

# The Washington Historical Quarterly

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## THE COLUMBIA RIVER HISTORICAL EXPEDITION

The scenic and climatic advantages of our Northwest, as well as its rich and abundant resources, have been acclaimed to the ends of the earth and have made the region justly famous. Intensive application to pursuits of fortune in this new land, however, seems up to the present almost to have precluded giving much attention to another feature that promises to furnish an important additional impetus to tourist travel and to the cultural development of the various communities themselves. This is the arousing of a general interest in the historic background of the territory from the Mississippi to the mouth of the Columbia and Puget Sound. It has been called the public's awakening to an historical consciousness.

That this whole region was the scene of many stirring events of pioneer days and earlier, when it was beyond the frontier, is beginning to be realized, as it has not been realized previously except by the more or less limited number of students of the subject. Events of far reaching importance have become half forgotten in the daily rush and grind of current business. But the time seems to have come when the Northwest is beginning to take pride in her historical heritage and is showing it by placing memorial tablets and monuments to mark places and commemorate events and to honor the memory of heroes of the formative period of the country.

A great stimulus to this movement is the plan for a group of historians, writers, and others interested in the subject to travel from Chicago to the mouth of the Columbia River in July of this year. The party will be accompanied by a group of students who are winners of oratorical contests in the high schools of various cities throughout the country on "The French Pioneers in America." The Governors and Historical Societies of the states of Montana, North Dakota, Idaho, Washington, and Oregon are sponsoring the trip, which will be known as The Columbia River Historical Expedition.

The avowed purpose is to visit historic places, hold memor-

ial celebrations, and dedicate appropriate monuments in honor of distinguished pathfinders and pioneers of the Northwest.

Last year a similar expedition, which was known as The Upper Missouri Historical Expedition, made a trip into the states of North Dakota and Montana, skirting the Mouse, the upper Missouri and the Maria's River and ascended the headwaters of the latter stream to the crest of the continent at Maria's Pass, where the official activities of the journey terminated. Lewis and Clark, La Verendrye, David Thompson, and Governor Isaac I. Stevens especially were honored.

This year's expedition will occupy twelve days, and in carrying out the program planned, the party will follow an historic trail along the Mississippi, the Red River of the North, the Mouse, the Missouri, the Kootenai, the Pend d'Oreille, and the Columbia; rivers whose waters bore the slender bark canoes and cumbersome keel boats of the earliest explorers, pathfinders, and fur traders and on whose shores still may be seen the sites of the old fur trading posts and missions.

To transport the members of this Expedition, the Great Northern Railway will run a special train known as the Columbia River Special.

After an overnight run via the Burlington Route, the party will arrive in St. Paul and Minneapolis on the morning of July 16, where short trips will be made to the principal points of historic interest in the Twin Cities.

From the original head of navigation of the Mississippi at St. Paul across to the valley of the Red River of the North and down that valley to Grand Forks, the trip will be devoted to visualizing the early means of transportation in the Northwest, particularly the period of the Red River ox carts. These picturesque, high, two-wheeled carts constructed entirely of wood, even the various parts being held together by wooden pins, were drawn by a single ox and for many years were the only means of transporting heavy goods between the Red River settlements and the Mississippi.

For practically the entire distance from St. Paul to Grand Forks the Columbia River Special will parallel the route of these ancient vehicles. At the University of North Dakota there will be an ox cart parade, after which the party will attend a banquet and listen to talks given by Dr. Solon J. Buck, Dr. C. N. Bell, and Dr. O. G. Libby, authorities on the history of this region.

During the night of the sixteenth the Expedition will move

westward over the rolling plains of North Dakota, arriving at Fort Union, on the boundary between North Dakota and Montana, early the following morning. A tall flag pole just south of the tracks and overlooking the Missouri River stands in the exact place where the original flag pole of historic Fort Union once stood.

To honor the almost forgotten members of the fur trade, there will be held here a colorful pageant depicting the country as it was a hundred years ago. Indian tribes, whose ancestors once traded at this post, will dominate the program. Indian chiefs, braves, squaws and papooses—dressed in their gay finery of beaded buckskin and feathered head-dresses—will dance to the measured beat of the tom-tom; Assiniboine will talk to Hidatsa and Sioux will talk to Blackfoot by means of the sign language; and many tribes will compete in old time games, notably the hand game and the wheel game.

On Sunday, July 18, two stops will be made; the first at Fort Benton and the second not far beyond at the Great Falls of the Missouri. Both of these are places notable in the history of the Northwest. Fort Benton was one of the latter day fur trading posts which saw the changing of the West from the great primeval wilderness of the fur trade to the vigilante days of the mining era, then to the days of the Indian wars, and finally to the present day of the railway, the farmer, and the cattle raiser. The flourishing city of Great Falls overlooks the famous falls of the Missouri, discovered June 13, 1805, by Lewis and Clark while on their memorable journey up the Missouri and over the top of the continent to the wave washed shores of the Pacific.

Arriving at Bonners Ferry on the morning of the nineteenth, short speeches will be made by T. C. Elliott and J. B. Tyrrell, and a monument will be dedicated to commemorate the first route of trade and travel across what is now the State of Idaho. This route down the beautiful canyon of the Kootenai and on into the valleys of the Pend d'Oreille and Spokane will be followed by the Columbia River Special, and here the members will be reminded of two other periods of travel: First, the Indian, either on foot or on horseback, his tepee and few household goods lashed on a crude travois or carried by a patient squaw; and later the brigades of the fur traders carrying tomahawks, knives, beads, blankets, and other trade goods westward, or bearing eastward the peltries of the trapper and hunter bound for Montreal and eventually the busy fur marts of London, Paris, and Leipsic.

At the end of this journey and along the age-old trail across

the mountains is Spokane, the Expedition's first stop in the State of Washington. Here the party will be taken by automobile to the top of Mount Spokane where, high above a widespread panorama of bountiful orchards and waving grain fields, once the country of the fur trader and Indian missionary, Mr. N. W. Durham will talk and a picnic supper will be served.

The next day, Tuesday, July 20, will be spent following the surging waters of the Columbia, the great River of the West; searched for in vain by Verendrye and his sons, by the Spaniards and the English mariners; discovered by an American sea captain, Robert Gray, in 1792; afterwards explored for a great part of its length by another group of Americans, the Lewis and Clark expedition, and for its entire length by David Thompson in 1811; and finally opened to trade by John Jacob Astor's Pacific Fur Company.

The last three parties mentioned and the many others who traveled this historic trail to the Pacific all stopped at the ancient Indian village of Wishram to barter with these aboriginal traders and to portage their canoes around the falls. To honor these many pioneers the Columbia River Historical Expedition will make a stop at the present town of Wishram, which is located just above Celilo Falls at the upper end of The Dalles, to attend dedicatory ceremonies at which addresses will be made by Judge Charles H. Carey and Mr. Lawrence J. Burpee, and a monument, composed of rock taken from the majestic palisades of basalt, which line the Columbia for many miles, will be unveiled.

In the afternoon an automobile trip will be made over the Columbia River Highway to Multnomah Falls and back to Portland where the members will again board the train and proceed to Seaside, Oregon.

The route of Lewis and Clark will be followed at many places throughout the journey, first for some distance along the Missouri at and west of Williston, North Dakota, again at Fort Benton and Great Falls, a third time at Meriwether, Montana, a fourth time along the Columbia, and on Wednesday their route will be visited again, this time at Seaside where they built their camp for the manufacture of a supply of salt for use on their return journey. This will occupy the morning hours and the remainder of the day will be spent enjoying the sports and pastimes of the Pacific beaches.

Thursday morning at Astoria, Oregon, Dr. Samuel Eliot Morison and Judge F. W. Howay will be the speakers at the dedica-

tion of the Astoria Column. This monument, which stands in John Jacob Astor Park, has been made possible through the generosity of Vincent Astor, Esq., the great grandson of John Jacob Astor. It is a slightly tapering column one hundred and twenty-five feet high and rising, as it does, from the highest point in Astor Park, its majestic outlines will be visible to vessels many miles out in the Pacific. Its general style is suggestive of two famous European monuments; one erected by the Roman Emperor Trajan in 114 A.D. to commemorate his campaigns, and the other by Napoleon in Paris one hundred and twenty years ago in honor of his victories. But instead of perpetuating the acts of vain-glorious emperors, the exterior of this column will be decorated with a long, spiraling frieze upon which has been carved a succession of scenes and figures telling of the discovery of the Columbia, the explorations of Lewis and Clark, and the adventures of the Astorians.

Washington's youngest city, Longview, will be host to the Expedition on Thursday afternoon, and here, after listening to Professor Edmond S. Meany speak, a new highway bridge, suitably decorated, will be dedicated in memory of the early fur traders and pioneers of that part of the Columbia valley.

The next day will be spent in a return visit to Spokane, Washington, where two important events will take place. The first is the dedication of a monument that is now being erected by the Washington State Historical Society to commemorate the Battle of Spokane Plains, and the second will be an Indian Congress at Spokane, where the many tribes who dwell west of the Rockies will congregate.

The next two days will be spent in a sight-seeing tour of Glacier National Park and the final two days on the return journey to Chicago.

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