

The Transportation of Lewis and Clark

by Tom Laidlaw

A short approximation of dates and transportation on the Lewis and Clark Expedition.
A longer and more detailed compilation is in progress.

Camp River DuBois (Wood River, IL) May 14, 1804

1 keeled boat, 55 feet long

1 Red Pirogue, 41 feet long.

1 White Pirogue, 39 feet long

As many as four horses, which died at various times before reaching the Mandans.

Fort Mandan (Washburn, ND) Oct 31, 1804 - Apr 7, 1805

Keelboat sent back, 6 dugouts made.

6 dugout canoes, 2 pirogues

Marias River (Loma, MT) June 1 – June 12, 1805 Red Pirogue is left behind June 9, 1805.

6 dugout canoes, White Pirogue

Great Falls (Great Falls, MT) June 16 – July 15, 1805 White Pirogue is cached below the portage. Lewis uses skins to cover the iron frame of a boat he had brought with him, but “The Experiment” failed so Clark took some men and built 2 more dugouts.

8 dugout canoes

Wisdom River (MT 41 between Three Forks and Dillon, MT) Aug. 7, 1805

One dugout is left at Wisdom (Big Hole) River

7 dugout canoes

Camp Fortunate (Clark Reservoir south of Dillon MT) Aug. 12 - 30, 1805

All canoes are sunk at Camp Fortunate and party crosses Lemhi Pass to Salmon, ID to get

29 horses and 1 mule from Shoshones. Rte 28 & 93 north. **One horse gives out along the way.**

Ross’s Hole (Sula, MT) Sept 5, 1805

Trade in 7 horses and buy 11 more from Salish Indians.

39 Horses, 1 mule, 3 colts

Traveler’s Rest (Lolo, MT) Start climbing the Bitterroots. Sept. 12, 1805

Hard to keep track in here. **Killed at least 3 colts and one horse for food.**

38 horses

Canoe Camp (Orofino, ID) leave horses (38 in number), build canoes. Sept. 26, Oct 7, 1805

4 large canoes

1 small canoe.

The Great Falls of the Columbia (The Dalles, OR) Oct. 27, 1805

At The Dalles they trade their small canoe for one of Indian manufacture.

4 large dugouts

1 Indian canoe.

Fort Clatsop (Warrenton, OR) Dec. 7, 1805 – Mar. 23, 1806

(over)

The Transportation of Lewis and Clark (Homeward Bound)

The return is more complicated, so bear with me. One of their large canoes was severely damaged during the winter, and Lewis talks of needing one more canoe to go home in, so they stole one from the Indians. (Moulton says that the Indians had stolen some Elk earlier, so it was only fair.) Anyway, here's my take on the return transportation. These are only estimates and sometimes I have to work backward.. When actual counts are noted I have given references to Moulton's Journals.

Fort Clatsop (Mar 23, 1806) **3 large dugouts, 3 Indian canoes** (10, 200)

The Dalles – John Day River (April 19-25, 1806) -- Starting below the Dalles they tried to obtain horses and trade in their canoes. They had limited success, and it was not until the area of today's Roosevelt, WA that they got rid of their last canoe. The local Indians, realizing that the canoes would be abandoned anyway, haggled very hard, and broke several trade agreements. Several of the canoes were broken up and used for firewood. Eventually they obtained enough horses for everyone to at least cart their baggage with ease. By April 25 they owned approximately **17 Horses. They also had 3 rentals and one borrowed and Charbonneau had 2.**

Yellepit's Village (April 27-28, 1806) Opposite mouth of Walla Walla River, south of Kennewick, WA. Yellepit traded a **fine white horse** to Clark. From here on the 29th they **bought two horses**, crossed the Columbia River and camped about one mile up the Walla Walla River. Besides not having to paddle upstream, Lewis figured they would save about 80 miles by land, cutting off the Snake River's north meander. So they took their horses and went cross-country on an old Indian Trail. On April 30 they bought **two more horses** and got **one for medicine** bringing the total owned to **23 Horses** (7, 188) plus 4

Camp Choppunish (May 8 - June 10) – Here they recovered their caches and began retrieving their horses from the care of Twisted Hair. Some of them had come under the control of another Indian, Cut Nose, and there was a great argument about who took better care of the horses. They had to wait almost a month for the snow to melt on the Bitterroots. Eventually they got most of their original horses plus a few gifts and now they had “**enough horses for each man to ride one and use one for baggage, plus a few extra.**” By later journal entries they left the Nez Perce with **66 Horses and 1 colt.** (8, 77 & 179)

Traveler's Rest (July 3, 1806) – From here it gets real complicated. **Lewis** goes directly to Great Falls with 9 men and **17 horses** (8, 77) He follows the Blackfoot River, crosses the continental divide at Lewis and Clark Pass (Clark never there), heads N. to the Sun River, thence to the Missouri where he builds a bullboat and a two-skin canoe “**on our own plan**” to cross to the upper portage camp. Seven of the horses are stolen so he leaves 6 men with **4 horses** to prepare for the reverse portage and takes only three men and **6 horses** to the Marias River, where he tangles with some Indians on the Two Medicine River near Cutbank, MT. Two Indians are killed.

Clark takes 22 people besides himself, **49 horses and one colt** (8, 179), back down to Camp Fortunate where he opens caches, recovers **6 of the 7 sunken canoes** and takes the nails and iron from the broken one. At the Wisdom (Big Hole) River he takes the nails from the canoe that had been left there the previous August and then goes to Three Forks with the **6 canoes & the horses.** From there **Ordway** takes 9 men in the **6 canoes** to meet Lewis's six men at Great Falls. **Clark** goes by land over to the Yellowstone River, builds a **dugout catamaran** and follows the Yellowstone to the Missouri. **Pryor** and three men take the horses overland from the Yellowstone bound for the Mandan villages but they are stolen, so he builds **2 bullboats** at Pompey's Pillar and floats down the Yellowstone to meet Clark on August 8, 1806.

July 27, 1806 - Ordway's & Gass's men, leave 1 canoe, complete the portage, pick up the **White Pirogue**, and go downriver with **5 canoes, & the White Pirogue.** **Gass & Willard** take the **4 horses** overland. On **July 28** they meet **Lewis**, who has gained several horses in the fight with the Blackfeet. The horses are all let go on the prairie. The Red Pirogue is abandoned, they dig up the caches at **Maria's River** and float several miles downstream before they camp for the night. **5 canoes, White Pirogue.**

August 12, 1806 Lewis meets Clark on the Missouri and the whole group is together again with **5 canoes, the White Pirogue, 2 bullboats, and a dugout catamaran.** “*At 3 p.m. we proceeded on all together after having left the two leather canoes on the bank.*” (8, 295). So now they have **5 canoes, the White Pirogue, and a dugout catamaran.**

August 17, 1806 Mandan Villages **Another catamaran** is made from two of the 5 single dugouts. This to make a steady ride for Mandan chief Sheheke, who agreed to go and visit the “Great Father of the Seventeen Great States of America.” Colter & Charbonneau are discharged. Now they have **3 canoes, the White Pirogue, and 2 dugout catamarans.**

Sept. 20, 1806 Three of the party were unable to row due to eye trouble, so they **set adrift the Yellowstone catamaran** and distribute 29 men among the remaining boats: **3 canoes, the White Pirogue, and 1 dugout catamaran.**

Sept. 23, 1806 St. Louis, MO Journey's End