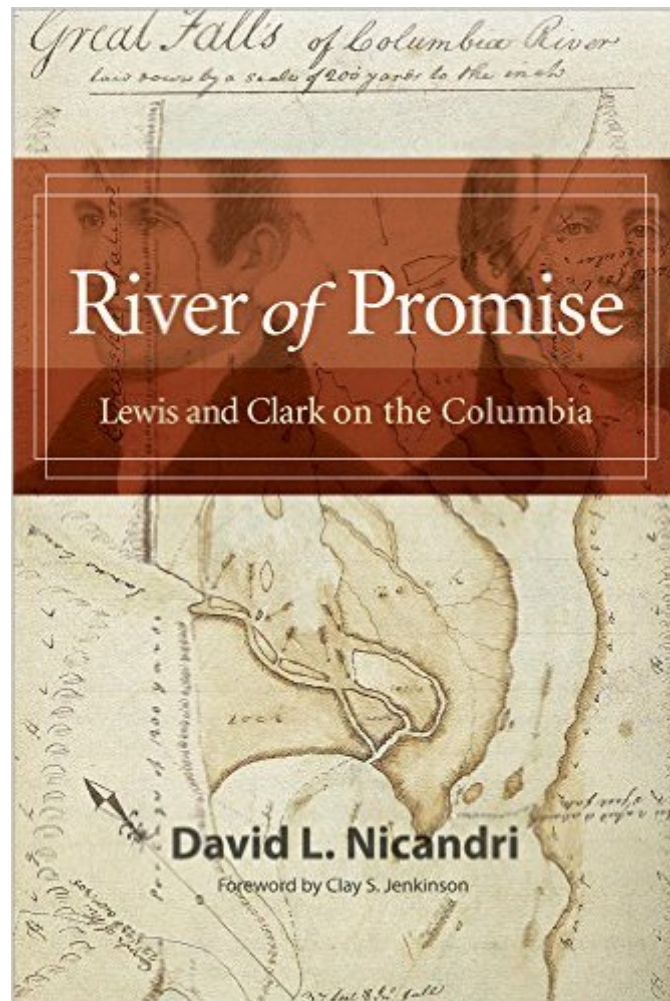


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River Of Promise: Lewis And Clark On The Columbia



Synopsis

In the many published accounts of the Lewis and Clark expedition, historians have tended to undervalue the explorers' encounter with Columbia River country. Most narratives emphasize Lewis and Clark'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 Clark'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 Lewis'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 Lewis'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.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

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.

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