

LEWIS & CLARK EXPEDITION

By George Constantourakis

In 1803 President Jefferson sent James Monroe to Paris to aid Robert Livingston in the Louisiana Purchase. They negotiated the Louisiana Purchase with eloquent finesse. On Nov. 30 1803, the Louisiana Territory was handed over by the Spanish governor to the French perfect. Then three weeks later in Dec. 1803 it was transferred to the United States.

Soon after President Jefferson sent his friend Meriwether Lewis and William Clark and their Corps of Discovery on a quest to find a Northwest Passage to the Pacific. Jefferson was also interested in every aspect of the land and he instructed them to observe and record *"the face of the country, its growth & vegetable productions...the animals of the country generally, & especially those not known in the U.S."*

In April 1804, they set out from St. Louis up the Missouri River. Lewis and Clark were amateur naturalists but careful observers, they described hundreds of plants and animals previously unknown to science. Near the mouth of the river Vermillion in South Dakota the explorers saw the American Bison (Buffalo). They commented on their great numbers. Clark wrote: *"I assented to the high Country and from an eminence I had a view of ... near 20,000 of those animals feeding on this plain."* In spite of the Bison's powerful appearance, Lewis found them *"so gentle that the men frequently throw sticks and stones at them in order to drive them out of the way."* Commenting on their great numbers Clark noted that one day they had to wait an hour while a Bison herd crossed the river in front of them. In South Dakota, the explorers often saw Bighorn Sheep crossing on sharp cliff faces. Lewis wrote *"a kind of Anamale with large Circular horns"* in places where *"had they made one false step they must have been precipitated"* at least 500 feet. In addition to noting animals new to science, they collected dozens of plant specimens, drying and pressing them for the trip back east. In spite of the loss of some of their specimens due to water seeping into the cache; they still managed to return with about 200 plant specimens

.For the winter they stayed at Fort Mandan. They acquired Toussaint Charbonneau and his Shoshone wife as guides. They followed the Missouri, then crossed the Rockies at Lemhi Pass. During the gruelling crossing of the Rockies food ran low and the men almost starved. On the mountain cliffs they saw the Mountain Goat (*Oreamnos americanus*). On August 24, 1805 at Lemhi County, Idaho Clark wrote in his journal: *"It is about the size of the common sheep, the wool is reather shorter..."*.

After crossing the Rockies and having received food from the Nez Perce Indians, they canoed down the Clearwater, Snake and Columbia Rivers to the Pacific Ocean and established Clatsop (Astoria, Oregon).

In the Spring of 1806 they started for the return trip. After several month, on September 20 the reached the plains and they spotted animals that thrilled them - domestic cows- which meant they were nearly home. They went down the Missouri River to St. Louis. Jefferson was delighted with their report, even though no waterway was found to the Pacific Ocean.

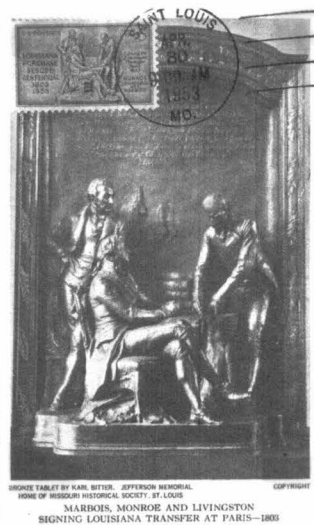
LEWIS & CLARK EXPEDITION Clockwise from Left:

(Figure 1) **DISCOVERY OF LOUISIANA (1682)** by Cavalier de La Salle. **Issue:** Dec. 18, 1982. **For:** Tricentenary of the Discovery of Louisiana. **Cancel:** First Day, Paris, special mention: 'DECOUVERTE DE LA LOUISIANNE', concordant illustration (triple).

(Figure 2). **THE LOUISIANA PURCHASE.** **Issue:** Apr. 30, 1953. **For:** 150th anniversary of the Louisiana Purchase. **Cancel:** First Day, Saint Louis MO, regular.

(Figure 3) **LEWIS AND CLARK EXPEDITION.** **Issue:** July 28, 1954. **For:** 150th anniversary of their Expedition. **Cancel:** First Day, Charlottesville VA, regular.

(Figure 4) **LEWIS AND CLARK EXPEDITION.** **Issue:** July 28, 1954. **For:** 150th anniversary of their Expedition. **Cancel:** First Day, Sioux City, Iowa, special.



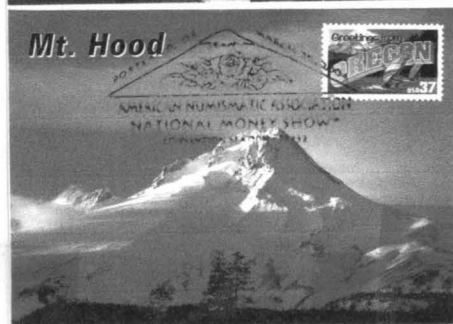
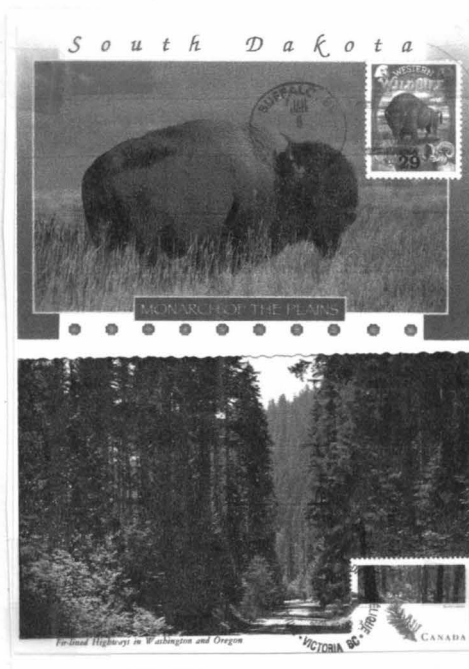
LEWIS & CLARK EXPEDITION Clockwise from Left:

(Figure 5) AMERICAN BISON (BUFFALO), SOUTH DAKOTA. Issue: Oct. 18, 1994. For: Legends of the West - Western Wildlife. Cancel: Jan. 8, 1996, Buffalo SD, regular.

(Figure 6) MOUNTAIN GOAT, ROCKIES. Issue: June. 13, 1987. For: American Wildlife. Cancel: First Day, Toronto, Canada, special illustration and mention: 'USPS CAPEX STA'.

(Figure 7) MOUNT HOOD, OREGON. Issue: May 12, 2002. For: Greetings from America - Oregon. Cancel: Mar. 19, 2004, Portland OR, special mention, concordant illustration of Mount Hood (triple).

(Figure 8) RAINFORESTS OF THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST. Issue: Aug. 7, 1990. For: Canadian Forests. Cancel: Sept. 12, 2001 Victoria BC, regular.



LEWIS & CLARK EXPEDITION Clockwise from Left:

(Figure 9) LEWIS, EXPEDITION TRAIL FROM ST. LOUIS TO THE PACIFIC OCEAN. Issue: May 14, 2004. For: Bicentennial of Lewis & Clark Expedition. Cancel: First Day, Orofino ID, regular.

(Figure 10) LEWIS & CLARK EXPEDITION - MONTANA TRAIL. Issue: May 14, 2004. For: Bicentennial of Lewis & Clark Expedition. Cancel: First Day, Charles MT, regular.

(Figure 11) LEWIS & CLARK EXPEDITION - MONTANA TRAIL. Issue: May 14, 2004. For: Bicentennial of Lewis & Clark Expedition. Cancel: First Day, Great Falls MT, regular.

(Figure 12) CLARK. Issue: May 14, 2004. For: Bicentennial of Lewis & Clark Expedition. Cancel: First Day, Pierre SD, regular.

