

Reaching the area we know as Montana, Lewis and Clark came upon a fork in the road. If they turned the wrong way, they would not only lose valuable time, they would dishearten their men.

Which direction was correct? The Hidatsa had told the leaders to look for a waterfall, but they were not expecting the waterfall they actually found! The Great Falls of the Missouri would test the mettle of every man in the expedition.

The National Park Service, quoting from the Corps of Discovery record, tells us what it was like when the first white man gazed at the magnificent Great Falls of the Missouri:

The Great Falls Portage presented Lewis and Clark with one of the most challenging ordeals of the expedition. On June 13, 1805, Lewis and a small advance party witnessed "the grandest sight" (DeVoto 1997, 137) when they became the first white men to see the Great Falls of the Missouri River.

Lewis commented that "from the reflection of the sun on the spray or mist which arises from these falls is a beautiful rainbow produced which adds not little to the beauty of this majestically grand senery" (138).

Unable to traverse the falls by canoe, the men had to carry every vital piece - of everything they had - by hand and foot, walking seventeen miles around the falls. And ... they did it cheerfully, according to the expedition's journals. The delay at the falls cost about a month's worth of time.

As the Corps of Discovery continued to trudge ahead, the men were worn out - and they had not yet reached the mountains. Despite the constant adversity, there is no record that Lewis and Clark ever quarreled or disagreed.

Still walking, the group desperately needed horses. The Shoshone had them, but Sacagawea had not yet located her tribe. She was seeing familiar things, but it had been some time she she was kidnapped - by the Hidatsa - then sold to the Mandan Sioux. Where were her people?

Ahead of the expedition was the source of the Missouri. Ahead of them were the mountains. Without horses, the men could not complete their mission.

Lewis finally made contact with the Shoshone. Those Native Americans held the fate of the expedition in their hands. If they would not sell horses to Lewis and Clark, the explorers could not continue west.

Then ... at just the right moment ... Sacagawea made a remarkable discovery. The Shoshone chief - Cameahwait ("One Who Never Walks") - was her brother! Lewis and Clark named the meeting place "Camp Fortunate."

See, also, these videos:

Lewis and Clark - Corps of Discovery

Lewis and Clark Meet Sacagawea

Lewis and Clark - Reach the Pacific Ocean

Lewis and Clark - After the Corps of Discovery

Meriwether Lewis - Girandoni Air Rifle

Sacajawea - Interpreter for Lewis and Clark

Credits:

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Directed by:

William Kronick

Jack Kaufman

Bert Haanstra
Terry Sanders
Nicholas Clapp

Narrated by:
Jeff Bridges

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Lewis-and-Clark-Meeting-with-the-Shoshone>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/Lewis-and-Clark-Meeting-with-the-Shoshone>