

Clark to Jonathan Clark, William wrote that, in his final delirium, Lewis would apparently conceive "that he herd me Coming on, and Said that he was certain [I would] over take him, that I had herd of his Situation and would Come to his releaf."

In one sense, Clark did exactly that in taking over the project. After further delays, including the bankruptcy of the original publisher, the journals finally came out in a two-volume edition in 1814 that left out most of the expedition's significant scientific discoveries.

**W**HAT IT DID INCLUDE WAS A cartographic masterpiece: Clark's map of the West. For the first time the blank spaces on the continent had been filled in with generally accurate representations of mountain ranges and rivers. Prominently marked on Clark's map were the names of dozens of tribes that lived there, in bold type that continues to undermine the notion that the West was ever an unpopulated wilderness.

The press run was a paltry 1,417 copies. It sold poorly. Two years later, Clark still had not received his own copy. By that time the nation was beginning to forget about Lewis and Clark. Well-publicized explorations led by John Charles Fremont through the Rockies to California and John Wesley Powell down the Colorado River eventually eclipsed the Voyage of Discovery in the public's imaginings of the West. Yet publishing would revive their reputations. New editions of the journals were published in 1893 and 1904-05, bringing the saga to life a century after it happened.

When the men of the Corps of Discovery had arrived back in St. Louis in 1806, the residents "Huzzared three cheers." But they otherwise did not seem to know what to make of this crew or its achievement. Two nights later, they feted the captains at William Christy's inn. There they raised toasts to, among others, President Jefferson ("the polar star of discovery") ... Christopher Columbus ("his hardihood, perseverance and merit") ... and Agriculture and Industry ("The farmer is the best support of government"). But when the revelers got to the captains in the 18th and final toast, they seemed to be at a loss for words. Finally they settled for saluting "their perilous services [that] endear them to every American heart."

It has been that way ever since. ■

Go to [time.com/lewisandclark](http://time.com/lewisandclark) to see original pages from Lewis and Clark's journals

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BY BRIAN HALL

## The Slave Who Went with Them

**T**here he is, in the background of paintings, schoolbook illustrations, celebratory films. He's hauling a boat, cradling a rifle, looking on. He is often bare-chested. No one is speaking to him. Frankly, his presence is a little embarrassing. He is York, William Clark's body servant—slavery's version of a valet.

It is not clear why Clark brought him along, although York would have had a good deal of experience caring for the sickly Clark. The co-leader's journal entries afford only the briefest glimpses of a man whose name he often didn't capitalize. We hear of York at work, sawing wood for huts or gathering cress for his master's dinner. There's the steamed York: "my Servent nearly exosted with heat thirst and fatigue." And frozen York: "my Servents feet also frosted & his P—s a little." An overworked York: "my boy york very unwell from violent Colds & Strains Carrying in meet and lifting logs on the huts to build them." And a York, uneasily at play: "York very near loseing his Eyes by one of the men throwing Sand at him in fun."

Although Clark took York for granted, the Native Americans were intrigued by him. The Arikara Indians were "much asstonished at my Black Servent and Call him the big medison." This could create problems in Clark's eyes: "my black Servent ... made him Self more turrible in thier view than I wished him to Doe ... telling them that before I cought him he was wild & lived upon people." Yet Clark could play the York card when it served his purpose: "I ordered my black Servent to Dance which amused the Croud very much."

There are hints that York's status improved during the expedition. Later journal entries mention him scouting and being sent to villages to trade. Clark

names geography for him: York's Eight Islands; York's Dry Creek. When the captains poll the crew about where to spend the winter of 1805-06, York's opinion is recorded—last, with Sacagawea's. So perhaps he had earned a little respect.

After the corps returned, all the men received double pay and land grants from a grateful Congress—except, of course, York. He apparently thought that in lieu of all that, his pay might be ... his freedom? Clark, who had settled in St. Louis, reacted badly. He allowed York to return temporarily to

Louisville to rejoin his wife, who had a different master. But Clark wrote to his brother Jonathan, "if any attempt is made by york to run off, or refuse to provorm his duty as a Slave, I wish him Sent to New Orleans and Sold, or hired out to Some Severe master untill he thinks better of Such Conduct." Outraged bewilderment rings from this and other letters included in the new book *Dear Brother: Letters of William Clark to Jonathan Clark*. Clark had known York since they were boys; in some ways, he'd been more intimate with York than with any other human being.

Clark's callousness toward York sits awkwardly with his portrayal as an American hero. That might be one reason why the new IMAX-National Geographic film on Lewis and Clark neglects it, saying only that Clark eventually freed York. Well, maybe. That is what Clark told Washington Irving in 1832, making certain his famous literary visitor knew that York's life as a freeman had been a failure. "Damn this freedom," said York, according to Irving's notes, "I have never had a happy day since I got it." He determined to go back to his old master—set off for St. Louis but was taken with the choke in Tennessee & died." Yet two months after this conversation, a fur trader named Zenas Leonard encountered a black man living among a band of Crow Indians. The man claimed to be York. Could he instead have run off, as Clark had feared?

Perhaps it's comforting to think that Clark freed York. But if it's comfort we're after, then between Clark's story of the demoralized ex-slave dying on his way back to beg his master's forgiveness and Leonard's story, I know which I prefer. Of the black man he met among the Crow, Leonard wrote, "He enjoys perfect peace and satisfaction, and has everything that he desires at his own command." ■



MAN OF CURIOSITY: Clark's servant York

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Brian Hall's novel about Lewis and Clark, *I Should Be Extremely Happy in Your Company*, will be published by Viking in January