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Alan H. Archambault
Jean Baptiste Charbonneau
The "Little Dancing Boy" of the Corps of Discovery

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Editor Alan Archambault

President's Report

Except for a few days when the temperatures were extremely hot (for the Northwest), beautiful weather continues to bless the area, bringing visitors and making for a busy time at the Museum. Figuratively speaking, the Museum has experienced a "hot" summer season because, in addition to the normal visitor stream, curator Alan Archambault and the ROTC Summer Camp staff were able to coordinate Museum tours for the hundreds of ROTC cadets attending ROTC summer camp at Fort Lewis.

The tours, in groups of about 125 cadets, began on 2 July and will end about the middle of August. Through the tours, the Museum is performing a service by helping to instill in these future Army leaders an appreciation of their connectivity with the past while they go on to play their role in future Army history.

Listening to their animated conversations and talking with some of the cadets reminded me of my own days as an ROTC cadet attending summer camp at Fort Lewis over four decades ago. I could only marvel at how young these cadets looked and whether I really looked as young then!

Business has been brisk at the Cannon Shop. The ROTC cadet visits have provided an unexpected and welcome addition to our normal sales revenues, which are at their highest during the summer months. Another improvement that has resulted in a substantial boost in sales was the installation of the capability to accept credit cards. Since the acceptance of credit cards, well over half of sales transactions at the Cannon Shop are now by "plastic."

On 23 September the statue of Sergeant John Ordway, the first sergeant of Lewis and Clark's Corps of Discovery, will be officially dedicated. Located in the new memorial park near the Main Gate of Fort Lewis, the statue represents not only Sergeant John Ordway, but all Army noncommissioned officers through history. Members of the Friends of the Fort Lewis Museum are invited to the program which will begin at 1100 hours.

Mark your calendars for our fall general membership brunch on 24 September. The program will feature a discussion and demonstration of the current individual combat uniform and related battle gear. Our guests will be LTC Alfredo Mycue, commander, 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, and some of his soldiers. It will be interesting to see how far the Army has come, technologically, in clothing and equipping the individual soldier for combat. We hope you will be able to attend.

Ian Larson

Curator's Report

It has been a grand summer for the Fort Lewis Military Museum. In addition to the ROTC tours, we have had many summer camp tours as well as general visitors. All in all, it has been a memorable summer for sharing our military history with the military and civilian communities.

On 20-21 September we expect to receive our re-certification inspection by the U.S. Army Center of Military History. The inspections are conducted every five years to ensure that Army Museums meet the minimum requirements of Army Regulation 870-20. In preparation for the inspection, the Museum staff has been busy putting all our "paperwork" in order to ensure that we put our best foot forward for the inspection team.

As the Bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark Expedition comes to an end, I decided to run two more Lewis and Clark related articles in the *Banner*. The photographs of Jean Baptiste Charbonneau's grave marker are courtesy of Friends George and Raymonde Limoges. They visited the site in Oregon, where the youngest member of the Lewis and Clark Expedition is buried, and provided me with several excellent images.

The Corps of Discovery arrived in St. Louis on 23 September 1806. On the two hundredth anniversary of that event, Fort Lewis will dedicate a statue to Sergeant John Ordway, the first sergeant of the expedition. I hope many of our Museum Friends will be able to attend this important commemoration.

Alan Archambault



Jean Baptiste Charbonneau

The Youngest Member of the Lewis and Clark Expedition

Although he was not “officially” a member of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, young Jean Baptiste Charbonneau was a popular and endearing presence on the trip from Fort Mandan to the Pacific Coast and back.

Jean Baptiste was born on 11 February 1805, while the expedition was wintering at Fort Mandan, Louisiana Territory, in what is now the state of North Dakota. His father, Toussaint Charbonneau, was a French Canadian fur trader who was living among the Hidatsa and Mandan Indians during the Winter of 1804-1805.

His mother was Sacagawea, a Shoshoni Indian who had been captured by the Hidatsa and was sold to Toussaint Charbonneau. From the historical record, Charbonneau considered Sacagawea his wife, even if it was not a formal arrangement.

In November 1804, Toussaint was hired as an interpreter by Captains Lewis and Clark. Sacagawea was to accompany the expedition to help her husband interpret the Shoshoni language, which he did not speak. When the expedition left Fort Mandan in April 1805, Toussaint, Sacagawea, and their infant son were part of the party. Having the Charbonneau family on the journey turned out to be an unexpected asset for the expedition. Captain William Clark noted on 19 October 1805, “as soon as they (Indians) saw the squaw wife of the interpreter, all came out and appeared to assume new life, the sight of the Indian woman...confirmed those people of our friendly intentions, as no woman ever accompanies a war party of Indians in this quarter.”

Often carried on his mother’s back, little Jean Baptiste admirably endured all the hardships of the expedition. While awaiting the melting of the winter snows in Lolo Pass in the Bitterroot Mountains, near present day Kamiah, Idaho, little Baptiste survived a two week long infection of the jaw and throat.

Captain William Clark was particularly fond of Jean Baptiste and nicknamed him “Pompy” or “Pomp.” Clark also referred to him as his “little dancing boy.” Clark was so taken by the little boy that he even named a prominent and unique rock formation on the south bank of the Yellowstone River, in present day Montana, “Pompey’s Tower.”

In August 1806, near the end of the expedition, Toussaint Charbonneau and his family were “mustered out” of service to the Corps of Discovery at the Mandan Village. Captain Clark expressed his gratitude to the family and offered to raise and educate Jean Baptiste in St. Louis. Several years later, in 1809, the Charbonneau family visited St. Louis and Jean Baptiste was placed in school under Captain Clark’s patronage.

It is believed that after his schooling began, Jean Baptiste had little or no contact with his parents.

Toussaint and Sacagawea returned to the frontier in 1811. Sacagawea is thought to have died in 1812 leaving behind an infant girl named Lizette. The baby was adopted by John Luttig, a fur trade clerk at Fort Manuel. Toussaint roamed the west and worked as an interpreter for fur companies and the U.S. government. He lived to be over 80 years old and died around 1843.

At the age of nineteen, Jean Baptiste met Prince Paul Wilhelm, Duke of Wurtenburg. Taking a liking to the young man, the prince took him to Europe where they toured many countries between 1823 and 1829. During that time, Jean Baptiste became a “cultured gentleman speaking several languages.”

The call of his native land brought Jean Baptiste back to America in 1829. He became known as a frontier guide, scout and mountain man. Respected by other frontiersmen, his most notable feat was leading the Mormon Battalion to California during the Mexican-American War.

In 1849, the literate Jean Baptiste took a position as Alcalde (magistrate) of the San Luis Rey Mission in California. He soon left this position, since he disliked the treatment of the Native Americans by the mission system. Jean Baptiste soon answered the lure of the California gold fields. It appears that he did not strike it rich, since by 1861 he is listed as a clerk in the Orleans Hotel in Auburn, California.

In 1866, Jean Baptiste embarked on one more adventure to a new gold field in the Montana Territory. However, while on the grueling journey, he contracted pneumonia and died on 16 May 1866, at Inskip Station, Oregon Territory. Jean Baptiste Charbonneau was sixty-one years old. He had lived a remarkable life that began with one of the most famous of all American journeys.



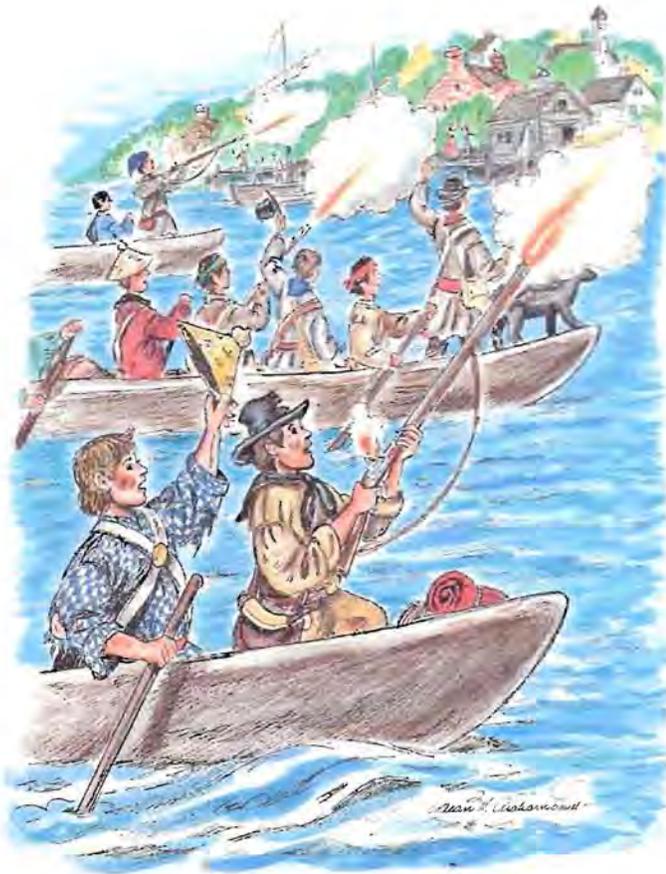
Jean Baptiste Charbonneau grave marker.

The Corps of Discovery Completes its Journey on 23 September 1806

Two hundred years ago the Corps of Discovery completed its epic journey to the Pacific Ocean and back to the St. Louis area. Captains Meriwether Lewis, William Clark, and the soldiers of the Corps of Discovery had traveled a total of 7,689 miles. They had mapped areas never before charted, had met and traded with over 50 native American tribes, and collected specimens and information on dozens of unknown plants and animals. They paved the way for tens of thousands of Americans who followed their trail in the decades to come. Their epic journey was to become the most famous story of exploration in the history of the United States.

Sergeant John Ordway described the homecoming in his journal entry for August 23, 1806:

"We set out after breakfast and proceeded on. Soon arrived at the mouth of the Missouri. Entered the Mississippi River and landed at River DuBoise where we wintered in 1804....We delayed a short time and about 12 o'clock we arrived in St. Louis, fired three rounds as we approached the town and landed opposite the center of town, the people gathered on the shore huzzahed three cheers. We unloaded the canoes and carried the baggage all up to a store house in town. Drew out the canoes. Then the party all considerable much rejoiced that we have the Expedition completed and now we look for boarding in town and wait for our settlement and then we intend to return to our native homes to see our parents one more as we have been so long from them."



Members of the Corps of Discovery fire a salute as they approach St. Louis.



Soldier of the Corps of Discovery
September 1806

The Friends of the Fort Lewis Military Museum

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