

Voyage of Discovery

On the Lewis and Clark Trail – Council Bluffs, Iowa, to Rapid City, South Dakota

9 July 2021



Pronghorn graze as a late afternoon thunderstorm approaches Badlands National Park, Wall, South Dakota.



Some of Badlands National Park's most bad-ass lands.

“Manifest Destiny”

In 1803, when the United States bought the “Colony or Province of Louisiana” from France, what did it actually buy? Put another way, what exactly did France own that it could sell to the United States?

Not 828,000 square miles / 2,140,000 square kilometers of real estate, as most history books state, but “the adjacent Islands belonging to Louisiana all public lots and Squares, vacant lands and all public buildings, fortifications, barracks and other edifices which are not private property,” in the words of the treaty preserved in the National Archives.¹

In real estate terms, that was a minuscule tract.

Other than the cost of cursory explorations, France hadn't spent a franc to buy the land from its inhabitants. Louisiana belonged to France – in the eyes of Europe's colonial powers as well as the new United States – because in 1682, French explorer René-Robert Cavelier, planted a cross at the mouth of the Mississippi River and declared that all the land drained by that river belonged to King Louis XIV. Prior to France losing the part of that claim east of the Mississippi to Great Britain in what Americans call the French and Indian War, the Louisiana Territory stretched from western Pennsylvania to the Rocky Mountains and from the Gulf of Mexico to Canada.



American Progress by John Gast (1872). “Columbia” brings light to the West. Original in Autry Museum of the American West, Los Angeles.

The Europeans who moved to the Americas and spread throughout the two continents encountered existing inhabitants living according to their own societal ways – not considered equal – but the existence of those ways was self-evident. This was a different cultural encounter from the one between European-Americans and black Africans who were unloaded from ships as merchandise, not as fellow humans who had been kidnapped from their societies across the Atlantic.

There was a common element, however. The ultimate decisions governing these encounters were reserved by white people for themselves.

“What Thomas Jefferson purchased wasn’t actually a tract of land. It was the imperial rights to that land, almost all of which was still owned, occupied, and ruled by Native Americans,” wrote Robert Lee of Cambridge University, an expert on U.S. government-American Indian treaties, [in this Slate article](#).²

The Louisiana Purchase Treaty meant those “imperial rights” – the rule or authority of a sovereign state over its dependencies – belonged to the government of the United States and would not be contested by governments of countries like Great Britain, Spain or France. But title to the land remained with Native Americans, subject to contract or conquest.

Jefferson, the third U.S. president, preferred acquisition by the first means but was amenable to the latter.

His view, as that of George Washington before him, was a belief in the United States’ ultimate future as a continent-spanning nation. “Manifest Destiny,” a yet-to-be-coined phrase, was a widely held belief among many white Americans and European newcomers. Some saw Manifest Destiny as divine intention. Even before independence, they were already moving westward and pressing against the Mississippi.

Obviously it was an encounter between a rapidly growing number of white people, armed with superior technology, against fewer and militarily weaker Natives. From the popular white perspective, however, it was really about “civilization” vs. savages.

Jefferson’s proposed resolution was a “[civilization program](#).”³ Natives who wished to keep their customs and semi-nomadic lifestyle of subsistence hunting, would be “removed” to part of the new territory west of the Mississippi reserved for them. But Indians who could be persuaded to become “civilized” – settle permanently, clear the forests, and farm – could stay. Among other things, that would mean men taking up what Natives considered women’s work but which whites considered the most refined of male occupations.

“Jefferson just believes that native cultures are, in the long run, doomed,” said Alan Taylor, a University of Virginia history professor whose online lecture I attended last month.⁴ “... Jefferson felt that he was entitled to expand the United States in this way and to absorb native peoples (via intermarriage) thoroughly. As you could well imagine, native peoples didn't agree with him.”

Despite Jefferson’s stated policy, three months before Lewis and Clark set out from Saint Louis, [he wrote to William Henry Harrison](#),⁵ governor of the Indiana Territory and later the ninth president: “To promote this disposition to exchange lands which they [Indians] have to spare & we want, for necessities, which we have to spare & they want, we shall push our trading houses, and be glad to see the good & influential individuals among them run in debt, because we observe that when these debts get beyond what the individuals can pay, they become willing to lop th[em off] by a cession of lands.”

An “Indian removal” policy was not enacted until 1830 by the seventh president, Andrew Jackson. By then, the issue of Indians becoming “civilized” no longer mattered. [Gold had been discovered two years earlier on Cherokee land in Georgia at a place now called Dahlonega, a Cherokee word for “yellow money.”](#)⁶ Georgia held a lottery to redistribute Cherokee land to whites and denied the Cherokee mining rights. Within two years [5,000 white gold-seekers had moved onto Cherokee land](#).⁷ Despite a U.S. Supreme Court ruling that only the federal government, not states, had authority over Native lands, [Jackson and the state of Georgia ignored it](#).⁸

About 100,000 Cherokee, Creek, Chickasaw, Choctaw and Seminoles, called the “[Five Civilized Tribes](#)”⁹ because of their willingness to adopt or adapt to white culture – to the point that some owned slaves – were marched along the infamous “Trail of Tears” from the southeastern states to a new Indian Territory, now Oklahoma, one of the states carved from the Louisiana Purchase. About 10,000 died of diseases and in

attacks from white settlers on the way. The National Park Service and Cherokee Nation produced a 20-minute video about it in 2013.¹⁰

Some Cherokee escaped removal and now occupy the Qualla Boundary in North Carolina's Great Smoky Mountains adjacent to the national park.¹¹ Land within the boundary is held in trust for the Eastern Band of Cherokee by the federal government and only enrolled members of the band are allowed to own or transfer property within the boundary. It is self-governing, separate from state and federal governments.¹²

Oklahoma, home to six Tribes at the time of Lewis and Clark, has 38 reservations today and the second highest proportion of Native people of any state after Alaska. Half of the 10 states with the highest percentage of American Indians¹³ lie along Lewis and Clark's route to the Pacific. But the 6.8 million Americans of indigenous or mixed ancestry today comprise only 2.1% of the total U.S. population.¹⁴



Secretary of Interior Deb Haaland

that she is the first Native American (Laguna Pueblo) appointed to any cabinet position.

The Native American story is a tremendously significant part of where we're traveling. They were Lewis and Clark's daily concern. The 15 states formed partly or entirely from the Louisiana Purchase contain more than a quarter of Natives (28%), included those of mixed race, in the United States.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) handles relations between the federal government and today's 574 federally recognized sovereign tribal nations, each with its own government. Tribal citizens – that's the correct legal term – are also U.S. citizens. About 22% live on one of 334 reservations¹⁵ whose combined area is slightly larger than Montana,¹⁶ the fourth largest state. We will travel through states with 59 reservations catalogued two pages further on).

It's also significant that we are traveling in the year that Deb Haaland was named secretary of the Department of Interior, the cabinet department that houses both the BIA and National Park Service. Haaland's Norwegian surname disguises the fact

Beginning in the late 1800s, the BIA paid Christian groups to educate children from Indian reservations in boarding schools and later founded additional schools itself. One of the earliest and most famous was the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, founded in 1879 by Army Col. William Pratt. In white America, Carlisle is best known for its football teams, Coach Pop Warner and Jim Thorpe, a member of Iowa's Sac and Fox Tribe, who was a double gold medalist in the 1912 Stockholm Olympics and later a professional football, basketball and baseball player.

Carlisle is known among Native Americans for Pratt's 1892 speech expressing his philosophy for educating American Indians, which became the model for these schools:¹⁷ "A great general has said that the only good Indian is a dead one, and that high sanction of his destruction has been an enormous factor in promoting Indian massacres. In a sense, I agree with the sentiment, but only in this: that all the Indian there is in the race should be dead. Kill the Indian in him, and save the man."

In a *Washington Post* op-ed last month, Haaland recalled that her maternal grandparents "were stolen from their families when they were only 8 years old and were forced to live away from their parents, culture and communities until they were 13. Many children like them never made it back home."¹⁸ Nearly nine of 10 of

school-age Indian children before 1926 were forced into boarding schools where they were punished for misdeeds including speaking Native languages or following Native traditions.¹⁹

Some Americans deny this is an eradication of culture. Former U.S. Senator from Pennsylvania and CNN commentator Rick Santorum said earlier this year that “We came here and created a blank slate. We birthed a nation from nothing. I mean, there was nothing here. I mean, yes we have Native Americans, but candidly there isn't much Native American culture in American culture.”²⁰ He later said he “misspoke.”²¹

That characterization is contradicted by historians and cultural experts. Of the 11 U.S. cultural sites included on the list of 1,121 United Nations World Heritage Sites, five deal with Native American civilizations.²²

“Assimilation, in the way that Washington and Jefferson thought about it, was in fact a form of extinction,” said Native American historian Colin Calloway of Dartmouth College,²³ whose 2018 book, *The Indian World of George Washington*, was a finalist for the National Book Award for nonfiction. “... You can commit genocide on people by destroying their culture.”

Notes

¹ **Treaty between the United States of America and the French Republic**, National Archives and Records Administration https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/american_originals/louistxt.html

² **The true cost of the Louisiana Purchase**, by Robert Lee, *Slate*, March 1, 2017 http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/history/2017/03/how_much_did_the_louisiana_purchase_actually_cost.html

³ **President Jefferson and the Indian Nations**, Monticello and the University of Virginia in Charlottesville <https://www.monticello.org/thomas-jefferson/louisiana-lewis-clark/origins-of-the-expedition/jefferson-and-american-indians/president-jefferson-and-the-indian-nations/>

⁴ **Jefferson's West: Lewis, Clark and Native Americans – An Overview of the Expedition**, by Alan Taylor, University of Virginia Lifetime Learning Program, June 15, 2021. Taylor's full quote answering a question about Jefferson feeling “justified or entitled” in expanding U.S. territory to land inhabited by Native Americans was: “Well, Jefferson thought so. And so, Jefferson is playing this game that being played with European imperial powers and North America. They'd long been in the habit of laying claim to territories that, in fact, were inhabited and long possessed by native peoples. So, there was a tendency to dismiss the sovereignty of native peoples, to take it lightly and to cast them as a stereotype, as being primitive savages. Now, sometimes you could cast them as noble savages, but Thomas Jefferson, the other leaders of the United States, the leaders of Britain, France, Spain – except for a few literary figures – all regard the Indians as having an inferior level of civilization and lacking all of the attributes of sovereignty. They insist on this. I'm talking about belief; I'm not necessarily talking about reality, a powerful thing. And so, Jefferson just believes that native cultures are, in the long run, doomed. And he, as he saw it, the United States had a responsibility to try to facilitate native peoples giving up their cultures and giving up their claims to sovereignty and becoming absorbed – not just within the bounds of the United States – but within the body of the American people. Literally. He was a big believer in intermarriage between native peoples and non-native peoples, and he assumed that native peoples would cease to exist, that biologically they would be their descendants, but they would be mixed in race with the Americans, and that their cultures wouldn't exist anymore. And he felt that this was necessary as a security matter, in part for the United States because he saw independent native peoples as potential allies of American enemies, especially the British. So, Jefferson felt that he was entitled to expand the United States in this way and to absorb native peoples thoroughly. As you could well imagine, native peoples didn't agree with him.”

⁵ **Thomas Jefferson to William H. Harrison**, February 27, 1803, Retrieved from the Library of Congress <https://www.loc.gov/item/mtjib012188/>

⁶ **All Things Cherokee**, an online source for tribal information on genealogy, art and culture by Christina Berry, a citizen of the Cherokee Nation <https://www.allthingscherokee.com/dahlonega-georgia/>

⁷ **New Georgia Encyclopedia**, a program of Georgia Humanities, University of Georgia Press, the University System of Georgia and Office of the Governor <https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/gold-rush>

⁸ **Ibid** <https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/government-politics/worcester-v-georgia-1832>

⁹ **Oklahoma Indian School History**, *The Indian School Journal*, December 1915, Retrieved from the National Archives <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/2745554>

¹⁰ **Trail of Tears National Historic Trail**, National Trails NPS, YouTube posted April 18, 2013 <https://youtu.be/7LSkfmCj8Jg>

¹¹ **Qualla Boundary**, NCPedia 2006, an online resource of the North Carolina Government & Heritage Library at the State Library of North Carolina <https://ncpedia.org/qualla-boundary>

¹² **Official Government Website of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians** <https://ebci.com/government/>

¹³ **Native American Population 2021**, World Population Review <https://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/native-american-population> The 10 states with the highest percentage of Native American population are, in descending order, 1) Alaska, 20.3%, 2) Oklahoma, 13.2%, 3) New Mexico, 10.8%, **4) South Dakota, 10%**, **5) Montana, 8%**, **6) North Dakota, 6.5%**, 7) Arizona, 5.3%, 8) Wyoming, 3.6%, **9) Oregon, 3%**, **10) Washington, 2.8%**. States in **boldface** are those Lewis and Clark passed through.

¹⁴ **Ibid**

¹⁵ **Profile: American Indian/Alaska Native**, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health, May 21, 2021 <https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/omh/browse.aspx?lvl=3&lvlid=62#:~:text=22%20percent%20of%20American%20Indians.p,percentage%20of%20any%20racial%20group>

¹⁶ **Tribal Nations and the United States: An Introduction**, National Congress of American Indians, Embassy of Tribal Nations, February 2020 [https://www.ncai.org/tribalnations/introduction/Indian Country 101 Updated February 2019.pdf](https://www.ncai.org/tribalnations/introduction/Indian%20Country%20101%20Updated%20February%202019.pdf)

¹⁷ **Capt. Richard H. Pratt on the Education of Native Americans**, excerpts from a speech to the Nineteenth Annual Conference of Charities, 1892, web page created by the American Social History Project / Center for Media and Learning (Graduate Center, CUNY) and the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media (George Mason University) <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/4929>

¹⁸ **My grandparents were stolen from their families as children. We must learn about this history**, by Deb Haaland, *The Washington Post*, June 11, 2021 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/06/11/deb-haaland-indigenous-boarding-schools/>

¹⁹ **Away from Home: Native American Boarding School Stories**, a traveling exhibit of the Heard Museum of Phoenix, Arizona. <https://heard.org/boardingschool/> The exhibit was at the Clatsop County (Oregon) Historical Society's Heritage Museum in Astoria, Oregon, at the mouth of the Columbia River near Lewis and Clark's Fort Clatsop, between April 6 and May 25, 2021. <https://astoriamuseums.org/exhibit/away-from-home-native-american-boarding-school-stories/> From June 16 through August 11, which covers the time period in which these newsletters are published, the exhibit is at the Everhart Museum of Natural History, Science, and Art in Scranton, Pennsylvania. The exhibition is booked at various museums through March 16, 2025. The full schedule is at <https://nehontheroad.org/exhibition/away-from-home/>

²⁰ **Video of speech to Young America's Foundation**, Tweeted by @JasonCampbell, April 26, 2021 <https://twitter.com/JasonSCampbell/status/1386685340522536961>

²¹ **Rick Santorum says he 'misspoke' after saying 'there isn't much Native American culture in American culture'**, by Asha C. Gilbert, April 26, 2021 <https://www.usatoday.com/story/entertainment/tv/2021/04/26/rick-santorum-dismisses-native-american-culture-spurring-backlash/7384340002/>

²² **United States of America: Properties inscribed on the World Heritage List**, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, World Heritage Convention, 2021 <https://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/us> The Native American cultural sites are: Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site in Collinsville, Illinois, which I mentioned in yesterday's newsletter, Chaco Culture National Historic Park in New Mexico, Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado, Monumental Earthworks of Poverty Point in Louisiana and Taos Pueblo in New Mexico. Brief videos created for the UN by Japan broadcaster NHK,

narrated in English, can be seen for four of the five sites via the site name links. The video for the Monumental Earthworks of Poverty Point was created by the Louisiana Office of Cultural Development.

²³ **Book Talk Tuesday**, Q&A with Colin Calloway, Dartmouth College professor of Native American Studies produced by George Washington's Mount Vernon, YouTube streamed live May 12, 2020 <https://youtu.be/9xH85VCPacY>
I also attended Calloway's June 16, 2021 online lecture **A World of Change - The Native American West Before Lewis and Clark**, which was part of the University of Virginia series mentioned in Footnote 5.



Julie and I temporarily left the Lewis and Clark Trail today at Chamberlain, South Dakota, where we crossed the Missouri River at a point where this 50-foot / 15-meter tall stainless steel Native American woman, named Destiny of Earth and Sky, stands where the expedition camped on its out-bound and return trips. "My intent is to have the sculpture stand as an enduring symbol of our shared belief that all here are sacred, and in a sacred place," wrote the piece's creator, South Dakota's Artist Laureate Dale Claude Lamphere of Sturgis.

This chart will track the 77 counties in nine states that we're traveling through from St. Louis to the Pacific coast. The counties are listed in the order we enter them. Counties that the Corps of Discovery traveled through or had some other connection have red explanation cells.

TOMORROW - County-by-county in South Dakota

Start Day 4 at Rapid City, South Dakota

Via I-90

County	Population	County seat	Source of name / significance to Lewis and Clark
37. Meade	28,332	Sturgis	Fort Meade was built in the area in 1878, named for Gen. George Gordon Meade, who defeated Gen. Robert E. Lee in the Civil War at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.
38. Lawrence	25,844	Deadwood	John Lawrence, former member of the Dakota Territory legislature, sargeant-at-arms for the U.S. House of Representatives, and U.S. Marshal for the territory before retiring to become county road supervisor and election judge.

County-by-county in Wyoming

Via I-90

39. Crook	7,584	Sundance	Brigadier Gen. George Crook, an army commander during in the long-running Indian Wars.
40. Campbell	46,341	Gillette	Robert Campbell, first governor of Wyoming Territory.
41. Johnson	8,445	Buffalo	E.P. Johnson, lawyer in Cheyenne.

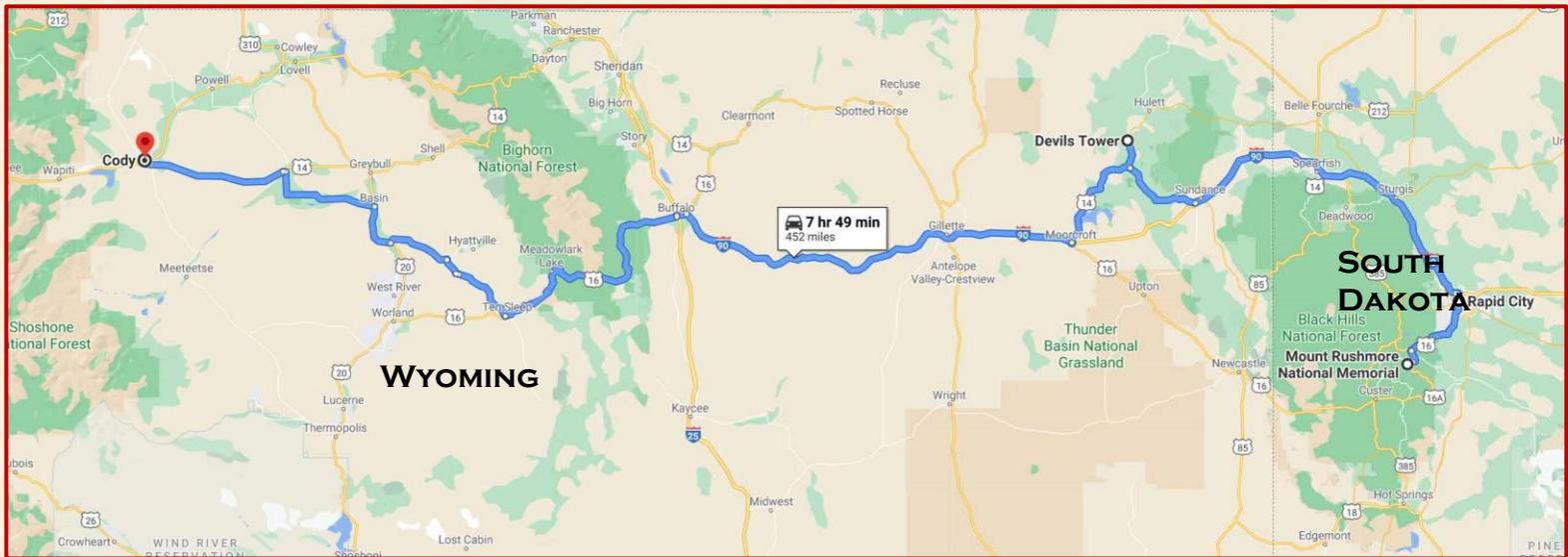
Via U.S. 16, 40 and Wyoming 30

42. Big Horn	11,790	Basin	Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep.
43. Park	29,194	Cody	Most of Yellowstone National Park, the world's first national park, established in 1872, is located within the county.

End of Day 4 at Cody, Wyoming

Day: 452 miles / 727 kilometers

Trip: 1,404 miles / 2,260 kilometers





we Came to [to] make a warm bath for Sergt. Floyd hoping it would brace him a little, before we could get him in to this bath he expired, with a great deal of composure, having Said to me before his death that he was going away and wished me to write a letter— we (took) Buried him to the top of a high round hill over looking the river & Countrey for a great distance Situated just below a Small river without a name to which we name & call Floyds river, the Bluffs Sergts. Floyds Bluff— we buried him with all the honors of War, and fixed a Ceeder post at his head with his name title & Day of the month and year Capt Lewis read the funeral Service over him after paying every respect to the Body of this desceased man (who had at All times given us proofs of his impatality Sincurity to ourselves and good will to Serve his Countrey) we returned to the Boat & proceeded to the Mouth of the little river 30 yd. wide & Camped a butifull evening

Captain William Clark
20th August [1804] Monday

On a high bluff above the Missouri River outside Sioux City, Iowa, Julie sits below a monument and 15-star U.S. flag at the burial place of Sergeant Charles Floyd, the only member of the Lewis and Clark Expedition to lose his life on the journey. Historians believe Floyd died of a burst appendix, a condition from which no physician of the time would have been able to save him.