

Lewis and Clark on the Great Plains Timeline from Rebraska City, Rebraska to Pierre, South Dakota

July 19, 1804 – In the vicinity of Nebraska City, Nebraska, Clark, in pursuit of an elk, ascends a hill and discovers the “boundless prairie”.

July 20, 1804 – Near Nebraska City, Nebraska, Clark’s observation of the “parched prairies” was noted. As the Corps traveled through the Great Plains it was understood that fires were ecologically important wherever grass growth was abundant to prevent secondary growth. They were set by lightning or accidentally by humans, or often Indians set fires purposely for signaling or for improving grazing.

July 24, 1804 – For several days the Corps stayed at a site they called “Camp White Catfish”, near modern day Bellevue, Nebraska. Clark copied a map, while Lewis readied letters for President Jefferson; potentially they wanted to send this material back eastward with a few of the men, but decided against it. Many of the men were hunting, although game was scarce. Those who fished were more successful and caught catfish, from which the name of the camp was derived.

MILEAGE CHART

FROM	TO	APPROX. MILEAGE
Nebraska City, NE	Bellevue, NE	40 miles
Bellevue, NE	Omaha, NE	11 miles
Omaha, NE	Council Bluffs, IA	4 miles
Council Bluffs, IA	Fort Calhoun, NE	25 miles
Fort Calhoun, NE	Missouri Valley, IA	20 miles
Missouri Valley, IA	Onawa, IA	38 miles
Onawa, IA	Sioux City, IA	38 miles
Sioux City, IA	Elk Point, SD	21 miles
Elk Point, SD	Vermillion, SD	16 miles
Vermillion, SD	Yankton, SD	26 miles
Yankton, SD	Wagner, SD	67 miles
Wagner, SD	Mitchell, SD	64 miles
Mitchell, SD	Chamberlain, SD	70 miles
Chamberlain, SD	Fort Thompson, SD	19 miles
Fort Thompson, SD	Pierre, SD	66 miles

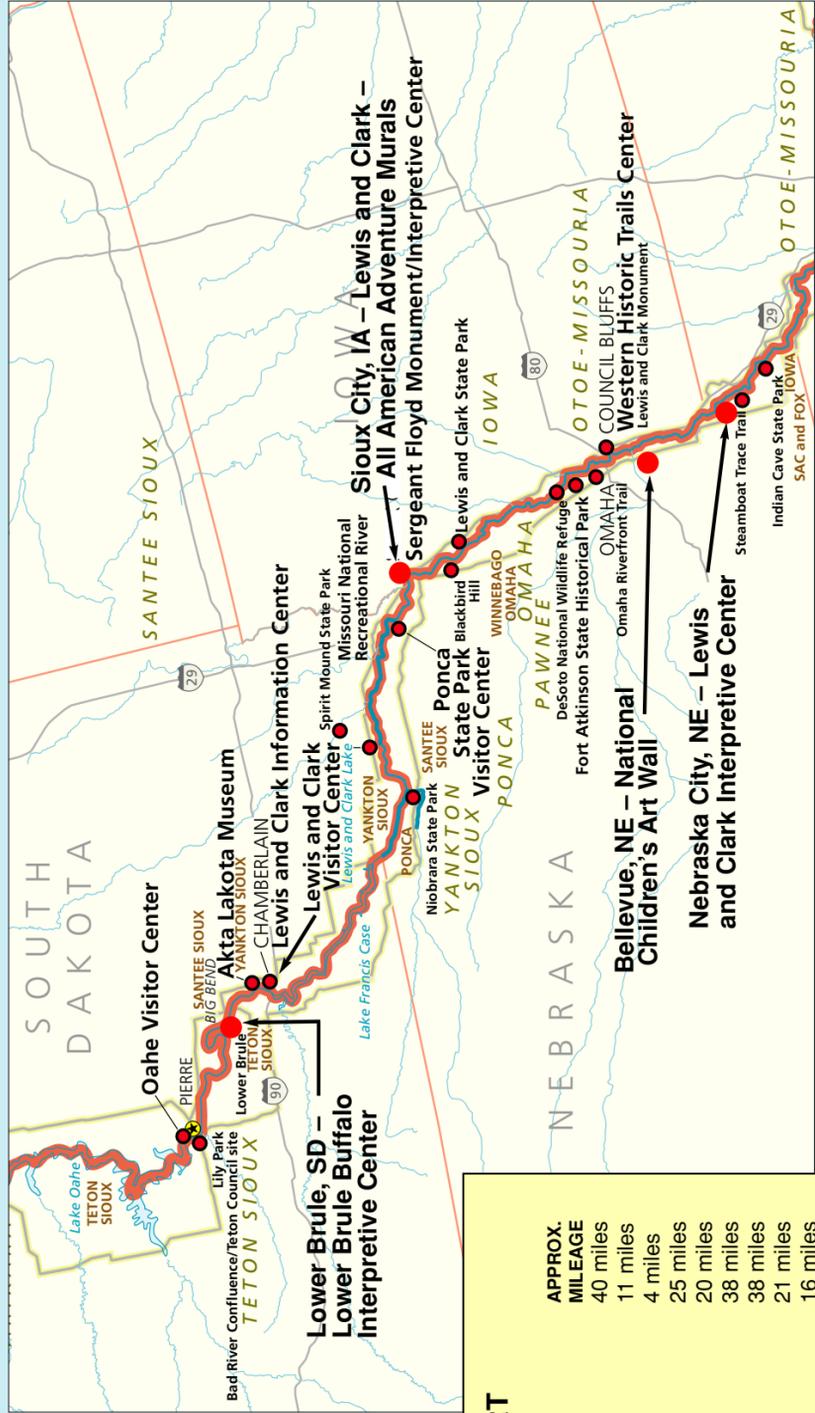
July 30, 1804 – Present day Fort Calhoun, Nebraska, Fort Atkinson State Historical Park. Joseph Fields shoots a badger. This is the first zoological specimen preserved by Lewis on the expedition. Lewis skinned and stuffed the badger and sent it back to Jefferson. Lewis describes this specimen as a “camiverous animal, it’s eye are small black and piercing.”

August 1, 1804 – Present day Fort Calhoun, Nebraska, Fort Atkinson State Historical Park. They waited for Indian chiefs to arrive for a council. This was William Clark’s 34th birthday, and he recorded “This being my birth day I order’d a Saddle of fat venison, an Elk fleece and a bevertail to be cooked and a Desert of Cherries, Plumbs, Raspberries currents and grapes of a Supr quality. 3 Deer and an Elk killed to day The Indians not yet arrived. A Cool fine evening Musquetors verry troublesome, the Praries Contain Cheres, Apple, Grapes, Currents, Raspbery, Gooseberry Hasltenuts and a great variety of Plants and flours not common to the U S What a field for a Botenist [botanist] and a natreliss [naturalist]”.

August 3, 1804 – Present day Fort Calhoun, Nebraska, Fort Atkinson State Historical Park (Council Bluff site). After breakfast, Lewis and Clark gave out peace medals to the Otoe and Missouri chiefs.

August 8, 1804 – In the vicinity of Little Sioux, Iowa (above the mouth of Little Sioux River). Lewis documents the American white pelican & they name an island Pelican Island: “we had seen but a few aquatic fowls of any kind on the river since we commenced our journey up the Missouri. this day I saw a great number of feathers floating down the river those feathers had a very extraordinary appearance as the appeared in such quantities as to cover pretty generally sixty or seventy yards of the breadth of the river. for three miles after I saw those feathers continue to run in that manner, we did not perceive from whence they came, at length we were surprised by the appearance of a flock of Pillican at rest on a large sand bar. The number of which would if estimated appear almost in credible they appeared to cover several acres of ground. The island which we called after them from the number we saw on it”.

August 11, 1804 – Near Onawa, Iowa, Lewis and Clark State Park. Lewis and Clark honored Black Bird, a chief of the Omaha Indians who died four years earlier, by climbing to the top of his mound grave with ten men and planting a flag. They stated in the journals that over 400 Indians, including Black Bird, had died of smallpox in an epidemic four years previously.



August 15, 1804 – Near Macy, Nebraska, AKA Fish Camp. Clark and Company caught “318 fish of different kind.”

August 18, 1804 – Near Homer, Nebraska. This was Capt. Lewis’ 30th birthday. A court martial was held for Pvt. Moses B. Reed, who had deserted and was tracked down, captured and returned to camp. He was expelled from the permanent party and ordered to return to St. Louis from the Mandan villages in the spring – in addition, he had to run the gauntlet four times through. The Otoe chiefs thought this punishment harsh until Reed’s great offense was explained to them. An evening meeting was held with the Otoe chiefs, followed by a dance which lasted until 11 p.m. An extra gill, a 1/4 of a pint, of whiskey was issued to each man.

August 20, 1804 – Near Sioux City, Iowa. The only member of the Corps of Discovery to die on the expedition, Sgt. Charles Floyd succumbed to what is now believed to have been appendicitis. Even if the members of the expedition had known what his malady was, there was nothing they could have done for him. Sgt. Floyd died on either the Nebraska or the Iowa side of the river; his body was then taken upriver to the first high bluffs at modern Sioux City, Iowa, for burial. The inroads of the Missouri River washed away part of Floyd’s grave and his remains were reburied in 1857, 600 feet to the southeast of the original site. In 1895 the grave was marked with a concrete slab, and in 1901 a 100 foot tall obelisk was erected over the spot. Clark recorded: “Seri. Floyd Died with a great deal of Compusure, before his death he Said to me, ‘I am going away I want you to write me a letter.’ We buried him on the top of the bluff 1/2 Mile below a Small river to which we Gave his name, he was buried with the Honors of War much lamented, a Seeder post with the Name Sergt. C. Floyd died here 20th of august 1804 was fixed at the head of his grave. This Man at all times gave us proofs of his firmness and Determined resolution to doe Service to his Country and honor himself” The military funeral was conducted by Capt. Lewis.

August 21, 1804 – Jefferson, South Dakota. Buffaloberry, new to science, was documented as an “excellent fruit”.

August 22, 1804 – Elk Point, South Dakota. First Election west of the Mississippi River was conducted by Lewis and Clark following the death of Sergeant Floyd. Three Privates were in contention for Sergeant status, Patrick Gass, William Bratton, and George Gibson. Gass received the highest number of votes and was installed as Sergeant of the 2nd Squad.

August 23, 1804 – One mile southeast of Vermillion, South Dakota. A wide variety of wildlife was sighted on this day; Joseph Field killed the expedition’s first buffalo.

August 24, 1804 – Newcastle, Nebraska – Ionia Volcano. Clark recorded: “Those bluffs appear to have been lately on fire”. As late as 1877, scientists believed that the bluff was a true volcano caused to erupt when the flooding Missouri River poured water onto molten rock in subterranean caverns. By 1900, investigations proved that the eruptions were due to the hear of oxidation of damp pyritiferous and carbonaceous Carille shale on fresh exposures provided by the rapid erosion of the river bluffs.

for the boy grew up to be the famous “Struck By The Ree”, Chief of the Yankton Tribe. “Struck By The Ree’s” monument is located in Greenwood, South Dakota.

September 7, 1804 – Corps camp was at “the Tower,” four miles southeast of the Nebraska/South Dakota border on the Nebraska side, near Lynch, Nebraska. The men investigated a prairie dog town, described it for science and captured a prairie dog. This captured prairie dog survived the trip in the keelboat to Fort Mandan, wintered over and returned back down river to Washington DC for President Jefferson.

September 10, 1804 – The camp was on Pocatontas, or Towhead Island, now inundated by Lake Francis Case. On Cedar Island Clark found the fossil remains of the backbone, teeth and ribs of an ancient sea-dwelling creature called a plesiosaur, 45 feet long. Some of the vertebra apparently are now in the Smithsonian Institute.

September 11, 1804 – Near Platte, South Dakota. After being separated from the party for more than two weeks, Private George Shannon re-joins the keelboat. Shannon, the youngest member of the party at age 19, had gotten lost on the prairie and run out of bullets. He had gone 12 days without eating, except for some wild grapes and a rabbit, which he shot using a piece of stick in place of a bullet.

September 12, 1804 – In the vicinity of Platte, South Dakota. A Lewis and Clark discovery – the sharp-tailed grouse. Although they never gave a full description of the grouse, they sent a live specimen to Jefferson from Fort Mandan in April 1805. The Grouse did not survive the trip.

September 14, 1804 – In the vicinity of Chamberlain, South Dakota. First scientific description of the pronghorn, called by Lewis and Clark as a “goat”.

September 16, 1804 – Near present day Chamberlain, South Dakota. The Corps encamp to dry their provisions after 3 days of rain. Lewis documents: “Vast herds of buffalo deer, Elk, and Antilopes were seen feeding in every direction as far as the eye of the observer could reach.” The jackrabbit, antelope, mule deer, black-billed magpie and coyote were the first detailed descriptions recorded for science by Lewis and Clark. Four living magpies were sent to Jefferson in April 1805, only one of which arrived alive.

September 20, 1804 – The Corps was in Hughes County, South Dakota, in the Grand Detour or Big Bend of the Missouri area. The men could walk easily across the narrow land areas between the bends in the river. Clark noted: “I walked on Shore . . . Saw numbers of Buffalo and Goats, I saw a Hare and believe he run into a hole in the Side of a hill . . . None of those Goats has any Beard, they are all Keenly made and is butifull.”

September 23, 1804 – Encamped near “Ruebens Creek” present Medicine Creek, South Dakota. Lewis & Clark are informed by three young native boys, that a band of “Tetons” are camped at the next creek. They present the boys with a twist of tobacco with directions to their Chiefs that they would like to speak to them the next day.

September 24, 1804 – Within the boundaries of modern Pierre, South Dakota, the Corps met and had a confrontation with the Lakota or “Teton” Sioux. The following day the men raised a flag and put up the sail awning for a council. The Lakota began to arrive about 11 a.m.; after a ceremony much like those of the past few months with other Indian tribes, the Lakota leaders feigned drunkenness and asked for more presents, declaring they would not let the Corps go on without them. The Second Chief, called the Partisan, threatened Clark, who drew his sword and called the men to arms. A potentially disastrous confrontation was finally diffused when Chief Black Buffalo resolved the conflict.

Sources Sited: Gary E. Moulton, ed. *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, Volume One, Atlas; Volume 2, August 30, 1803 – August 24, 1804; Volume 3, August 25, 1804 – April 6, 1805.