief appointment as surveyor general for federal lands in Illinois, Missouri, and Arkansas. And in the same way that Clark's public career had reflected the changes in territorial Missouri, so too did his public responsibilities after 1821 reflect the State of Missouri's ongoing development.

The most dramatic changes came in relations with the Indians of the eastern Plains. Like Meriwether Lewis, Clark had shown a genuine respect for Indians. As an Indian agent, he acquired a reputation among Indians as a more reliable and honest negotiator than many of his American counterparts. But Clark also had a reputation in Washington as a loyal and reliable public official. More and more, these roles came into conflict. In response to Indian militancy in the 1810s and white migration in the 1820s, Clark took an increasingly hard line with Indians. Meanwhile, Indians had little room to maneuver as the United States consolidated its hold in the Missouri Territory. An 1818 treaty with the Osage Indians spoke volumes about the state of affairs. The treaty began by explaining that "the Osage nations have been embarrassed by the frequent demands for property taken from the citizens of the United States, by war parties, and other thoughtless men of their several bands, (both before and since their war with the Cherokees,) and as the exertions of their chiefs have been ineffectual in recovering and delivering such property." Casting the Osage as people no longer capable of governing themselves, the treaty also transferred much of the Osage land to the United States. Clark represented the federal government and concluded negotiations, appropriately enough, at the military outpost of Fort Clark. Auguste Chouteau signed the document as well, still enjoying his role as arbiter between Indians and the federal government.

Agreements like the 1818 Osage treaty became common throughout the United States. The Osage ceded the last of their Missouri lands in 1825, as did the Sauc and Fox in 1824. In

1830, President Andrew Jackson extended the principles of these treaties into the Removal Policy. Originally designed to force all Indians east of the Mississippi to vacate their lands, removal moved westward, following close on the heels of white settlers who continued to demand that their government provide more land for settlement. William Clark remained what he had always been: a loyal public servant. During the 1820s and 30s he helped orchestrate the forced eviction of Indians from Missouri and the surrounding territory.

Removing Indians from Missouri became all the more important to white officials because the state seemed to become more crowded. Throughout the 1820s, thousands of Americans living in the East concluded that their futures lay in the West. The impact on Missouri was immediate and it was staggering. Settlers arrived throughout the 1820s, completing a conversion that was already under way in the 1810s. By the 1830s Missouri was no longer a region of trade with a mixed population of Indians, Francophone merchants, Creole elites, and American newcomers. It was an increasingly crowded state where the majority of settlers were Protestant Anglo-Americans arriving from the East.

Most of these Anglo-American newcomers pursued agricultural pursuits, whether working individual farms or attempting to build large plantations. This did not mean that Missouri ceased to be a nexus for trade. To the contrary, all those newcomers needed to purchase supplies and sell their produce. And with steamboats becoming more reliable and, in turn, abundant, there was a means to transport goods in all directions. The rivers that had always been at the center of life in Missouri became more important as ever larger steamboats moved up and down the Mississippi, Missouri, and Ohio rivers. St. Louis was the great beneficiary of this growth. The city's population soared, transforming a small frontier town into a booming metropolis.

Some simple numbers tell the story. On the eve of statehood, the 1820 census recorded a population for the Territory of Missouri of 66,586 people. Ten years later, that number had more than doubled to an astonishing 140,455. The increase in the slave population kept pace, increasing from 10,222 in 1820 to 25,096 in 1830. Those numbers continued to surge into the 1840s, as immigrants from western Europe joined the stream of migrants from the East.

People like Auguste Chouteau and William Clark welcomed these changes, albeit for different reasons. For merchants like Chouteau, greater populations meant greater commercial opportunities. He invested in banking and, like Clark, became a land speculator. Also like Clark, he was a slaveholder, and after his death in 1829, twelve of those slaves went to his wife while an additional thirty-six were sold. Chouteau needed to diver-

sify, because the very success of Chouteau's fur empire contributed to its demise. With beaver and other fur-bearing animals hunted to near-extinction, Chouteau wisely expanded his interests.

For public officials like Clark, peaceful development was an indication of the sort of progress that a good government should help deliver. Nor did Clark lack personal reasons. After watching the prosperity of his parents and his siblings collapse in the years before the Lewis and Clark Expedition, Clark made certain that he would provide for his own family.

Clark's strategy for financial security could not have been more different from Lewis'. First of all, he made certain to keep his personal finances separate from government business. Not only did this make good business sense, but it prevented any accusations of corruption. Of course, Clark's influence and contacts put him in a preferable position for any business deal, but he nonetheless managed to keep his public and private worlds sufficiently separate to avoid ethical problems. And unlike Lewis, who focused on the fur trade, Clark sought his fortune through a more reliable source of profit on the western frontier: land speculation. Throughout the 1810s, '20s, '30s, William Clark set about acquiring plots of land dispersed throughout Missouri.

Clark seemed to exemplify the sort of opportunities that Americans found on the frontiers of North America. After a series of personal and professional setbacks, Clark's life suddenly took shape in the West. Professionally, the expedition finally provided a springboard for advancement within the federal government. Meanwhile, Clark also found that his personal life could finally move forward. In June 1808 he married Julia Hancock, a Virginian like himself. If Clark was unusual in his high level of government appointment, his family was actually representative of what so many people experienced in the Missouri of the early nineteenth century. Clark brought Julia with him to Missouri, apparently never wondering if she wanted to come. Like women throughout the United States, the advancement of family meant separation from friends and from kin.

Julia bore five children before dying in 1820 at her father's Virginia estate. Clark traveled with her to Virginia, and his absence from Missouri contributed to his unsuccessful gubernatorial candidacy. A year later, Clark married again, and his second wife, Harriet, had two sons before she, too, died in 1831. Of Clark's seven children, three died in childhood. This sort of mortality was all too common in the early American republic.

Clark was typical of Missouri newcomers in one other way. When William and Julia Clark put down roots in Missouri, they brought most of their slaves with them. While Missouri never became home to plantations on the scale of

older states like Virginia and South Carolina, or even the newer plantation societies in Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana, slavery itself was no less important to the region's development. An 1829 case before the St. Louis Circuit Court provides a glimpse at slave life in rural Missouri, as well as the systems that were supposed to preserve enslavement. At midnight on August 29, 1829, Daniel Bissell's plantation was home to a celebration among his slaves. Bissell himself was a veteran of the territorial government. A brigadier general in the United States Army, he had worked with William Clark in the territory to establish federal authority over Indians and plan defenses against any European threats. Bissell and Clark also owned neighboring plantations. Ben, one of Clark's slaves, came to the party, and other slaves in attendance claimed he was looking for trouble. A fight ensued between Ben and a slave named Bill who came from yet another plantation. One slave remembered hearing "Oh God he is stabbed!" Ben later admitted to stabbing Bill, but claimed he did so only to hurt Bill, and then only as payback for an insult. (A jury subsequently found Ben guilty of assault with intent to kill and sentenced him to receive twenty lashes as punishment.)

Missouri law actually forbade slaves from moving about this freely, in large part because whites feared that slaves from different plantations could conspire to lead a slave revolt. Benjamin's actions showed the reality that even men like Clark and Bissell, for all their experience governing the interracial population of Missouri, could never fully control their own slaves. Meanwhile, the fight itself reveals just how complex plantation life could be. Slaves met, celebrated, and bore grudges with the same energy as other Missourians. Finally, it serves as a reminder of realities that men like Clark never fully appreciated. At a certain fundamental level, Clark never quite understood the meaning of slavery, nor did many other Missourians. Clark's focus on establishing government in the West overshadowed an awareness of slavery's potential as a source of political dispute.

By the time he died in 1838, William Clark's legacy was ambiguous. While he had helped to create a stable society in Missouri, he had done so at the cost of Indians and African Americans. His personal legacy to his family was no less confusing. In terms of the property that he owned, Clark was a wealthy man. But Clark was also cash poor, and the salary he continued to draw from the federal government was a vital source of revenue. He had gambled on Missouri's future, struggling to pay for land while he waited for the value of that land to appreciate. In the end, his gamble paid off. With settlers rushing into Missouri, the demand for land kept prices rising throughout the antebellum era.

Clark's will provides a revealing window to his own life and to life in Missouri. For example, he was sufficiently wealthy to leave his oldest son, Meriwether Lewis Clark, \$8,000 in cash plus land in Missouri, Indiana, and Kentucky worth an estimated \$8,700. Settling Clark's estate took years. His probate record, which includes his will and all the documents that went into settling his affairs, is a massive document just over 500 pages. Most of that probate record is devoted to settling Clark's land holdings. This too was common, for land speculators often died without the sort of reliable surveys that made for a speedy distribution of land. Meanwhile, an 1840 list of

Clark's personal possessions listed the sort of objects that a wealthy St. Louisian might own. That list included the following:

- 1 pair Cherry Card tables \$12.00
- 1 Cherry Dressing table \$2.00
- 1 Hair bottom sofa \$10.00
- 1 Rifle gun & 1 Hunting knife \$20.00
- 1 large feather bed \$20.00
- 1 Copy Indian tribes of N. America (7 vols.) \$28
- 1 Engraving of Meriwether Lewis 12 1/2 cents

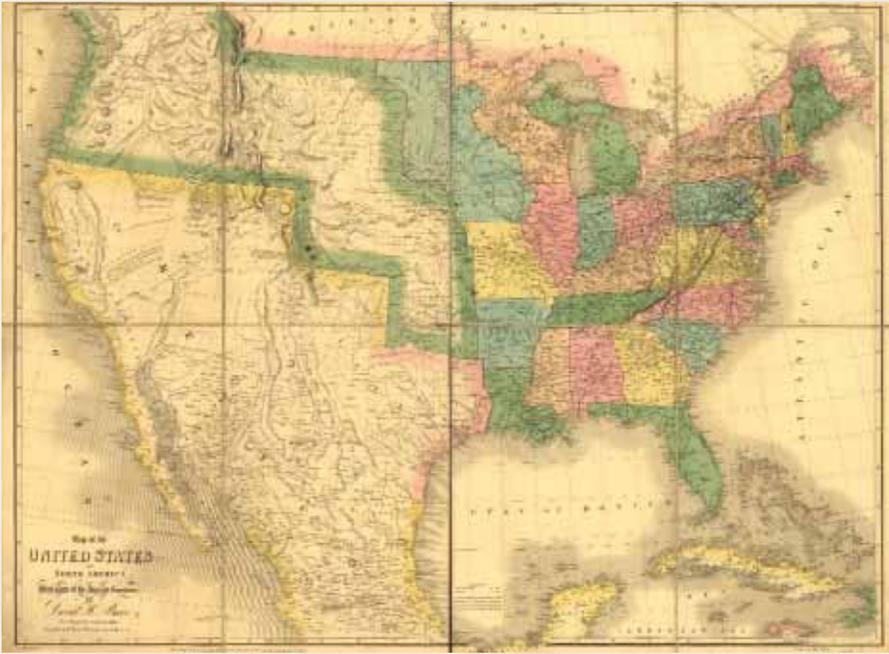
These simple objects further detailed Clark's world. The furniture included the objects of a wealthy man with access to sophisticated goods. They were the sort of thing that men on frontiers

struggled to acquire as proof of their sophistication, wealth, and their distance from the rough world around them. Meanwhile, the rifle, the knife, and the multivolume description of Indians reflected the complex, often violent multiracial world of Missouri. Finally, the engraving of Meriwether Lewis reflected not only Clark's enduring admiration for his friend, but also the simple fact that the Corps of Discovery had transformed Clark from a former army officer in declining circumstances to a leading citizen in the nation's commercial emporium. And the value of that engraving was appropriate. During the twentieth century, Meriwether Lewis would become a legend, his reputation overshadowing that of William Clark. But in the 1830s, Lewis was an example of opportunities lost, while Clark was a model of opportunities realized.

The year after Clark died, a new map finally showed Missouri in all its glory. The mapmaker was none other than John Arrowsmith, nephew of the man whose 1795 map had so inspired Jefferson in its meticulous detail but so frustrated Jefferson with its lack of information on the West. Based on the work of David Burr, a former topographer for the U.S. Post Office, this 1839 map placed Missouri squarely in the center of the United

St. Louis Sept 30 1840		Wm Clark	
The Estate of Genl Wm Clark deceased - For			
Articles taken at valuation of personal estate, as directed by said Court			
1	Set of 3 Cherry Dressing Tables	12	35 00
	Cherry Dressing Table	2	2 00
	Hair bottom sofa	1	10 00
	Rifle gun & 1 Hunting knife	1	20 00
	Large feather bed	1	20 00
	Copy Indian tribes of N. America (7 vols.)	1	28 00
	Engraving of Meriwether Lewis	1	12 1/2 cts
1	Pair Glass	11	4 00
11	Music stands or four tables	12	13 75
1	Hunting Table	21	5 00
1	Letter press	28	5 00
1	Black leather trunk	25	1 00
1	pair Glass candle shades	26	4 00
1	Rifle gun, 1 barrel, 1 case, 1 pouch	27	15 00
1	Pair brass paintings (Redskins from war)	28	75 00
1	pair Gold Spectacles	31	1 50
1	Indian War club (in case)	37	3 00
1	pair Mattresses, 2 pillows, 1 blanket	44	10 00
1	Leather Bed, 2 pillows, 1 blanket	46	14 50
2	Meriwether Lewis Clark Exposition	43	5 80
1	Copy Indian Tribes of N. America (7 vols.)	49	28 00
1	Family Bible	52	1 50
1	Footstool of Mr. John M. Clark (by James)	59	10 00
1	John's Saddle (by James)	58	20 00
1	Ray's Saddle ( - )	56	3 00
1	Genl Wm Clark (by James)	57	10 00
1	Wm Clark (by James)	48	5 00
1	Wm Clark ( - )	67	5 00
1	Set of Colored Bed Curtains	70	3 00
2	White Counterpane	73	2 00
1	Colored Counterpane	74	75 00
2	Leather Table cloths	75	1 50
Amount cannot proceed		1	2702 25

William Clark Probate Record, Inventory, St. Louis Probate Court, 1840. (Missouri State Archives)



**Figure 4. Burr, *Map of the United States of North America with Parts of the Adjacent Countries...* (London: 1839). (Library of Congress)**

States. Standing out with bright yellow coloring in comparison to the more muted colors for the surrounding states and territories, this map also showed the work of Lewis and Clark. Much of the detail on the North American West reflected information gathered by expeditions like the Corps of Discovery. Meanwhile, Missouri itself was filled with the names of burgeoning towns and cities, the sort of regional development that Lewis and Clark had always sought. Finally, just beyond Missouri's boundaries are the names of Indian tribes, many of them forcibly transplanted to the plains under Jackson's removal policy.

Lewis and Clark had never attempted to draw such a map. As explorers of the North American West, they were more concerned with the geography, the environment, and the residents then they were with political jurisdictions. But as public officials, this was exactly the sort of map they wanted. Like those other Virginians—Jefferson and Madison—they hoped to “see” a Missouri that was stable and clearly defined. Converting that vision of Missouri into reality remained one of the great accomplishments for the founding generation. It was also their most troublesome legacy. A peaceful, clearly defined Missouri could not exist without removing both Indian power and, in the end, Indians themselves. Likewise, the Missouri they created not only extended the suffering of slaves, but also generated disputes over the expansion of slavery that eventually destroyed the union.

As a result, by the time Clark died in 1838, people still looked at Missouri in different ways, either as a place of opportunities found or opportunities lost. But one thing had changed. There was, in fact, a place called Missouri. And that word had meaning for people. It referred to a state that people recognized as a place of considerable conflict, but also to a place that was unquestionably American.

### Note

It is perhaps unusual to end an essay by talking about other historians, but this is an unusual case. People interested in Missouri during the age of Lewis and Clark are lucky. After years in which scholars tended to ignore the early history of Missouri, three books are in the works, each of which will be fascinating in its own right. I call attention to them here to make readers aware, but also to give credit where it is due, because the authors of those books have made a profound impact on the way I think about Missouri history. William Foley, already an accomplished historian of Missouri, will soon publish the first modern scholarly biography of William Clark. Corresponding with the bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark expedition, Foley's extensive research will finally provide a full portrait of Clark, who remains one of the most important figures in western history. In 2004 readers will also be able to read Jay Gitlin's forthcoming book, *The Bourgeois Frontier: French Towns in Mid-America and the*

*Course of Westward Expansion, 1763 to 1863*, which will offer a comprehensive study of regional culture during the years of transition from European colony to American province. Finally, Stephen Aron is working on a broader regional history tentatively entitled *American Confluence*. Scholars have long commented that Missouri provides a wonderful case study for explaining the frontiers of North America, and Aron's book will provide exactly that sort of broad context and revealing scope. Anybody who wants to understand why their ancestors came to Missouri, why Missouri came to be in the first place, or why Missouri's history followed its particular path will want to read these books.

## For Further Reading:

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