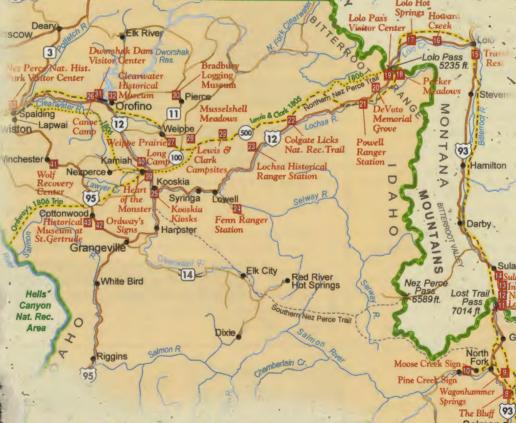
in Idaho

BY KATHLEEN CRAVEN & BOB McDIARMID

or the next three years,
Idahoans will join with the
rest of the nation in commemorating the bicentennial of
the incredible journey of
Meriwether Lewis, William
Clark and the Corps of
Discovery. After all, the group
passed through Idaho and
included the young native
woman Sacagawea who was
born near present-day Salmon.

This outpouring of pride comes despite the fact that, were they to do it all over again, the intrepid duo would most likely opt to bypass Idaho altogether.

According to historians, while the 'toughness, resource-fulness and wilderness savvy of the pair is undisputed, the less than 200-mile stretch of trail (roughly 5 percent of the total distance) through 'Idaho's rugged mountains and wilderness terrain nearly killed them. In fact, were it



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not for the kindness of the Shoshone and Nez Perce tribes, they would never have made it.

"Idaho was by far the hardest and hungriest part of the entire journey," says Boise State adjunct history professor Carol Lynn MacGregor (MA, history, '91), a Lewis and Clark authority. A year and a half into the journey and already trail weary, the Corps expected to navigate Lolo Pass, east of present-day Missoula, Mont., on the Montana-Idaho border and find a water route waiting to whisk them to the Pacific Ocean. Instead, they came face to face with the most intimidating mountain range. they had ever seen - the Bitterroot Range of the Rocky Mountains.

"They thought they could go from the Missouri River to the Snake and Columbia River drainages," says Boise State history professor and North American exploration expert Barton Barbour. "But going over the mountains, they realized they were in tortuous real estate."

So they did what many explorers unfamiliar with such rugged terrain would do - they got lost. After close to two weeks of eating limited stores of dried salmon as well as camas roots, horses and candle wax made from animal fat, they staggered out of the Bitterroots in late September 1805 and were rescued by the Nez Perce near present-day. Weippe. Never having encountered white men before, the tribe's first instinct was to kill the intruders. But a Nez Perce woman who had been treated well by white men while a

prisoner of another tribe persuaded them to spare their lives.

"They were very weak and hungry, and extremely ill from dysentery. They were a pushover," MacGregor says. "They owe a great debt of gratitude to the Nez Perce."

And the nation owes a great historical debt to Lewis and Clark. Having survived the trayails of the Idaho portion of the journey, the group pushed through Washington and Oregon and eventually reached the Pacific Ocean in November 1805, having accomplished several key goals laid out by President Thomas Jefferson.

In an 1803 letter to Capt. Lewis, Jefferson outlined three purposes for the journey. First was to discover the Northwest Passage, thereby opening up the continent to commerce; second was to gather scientific data; and third was for expansion of the fledgling nation's empire.

Although their journey proved, ultimately, that there " was no Northwest Passage, the adventure did indeed . open the doors to unprecedented commerce in the fur trade. Their invaluable cache. of scientific data detailed 178 plants and 122 animals that were new to them, and also detailed valuable information about familiar flora and fauna. Finally, having extensively mapped an area only roughly navigated by others, they were able to lay claim to vast areas of the West.

"Lewis and Clark opened a pass to the West," MacGregor says. "Fur traders came immediately in their wake, with missionaries soon after and settlers on their heals. ... There had been exploration along the coast by Spaniards;

Russians and English, but these were
Americans and they expanded this country from sea to sea and lay the first claim over the land for America."

While that's all well and good and dutifully recorded in history books, the true reason for most Idahoan's swelling of pride goes beyond the science and the politics to the true heart of the journey. Bottom line—this is definitely one of the greatest adventure stories ever told.

"To some Americans, the Corps of Discovery affirms admirable aspects of our national character, like the rugged individualism, hardy adventurousness and an irresistible urge to discover what lies beyond the horizon." writes Barbour, in an essay reviewing The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. "Thetale of those roughly. 30, mostly unknowable 'Americans' who trekked to the Pacific seems comparable to the adventures of Odysseus and his cohorts."

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Commemorating the Corp.

The next three years will feature an amazing array of legacy events commemorating the bicentennial of the Corps of Discovery's path through Idaho. Events start in June 2003, with a summer fair in Lewiston that will include a Lewis and Clark Symposium as well as a Lewis and Clark Discovery Faire. This summer also will feature the opening of a new Lolo Pass Visitors Center by the Clearwater National Forest.

The city of Weippe is also planning to unveil a new Lewis and Clark center in June. Weippe is a key site on the journey of Lewis and Clark, as the Nez Perce Indians rescued the Corps after its members nearly starved to death in the winter cold of the Bitterroot Mountains. Salmon is opening its new Sacagawea Interpretive and Education Center in August in conjunction with Sacagawea Heritage Days.

The City of Boise will dedicate a statue of Sacagawea this spring. The statue will be located outside the Idaho Historical Museum in Julia Davis Park.

Two Web links to guides and maps for the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial are TIME magazine's Lewis and Clark feature at www.time.com/time/2002/lewis_clark/ and Idaho Travel Council's Web site for The Lewis & Clark Exposition at http://www.lewisandclarkidaho.org.