

Campfire Scenes

Clark's Unwelcome Visit

Characters:

Clark

Lewis

Sacagawea

Charbonneau

Drouillard

Jo Field

Reubin Field

Members of Pisch quit pas tribe

On October 19th, 1805, near present-day McNary Dam, the party came upon "Muscle Shell rapid," a "verry bad rapid which was about 2 miles in length." While waiting for the canoes to pass, Clark and three men crossed the Columbia and encountered a village of Umatillas or Cayuses. Their lodges sat on the bank opposite the mouth of the Umatilla River, near what is now Plymouth, Washington in Benton County (Moulton V.5, 307). The following account from Clark's journal tells the story:

...while Setting on a rock wateing for Capt Lewis I Shot a Crain which was flying over of the common kind. I observed a great number of Lodges on the opposit Side at Some distance below and Several Indians on the opposit bank passing up to where Capt. Lewis was with the Canoes, others I Saw on a knob nearly opposit to me at which place they delayed but a Short time before they returned to their Lodges as fast as they could run, I was fearfull that those people might not be informed of us, I deturmined to take the little Canoe which was with me and proceed with the three men in it to the Lodges, on my aproach not one person was to be Seen except three men off in the plains, and they Sheared off as I aproached near the Shore, I landed in front of five Lodges which was at no great distance from each other, Saw no person the enteranc or Dores of the Lodges wer Shut with the Same materials of which they were built a mat, I approached one with a pipe in my hand entered a lodge which was the nearest to me found 32 persons men, women and a few children Setting permiscuesly in the Lodg, (Some) in the greatest agutation, Some crying and ringing there hands, others hanging their heads. I gave my hand to them all and made Signs of my friendly dispotion and offered the men my pipe to Smok and distributed a flew Small articles which I had in my pockets,—this measure passified those distressed people verry much, I then Sent one man into each lodge and entered a Second myself the inhabitants of which I found more fritened than those of the first lodge I destributed Sundrey Small articles amongst them, and Smoked with the men, I then

entered the third 4h & fifth Lodge which I found Somewhat passified, the three men, Drewer Jo. & R. Fields, haveing used every means in their power to convince them of our friendly disposition to them, I then (formd) Set my Self on a rock and made Signs to the men to come and Smoke with me not one Come out untill the Canoes arrived with (Some five Came out of each Lodge and Set by me and Smoked Capt Lewis at) the 2 Chiefs , one of whom spoke aloud, and as was their Custom to all we had passed the Indians came out & Set by me and Smoked They said we came from the clouds (which the) and were not men &c. this time Capt. Lewis came down with the Canoes rear in which the Indian, as Soon as they Saw the Squar wife of the interpereters (wife) they pointed to her and informed those who continued yet in the Same position I first found them, they imediately all came out and appeared to assume new life, the sight of This Indian woman, wife to one of our interprs. confirmed those people of our friendly intentions, as no woman ever accompanies a war party of Indians in this quarter— (Clark, from Moulton V.5, 305-6)

About this incident, Clark added: “I am confident that I could have tomahawked every Indian here” (Clark, from Moulton V.5, 303). Some historians consider this to be evidence of Clark’s aggressive nature (Lang, ref). David Nicandri (2005) believes “that it was a figure of speech whose intention was to show how totally obsequious these people were. Clark had no hostile intention; in fact the quote provides contrary evidence; he crossed the river to alert Lewis of their presence because he knew that an unannounced arrival would have potentially terrifying effects. Despite these efforts, Clark's peaceful mission was doomed because he had shot the crane.”

Clark’s “Dismal Nitch”

Characters:

Clark

Lewis

Members of the Corps

In November of 1805, as the party traveled the final miles in their long journey towards the Pacific, the winter coastal weather took a turn for the worse. Stuck for 6 days at what Clark called “this dismal nitch”, the party suffered through terrible rain and wind storms, lack of food and level ground to sleep and the knowledge that they were within miles of the ocean, but could not reach it. From November 9th through the 15th, they camped on the eastern side of Point Ellice, Pacific County, Washington, near the Megler Rest Area, now also the Clark's Dismal Nitch unit of Lewis & Clark National Historical Park.

It is in times of trial such as this that the true character of people is often revealed. William Clark

begins his report of this harrowing time on November 9th, as follows:

The tide of last night did not rise Sufficiently high to come into our camp, but the Canoes which was exposed to the mercy of the waves &c. which accompanied the returning tide, they all filled, and with great attention we Saved them untill the tide left them dry— wind Hard from the South and rained hard all the fore part of the day, at 2 oClock P M the flood tide came in accompanied with emence waves and heavy winds, floated the trees and Drift which was on the point on which we Camped and tosed them about in Such a manner as to endanger the Canoes verry much, with every exertion and the Strictest attention by every individual of the party was Scercely Sufficient to Save our Canoes from being crushed by those monstrous trees maney of them nearly 200 feet long and from 4 to 7 feet through. our camp entirely under water dureing the hight of the tide, every man as wet as water could make them all the last night and to day all day as the rain Continued all day, at 4 oClock P M the wind Shifted about to the S. W. and blew with great violence imediately from the Ocian for about two hours, notwithstanding the disagreeable Situation of our party all wet and Cold (and one which they have experienced for Several days past) they are chearfull and anxious to See further into the Ocian, The water of the river being too Salt to use we are obliged to make use of rain water— Some of the party not accustomed to Salt water has made too free a use of it on them it acts as a pergitive. at this dismal point we must Spend another night as the wind & waves are too high to proceed. (Clark, from Moulton V.6, 38)

The next day, November 10th, the Expedition was only able to travel 10 miles due to continued wet and windy conditions. That night, Clark wrote:

...formed a camp on the Drift Logs which appeared to be the only Situation we could find to lie, the hills being either a perpendicular Clift, or Steep assent, riseing to about 500 feet — our Canoes we Secured as well as we could— we are all wet the rain haveing continued all day, our beding and maney other articles, employ our Selves drying our blankets— nothing to eate but dried fish pounded which we brought from the falls... (Clark, from Moulton V.6, 39-40)

On November 11th, William Clark wrote:

A hard rain all the last night, dureing the last tide the logs on which we lay was all on float Sent out Jo Fields to hunt, he Soon returned and informed us that the hills was So high & Steep, & thick with undergroth and fallen Timber that he could not get out any distance; about 12 oClock 5 Indians came down in a canoe, the wind verry high from the S. W. with most tremendous waves brakeing with great violence against the Shores, rain falling in torrents, we are all wet as usial and our Situation is truly a disagreeable one; the great quantites of rain which has loosened the Stones on the hill Sides, and the Small Stones fall down upon us, our canoes at one place at the mercy of the waves, our baggage in another

and our Selves and party Scattered on floating logs and Such dry Spots as can be found on the hill Sides, and Crivices of the rocks. we purchased of the Indians 13 red charr which we found to be an excellent fish we have Seen those Indians above and are of a nation who reside above and on the opposit Side who call themselves (Galt-har-ma) [NB: Cath lah ma they are badly clad & illy made, Small and Speak a language much resembling the last nation, one of those men had on a Salors Jacket and Pantiloons and made Signs that he got those Clothes from the white people who lived below the point &c. those people left us and Crossed the river (which is about ~ miles wide at this place) through the highest waves I ever Saw a Small vestles ride. Those Indians are Certainly the best Canoe navigaters I ever Saw. rained all day. (Clark, from Moulton V.6, 41)

On November 12th, 1806, William Clark wrote:

A Tremendious wind from the S. W. about 3 oClock this morning with Lightineng and hard claps of Thunder, and Hail which Continued untill 6 oClock a. m. when it became light for a Short time, then the heavens became Sudenly darkened by a black Cloud from the S. W. and rained with great violence untill 12 oClock, the waves tremendous brakeing with great fury against the rocks and trees on which we were encamped. our Situation is dangerous. we took the advantage of a low tide and moved our camp around a point to a Small wet bottom at the mouth of a Brook, which we had not observed when we Came to this cove; from it being verry thick and obscured by drift trees and thick bushes It would be distressing to See our Situation, all wet and Colde our bedding also wet, (and the robes of the party which Compose half the bedding is rotten and we are not in a Situation (not) to supply their places) in a wet bottom Scercely large enough to contain us, (with) our baggage half a mile from us and Canoes at the mercy of the waves, altho Secured as well as possible, Sunk with emence parcels of Stone to wate them down to prevent their dashing to pieces against the rocks; one got loose last night and was left on a rock a Short distance below, without rciving more dammage than a Split in her bottom— Fortunately for us our men are healthy. men Gibson Bratten & Willard attempted to go aroud the point below in our Indian Canoe, much Such a canoe as the Indians visited us in yesterday, they proceeded to the point from which they were oblige to return, the waves tossing them about at will I walked up the branch and giked 3 Salmon trout. the party killed 13 Salmon to day in a branch about 2 miles above, rain Continued. (Clark, from Moulton V.6, 43)

On November 13th, 1805, Clark commented that “...if we were to have cold weather to accompany the rain which we have had for this 6 or 8 days passed we must eneviatilbly Suffer verry much as Clothes are Scerce with us...” (Clark, from Moulton V.6, 43-45). The next day a canoe was broken when crashed against the rocks.

On November 15th, 1805, William Clark wrote:

...About 3 oClock the wind lulled, and the river became calm, (we) I had the canoes loaded

in great haste and Set Out, from this dismal nitich where we have been confined for 6 days passed, without the possibility of proceeding on, returning to a better Situation, or get out to hunt, Scerce of Provisions, and torents of rain poreing on us all the time— proceeded on passed the blustering point below which I found a butifull Sand beech thro which runs a Small [NB?: river from the hills] below the mouth of this Stream is a village of 36 houses uninhabited by anything except flees, here I met C. Shannon and 5 Indians... (Clark, from Moulton V.6 49-50)

Two days later, Clark announced that he would be setting out the following morning by land for the Pacific Ocean. He determined that all who wished to join him be permitted. After all, they had crossed a continent to get to this place, who could bear to stop now? Only 11 men elected to do so, however. These were John Ordway, Nathaniel Pryor, Joseph and Reuben Field, George Shannon, William Bratton, John Colter, Peter Weiser, Francois (William) Labiche, Toussaint Charbonneau and York.

Sacagawea and the Whale

Characters:

Sacagawea

Pomp

Charbonneau

Clark

Members of Tillamook tribe

From their winter camp at Fort Clastop, Clark determined to travel to the site of a beached whale reported to him by the Clatsops. They told him of its southwestern location on the coast, in the vicinity of the Killamox nation. Never having seen this mammal herself, Sacagawea insisted that she accompany the group. They reached the site, at present-day Ecola Creek, near Cannon Beach, Oregon on January 9th, 1806.

On January 6th, 1806, Meriwether Lewis wrote:

Capt Clark set out after an early breakfast with the party in two canoes as had been concerted the last evening; Charbono and his Indian woman were also of the party; the Indian woman was very impotunate to be permitted to go, and was therefore indulged; she observed that she had traveled a long way with us to see the great waters, and that now that monstrous fish was also to be seen, she thought it very hard she could not be permitted to see either (she had never yet been to the Ocean). (Lewis, from Moulton V.6, 168)

On January 7th, 1806, William Clark wrote:

...I hired a young Indian to pilot me to the whale for which Service I gave him a file in hand and promised Several other Small articles on my return, left Sergt. Gass and one man of my party Werner to make Salt & permitted Bratten to accompany me, we proceeded on the round Slipery Stones under a high hill which projected into the ocean about 4 miles further than the direction of the Coast. after walking for 2½ miles on the Stones my guide made a sudden halt, pointed to the top of the mountain and uttered the word Pe Shack which means bad [NB: bad], and made Signs that we could not proceed any further on the rocks, but must pass over that mountain, I hesitated a moment & view this immense mountain the top of which (and) was obscured in the clouds, and the ascent appeared to be almost perpendicular; as the Small Indian path along which they had brought immense loads but a few hours before, led up this mountain and appeared to ascend in a Sideling direction, I thought more than probable that the ascent might be tolerably easy and therefore proceeded on, I soon found that the [blank] become much worse as I ascended, and at one place we were obliged to Support and draw our Selves up by the bushes & roots for near 100 feet, and after about 2 hours labour and fatigue we reached the top of this high mountain, from the top of which I looked down with astonishment to behold the height which we had ascended, which appeared to be 10 or 12 hundred feet up a mountain which appeared to be almost perpendicular, here we met 14 Indians men and & women loaded with the oil & Blubber of the whale... (Clark, from Moulton V.6, 177-8)

On January 8th, 1806, William Clark wrote:

Set out at Day a fine morning wind hard from S. E at 1½ miles arrived at a Open where I had a view of the Seas Coast for a long Distance rocks in every direction... I saw 5 Lodges of Indian of the Ca Ia mix nation, boiling whale in a trough of about 20 gallons with hot Stones, and the oyle they put into a Canoe I proceeded on a Short distance to the whale which was nothing more than the Sceleton, of 105 feet long, we took out a few bones and returned to the Cabins at the mouth of the Creek, and attempted to trade with those people who I found Close and Capricious, would not trade the Smallest piece except they thought they got an advantage of the bargain, their disposition is avaritious, & independant in trade, they offered to trade for Elk of which we had not I purchased some oile and about 120 w of (fish) Blubber after rendered, finding they would not trade I Determined to return home with what we have The Houses of these people appear temporary a ridge pole on 2 forks Supported a Certain number of Split boards of the red Cedar & pine, Set on the end the gable ends of the Same materials and Calculated for 2 families first, The Dress and apparenc of the natives as also the language is precisely that of the Clopsots & Chinooks, those people Save their oile in bladder Guts. Their food is principally fish that is thrown on the Shores by the Seas & left by the tide, This Cost is rocky, the mountains high & rugged, They inform me that their nation lives in 5 villages to the S E of this place at the mouths of Creek in which they catch Salmon. in the Season, I got of those people a

few roots Some Sturgeon whale. They Call a whale E cu-la a Creek Shu man, they have Some flew Sea ortter for which they ask Such prices I could not purchase any of them... Th party much fatigued in crossing' mountain & 4 high Points Steep & Slipery, also Stony Beach Slippery and tiresome. (Clark, from Moulton V.6, 180)

A Plot to Kill McNeal

Characters:

McNeal
Sergt. Pryor
Chinook woman
Indian man

“On the north side of Ecola Creek, in the north part of Cannon Beach,” this harrowing incident occurred (Moulton V.6, 185).

On January 9th, 1806, William Clark wrote:

A fine morning wind from the N. E. last night about 10 oClock while Smokeing with the nativ's I was alarmed by a loud Srile voice from the Cabins on the opposite Side, the Indians all run immediately across to the village, my guide who Continued with me made Signs that Some one's throat was Cut, by enquiry I found that one man McNeal was absent, I imediately Sent off Sergt. N. Pryor & 4 men in quest of McNeal who' they met comeing across the Creak in great hast, and informed me that the people were alarmed on the opposit Side at Something but what he could not tell, a man had verry friendly envited him to go and eate in his lodge, that the Indian had locked armes with him and went to a lodge in which a woman gave him Some blubber, that the man envited him to another lodge to get Something better, and the woman [NB: knowing his design] held him [NB: McNeal] by the blanket which he had around him [NB: He not knowing her object freed himself & was going off, when this woman a Chinnook an old friend of McNeals] (and) another ran out and hollow'd and his pretended friend disapeared— I emediately ordered every man to hold themselves in a State of rediness and Sent Sergt. Pryor & 4 men to know the cause of the alarm which was found to be a premeditated plan of the pretended friend of McNeal to assanate for his Blanket and what flew articles he had about him, which was found out by a Chinnook woman who allarmed the men of the village who were with me in time to prevent the horred act. this man was of another band at Some distance and ran off as Soon as he was discovered. (Clark, from Moulton V.6, 189)

The Hospitality of Chief Yelleppit

Characters:

Chief Yellept
Lewis
Clark
Shoshone woman
Sick people
Medicine man
Chim-nah-poms
Walla Wallas
Pierre Cruzatte

These excerpts from Lewis and Clark's journals describe the Corps' encounters with Yelleppit and the Walla Wallas- first on their trip to the Pacific, then as they returned up the Columbia.

Journal editor, Gary Moulton, provides some context for this meeting:

Once past the falls [the Corps] traded canoes for horses to continue their journey by land and made their way up the north side of the Columbia to the Walula (or Walla Walla) Indians, whom they found much more hospitable than those lower down the Columbia. On the westward journey the captains had promised Chief Yelleppit that they would remain with him for a few days on the way back. They kept their promise and camped with the Walulas from April 27 to 29, at the mouth of the Walla Walla River. Yelleppit told them about an overland shortcut to the Nez Perces, so on the thirtieth they continued eastward by land following a Nez Perce guide they had met several days earlier. They were anxious to reach the Nez Perces, with whom they had left their horses on the westbound trip. (Moulton V.7, 2)

On October 19th, 1805, William Clark wrote:

The great Chief Yel-lep-pit two other Chiefs , and a Chief of Band below presented themselves to us verry early this morning. We Smoked with them, enformed them as we had all others above as well as we Could by Signs of our friendly intentions towards our red children Particular those who opened their ears to our Councils. We gave a Medal, a Handkercheif & a String of Wompom to Yelleppit and a String of wompom to each of the others. Yelleppit is a bold handsom Indian, with a dignified countenance about 35 years of age, about 5 feet 8 inches high and well perpotiond. He requested us to delay untill the

Middle of the day, that his people might Come down and See us, we excused our Selves and promised to Stay with him one or 2 days on our return which appeared to Satisfy him; great numbers of Indians Came down in Canoes to view us before we Set out which was not until 9 oClock AM. (Clark, from Moulton V.5, 303-4)

On April 27th, 1806, Meriwether Lewis wrote:

here the principal Cheif of the Wallahwallahs joined us with six men of his nation. this Cheif by name Yel-lept' had visited us on the morning of the 19 of October at our encampment a little below this place; we gave him at that time a small medal, and promised him a larger one on our return. he appeared much gratified at seeng us return, invited us to remain at his village three or four days and assured us that we should be furnished with a plenty of such food as they had themselves; and some horses to assist us on our journey, after our scanty repast we continued our march accompanied by Yellept and his party to the village which we found at the distance of six miles situated on the N. side of the river at the lower side of the low country about 12 ms. below the entrance of Lewis's river. This Cheif is a man of much influence not only in his own nation but also among the neighbouring tribes and nations.— This Village consists of 15 large mat lodges, at present they seem to subsist principally on a speceis of mullet which weigh from one to three lbs. and roots of various discriptions which these plains furnish them in great abundance. they also take a few salmon trout of the white kind.— Yellept haranged his village in our favour intreated them to furnish us with fuel and provision and set the example himself by bringing us an armfull of wood and a platter of 3 roasted mullets. the others soon followed his example with respect to fuel and we soon found ourselves in possession of an ample stock. they birn the stems of the shrubs in the plains there being no timber in their neighbourhood of any discription. we purchased four dogs of these people on which the party suped heartily having been on short allowance for near two days. the indians retired when we requested them this evening and behaved themselves in every respect extreemly well. the indians informed us that there was a good road which passed from the columbia opposite to this village to the entrance of the Kooskooske on the S. side of Lewis's river; they also informed us, that there were a plenty of deer and Antelopes on the road, with good water and grass. we knew that a road in that direction if the country would permit would shorten our rout at least 80 miles. the indians also informed us that the country was level and the road good, under these circumstances we did not hesitate in pursuing the rout recommended by our guide whos information was corroborated by Yellept & others. we concluded to pass our horses over early in the morning. (Lewis, from Moulton V.7, 173-4)

On April 28th, 1806, William Clark wrote:

This morning early the Great Chief Yel lip pet brought a very eligant white horse to our Camp and presented him to me Signifying his wish to get a kittle but being informed that we had already disposed of every kittle we could possibly Spare he Said he was Content

with what ever I thought proper to give him. I gave him my Swoard, ioo balls & powder and Some Small articles of which he appeared perfectly Satisfied. it was necessary before we entered on our rout through the plains where we were to meet with no lodges or resident Indians that we Should lay in a Stock of provisions and not depend altogether on the gun. we dertected R. Frazer to whome we have intrusted the duty of making the purchases, to lay in as maney fat dogs as he could procure; he Soon obtained 10. being anxious to <go> depart we requested the Chief to furnish us with Canoes to pass the river, but he insisted on our remaining with him this day at least, that he would be much pleased if we would consent to remain two or 3 days, but he would not let <him> us have Canoes to leave him this day. that he had Sent for the Chim-na-pums his neighbours to come down and join his people this evening and dance for us. We urged the necessity of our proceeding on imediately in order that we might the Sooner return to them, with the articles which they wishd. brought to them but this had no effect, he Said that the time he asked Could not make any Considerable difference. I at length urged that there was no wind blowing and that the river was consequently in good order to pass our horses and if he would furnish us with Canoes for that purpose we would remain all night at our present encampment, to this proposition he assented and Soon produced a Canoe. I Saw a man who had his knee contracted who had previously applied to me for Some Medisene, that if he would founrish another Canoe I would give him Some Medicsene. He readily Consented and went himself with his Canoe by means of which we passed our horses over the river Safely and hobbled them as usial...

a little before Sun Set the Chim nah poms arrived; they were about 100 men and a flew women; they joined the Wallah wallahs who were about 150 men and formed a half Circle around our camp where they waited verry patiently to See our party dance. the fiddle was played and the men amused themselves with danceing about an hour. we then requested the Indians to dance which they very Chearfully Complied with; they Continued their dance untill 10 at night. the whole assemblage of Indians about 350 men women and Children Sung and danced at the Same time. most of them danced in the Same place they Stood and nearly jumped up to the time of their musick. Some of the men who were esteemed most brave entered the Space around which the main body were formed in Solid Column and danced in a Circular manner Side wise. at 10 P M. the dance ended and the nativs retired; they were much gratified in Seeing Some of our Party join them in their dance. one of their party who made himself the most Conspicuous Charecter in the dance and Songs, we were told was a Medesene man & Could foretell things. that he had told of our Comeing into their Country and was now about to Consult his God the moon if what we Said was the truth. (Clark, from Moulton V.7, 179-181)

A “Difficult and Fatieguing” Road

Characters:

Clark

Lewis

Hugh Hall

Members of the Corps

In April of 1806 the Corps passed Celilo Falls on their return upriver and then exchanged their canoes for horses in order to travel by land. This occurred on the north bank of the Columbia in the vicinity of the present Klickitat/Benton county line. The group had to abandon the canoes at this time because the spring freshet was in full force. This raging water was 20 degrees colder than it had been the previous fall when they descended the river, going with the flow. There was no way to paddle up this raging river!

Once on horseback, the road was not easy. They were traversing the hard-edged basalt ledges carved by the river through the millennia. Out of the micron-thick soil, prickly pear cactus grew in profusion. Places free of prickly pear were only so because of the sand dunes which made trekking arduous. The men soon grew tired and sore. The following excerpts demonstrate the captains' ability to sympathize with their party, and sacrifice on their behalf.

On April 24th, 1806, Meriwether Lewis wrote:

... the road was rocky and sandy alternately, the road difficult and fatiguing... most of the party complain of the soariness of their feet and legs this evening; it is no doubt caused by walking over the rough stones and deep sands after being for some months passed been accustomed to a soft soil. my left ankle gives me much pain. I bathed my feet in cold water from which I experienced considerable relief. (Lewis, from Moulton V.7, 163)

The next day, on April 25th, Patrick Gass wrote: "The men in general complain of their feet being sore; and the officers have to go on foot to permit some of them to ride. (Gass, from Moulton V.10, 215).

On that same day, Lewis recorded:

...we traded for two horses with nearly the same articles we had offered at the village; these nags Capt. C. and myself intend riding ourselves; having now a sufficiency to transport with ease all our baggage and the packs of the men... (Lewis, from Moulton V.7, 166)

On that day Clark reported:

I was in the rear and had not proceeded very far before one of the horses which we had hired of the Chopunnish, was taken from Hall who I had directed to ride. he had fallen

behind out of my sight at the time... (Clark, from Moulton V.7, 167)

On April 26th, 1806, Gass writes again: "At 2 o'clock we continued our journey, and the officers were obliged to go on foot again, to let some of the men ride whose feet were very sore. (Gass, from Moulton V.10, 216).

It was the care like that which Clark took with Hall that created the bond between the Captains and the men that helped make the venture a success.

A Disagreeable Meal

Characters:

Lewis
Nez Perce man

While dining just east of the mouth of the Clearwater River with some Nez Percés on May 5th, 1806, Lewis was confronted by an angry Nez Perce. About this incident, he wrote:

...while at dinner an indian fellow verry impertinently threw a poor half starved puppy nearly into my plait by way of derision for our eating dogs and laughed very heartily at his own impertinence; I was so provoked at his insolence that I caught the puppy and threw it with great violence at him and struck him in the breast and face, seized my tomahawk and shewed him by signs if he repeated his insolence I would tomahawk him, the fellow withdrew apparently much mortified and I continued my repast on dog without further molestation. (Lewis, from Moulton V.7, 210)

Dispute Among Chiefs

Characters:

Chief Twisted Hair
Chief Cut Nose
Chief Broken Arm
Shoshone boy (interpreter)
Lewis
Clark
Drouillard

Willard

A dispute among Nez Perce Chiefs arose over the subject of horses that the Corps had left with Chief Twisted Hair over the winter. Other Chiefs criticized Twisted Hair for failing to care properly for these animals. Their disagreement could delay the establishment of a base camp where the Lewis and Clark party would wait for the snow to melt in the high country. The captains involved themselves in the dispute because of their need to retrieve their horses and get settled. This incident took place in early May, 1806, in present-day Idaho, near Orofino.

On May 8th, 1806, Meriwether Lewis described the incident:

...at half after 3 P.M. we departed for the lodge of the Twisted hair accompanied by the Chief and sundry other Indians. the relation of the twisted hair left us. the road led us up a steep and high hill to a high and level plain mostly un-timbered, through which we passed parrallel with the river about 4 miles when we met the Twisted hair and a party of six men. to this Cheif we had confided the care of our horses and a part of our saddles when we decended the river last fall, the Twisted hair received us very coolly an occurrence as unexpected as it was unaccountable to us. he shortly began to speak with a loud voice and in a angry manner, when he had ceased to speak he was answered by the Cutnose Cheif or Neeshneparkkeook; we readily discovered that a violet quarrel had taken place between these Cheifs but at that instant knew not the cause; we afterwards learnt that it was on the subject of our horses. this contreversy between the cheifs detained us about 20 minutes; in order to put an end to this dispute as well as to releive our horses from the embarasment of their loads, we informed the Cheifs that we should continue our march to the first water and encamp accordingly we moved on and the Indians all followed. about two miles on the road we arrived at a little branch which run to the wright, here we encamped for the evening having traveled 6 miles today. the two cheifs with their little bands formed seperate camps at a short distance from ours, they all appeared to be in an ill humour. we had been informed some days since that the natives had discovered the deposit of our saddles and taken them away and that our horses were much scattered. we were very anxious to learn the particulars or truth of these reports from the twisted hair, as it must in some measure govern us in the establishment of our perminent camp which in consequence of our detention by the snow of the mountains has become necessary. to obtain our horses and saddles as quickly as possible is our wish, and we are somewhat apprehensive that this difference which has taken place between these Chiefs may millitate against our operations in this respect. we were therefore desireous to bring about a good understanding between them as soon as possible. The Shoshone boy refused to speak, he alledged it was a quarrel between two Cheifs and that he had no business with it; it was in vain that we urged that his interpreting what we said on this subject was not taking the responsibility of the inteference on himself, he remained obstenately silent, about an hour after we had encamped Drewyer returned from hunting we sent him to the Twisted hair to make some enquiries relative to our horses and saddles and to ask him to come and smoke with us. The Twisted hair accepted the invitation and came to our fire.

The twisted hair informed us that accordingly to the promise he had made us when he separated from us at the falls of the Columbia he collected our horses on his return and took charge of them, that about this time the Cutnose or Neeshneparkkeook and Tun-nach'-emoo-toolt or the broken arm returned from a war excursion against the Shoshonees on the South branch of Lewis's river which had caused their absence when we were in this neighbourhood. that these men became dissatisfied with him in consequence of our having confided the horses to his care and that they were eternally quarreling with him insomuch that he thought it best as he was an old man to relinquish any further attention to the horses, that they had consequently become scattered; that most of the horses were near this place, a part were in the forks between the Chopunnish and Kooskooske rivers and three or four others were at the lodge of the broken Arm about half a days march higher up the river, he informed us with respect to our saddles that on the rise of the water this spring the earth had fallen from the door of the cash and exposed the saddles, he being informed of their situation had taken them up and placed them in another cash where they were at this time; he said it was probable that a part of them had fallen into the water but of this he was not certain. The Twisted hair said if we would spend the day tomorrow at his lodge which was a few miles only from hence and on the road leading to the Broken arm's lodge, he would collect such of our horses as were near this place and our saddles, that he would also send some young men over the Kooskooske to collect those in the forks and bring them to the lodge of the broken Arm to meet us. he advised us to go to the lodge of the broken Arm as he said he was a Chief of great eminence among them, and promised to accompany us thither if we wished him. we told him that we should take his advice in every particular, that we had confided the horses to his care and expected that he would collect them and deliver them to us which when he performed we should pay him the two guns and ammunition we had promised him for that service, he seemed much pleased and promised his utmost exertions. we sent Drewyer to the Cutnose who also came to our fire and smoked with ourselves and the Twisted hair we took occasion in the course of the evening to express our regret that there should be a misunderstanding between these Chiefs; the Cutnose told us in the presents of the Twisted hair that he the twisted hair was a bad old man that he wore two faces, that in stead of taking care of our horses as he had promised us that he had suffered his young men to ride them hunting and had injured them very much; that this was the cause why himself and the Broken arm had forbid his using them. the other made no reply. we informed the Cutnose of our intention of spending tomorrow at the Twisted hair's lodge in order to collect our horses and saddles and that we should proceed the next day to the Broken Arm's lodge, he appeared well satisfied with this arrangement and said he would continue with us, and would give us any assistance in his power; he said he knew the broken arm expected us at his lodge and that he had two bad horses for us, metaphorically speaking a present of two good horses. he said the broken arm had learnt our want of provision and had sent four of his young men with a supply to meet us but that they had taken a different road and had missed us.— about 10 P. M. our guests left us and we layed down to rest. (Lewis, from Moulton V.7, 227-230)