

Lewis and Clark Commemorative

The 150th Anniversary of the start of the Lewis and Clark expedition up the Missouri was commemorated by the State Historical Society of Iowa in a special edition of *The Palimpsest* issued in September 1954. It presents a vivid picture of one of the most colorful events in Iowa history.

After spending the winter of 1803-1804 in winter quarters at Camp Dubois [Wood River] opposite the mouth of the Missouri River in Illinois, where the recruits were drilled and disciplined (for this was a military expedition), the little band of men started up the Missouri on May 14, 1804. On July 18 they reached the southwest border of modern Iowa at what is now Fremont County. Although the men complained that the "Musquitos [were] so thick & troublesom that it was disagreeable and painfull to Continue a moment still," they rejoiced over the large quantity of fish and game which they were able to catch and kill while passing along Iowa's western border.

On August 2 a small party of Indians from the Oto and Missouri tribes were encountered. Clark wrote that the Indians were sent "Some rosted meat, Pork, flour & meal, in return they sent us Water millions." A conference was set for the

following day which was held on a bluff on the Nebraska side of the Missouri. It was for this event that Council Bluffs, Iowa, was named. Lewis and Clark informed the chiefs of the wishes of the government in Washington and gave them advice and directions as to how they were to conduct themselves. In reply, Clark wrote in his journal, the chiefs "all Delivered a Speech, acknowledging their approbation to the Speech and promising to prosue the advice & Derections given them that they wer happy to find that they had fathers which might be depended on &c." Various presents were exchanged and then, after Lewis had astonished the Indians by "Shooting the air gun a fiew Shots," the party proceeded on upstream once more.

As they approached present-day Sioux City, two events of importance in Iowa history took place. On August 19 another council was held with representatives of the Missouri and Oto Indians. More speeches were made and presents exchanged. One of the serious Indian problems was summed up when Clark noted that "those people beged much for Whiskey."

On the same day Charles Floyd, sergeant in command of one of the party's three squads, was "taken verry bad all at once with a Biliose Chorlick." Despite the attention of all members of the expedition, Sergeant Floyd got worse and on August 20, 1804, he "Died with a great deal of Composure." A half mile below the mouth of the Floyd

River, which was named for him, Floyd "was buried with the Honors of War much lamented." He is thought to have been the first white man buried in Iowa. In later years the Missouri washed away part of his grave and in 1857 his remains were moved two hundred yards inland. In 1901 the present monumental shaft was erected to his memory.

There were many cities willing to serve as the First Day of Issue for the Lewis and Clark Commemorative Stamp but Sioux City was finally designated. The choice of location was excellent for Sioux City had erected the most imposing monument honoring both the expedition and Sergeant Floyd — the only soldier to die on the expedition. The choice of date and the subject matter depicted on the stamp itself is debatable, as a careful reading of the above would indicate.

Sioux City was observing in 1954 the 100th Anniversary of its founding and had apparently prevailed upon the Post Office Department to allow its celebration to take precedence over the actual historical event that was being commemorated. As a result the date selected would have been more in keeping with the Council Bluffs-Omaha area and the "Council" with the Indians on August 3. The stamp design, on the other hand, would have been more in keeping with the Bismarck, North Dakota, region and the Mandan villages. Had the sale taken place on August 20

and had the design reproduced the Floyd Monument with pictures of Lewis and Clark on opposite sides, there would have been a perfect synchronization of time, place, and the events of the day.

The *Sioux City Journal* of July 29, 1954, carried the following account of the sale:

More than a quarter of a million first-day covers bearing the new Lewis and Clark commemorative stamps were canceled at the Sioux City postoffice Wednesday and forwarded to destinations that included every state in the nation and a score of foreign countries.

When stamp windows closed Wednesday evening, 250,710 covers had been canceled. Clerks estimated a possible 10,000 more would be deposited and canceled before midnight.

George Dubes, superintendent of finance, said 360,000 Lewis and Clark stamps had been sold at the close of business Wednesday. Orders came from all parts of the country, largely from stamp dealers. Largest single order was for \$2,733 and many for \$1,000 each.

Thirty-six extra clerks have been employed for a week to affix the stamps to covers.

Twelve stamp dealers set up first day cover tables outside the postoffice building Wednesday and all reported heavy demand, most going to Sioux City visitors as centennial souvenirs.

The number of stamps requested on first day covers ranged from a single stamp to as many as 54 on one cover, Roy Walsh, postoffice clerk, said.

A total of one and a half million of the stamps were made available to the postoffice here.

In addition to the designs of the five major concerns,

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probably as many as 10 other designs were available, according to A. L. Fluegel, Kansas City, Kan., dealer.

Boy scouts in evidence too, selling first day covers alongside the dealers.

Estimates place the number of stamp collectors in this country at 12 million.

The total sale of Lewis and Clark Commemorative First Day Covers on July 28 was 371,557, a far cry from either the Iowa Statehood Stamp or the Hoover Memorial Stamp.