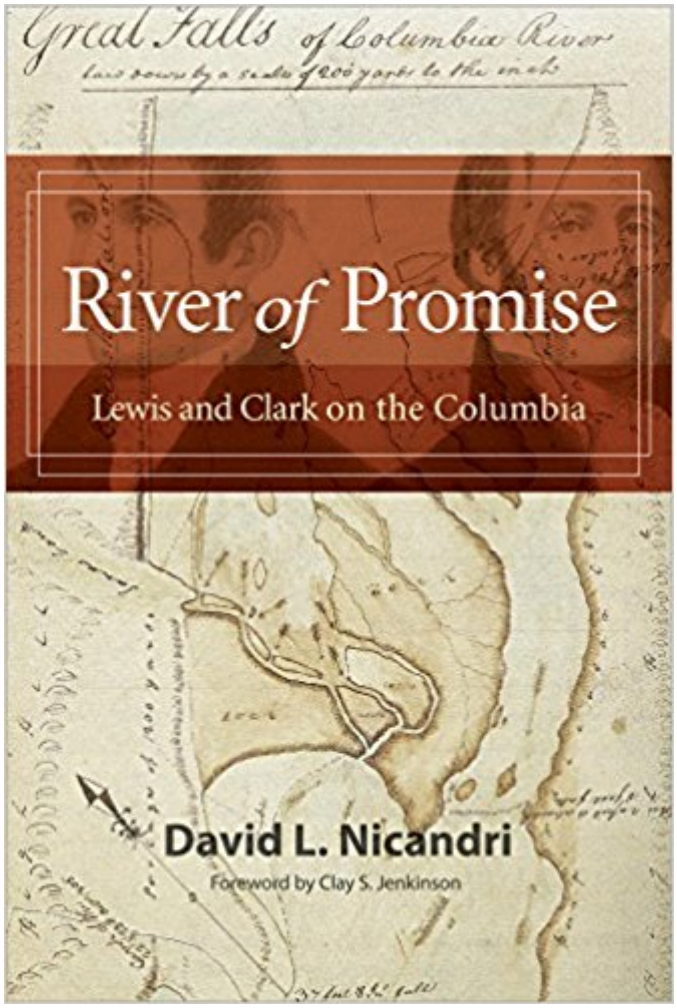
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River Of Promise: Lewis And Clark On The Columbia



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Synopsis

In the many published accounts of the Lewis and Clark expedition, historians have tended to undervalue the explorersÃ¢â ¬â„¢ encounter with Columbia River country. Most narratives emphasize Lewis and ClarkÃ¢â ¬â„¢s adventures through their journey to the Bitterroot Mountains but have said little about the rest of their travels west of there.River of Promise fills a significant gap in our understanding of Lewis and ClarkÃ¢â ¬â„¢s legendary expedition. Historian David L. Nicandri shifts the focus to an essential goal of the explorers: to discover the headwaters of the Columbia and a water route to the Pacific Ocean. He also restores William Clark in his role as the primary geographic problem-solver of the partnership. Most historians assume that Meriwether Lewis was a more distinguished scientist than Clark because of his formal training in Philadelphia and superior writing skills. Here we see Clark as LewisÃ¢â ¬â„¢s equal as scientific geographer, not merely the practical manager of boats and personnel.Nicandri places the legend of Sacagawea in clearer perspective by focusing instead on the contributions of often-overlooked Indian leaders in Columbia River country. He also offers many points of comparison to other explorers and a provocative analysis of LewisÃ¢â ¬â„¢s suicide in 1809, arguing that it was not a sudden event but fruit of a seed planted much earlier, quite possibly in Columbia country.Ã Â

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Customer Reviews

David L. Nicandri is director of the Washington State Historical Society. He is the Executive Editor of Columbia Magazine and author of many books and articles.Clay S. Jenkinson, well known for his historical portrayals of Thomas Jefferson and Meriwether Lewis, is the editor of A Vast and Open

Plain: The Writings of the Lewis and Clark Expedition in North Dakota, 1804Ã¢â ¬â œ1806 and author of Becoming Jefferson's People: Re-inventing the American Republic in the Twenty-first Century.

I've read a number of books on Lewis and Clark and the most interesting offers a different perspective that makes the book entertaining to read whether new information, a different perspective or advancing a new theory. Nicandri offers a combination of the above and places greater emphasis of the difficult challenges the the expedition fared after conquering the rockies, the ferocious and churning Columbia along with interesting detail on the captains, native americans, Sacagawea's true role, a new look at the journals, and quite a deep look at Clark's role. Clark has an extra look at his contributions primarily due to Lewis' absence from writing for three months, literally starting with their crossing of the Bitterroot Mts. when Lewis shuts down his writings, Clark earnestly records in brief and technical detail virtually keeping the ship's log. While Lewis is much more descriptive in his writings, Clark is more the geographer and map maker. Of interesting note is the fact that Nicandri points out that, particularly in Lewis' case, brief notes were taken, revised perhaps more than once and written more refined into the journal we are most familiar with. There is a contrast in their writings that the author skillfully points out particularly when Lewis asserts his role, sometimes at the expense of Clark. The classic moment comes when Clark discovers a virtual role reversal in a critical first meeting of an indian tribe where Lewis put himself in the limelight, Clark only discovering this after attempting to pull the overdue book together after he retrieves Lewis's journals after his tragic death. Nicandri also skillfully utilizes the journals of the rest of the other writers in the command like Patrick Glass that offer another or reinforcing view of what Lewis and Clark saw. Some interesting clarifications such as the real role of Sacagawea who was always helpful but the roles of Nez Perce chiefs Twisted Hair and Tetoharsky who are much more key in guiding the expedition into the Columbia river basin and in the interaction with other tribes. What is always fascinating, aside from the tremendous journey and the descriptions of the wilderness, is the interactions between Lewis and Clark. They both brought different strengths and survived with their crew in tact, but the differences of the two is quite a contrast. While Lewis exhibited excellent leadership it is obvious that Clark was the steady hand and worked best with the soldiers. The difficulties of the return trip where the strain on Lewis became more evident particularly noted in his periodic blow ups with natives while Clark maintained a steady, constructive relationship with the natives. Nicandri, on that topic, also makes reference to earlier explorers making note that good relations with natives was critical particularly when traveling up stream since the exposure is much

more enduring. Nicandri’s observations on Lewis’ stresses on his return, that seems to the initial cracks in his mental health, not helped by his embarrassing wound. Nicandri’s theory on what contributed to Lewis’ final breakdown that is not at all far off the mark. iAnyone who listened to Clay Jenkinson on the Jefferson hour would attest to that. In fact, Jenkinson writes a detailed prologue that is a great endorsement of the book. The expedition is forever fascinating and as Nicandri states in one incident,’When William Clark disagrees with Meriwether Lewis there is a story to tell".

This isn’t an enjoyable read. It’’s likely best used as a college textbook addition to a full course on L & C. The author expects the reader to know the classic story, details and all. Not an impossible task but one that this reader hadn’t prepared for. Especially since the story is basically dissected and rewritten in this version.I’ll keep at it, but the slog negates any pleasure I may have gotten reading about the river I live on. Pleasure I most certainly expected.

Great interpretation of the Lewis and Clark story written by maybe the most knowledgable person on the subject.

Having read lots of Lewis and Clark authors, from DeVoto, to Ambrose, Moulton, and Ronda, I was skeptical.River of Promise, by David L. Nicrandri, has proven to be an interesting and valuable addition to my L & C library. The author is the head of the Washington State Historical Society. His research into journals, field notes and published materials from the expedition participants does a comprehensive comparison of sources. His wider inclusion of accounts from other exploratory expeditions adds context. He also includes considerations from many of the authors noted above.I have found answers to many questions, such as " why didn’t the Leaders choose to float the Bitterroot River and Clark Fork to the Columbia" instead of struggling over Lolo Pass from Travellers Rest near Missoula Montan. Other questions regarding the potential claims of England and the U.S. for the Northwest are the subject of interesting examination.The book is an interesting read, moving through the territory, yet exploring the interesting sub story, and exploding a few "myths" that have developed around this great expedition. The author is skilled at bringing together lots of different perspectives, always well researched, but packaged into an entertaining and informative addition to the many published Lewis and Clark stories.

Was sorry to come to the end of this book. It was so fascinating and hard to put down. I will read it again.

very well written and provocative ideas.

Great book!

This book brings a new perspective to the Lewis and Clark expedition because it tells in more detail of the journey west of the Continental Divide. Meriwether Lewis had quit keepting a journal and the standard records of the expedition give short shrift to this part of the journey. For people who live in the west it is particularly pleasing to learn more details of the Indians, the places they saw, the things they did and impressions of various members of the expiditon who did keep journals.

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