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Extract of a letter from Captain Meriwether Lewis to the President of the United States, dated (my copy says apt 17)

Fort Mandan, April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1805.

Dear Sir: Herewith enclosed you will receive an invoice of certain articles, which I have forwarded to you from this place.

Among other articles you will observe, by reference to the invoice, sixty-seven specimens of earths, salts, and minerals, and sixty specimens of plants: these are accompanied by their respective labels, expressing the days on which obtained, places where found, and also their virtues and properties, when known. By means of these labels, reference may be made to the chart of the Missouri, forwarded to the Secretary of War, on which the encampment of each day has been carefully marked: thus, the places at which these specimens have been obtained, may be easily pointed out, or again found, should any of them prove valuable to the community on further investigation.

You will also receive herewith enclosed, a part of Captain Clarke's private Journal; the other part you will find enclosed in a separate tin box. This Journal

will serve to give to you the daily details of our progress and transactions.

I shall despatch a canoe with three, perhaps four persons from the extreme navigable point of the Missouri, or the portage between this river and the Columbia river, as either may first happen. By the return of this canoe, I shall send you my Journal, and some one or two of the best of those kept by my men. I have sent a Journal kept by one of the sergeants, to Captain Stoddard, my agent at St Louis, in order as much as possible to multiply the chances of saving something. We have encouraged our men to keep Journals, and seven of them do, to whom in this respect we give every assistance in our power.

I have transmitted to the Secretary at War, every information relative to the geography of the country which we possess, together with a view of the Indian nations, containing information relative to them, on those points with which I conceived it important that the Government should be informed.

By reference to the Muster rolls forwarded

to the War Department, you will see the state of the party; in addition to which we have two interpreters, one negro servant to Captain Clarke; one Indian woman, wife to one of the interpreters, and a Mandan man, whom we take with a view to restore peace between the Snake Indians, and those in this neighborhood, amounting in total with ourselves to thirty-three persons. By means of the interpreters and Indians, we shall be enabled to converse with all the Indians that we shall probably meet with on the Missouri.

I have forwarded to the secretary at War my public accounts, rendered up to the present day. They have been much longer delayed than I had any idea they would have been, when we departed from the Illinois; but this delay, under the circumstances which I was compelled to act, has been unavoidable. The provision perogue and her crew, could not have been dismissed in time to have returned to St. Louis last Fall, without evidently in my opinion, hazarding the fate of the enterprise in which I am engaged;

and I therefore did not hesitate to prefer the censure that I may have incurred by the detention of these papers to that of risking in any degree the success of the expedition. To me, the detention of these papers has formed a serious source of disquiet and anxiety, and the recollection of your particular charge to me on this subject, has made it still more poignant.

I am fully aware of the inconvenience which must have arisen to the War Department, from the want of these vouchers, previous to the last session of Congress, but how to avert it was out of my power to devise.

From this place we shall send the barge and crew early tomorrow morning, with orders to proceed as expeditiously as possible to St. Louis; by her we send our despatches, which I trust will get safe to hand. Her ~~Crew~~ consists of ten able-bodied men, well armed and provided with a sufficient stock of provision to last them to St. Louis. I have but little doubt but they will be fired on by the Sioux; but they have pledged themselves to us that they will not yield while there is a man of them living. Our baggage is all embarked.

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on board six small canoes, and two perogues; we shall set out at the same moment that we despatch the barge. One, or perhaps both of these perogues, we shall leave at the falls of the Missouri, from whence we intend continuing our voyage in the canoes, and a perogue of skins, the frame of which was prepared at Harper's Ferry. This perogue is now in a situation which will enable us to prepare it in the course of a few hours. As our vessels are now small, and the current of the river much more moderate, we calculate upon travelling at the rate of twenty or twenty-five miles per day, as far as the falls of the Missouri. Beyond this point, or the first range of Rocky Mountains, situated about one hundred miles further, any calculation with respect to our daily progress, can be little more than bare conjecture. The circumstance of the Snake Indians possessing large quantities of horses, is much in our favor, as by means of horses the transportation of our baggage will be rendered easy and expeditious over land, from the Missouri to the Columbia.

Secretary

river. Should this river not prove navigable where we first meet with it, our present intention is, to continue our march by land down the river, until it becomes so, or to the Pacific Ocean. The map which has been forwarded to the Secretary of War, will give you the idea we entertain of the connexion of these rivers, which has been formed from the corresponding testimony of a number of Indians, who have visited that country, and who have been separately and carefully examined on that subject and we therefore think it entitled to some degree of confidence. Since our arrival at this place, we have subsisted principally on meat, with which our guns have supplied us amply, and have thus been enabled to reserve the parched meal, portable soup, and a considerable proportion of pork and flour, which we had intended for the more difficult parts of our voyage. If Indian information can be credited, the vast quantity of game with which the country abounds through which we are to pass, leaves us but little to apprehend from the want of food.

We do not calculate on completing our voyage within the present year, but expect to reach the Pacific ocean, and return as far as the head of the Missouri, or perhaps to this place, before Winter.

\* You may therefore expect me to meet you at Montachello in September 1806.

On our return we shall probably pass down the Yellow Stone river, which from Indian information, waters one of the fairest portions of this continent.

I can see no material or probable obstruction to our progress, and entertain, therefore, the most sanguine hopes of complete success. As to myself, individually, I never enjoyed a more perfect state of good health than I have since we commenced our voyage. My inestimable friend and companion, Captain Clarke, has also enjoyed good health generally. At this moment every individual of the party is in good health and excellent spirits, zealously attached to the enterprise, and anxious to proceed; not a whisper of discontent or murmur is to be heard among them; but all in unison act with the most

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perfect harmony. With such men  
I have every thing to hope, and  
but little to fear. Be so good  
as to present my most affectionate  
regard to all my friends, and be  
assured of the sincere and  
unalterable attachment of,

Your most obedient servant,  
Meriwether Lewis  
Captain 1<sup>st</sup> U. S. Reg't of Infantry.

Th. Jefferson,  
President U. S.