

Westward bound.

by Annabel Wildrick

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On May 14, 1804, Meriwether Lewis, William Clark, and the Corps of Discovery set out across America. On the journey west, the expedition met almost 50 different America Indian groups, of tribes. For the first time, white Americans began to realize how many native people live in this vast and west of the Mississippi. All along the way, American Indians helped make Lewis and Clark's incredible journey possible. Read about some of the people Lewis and Clark met.

The Oto and Missouri people were hunters and farmers along the Missouri River. These were the first Indians with whom Lewis and Clark held a ceremonial meeting, or council. Lewis and Clark gave away presents and showed off the latest of the white man's technology: compasses, magnets, and telescopes. They spoke about the Indian's new "Great Father" in the East: President Thomas Jefferson. Lewis and Clark repeated this ceremony each time they met a new American Indian tribe.

The Mandan people farmed along the Missouri, too. During the winter that Lewis and Clark spent at Fort Mandan, the adventurers traded with the Indians for food and other supplies. While there, Lewis and Clark met the Shoshone woman Sacagawea and her husband, who guided them for the rest of the journey.

The Shoshone people lived east of the Rockies and moved from place to place hunting and gathering food. The Shoshone knew the land on both sides of the Rocky Mountains, and they had horses, which the men needed for crossing the mountains. (On pages 14-15, find out how Sacagawea helped the expedition get their horses.

The Nez Perce people lived in villages on the plains west of the Rocky Mountains, where they fished in clear streams and gathered plants in the mountain fields. They also had the largest herd of horses in the land. After the terrible 11-day crossing of the Bitterroot Mountains, Starving explorers stuffed themselves on the delicious salmon and other food the Nez Perce gave them.

The Clatsop people lived on the south side of the great Columbia River. They had plenty of food; they also had fur for clothes and trading. One of the village chiefs, Coboway, helped the explorers decide where to build their home for the winter of the 1805-06. (Read about Fort Clatsop on pages 28-29.)