



**SUPPLIED FOR SURVIVAL:**

*Meriwether Lewis  
at Harpers Ferry*

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**A Lewis & Clark Bicentennial Commemoration**

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Harpers Ferry National Historical Park  
Harpers Ferry, West Virginia  
March 28-30, 2003

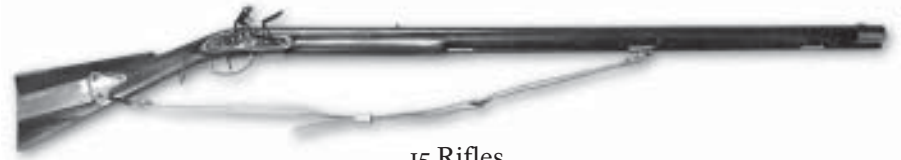


1807 portrait of Meriwether Lewis by Charles Willson Peale  
(Independence National Historical Park)

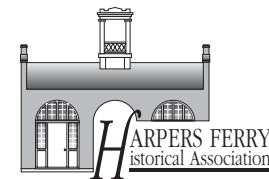
*“Yesterday, I shot my guns and examined the several articles which had been manufactured for me at this place; they appear to be well executed.”*

– Meriwether Lewis, July 8, 1803

### List of Inventory Acquired by Meriwether Lewis at Harpers Ferry:



- 15 Rifles
- 24 Pipe tomahawks
- 36 Pipe tomahawks for “Indian Presents”
- 24 Large knives
- 15 Powderhorns and pouches
- 15 Pairs of bullet molds
- 15 Wipers or gun worms
- 15 Ball screws
- 15 Gun slings
- Extra parts of locks and tools for repairing arms
- 40 Fish giggs
- Collapsible iron boat frame
- 1 Small grindstone



Harpers Ferry National Historical Park would like to thank the following organizations for their support: Corps of Engineers Eastern Legacy Division, Harpers Ferry Historical Association, Lewis & Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail, West Virginia Division of Tourism, and the West Virginia Humanities Council.

## Schedule of Events

**SUNDAY, MARCH 30, 2003**

**9:00 am - 5:00 pm**

Corps of Discovery II (The Green in Lower Town – this exhibit will remain at the park through April 18).

**11:00 am - 4:00 pm**

Harpers Ferry Historical Association Lewis & Clark Books and Commemoratives (Bicentennial Tent on Arsenal Square).

**11:00 am - 4:00 pm**

Lewis & Clark Bicentennial Information (Bicentennial Tent on Arsenal Square).

**11:00 am - 4:00 pm**

Living History Displays and Demonstrations (John Brown's Fort on Arsenal Square).

**11:00 am - 11:30 am**

Music of the American Indian, featuring music by Turtle Island Band (Tent of Many Voices on The Green).

**11:00 am - 11:45 am**

Meriwether Lewis at Harpers Ferry, a Ranger-conducted program (meet Ranger on Hamilton Street).

**12:00 noon - 12:45 pm**

Music in the Age of Meriwether Lewis, with David and Ginger Hildebrand (Tent of Many Voices on The Green).

**1:00 pm - 2:30 pm**

The Role of Harpers Ferry in the Lewis & Clark Expedition – A Panel Discussion with Dr. Merritt Roe Smith, Dr. Daniel Thorp, Dr. Gary Moulton, Dr. Jerry Thomas, Barbara Fifer, Ken Karsmizki, James Holmberg, and Bill Barker (Tent of Many Voices on The Green).

**2:30 pm - 3:30 pm**

Reception and Book Signing, with music by David and Ginger Hildebrand (Tent of Many Voices on The Green).

**3:30 pm - 4:30 pm**

“A President's Vision, A Captain's Challenge,” featuring Bill Barker as Thomas Jefferson and Dick Cheatham as Meriwether Lewis (Tent of Many Voices on The Green).

## Meriwether Lewis at Harpers Ferry



*This 1803 print shows the new government arsenal at the junction of the Potomac and Shenandoah rivers. Twenty years earlier, in 1783, Thomas Jefferson declared that this scene was “worth a voyage across the Atlantic.”*

MERIWETHER LEWIS relied on the U.S. Armory and Arsenal at Harpers Ferry for guns and hardware that would meet the unique requirements of his transcontinental expedition. On March 16, 1803, Lewis arrived in Harpers Ferry with a letter from Secretary of War Henry Dearborn addressed to Armory superintendent Joseph Perkins:

*Sir:*

*You will be pleased to make such arms & Iron work, as requested by the Bearer Captain Meriwether Lewis and to have them completed with the least possible delay.*

In addition to procuring 15 rifles, 15 powder horns, 30 bullet molds, 30 ball screws, extra rifle and musket locks, gunsmith's repair tools, several dozen tomahawks, and 24 large knives, Lewis also attended to the construction of a collapsible iron boat frame of his own design. The strange craft was comprised of an iron frame that came apart in sections, over which was stretched a covering of hide. Lewis planned to use the craft following the portage around the Great Falls of the Missouri River. The Armory mechanics assigned to the

## Meriwether Lewis at Harpers Ferry

project, however, had considerable difficulty assembling the iron frame, and Lewis was forced to prolong his Harpers Ferry stay from the week he had planned to over a month. On April 20, 1803, Lewis wrote President Jefferson:

*My detention at Harper's Ferry was unavoidable for one month, a period much greater than could reasonably have been calculated on; my greatest difficulty was the frame of the canoe, which could not be completed without my personal attention to such portions of it as would enable the workmen to understand the design perfectly. -My Rifles, Tomahawks & knives are already in a state of forwardness that leaves me little doubt of their being in readiness in due time.*

Lewis and the Armory mechanics finally finished the iron frame, and Lewis conducted a "full experiment" on a section of the unusual canoe. Lewis believed this craft would be lighter and could carry more weight than any other boat of similar size.

On April 18, 1803, Lewis finally departed Harpers Ferry to attend to other pressing matters in Lancaster and Philadelphia, Pa. Eleven weeks later, on July 7, Lewis returned to Harpers Ferry. The following day he wrote President Jefferson:

*Yesterday, I shot my guns and examined the several articles which had been manufactured for me at this place; they appear to be well executed.*

Securing a driver, team, and wagon to haul his large supply of weapons and articles to Pittsburgh, Pa., Lewis departed Harpers Ferry for the last time on July 8, 1803. Although there would only be one skirmish in which the rifles were fired against Indians, the arms procured at Harpers Ferry kept Lewis and his men fed for 28 months, and several of the tomahawks served well as "Indian Presents."

The collapsible canoe, on the other hand, did not work out as planned. When the expedition reached the Great Falls of the Missouri in late June 1805, Lewis was unable to find pine trees for pitch to seal the seams of the leather skins stretched over the frame - work. From June 18-July 8, 1805, the canoe was assembled and covered with a total of 28 elk skins and 4 buffalo skins. A substitute tar of charcoal, beeswax, and buffalo tallow was applied to the skins to prevent them from leaking. When put into the water on July 9, "the

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### 10:00 am - 10:45 am

Meriwether Lewis at Harpers Ferry, a Ranger-conducted program (meet Ranger on Hamilton Street).

### 11:00 am - 4:00 pm

Living History Displays and Demonstrations (John Brown's Fort on Arsenal Square).

### 11:00 am - 11:45 am

"Going Along with Lewis & Clark," a Lewis & Clark Children's Program with Barbara Fifer (Armory Tent).

### 11:00 am - 11:45 am

Hand Forging in the Age of Lewis & Clark, with Bill Keeler (Tent of Many Voices on The Green).

### 12:00 noon - 12:45 pm

Meriwether Lewis at Harpers Ferry, a Ranger-conducted program (meet Ranger on Hamilton Street).

### 1:00 pm - 1:45 pm

The Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition, Dr. Gary Moulton (Tent of Many Voices on The Green).

### 2:00 pm - 2:30 pm

"Pierre Cruzatte & the Music of the Corps of Discovery," featuring Daniel Slosberg as Pierre Cruzatte (Potomac Street Stage).

### 2:30 pm - 3:00 pm

Formal Ribbon Cutting and Dedication of the park's new exhibit, "Meriwether Lewis at Harpers Ferry" (Potomac Street Stage).

### 3:00 pm - 3:45 pm

Reception and Book Signing, featuring music by Chamber Music Unlimited (Armory Tent).

### 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm

"A President's Vision, A Captain's Challenge," featuring Bill Barker as Thomas Jefferson and Dick Cheatham as Meriwether Lewis (Tent of Many Voices on The Green).

### 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm

"The Lewis & Clark Expedition," slide show and lecture by James Holmberg, followed by Book Signing and Reception, with music by Daniel Slosberg (Mather Training Center on Camp Hill).

## Schedule of Events

### FRIDAY, MARCH 28, 2003

#### 2:00 pm

Opening of Corps of Discovery II (The Green in Lower Town – this exhibit will remain at the park through April 18).

#### 5:45 pm - 6:30 pm

Opening Reception and Welcome, featuring music by Chamber Music Unlimited (Tent of Many Voices on The Green).

#### 6:30 pm - 7:00 pm

Opening Ceremony, featuring music by Turtle Island Band (Tent of Many Voices on The Green).

#### 7:00 pm - 7:45 pm

“Pierre Cruzatte & the Music of the Corps of Discovery,” featuring Daniel Slosberg as Pierre Cruzatte (Tent of Many Voices on The Green).

#### 8:00 pm - 9:00 pm

“The Journey of York,” featuring Hasan Davis as York, William Clark’s slave and the first African-American to cross the American continent (Tent of Many Voices on The Green).

### SATURDAY, MARCH 29, 2003

#### 9:00 am - 5:00 pm

Corps of Discovery II (The Green in Lower Town – this exhibit will remain at the park through April 18).

#### 10:00 am - 4:00 pm

USPS Meriwether Lewis Postal Cancellation Station (Arsenal Square Postal Kiosk).

#### 10:00 am - 4:00 pm

Harpers Ferry Historical Association Lewis & Clark Books and Commemoratives (Bicentennial Tent on Arsenal Square).

#### 10:00 am - 4:00 pm

Lewis & Clark Bicentennial Information (Bicentennial Tent on Arsenal Square).

## Meriwether Lewis at Harpers Ferry

experiment” floated “like a perfect cork,” but then began to leak. The substitute sealer did not stick. Lewis wrote in his journal:

*She leaked in such manner that she would not answer.*

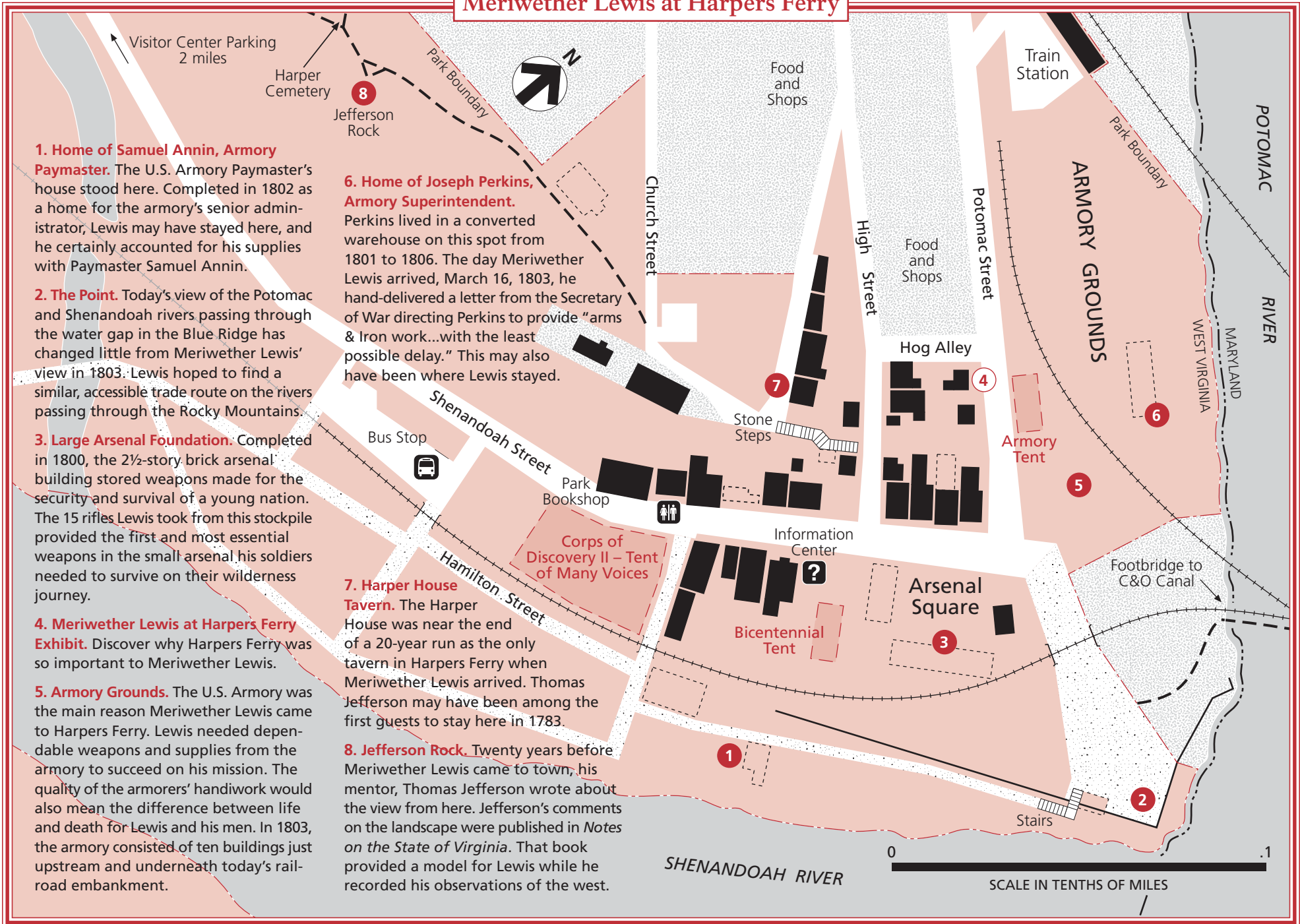
The failure of the collapsible boat “mortified” Lewis, and, lacking the time to attend to further modifications, he “relinquished all further hope of my favorite boat.” On July 10, a cache was dug and the boat was buried. Assuming that pine trees would be available when and where the iron frame was covered with skins had doomed the boat to failure.

From the Potomac River to the Pacific Ocean and back, supplies from Harpers Ferry traveled more than 4,000 miles with the Lewis & Clark Expedition. Of all the weapons, tools, and parts created and prepared at the Harpers Ferry Armory and Arsenal in its sixty year life, none may have traveled so far and affected so many as those which Meriwether Lewis obtained here in 1803.



*Armory Superintendent Joseph Perkins (left) and Captain Meriwether Lewis inspect the collapsible iron boat frame. Illustration by Keith Rocco.*

## Meriwether Lewis at Harpers Ferry



**1. Home of Samuel Annin, Army Paymaster.** The U.S. Army Paymaster's house stood here. Completed in 1802 as a home for the armory's senior administrator, Lewis may have stayed here, and he certainly accounted for his supplies with Paymaster Samuel Annin.

**2. The Point.** Today's view of the Potomac and Shenandoah rivers passing through the water gap in the Blue Ridge has changed little from Meriwether Lewis' view in 1803. Lewis hoped to find a similar, accessible trade route on the rivers passing through the Rocky Mountains.

**3. Large Arsenal Foundation.** Completed in 1800, the 2½-story brick arsenal building stored weapons made for the security and survival of a young nation. The 15 rifles Lewis took from this stockpile provided the first and most essential weapons in the small arsenal his soldiers needed to survive on their wilderness journey.

**4. Meriwether Lewis at Harpers Ferry Exhibit.** Discover why Harpers Ferry was so important to Meriwether Lewis.

**5. Armory Grounds.** The U.S. Army was the main reason Meriwether Lewis came to Harpers Ferry. Lewis needed dependable weapons and supplies from the armory to succeed on his mission. The quality of the armorers' handiwork would also mean the difference between life and death for Lewis and his men. In 1803, the armory consisted of ten buildings just upstream and underneath today's railroad embankment.

**6. Home of Joseph Perkins, Army Superintendent.** Perkins lived in a converted warehouse on this spot from 1801 to 1806. The day Meriwether Lewis arrived, March 16, 1803, he hand-delivered a letter from the Secretary of War directing Perkins to provide "arms & Iron work...with the least possible delay." This may also have been where Lewis stayed.

**7. Harper House Tavern.** The Harper House was near the end of a 20-year run as the only tavern in Harpers Ferry when Meriwether Lewis arrived. Thomas Jefferson may have been among the first guests to stay here in 1783.

**8. Jefferson Rock.** Twenty years before Meriwether Lewis came to town, his mentor, Thomas Jefferson wrote about the view from here. Jefferson's comments on the landscape were published in *Notes on the State of Virginia*. That book provided a model for Lewis while he recorded his observations of the west.