

Fort Manuel: Its Historical Significance

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The Fort Manuel historic site lies on the west bank of the Missouri River seventy miles south of Bismarck, North Dakota, in the present state of South Dakota. Facts about the site are vague in the minds of the general public as little has been published about this historical post. When synthesized, however, the total record concerning Fort Manuel reveals that it has dual historical significance.¹ Established in 1812 by famous Missouri Fur Company trader, Manuel Lisa, Fort Manuel was among the first in the chain of fortified posts that ushered in the fur trading era of the upper Missouri. Although it existed for only a brief period, Fort Manuel claims historical importance, first, because of its involvement in international warfare. On 5 March 1813 it was attacked by Indians and eventually destroyed, apparently upon British instigation arising out of hostilities of the War of 1812. It was reported that fifteen of Manuel Lisa's *engages* were massacred at the time of the Indian attack.

Fort Manuel's second, and perhaps more significant, historical feature lies in its distinction as the place where Sacagawea, the legendary woman member of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, died on 20 December 1812.² Although records of the period of her death are conclusive as to her identity, a turn of the century theory, which purported that she died in Wyoming

1. When all historical facts are considered, Fort Manuel deserves designation as a *Registered National Historic Place*, as such identification would properly mark its role in the documented history of the trans-Mississippi West.

2. The Sacagawea form of the spelling of her name was adopted about 1905 by the United States Bureau of Ethnology. The Dictionary of American Biography and the United States Geographic Names Board followed suit.

in 1884, regrettably has prevailed as popular belief and distorts this event in American history. Promulgated by the late Dr. Grace Raymond Hebard, professor of Political Economy at the University of Wyoming, this theory alleged that Sacagawea died at Fort Washakie on the Wind River Indian Reservation in Wyoming on 9 April 1884. The principal objective of this paper, therefore, is to correct this long-standing error concerning the authentic place and date of Sacagawea's death. It is hoped that the integrity of the documentation supporting the 1812 event at Fort Manuel will definitively resolve the prevailing enigmatic myths concerning America's most famous Indian woman.

Hebard first published her theory in 1907. However, in 1920 the Missouri Historical Society edited an 1812-1813 Missouri Fur Company journal, which documented the 20 December 1812 death of Charbonneau's Snake Indian wife at Fort Manuel. This primary reference contradicted Hebard's Wind River hypothesis and immediately raised skepticism among historians of that period concerning the validity of Hebard's research. Standing firm on her position, Hebard, for the next twelve years, sought information to corroborate that it was not Sacagawea who had died at Fort Manuel, but another of Charbonneau's Snake wives who she identified as "Otter Woman." In 1932 after three decades of effort, Hebard published her book *Sacajawea*, which set forth the complete text of her theory including her rationale concerning Otter Woman.³ Establishing Otter Woman as the Snake wife of Charbonneau who had died became even more vital to her theory because another record written in 1811 also documented that Charbonneau and his Snake wife were at that time on the upper Missouri in the vicinity of the Fort Manuel site.

Henry M. Brackenridge, an American journalist, while en route up the Missouri in 1811, reported that "We had on board a Frenchman named Charbonneau, with his wife, an Indian woman of the Snake nation, both of whom had accompanied Lewis and Clark to the Pacific."⁴ This documentation was

3. Grace Raymond Hebard, *Sacajawea, A Guide and Interpreter of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, with an Account of the Travels of Toussaint Charbonneau, and of Jean Baptiste, the Expedition Papoose* (1932, reprint ed., Glendale, Calif.: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1962).

4. Henry M. Brackenridge, "Journal of a Voyage Up the River Missouri," in Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *Early Western Travels, 1748-1846*, 32 vols. (Cleveland, Ohio: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1904-7), 6:32.

reinforced by John C. Luttig, clerk of the Missouri Fur Company at Fort Manuel, who wrote in his journal on 20 December 1812, "this Evening the Wife of Charbonneau a Snake Squaw died of a putrid fever."⁵ Thus, to fulfill the theory that Sacagawea lived out her life in Wyoming, it was necessary for Hebard to prove that it was not Sacagawea, but another Snake wife—"Otter Woman"—who had been documented by Brackenridge and Luttig.

Toussaint Charbonneau was reported by Lewis and Clark to have had three wives. Two were of the Snake nation who had been kidnapped in about 1800 and had been held in virtual slavery by their captors, the Hidatsa tribe at Knife River (North Dakota), from whom Charbonneau had purchased them. One was Sacagawea, then about seventeen years old and pregnant with Charbonneau's child. The second wife, as well as the unidentified third, was not named by Lewis or Clark, or any other expedition journalist.

Since the journals of the expedition left no record of the name of Charbonneau's second Snake wife, Dr. Hebard sought evidence that would establish her identity coincident with Lewis and Clark's 1804-1805 winter encampment at Fort Mandan near present Bismarck, North Dakota. She obtained this information from hearsay testimony collected through interviews, statements, and affidavits, not one of which was supported by antecedent written records or documents of any kind. Given orally by persons more than a century after the recorded death of Charbonneau's Snake wife at Fort Manuel, these assorted statements were not original experiences of the interviewees, but consisted of "remembrances of stories" told to them by persons long deceased at the time of the interviews. Moreover, much of the testimony was given by very elderly persons and, under scrutiny, is found to contain obvious inconsistencies, contradictions, and confused identities of personalities. The most critical testimony adopted by Grace Hebard, as virtually the sole basis for establishing the veracity of her theory, was that assembled by an Indian Service physician

5. John C. Luttig, *Journal of a Fur-Trading Expedition to the Upper Missouri, 1812-1813*, ed. Stella M. Drumm (1920, reprint ed., Argosy-Antequarian, 1964), p. 106.

and writer, Dr. Charles A. Eastman, in a report to the commissioner of Indian Affairs dated 2 March 1925.⁶

Dr. Eastman's report, regardless of motive or objective, was seriously impaired by an indiscriminate use of hearsay information. Part of this evidence, provided by Mrs. Weidemann, an eighty-year-old Hidatsa Indian, 120 years after the Lewis and Clark Expedition, had been passed down to her by word of mouth from her father who had died in 1899 at the age of 102. Moreover, as explained in the interview with this woman, some of the traditions related by her father were in turn obtained through hearsay by him, as they had originated with a third party identified by her as Eagle Woman, who died in 1869.

It is significant that Grace Hebard's adoption of the name Otter Woman for the second Snake wife may be traced to Mrs. Weidemann's hearsay testimony. Considering that this wife had remained nameless for over a century, it is an amazing coincidence that the name of Otter Woman, used by Mrs. Weidemann in 1925, was also the name of a fictional character created by James Willard Schultz in his 1918 novel, *Bird Woman*.⁷ Except for this romantic tale, Mrs. Weidemann's designation of Otter Woman, so long after the expedition, is the earliest reference to that name found in any writings dealing with this period in history, and the name was hearsay by Mrs. Weidemann's own statement.

Eastman, drawing extensively from the testimony of Mrs. Weidemann in his 2 March 1925 report, stated: "The evidence given by . . . Mrs. Weidemann shows that Charbonneau did have two Shoshone wives and a Mandan wife besides. [She] clearly stated that Charbonneau took both of his Shoshone wives with him when he visited St. Louis some time in 1807 to 1808, and it is evident that he returned with but one Shoshone wife, who died on December 20, 1812."⁸

6. Charles A. Eastman, "Report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs," *Annals of Wyoming* 13, no. 3 (July 1941): 187-94. A typescript copy of the Eastman report with exhibits, including Mrs. Weidemann's testimony, is in the archives of the State Historical Society of North Dakota in Bismarck.

7. James Willard Schultz, *Bird Woman (Sajawea): The Guide of Lewis and Clark* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1918), p. 74. Stella Drumm, in her 1920 biographical sketch of *Sakakawea* in the Luttig journal, also attributes the name Otter Woman to James Schultz (see Luttig, *Journal of a Fur-Trading Expedition to the Upper Missouri*, p. 133).

8. Hebard, *Sajawea*, p. 113.

Dr. Eastman became even more emphatic concerning the validity of Mrs. Weidemann's comments when he wrote, "this is *proven* by the testimony of Eagle Woman and by the statements of Mrs. Weidemann."⁹ This is the "testimony" given orally by Eagle Woman to Mrs. Weidemann's father prior to her death in 1869; he told it to Mrs. Weidemann prior to his death in 1899; and she related it to Dr. Eastman in 1925! Apparently, based upon this "proof," Dr. Eastman incorporated Mrs. Weidemann's alleged Otter Woman into his report as a historical fact: "Charbonneau's Snake wife whose name is Otter Woman . . . the Shoshone woman who died at Fort Manuel, was Otter Woman, the other Shoshone wife of Charbonneau."¹⁰

As a result of this report Hebard adopted Dr. Eastman's "historical fact" and wrote in her book *Sacajawea*: "It is evident, moreover, that this Indian mother was the 'Otter Woman,' referred to by Brackenridge, and that she had only the one child with her at the time of her death [at Fort Manuel, 20 December 1812]. . . . This wife has been designated by Dr. Charles A. Eastman as the 'Otter Woman,' a name generally used by authors writing of the death of one of Charbonneau's wives."¹¹

The child mentioned by Hebard was Sacagawea's infant daughter Lisette, born the summer of 1812.¹² Her son Jean Baptiste, the papoose of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, was with Clark in Saint Louis, commencing his education. Dr. Eastman referred to the 1811 Brackenridge documentation in his 1925 report; however, he edited the context to such an extent that Brackenridge's identification of Charbonneau's Snake wife as the Indian woman who had "accompanied Lewis and Clark to the Pacific" was completely omitted.

After identifying Charbonneau's second wife as Otter Woman, Grace Hebard's theory focuses upon *Porivo*, or "Bazil's Mother," a Shoshone Indian woman who died in 1884 on the Wind River Indian Reservation and whom she identified in her

9. Eastman, "Report," p. 190.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 187, 192.

11. Hebard, *Sacajawea*, p. 111, including fn.56.

12. Luttig, *Journal of a Fur-Trading Expedition to the Upper Missouri*, p. 106 (interleaf). This spelling with the "s" appears on an 1813 original document. Drumm inadvertently altered it to "z" and Hebard followed suit, as have most writers in citing the girl's name. Whether Lisette lived beyond infancy is uncertain.

*Census Roll of the Shoshone tribe of
Indians, present at the Shoshone and Ramona
Agency, Wyoming Territory November 1st 1877*

<u>Bat-tez</u>	3	4	1	0	8	113
<u>Mah-ss-pip</u>	1	1	0	0	2	114
<u>Andrew</u>	3	2	2	1	8	115
<u>Bazil</u>	3	2	1	0	6	116
<u>Bazil's Mother</u>	0	2	1	0	3	117

book in 1932 as "Sacajawea."¹³ According to Hebard, several years after the death of Otter Woman, "Sacajawea" became estranged from her husband, Toussaint, and left him. Tracing her life, Hebard states that "Sacajawea" took a new husband, who was later killed in an Indian war. Thereafter, she wandered through the West for several decades, ultimately joining her Shoshone people at Fort Washakie. Here, Hebard explains, she took the name *Porivo* and was reunited with her "son, Baptiste" and an adopted son, Basil.

Three individuals who did indeed live out their lives at Fort Washakie were determined, by Hebard's mistaken theory, to have been connected with the Lewis and Clark Expedition. The Wind River Agency documents of the period, including specifically the Census Roll of Shoshone Indians of 1 November 1877,¹⁴ show the three to be: "Bazil's Mother," "Bat-tez," and "Bazil." In 1932 Grace Hebard purported in her book that Bazil's Mother, who died in 1884, was "Sacajawea," and Bat-tez, who died in 1885, was "Jean Baptiste," the son born to Sacajawea at Mandan on 11 February 1805. She further identified Bazil, who died in 1886, as the orphaned nephew

13. Mrs. Blanche Schroer, a present resident of Lander, Wyoming, lived and worked for many years on the Wind River Reservation, beginning in 1929. She gives a revealing, candid evaluation of Grace Hebard's "Wind River Sacajawea" in the (Lander) *Wyoming State Journal*, 2 July 1963. Mrs. Schroer has a recording of an interview with a person who knew Porivo when she was living, and her views of Porivo's identity as "Sacajawea" are in sharp contradiction to those of Grace Hebard.

14. The Census Roll is at the Wyoming State Archives in Cheyenne.

adopted by Sacagawea at Camp Fortunate, Montana, on 17 August 1805.

This theory is a classic case of mistaken identity—of all three individuals. From testimony of persons who knew *Porivo* on the reservation, she apparently was the same woman recorded in Wind River Agency documents as “Bazil’s Mother.” Scholars are in agreement that she definitely was not Sacagawea of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Documentary evidence is conclusive that the latter died at Fort Manuel on 20 December 1812.

Bat-tez is listed on the 1877 census roll merely as Bat-tez. In testimony provided to Grace Hebard by his contemporaries, he was described as illiterate and having a limited English language vocabulary. Sacagawea’s son, Jean Baptiste Charbonneau, in contrast to the illiterate Bat-tez, became a highly educated man, fluent in four languages. Documents containing his handwriting in both English and Spanish are extant. A consistent chronology of his life is on record, including the event of his death. He died on 16 May 1866 at the age of sixty-one at present Danner, Oregon, and is buried there.¹⁵

Anthropological research of Shoshone-Bannock cultures reveals that during the Fort Bridger treaty negotiations in 1863 a person named Bazil was recorded as a Shoshone subchief under the leadership of Chief Washakie.¹⁶ Dr. Hebard cites the 1863 Fort Bridger account, together with earlier Mormon Church references, 1868 Wind River Treaty documents, and later records in which Bazil is named, then draws her assumption that he was Sacagawea’s adopted nephew. No records specifically associating this Wind River Reservation Bazil with Sacagawea are known. In fact, two Wind River documents of the period show him by name association to be connected with the woman recorded as “Bazil’s Mother.” These documents, both of which list the name “Bazil’s Mother,” were the 1877 Census Roll and a death certificate of 1884.¹⁷ Since the two documents were contemporary, and consistent in identifying

15. His gravesite was designated a *Registered National Historic Place* on 14 March 1973.

16. Robert F. Murphy and Yolanda Murphy, “Shoshone—Bannock Subsistence and Society,” *Anthropological Records* 16, no. 7 (November 1960): 305, 313.

17 Hebard, *Sacajawea*, p. 207.

Above Orphans Court holden at the Court house in the
 Town of St Louis within and for the County of St Louis
 on Wednesday the eleventh of August 1813.
 The Court ^{was present} David V Walker Esq
 George Tompkins Esq
 Judges
 The Court appointed William Clark Guardian to the infant
 children of Toussaint Charbonneau deceased, to wit Toussaint
 Charbonneau a boy about the age of ten years and Lucette
 Charbonneau a girl about one year old - the said infant
 children not being possessed of any property within the
 knowledge of the Court. The said Guardian is authorized
 to give bond.
 Court adjourned sine die
 David V. Walker

Saint Louis court minutes showing that William Clark was appointed
 the guardian for Sacajawea's children.

that person as Basil's mother, it appears unreasonable to assume
 that Basil was other than her own son.

Elsewhere in her writings, Hebard states, "the woman
 mentioned by Brackenridge was not Sacajawea but his other
 Shoshone wife, mother of Toussaint."¹⁸ Apparently influenced
 by a conjecture of Stella Drumm in her editing of the *Luttig
 Journal*, Hebard adds another character to her theory, the
 mysterious "Toussaint Charbonneau, Jr." Drumm speculated
 that Old Charbonneau had a second son by another of his wives,
 from her observation of the name "Toussaint" on documents in
 which the Charbonneau offspring were associated with William
 Clark. These were an 1813 adoption certificate listing Charbon-
 neau's daughter and son as being under the guardianship of
 William Clark, and later records of Clark's payment for expenses
 incurred in the boy's education.¹⁹ In both situations, as
 explained by the eminent Lewis and Clark scholar, Donald

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

¹⁹ Luttig, *Journal of a Fur-Trading Expedition to the Upper Missouri*, pp. 106
 (interleaf), 134.

Jackson, the name Toussaint (Jr.) was used either through inadvertance or absentmindedness by Clark, when he really meant Jean Baptiste.²⁰ This trait of Clark's is confirmed in his notation of the boy in his list of "Men on Lewis and Clark's Trip," shown on the cover of Clark's account book for the period 1825-1828, where Clark states, "Tousant Charbono in Wertenburgh Gy."²¹ Other records of the period, including those of Prince Paul Wilhelm, positively corroborate that it was *Jean Baptiste* who was in Germany from 1823 to 1829, as the protege of Prince Paul of Wurtemberg.²² Thus, Toussaint, Jr., and Jean Baptiste were one and the same person and another Hebard hypothesis concerning the Charbonneau family is found to be erroneous.

Dr. Hebard pursued her theory for three decades. Notwithstanding her diligent searching, she found no documentation linking the three Wind River Reservation persons to the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Nevertheless, during these years she published numerous accounts of her theory concerning the Wind River "Sacajawea," including opinions of others who had lived on the Wind River Reservation during the same time as the above three individuals and who were recalling events of a period up to a half century earlier exclusively from memory.

In 1932 Hebard published her major work *Sacajawea*. Her writings have provided a standard reference source for seventy years. Countless textbooks, newspapers, historical novels, juvenile romances, movies, and serious historical works, including encyclopedias, carry her theory as authentic. In magnitude, no other case of mistaken identity is known that can compare with the effect Hebard's theory has had upon the image of an American personality.

Contradicting the Hebard theory are the findings of recent exhaustive research involving the correlation of several documents recorded by contemporaries of Sacagawea who had

20. Donald Jackson, ed., *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition with Related Documents, 1783-1854*, 2d printing (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1962), p. 640 n. 2.

21. Original document is located at the Newberry Library in Chicago. See also *Ibid.*, pp. 638-40.

22. Ann W. Hafen, "Jean Baptiste Charbonneau," in L. R. Hafen, ed., *The Mountain Men and the Fur Trade of the Far West*, 10 vols. (Glendale, Calif.: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1965-1972), 1:205-24. See also Hebard, *Sacajawea*, p. 121.

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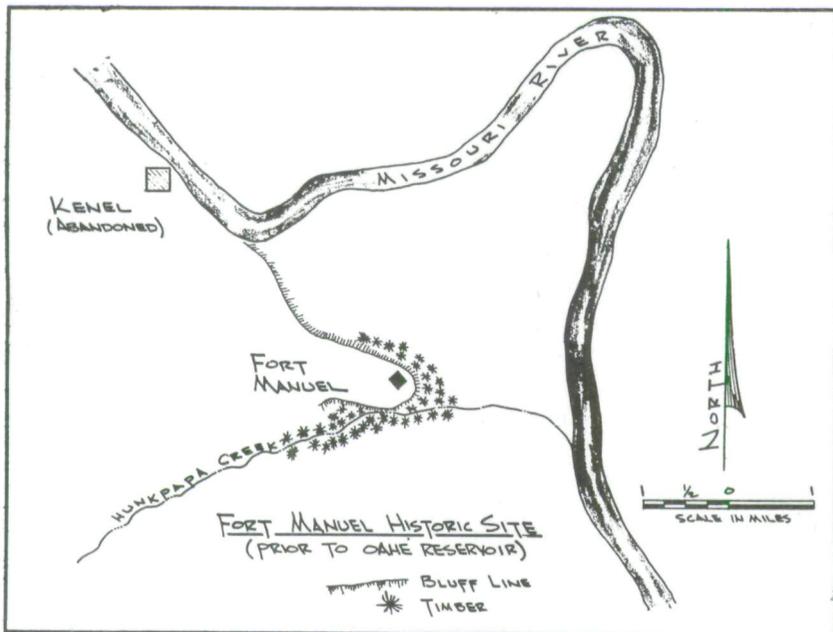
witnessed, or who had personal knowledge of, her death at Fort Manuel in 1812. Although certain documents were publicized as early as 1920, no substantive chronology, tying critical events of time, place, and persons directly into Sacagawea's final hours, is known. The integrity of the documents corroborating these recent findings has been carefully evaluated and acknowledged by many experts in the field.²³ In the context of the disciplines governing historical research, therefore, the documents verify the site of historic Fort Manuel as the place of death of Sacagawea.

Fort Manuel often has been confused with other posts operated by Manuel Lisa at different times and places. However, due in large measure to the fortunate preservation of a primary source of knowledge found in the journal of the company expedition of 1812-1813, kept by John C. Luttig, its identity and location are clear. This is a remarkable running record contemporary with the establishment and operation of the Fort Manuel station on the upper Missouri River. This journal is unique for its period in history, as no such daily record of any other station managed by Lisa has come to light. In fact, few comparable primary sources, even for later trading establishments elsewhere on the river, afford more explicit details of the relations between the native Indian peoples of the region and the whites who were trying to profit from the land's natural resources.²⁴

23. *Ed. Note:* For the full documentation of Sacagawea's death at Fort Manuel, see Irving Anderson's treatise "Probing the Riddle of the Bird Woman," *Montana, the Magazine of Western History* 23, no. 4 (Autumn 1973): 2-17. Remarks by scholars and serious students may be found in *Montana* 24, no. 1 (Winter 1974): 80-81. Also, *South Dakota History* has on file additional comments from experts, including those of the History Department, University of Wyoming, Laramie, and Wyoming State Archives and Historical Department, Cheyenne. All support the Fort Manuel documentation.

Anderson's other publications on the subject include: "J. B. Charbonneau, Son of Sacajawea," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 71, no. 3 (Sept. 1970): 247-64; "Letter to the Editor, J. B. Charbonneau, to Date" *ibid.* 72, no. 1 (Mar. 1971): 78-79; "Sacajawea's Papoose," *Our Public Lands*, National BLM Quarterly (Winter 1971): 4-6; "He Rests at the End of the Trail," *ibid.* (Spring 1972): 18-19; "Sacajawea? Sakakawea? Sacagawea? Spelling-Pronunciation-Meaning," *We Proceeded On*, National Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation Quarterly 1, no. 3 (Summer 1975): 10-11.

24. This discussion of the Fort Manuel site is excerpted from an unfinished, unpublished manuscript drafted by the late Dr. G. Hubert Smith, Archaeologist, Smithsonian Institution.



Originally, the fort was built at the water's edge. It is possible that the course of the river changed in later years.

There is one other early source of information concerning Fort Manuel. This is a reminiscent account of Lisa's career in the Indian trade, first anonymously published in a Saint Louis newspaper in 1838, long after his death, and quoting personal recollections of John Dougherty, a member of the 1812-1813 party (subsequently Indian agent for the tribes of the upper Missouri).²⁵ The account includes his testimony concerning certain memorable events at the post, as well as brief allusions to the station itself, which complement evidence of that contained in Luttig's journal.

On 9 August 1812 Luttig records that the site of the post was chosen by Manuel Lisa on a "beautiful Prairie Bluff with several Bottoms of fine timber around."²⁶ The next day a party was sent across the river in a boat to cut timber for buildings.

25. "Senor Don Manuel Lisa," *Missouri Historical Society Bulletin* 23, no. 1 (Oct. 1966): 52-58.

26. Luttig, *Journal of a Fur-Trading Expedition to the Upper Missouri*, p. 67.

Luttig recorded no specific description of the fort. However, the 1838 newspaper account, referred to above, provides the following:

Mr. Lisa erected a trading house about twelve miles above the Arickaree towns, on the Missouri, which he fortified in the usual mode of stockade. At two of the angles he added bastions, and mounted a swivel in each. . . . The fort was situated on a high riverbluff, which commanded an extensive view of the surrounding country.²⁷

It should be noted that the trading post was actually called "Fort Manuel" by its builders, who named it with an amusing ceremony. On 19 November 1812 Luttig wrote:

Thursday the 19th clear and warm little Ice in the River at four oclock in the after noon hung the great Door of the Entrance of the fort, which ceremony was saluted by 7 Guns and 3 rounds of Musquetry, made the Tour—around the Fort and Baptized the same MANUEL in the Evening a good Supper and a cheerful glass of Whiskey was given to the Men, and a Dance at which all the Ladies then in Fort attended, concluded the Day.²⁸

The documentation of the name "Fort Manuel" is a matter of some consequence, as this fort is frequently confused with other posts, also operated by Lisa, but located elsewhere on the Missouri at other times. Most were likewise known by some form of his name.

Although the daily entries in the Fort Manuel diary are usually brief, and sometimes cryptic, the document provides invaluable general information concerning the establishment and use of an early nineteenth century Missouri River trading post. But, of greater importance to researchers of Lewis and Clark history is the vital link the Luttig record forges in the chain of continuity tracing the whereabouts of Lewis and Clark's interpreter, Toussaint Charbonneau, and his Shoshone Indian wife, Sacagawea.

Further evidence to prove that Sacagawea died at Fort Manuel can be found by tracing the lives of Charbonneau and his wife from the time they returned from the Pacific with the Lewis and Clark Expedition in 1806 until their arrival at Fort Manuel in 1812. On 17 August 1806 the Lewis and Clark Expedition, homeward-bound from the Pacific, reached the

27. "Senor Don Manuel Lisa," p. 53-54.

28. Luttig, *Journal of a Fur-Trading Expedition to the Upper Missouri*, p. 94.

Mandan Indian villages. Here, interpreter Charbonneau was "paid-up" and released from service, together with Sacagawea and their nineteen-month-old son, Jean Baptiste, unofficial members of the expedition. Captain William Clark's journal entry for 17 August 1806 and a confidential letter written by Clark to Toussaint dated 20 August 1806, while en route downriver to Saint Louis, expressed his fondness for the Charbonneau family and suggested that they come to Saint Louis, where he would assist in getting Toussaint established in business and provide for Baptiste's education. This they did three years later.

Soon after moving there, however, Toussaint became disenchanted with civilization. Records show that within seventeen months after their arrival he had cut all ties with what to him no doubt was a too regimented, orderly way of life, and by 1811 had become an *engage* for the famous fur trader Manuel Lisa. Thus, he was en route by barge back to his old home among the Indians of the upper Missouri—his wife, Sacagawea, accompanying him while the boy, Baptiste, remained behind in Saint Louis to commence his education under the patronage of William Clark.

It is important to note that another member of Manuel Lisa's 1811 party aboard the barge was Henry M. Brackenridge. Vital information pinpointing Sacagawea's identity, plus indicating that she was in deteriorating health at this point in her life, is provided by Brackenridge, who in 1814 published a journal he kept on the 1811 voyage up the Missouri River. Specifically, on 2 April 1811 he stated:

We had on board, a Frenchman named Charboneau, with his wife, an Indian woman of the Snake nation, both of whom had accompanied Lewis and Clark to the Pacific, and were of great service. The woman, a good creature, of a mild and gentle disposition greatly attached to the whites, whose manners and dress she tries to imitate, but she had become sickly, and longed to revisit her native country; her husband, also, who had spent many years among the Indians, had become weary of a civilized life.²⁹

This is the Brackenridge document much maligned by Hebard and Eastman, as mentioned earlier. Dr. Eastman, in his

29. Brackenridge, "Journal of a Voyage Up the River Missouri," p. 32.

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1925 report, took sweeping editorial license with it: "In Breckenridge's [*sic*] Book of Travels he states that in 1811 when he was coming up the Missouri River on boats he saw Touissant Charbonneau and his Snake wife. He was told that the Frenchman was the guide of Louis [*sic*] and Clark Expedition. He also spoke of his wife as imitating white womens style in dressing and he spoke of her as being a commendable woman."³⁰

Eastman's omission of the phrase "had accompanied Lewis and Clark to the Pacific," apparently had the effect, in Grace Hebard's opinion, of strengthening the Weidemann creation of Otter Woman. Hebard said of Brackenridge's journal entry: "In this account Brackenridge seems to identify the woman who accompanied his expedition with Sacajawea, but investigation [Eastman's] shows this to be incorrect. Charbonneau at this time had at least three wives; two Shoshone and one Mandan, and the woman mentioned by Brackenridge was not Sacajawea but his other Shoshone wife, mother of Toussaint."³¹ This rejection of the Brackenridge journal, a primary source, and her acceptance of Eastman's secondary account as historical fact seems a paradox. This is especially true because she labeled James Schultz's *Bird Woman*, which had spawned Otter Woman, "purely historical fiction."³²

The 2 April 1811 Brackenridge journal entry becomes a critical bit of information, as it reveals that Sacagawea, in a state of declining health, returned with her husband to the plains country of the upper Missouri. When this is related to later clues given by John Luttig, moreover, it may be deduced that Sacagawea's strength was even further strained by a pregnancy that would culminate in the birth of a daughter (Lisette) during the summer of 1812. These complications surely hastened the timetable of her waning days.

30. Eastman, "Report," p. 188.

31. Hebard, *Sacajawea*, p. 93. This is not the first occasion of liberal editorial license exercised by Grace Hebard. In her "Pilot of the First White Men to Cross the American Continent," *Journal of American History*, 3d quarter (1907), Hebard embroidered the actual text of the 1814 Biddle/Allen edition of the Lewis and Clark journals with her own description of the virtues of Sacagawea. For an excellent disclosure of this, see Robert E. Lange's remarks in "Letters to the Editor," *Montana, the Magazine of Western History* 24, no. 1 (Winter 1974): 81.

32. Hebard, *Sacajawea*, p. 318.

Toussaint was at this time employed by Manuel Lisa and the next year finds him at Fort Manuel where he appears frequently in Luttig's account of daily activities at the post. And, consistent in time and place, Luttig on 20 December 1812 recorded an event involving Sacagawea that, unwittingly, would become Luttig's hallmark in the annals of the fur trade. On that day John C. Luttig recorded for posterity the obituary of Toussaint Charbonneau's wife, who Brackenridge, en route upriver a few months before, unmistakably identified as the Indian woman "of the Snake Nation [who] had accompanied Lewis and Clark to the Pacific." Luttig's journal entry reads:

A photograph of a handwritten list of names and titles, likely from a book cover. The text is written in cursive and includes the following entries:

- Mr. George -
- Ch' Floyd Bead
- R. Gray Bead
- J. Collins do
- J. Collier do
- J. Crezale Killed
- J. Fellers do
- J. Goodrich Bead
- J. Gibson Bead
- J. Howard
- J. Kall
- Mr. Gascorn
- Al. Willard
- Geo. Dredant Killed
- Louis Charbonneau
- Se. Charbonneau Bead
- Toussaint Charbonneau
- Wentzenburg

Clark's notation about Sacagawea's death in his list of "Men on Lewis and Clark's Trip" on the cover of his account book for the period 1825-1828.

Sunday, the 20th, clear and moderate . . . this Evening the Wife of Charbonneau a Snake Squaw, died of a putrid fever she was a good and the best Woman in the fort, age abt 25 years she left a fine infant girl.³³

Clearly, this text, when correlated with the Brackenridge journal and other contemporary records, decisively closes the final chapter in the life story of the "Bird Woman" of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. The other related contemporary documents that reinforce the integrity of Luttig's 20 December 1812 obituary include: (1) records of the Missouri Fur Company; (2) an adoption certificate placing the "orphaned" Charbonneau children under the guardianship first of John C. Luttig, then

33. Luttig, *Journal of a Fur-Trading Expedition on the Upper Missouri*, p. 106.

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William Clark; (3) Indian Department records for the period 1819-1835 that show continuous contact between Toussaint Charbonneau and William Clark;³⁴ and finally Clark's recently found 1825-1828 account book, which records in his own handwriting: "Se Car Ja We Au dead."³⁵

The Missouri Historical Society publication in 1920 of Luttig's journal, edited by Stella M. Drumm, and the Arthur H. Clark publication of Grace Raymond Hebard's controverting research of the Wind River, Wyoming, "Sacajawea" in 1932 aroused interest in attempting to locate the Fort Manuel site. It was hoped that archaeological evidence might be found that would confirm the Luttig obituary of 20 December 1812. But, as Dr. G. Hubert Smith questions: "How skeletal remains, even if they were of the proper sex and age, and even if found associated with distinctive grave goods, could be specifically identified as those of Sacagawea may not have been duly considered."³⁶

The true site of Fort Manuel of 1812-1813 appears to have first been identified through excavations made in 1938. The late William Duncan Strong, then of the Department of Anthropology at Columbia University, devoted parts of two days to test excavations at the site of Fort Manuel. Though field notes of Strong's investigations have not been found, a letter of 18 August 1938 from L. G. Lippert, then superintendent of Standing Rock Indian Agency (Fort Yates), to the commissioner of Indian Affairs affords some information on the results of Strong's work. Lippert stated that Strong had no doubt of the identity of the site, having traced the stockade by finding "charred butts of the posts," and that finding the "corners" of the original enclosure made it possible to give exact dimensions of the stockade.

It is clear from Lippert's letter that a major objective of Strong's brief excavations had been to locate graves of persons

34. Francis A. Chardon, *Journal at Fort Clark, 1834-1839*, ed. Annie Heloise Abel (Pierre: South Dakota Department of History, 1932), pp. 278-82. Upper Missouri Indian Department Subagents documented here with Toussaint Charbonneau include Benjamin O'Fallon (William Clark's nephew) and John Dougherty, a long-time associate of Clark's who was with Manuel Lisa at Fort Manuel at the time of Sacagawea's death.

35. Original document is located at the Newberry Library in Chicago.

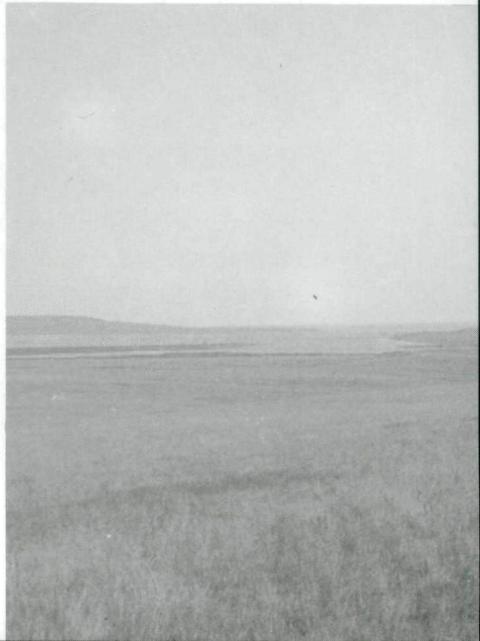
36. Excerpted from Smith's manuscript.

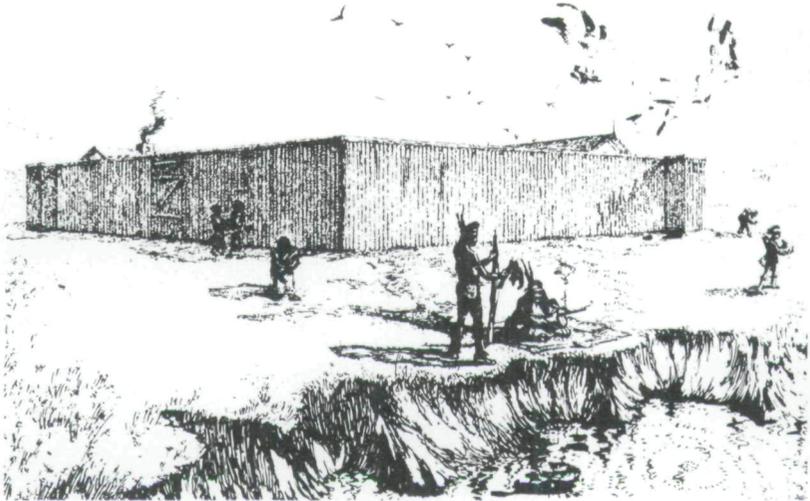


*The center of
the Fort Manuel site,
(below) fireplace hearthstones
uncovered by
archaeologists.*



*Beach fronting Fort Manuel site,
(right) the fort was located
at the tip of the long peninsula,
which now extends
into the Oahe Reservoir.*





Fort Manuel, 1812

who had died at Fort Manuel during the winter of 1812-1813, as recorded at the time. Yet of the five persons whose deaths were mentioned by Luttig—two Indian women, one Indian man, and two men of the company—only one of the latter is specifically said to have been interred, following his violent death in an Indian raid of 22 February 1813. In his reference to his excavations at Fort Manuel, Strong used only the specific term “caches” in alluding to archaeological features observed, and made no mention of any grave.

The most comprehensive archaeological investigations of Fort Manuel to date were made by the late Dr. G. Hubert Smith in 1965-1966. The field notes, maps, and related records compiled by Dr. Smith are now in the custody of the Midwest Archaeological Center, United States National Park Service, Lincoln, Nebraska. Dr. Smith has summarized his findings in *Plains Anthropologist*. Dr. Smith reports in 1966:

Salvage excavations were begun in 1965 at the site of the historic trading post of Fort Manuel Approximately one-third of the area enclosed by the stockade of the post was cleared of overburden, sections of the original log stockade being found in position, with remains of a circular bastion at its southeast corner. Within the stockade, the site of a ‘range’ of three

connected timber buildings was also found, each unit of which had been provided with its own fireplace, of fieldstone. Like the stockade, the buildings had been almost completely destroyed by fire, probably following removal of useful building materials and articles. Specimens obtained in excavation, though limited in scope and quantity, include both native artifacts and factory-made articles, and illustrate the trade as well as the use of the post itself.³⁷

In 1967 Dr. Smith concluded his summary findings:

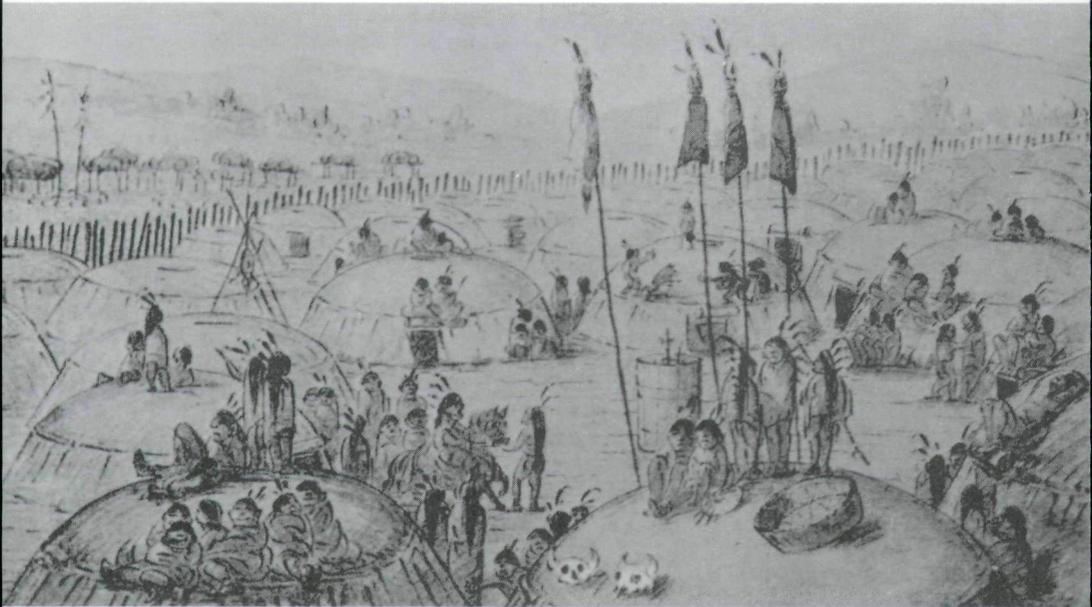
Excavations begun during the previous field season at the site of Fort Manuel, . . . resulting in the discovery of the sites of four additional buildings, bringing to seven the total number of such structures within the enclosure. The second of two bastions found proved to be circular like the first, previously excavated at the opposite angle of the stockade. These features appear to be unique in design and construction among Upper Missouri River posts. No evidence was obtained concerning any gate, though one is specifically mentioned in the post journal. Despite poor preservation of the structural remains of Fort Manuel, most of the evidence obtained during the two seasons of investigation is new, little of it having previously been available from contemporary records or those made during earlier excavations.

Both European and Indian articles of the 1812-13 period were obtained, although in relatively small numbers considering the large area exposed. No evidence was found of any prehistoric or historic earth-lodge village, a result that is in direct opposition to the assertion of some previous students that the site of the trading post had once been that of an Arikara Village. Nor was evidence obtained that sheds light on the burial of any of the persons known from the journal to have died at the post during the winter of 1812-13.³⁸

After extensive investigations by archaeologists, no identifiable grave for Sacagawea has been found at the Fort Manuel site. It seems probable that no such burial plot may have ever existed. Rather, her remains may have been placed on a funeral scaffold, in accordance with the customs of the Indians of the upper Missouri among whom she lived during most of her adult life. Lewis and Clark, John Bradbury, Henry Brackenridge, Prince Maximilian, Prince Paul Wilhelm, Karl Bodmer, George

37. G. Hubert Smith, "Fieldwork at Fort Manuel, Corson County, South Dakota, 1965," *Plains Anthropologist* 11, no. 32 (1966): 174.

38. Smith, "Fieldwork at Fort Manuel, Corson County, South Dakota," *Plains Anthropologist* 12, no. 36 (1967): 205.



George Catlin's drawing of a Mandan village, showing burial scaffolds outside the stockade

Catlin, and many others personally observed, and noted in their writings and paintings, the activities of the Indians of the upper Missouri during the first half of the nineteenth century. These men included in their observations traditional funeral rituals of the Indians of those times, as well as the Indians' beliefs in spiritual life after death. Consistently, their records describe funeral platforms or scaffolds. From these early accounts it may be concluded that, except for isolated incidences, it was not until the advent of white man's religion that underground burials became a common practice with most Indian cultures of the upper Missouri.

The lands embracing the Fort Manuel site lie within the flowage easement of Oahe Reservoir and are under the jurisdiction of the United States Army Corps of Engineers. During periods of high runoff the site is inundated by overflow waters of the Missouri River. However, when the reservoir level is down, faint traces of the stockade, exposed hearth stones,

and other evidences of the fort are discernable. Geographically, the Fort Manuel site remains today much the same in remoteness and vastness as it was during its occupancy in 1812 at the time of Sacagawea's death. The site location on the west bank of the Missouri River within the Standing Rock Indian Reservation is at a place remarkably fitting in character with the fur trade era and Sacagawea's Indian heritage.

America is 164 years delinquent in dedicating the final resting place of its most famous Indian woman. Entry of the Fort Manuel site into the *National Register of Historic Places* will help achieve this recognition by formally acknowledging the important events of history recorded there by John C. Luttig. And of even greater significance, such recognition will accelerate the rejection of a major historical inaccuracy by authoritatively removing the veil of mistaken identity surrounding Sacagawea, a most remarkable native American woman of our nation's history.

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