

Family Living

The Portland Observer

Corps of Discovery Embraced Core of Democracy Slave Had Equal Voting Rights on Lewis and Clark Expedition

The average sixth grader knows the forever-paired names Lewis and Clark -- and probably also the name Sacagawea -- but how many would recognize the name of York, the black slave owned by William Clark? A member of the original party that set forth from the St. Louis area on May 14, 1804, York became one of the most important and historically significant members of the legendary adventure.

The story of that adventure, including the key role played by York, will be dramatically retold in the new Ken Burns film, "Lewis & Clark: the Journey of the Corps of Discovery," a "General Motors Mark of Excellence Presentation" to be televised on PBS Tuesday and Wednesday, November 4 and 5, 1997 (8:00-10:00 PM, ET each night).

[Check local listings]

About the same age as his owner, York had been given to William Clark by Clark's father, who had, in his turn, owned York's father. York accompanied Clark as an expedition member of "The Corps of Discovery" from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Coast and back for the entire two years and four months of the journey.



"York": A painting by Charles M. Russell, entitled "York," depicts the slave whom William Clark took with him on his expedition west with Meriwether Lewis. The Indian tribes were fascinated by York, calling him "Big Medicine."

York was of particular fascination to the Indians encountered on the journey, almost none of whom had ever seen a black person before. Several tribes saw, in his skin color, special powers,

and called him "Big Medicine." At one stop, Clark noted in his journal that the Indians "all flocked around him & examined him from top to toe." At another encounter, the Indians, assum-

ing that York's skin had been blackened by paint, tried to rub it off, much to the amusement of York and the rest of the party.

One of the remarkable features of the Lewis and Clark expedition

was the important decisions that were made not by its leaders alone but by vote of all members of the group. It was in November of 1805 when the party, having reached the Pacific Ocean, was faced with

the decision of where to build its winter camp. Because there was disagreement about the best site, the matter was put to a vote. And so it was that 60 years before the Emancipation Proclamation, in the first U.S. expedition to the West, York -- a black man and a slave -- cast a vote.

Despite the equality he enjoyed as a member of The Corps of Discovery, however, York returned to the life of a slave when the journey was over.

Although accounts differ about the timing and conditions, it was some years after the end of the expedition before Clark finally granted York his freedom. According to some of the most reliable versions of the story, York then went into the carting business and died in Tennessee in 1832.

The story of the most significant trip in American history is told in the new Ken Burns film, "Lewis & Clark: the Journey of the Corps of Discovery," a "General Motors Mark of Excellence Presentation" to be broadcast Tuesday, Nov. 4 and Wednesday, Nov. 5, 1997 (8:00-10:00 PM, ET, each night) on PBS. [Check local listings]

Credit: Montana Historical Society

Postal Service Observes 'First Fruits'



The U.S. Postal Service will continue its Holiday Celebration stamp series October 22, 1997, with the issuance of the Kwanzaa stamp -- commemorating the increasingly popular African American festival of family, community and culture.

Joining Daniels for the "First Day of Issue" ceremony will be Dr. Maulana Karenga, the creator of Kwanzaa; stamp designer and noted artist, Synthia Saint James; and Dr. James L. Powell, Executive Director, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County.

"The principles of Kwanzaa hold special value for many African Americans and reach across cultural boundaries as well," says Daniels. "The values emphasized during the week-long celebration are designed to enhance relationships among individuals and families, which can ultimately lead to better communities."

"The issuance of the Kwanzaa stamp will raise an awareness of this important cultural festival and strengthen collective self-concepts for the present and honor the past for African American," Daniels adds.

Created in 1966 by Dr. Karenga, chairman of the Department of Black Studies at California State University - Long Beach, Kwanzaa is a seven-day cultural celebration that takes its name from the Swahili phrase meaning "first fruits" and honors the African tradition of celebrating the harvest.

The cultural festival -- which begins December 26 and ends on January 1 -- celebrates and reinforces family, community and culture through practices and affirmations related to the Nguzo Saba. The Seven Principles. The Seven Principles observed during Kwanzaa are Umoja (unity), Kujichagulia (self-determination), Ujima (creativity), and Imani (faith).

ODOT Offers Child Passenger And Airbag Safety Tips

Oregon Department of Transportation safety experts are providing drivers tips for child passenger and airbag safety in response to Oregon's first child fatality involving an airbag this week.

Persons who are not restrained with safety belts are slammed forward into the bag instead of allowing the airbag space to inflate, Levinski noted. This compounds the force of a crash and is likely to

injure passengers, she said. "Used correctly, airbags have saved thousands of lives," she added. To decrease the potential for airbag-caused injuries, give the airbag adequate room to inflate, she said.

Every time you ride, wear your safety belts, with the lap belt low and snug around the hip and shoulder belt over the collarbone, she said. Other tips include: Drivers:

- * Sit 10 to 12 inches back from the steering wheel, moving the seat

back as far as possible.

- * Grip steering wheel at nine and three o'clock positions.

- * If the vehicle is equipped with a tilt-type steering wheel, tilt the wheel towards the chest rather than up towards the face. Passengers:

- * When sitting in front, move the seat back as far as possible.

- * Children under the age of 12 and adult passengers with small or fragile frames should ride in the

back seat whenever possible.

- * Never use a rear-facing infant seat in the front seat of a car with passenger side airbags!

Due to the wide variety of child safety seats and auto interior designs, seat installation can be confusing and difficult, she said. "If you are unsure about whether you are using a child safety seat correctly, contact the Child Safety Seat Resource Center for Oregon at 1-800-772-1315," she said. For clarifi-

cation of Oregon's safety belt law or other traffic safety related information, contact the Oregon Department of Transportation at 1-800-922-2022.

Levinski reported that safety seats are only present in 40-76% of the situations requiring them. Of those using seats, about 90% are used incorrectly. Statewide, 17% of children under four are totally unrestrained or held by another passenger, she said.



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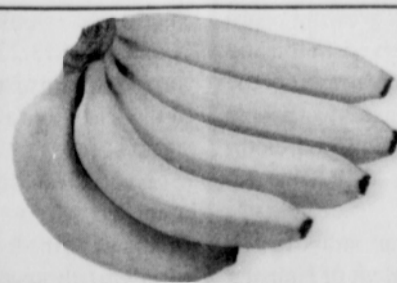
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