

Message on the Anniversary of the Lewis and Clark Expedition

May 14, 2026

Today, we celebrate the 222d anniversary of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, the moment when American pioneers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, together with their team of explorers, embarked on a daring expedition into the American West, testing the limits of human endurance and forever altering the very destiny of our Nation.

With the promise of expansion before our young Republic, President Thomas Jefferson commissioned the Corps of Discovery in 1803, a small but fierce military unit tasked with exploring the vast lands of the newly acquired Louisiana Territory. Their journey would assert American sovereignty over this new land and establish our Nation's presence from the banks of the Mississippi River to the shores of the Pacific Ocean.

Led by Captain Meriwether Lewis and Lieutenant William Clark, these determined explorers began their historic mission on May 14, 1804, departing from Camp Dubois in the Illinois country. With unwavering grit and steadfast devotion to their mission, these brave men journeyed up the mighty Missouri River, crossed the towering Rocky Mountains under extreme conditions, and followed the Columbia River to the Pacific coast.

Along the way, they carefully documented the wildlife, plant species, and geography of a vast and largely unknown continent, producing maps that would guide generations of future Americans westward. With the indispensable assistance of guides and interpreters—most notably Sacagawea and her baby, affectionately named by Clark as "Little Pomp"—they forged essential relationships with Native American Tribes that helped make their success possible.

In November of 1805, after nearly a year and a half of relentless travel, the Corps of Discovery reached the Pacific Ocean, an extraordinary achievement that expanded the boundaries of human knowledge and proved the existence of a continental passage to the western seas. Their successful return in September of 1806 secured their place among the greatest expeditions in world history.

Their discoveries unlocked the American West and showed a young Nation that there was no frontier too vast, no wilderness too challenging, and no dream beyond reach. Through their unmatched courage and perseverance, Lewis and Clark forged the pioneering spirit that drove millions of Americans westward, fulfilling our manifest destiny and carrying the promise of prosperity to the far corners of our continent.

As we commemorate the anniversary of Lewis and Clark's expedition and celebrate 250 years of American independence, we honor the generations of Americans who pushed the limits of possibility and expanded the boundaries of our Republic. Together, we renew our enduring commitment to pursuing new frontiers of innovation and greatness, honoring the bold spirit of those who came before us, and ensuring that America remains strong, prosperous, and free for generations to come.

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