

[August 17, 1805 — Nicholas Biddle edition of Lewis & Clark journals]

On setting out at seven o'clock, captain Clarke with Chaboneau [Toussaint Charbonneau] and his wife walked on shore, but they had not gone more than a mile before captain Clarke saw Sacajawea, who was with her husband one hundred yards ahead, began to dance, and show every mark of the most extravagant joy, turning round him and pointing to several Indians, whom he now saw advancing on horseback, sucking her fingers at the same time to indicate that they were of her native tribe. [Clark] went towards the forks [of the Missouri River] with the Indians, who as they went along, sang aloud with the greatest appearance of delight. We soon drew near to the camp, and just as we approached it a woman made her way through the croud towards Sacajawea, and recognising each other, they embraced with the most tender affection.

The meeting of these two young women had in it something peculiarly touching, not only in the ardent manner in which their feelings were expressed, but from the real interest of their situation. They had been companions in childhood, in the war with the Minnetarees [the Hidatsa] they had both been taken prisoners in the same battle, they had shared and softened the rigours of their captivity, till one of them had escaped . . . with scarce a hope of ever seeing her friend relieved from the hands of her enemies.

While Sacajawea was renewing among the women the friendships of former days, captain Clarke went on, and was received by captain Lewis and the chief, who after the first embraces and salutations were over, conducted him to a sort of circular tent or shade of willows. Here he was seated on a white robe; and the chief immediately tied in his hair six small shells resembling pearls, an ornament highly valued by these people, who procured them in the course of trade from the seacoast. The moccasins of the whole party were then taken off, and after much ceremony the smoking began. After this the conference was to be opened . . . Sacajawea was sent for; she came into the tent, sat down, and was beginning to interpret, when in the person of Cameahwait she recognised her brother: she instantly jumped up, and ran and embraced him, throwing over him her blanket and weeping profusely: the chief was himself moved, though not in the same degree.

[Later that day] we explained to them in a long harangue the purposes of our visit. . . . We told them of their dependance on the will of our government for all future supplies of whatever was necessary either for their comfort or defence; that as we were sent to discover the best route by which merchandize could be conveyed to them . . . ; that we were under the necessity of requesting them to furnish us with horses to transport our baggage across the mountains, and a guide to show us the route, but that they should be amply remunerated for their horses, as well as for every other service they should render us. . . . The speech made a favourable impression: the chief in reply thanked us for our expressions of friendship towards himself and his nation, and declared their willingness to render us every service.

-Meriwether, Lewis, William Clark, Thomas Jefferson, Nicholas Biddle, Paul Allen,
"History of the Expedition under the Command of Captains Lewis and Clark, to the Sources of the Missouri, thence across the Rocky Mountains and down the River Columbia to the Pacific Ocean. Performed during the years 1804-5-6. By order of the Government of the United States."
(1814) excerpt.