

March 1997

Idaho Chapter

Newsletter

NEW ADDRESS

Your chapter president has moved. Steve Lee is now living in the Lewiston area and his mailing address is now PO Box 2264, Lewiston, ID 83501 (instead of PO Box 96, Boise 83701). Ruthann Caylor, Chapter secretary and treasurer, can be reached at her home at 317 Hulbe Road, Boise, ID 83705.

1997 CHAPTER MEETINGS

The Chapter is currently making plans for meetings and field trips for 1997. All members are welcome to give suggestions for such events. Currently, it is hoped to have one meeting in the Salmon area, one in the northcentral Idaho and another in the Boise area.

This year's national annual meeting of the Foundation will be held in the neighboring state of Washington at Stevenson. Like the past several national meetings, chapter members will plan to get-together at that time, too.

There are also several projects that your president would like for the chapter to be involved with. These include a National Trails Day event, updating and expanding a Lewis and Clark museum display and completing a brochure on the Weippe-Lewiston segment of the trail. Excellent brochures exist for the other two Idaho portions of the trail. Look for more details on these projects in upcoming newsletters.

INTEREST GROWS IN SALMON

There has been some interest in the Salmon area for forming a chapter of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation. Ron Laycock, chair of the Chapter Formation and Liaison

Committee, will be in Salmon on April 30 to give a presentation on "The Role of Women in the Lewis and Clark Expedition" and to check on the possibility of forming a new chapter. Those interested should contact Wilmer Rigby or Mary Haydon for details.

It also looks like the national meeting of the Foundation in 2000 will be hosted by the Dillon, Montana chapter. With Salmon's proximity to Dillon, efforts will be made to include Lemhi Pass and Salmon as part of this event.

BICENTENNIAL PLANNING

The Idaho Governor's Lewis and Clark Trail Committee held a meeting last September to start planning for the bicentennial commemoration. Another meeting is planned for March 17 in Boise. Governor Phil Batt has selected the Idaho Historical Society to be the lead agency in this planning. Lewis and Clark enthusiasts also met last November in Lewiston to start the planning process.

T-SHIRTS STILL AVAILABLE

The Chapter still has a supply of shirts featuring the 1930s-era trail marker. The shirts come in many great colors. Contact Ruthann Caylor or Steve Lee for details.

FUTURE EVENTS

May 9-10 - Natl. Lewis & Clark Coordinating Conference, Nebraska City, NE For more information: (206) 286-2003; (e-mail) LCBICENT@aol.com.

July 11-12 - Meeting to discuss trail route over Lost Trail pass, sponsored by USFS. For more information: Mary Haydon (208) 756-5163.

July 27-30 - LCTHF Annual Meeting in Stevenson, Washington

Riddles of a Founding Father

AMERICAN SPHINX

The Character of Thomas Jefferson

By Joseph J. Ellis

Knopf, 365 pp., \$26

Reviewed by Brendan McConville

Americans never tire of Thomas Jefferson. He is the most studied of the Founding Fathers and, in recent decades, the most frequently invoked by all manner of public figures. There are more than 200 books on different aspects of Jefferson's life and thought, and the creation of new media has only amplified interest in him. There are Jefferson movies, Jefferson CD-ROMs, Jefferson web sites, the recent Jefferson television series and, no doubt somewhere, a rock band named the Angry Jeffersons. If anything, this fascination seems to be intensifying as the 21st century approaches.

The irony in all this attention is that the more we study Jefferson, the more elusive he seems to become. Proclaimer of universal natural rights and a slaveholder, aristocratic champion of an egalitarian society, European traveler and Virginia planter, Jefferson was a contradictory man caught in the portal between the premodern provincial society into which he was born and the liberal democratic world that he helped to create. Thus, he is many things to many people.

Jefferson's seemingly inscrutable character has frustrated many who have sought to understand him, but it is exactly this quality that has attracted Joseph Ellis, a professor at Mount Holyoke College, to the Sage of Monticello. The aptly titled "American Sphinx" focuses on the development of Jefferson's character and his contested legacy. Ellis is one of an ever-dwindling number of scholars who believe that it is possible to know Jefferson, or indeed any historical figure, "as he really was." By examining the "bedrock Jeffersonian values that determined the shape of the political vision he projected so successfully onto his world," Ellis believes we can better understand the relationship between the historical Jefferson and the Jeffersonian beliefs of the present. And to an admirable degree Ellis succeeds in this daunting task.

AT THE CORE OF "AMERICAN SPHINX" IS Ellis's perception of Jefferson as an idealist who was never as comfortable creating institutions or governing as he was conceptualizing a republican world. This tension in his public life, and a related tension in his private life between his values and his unstable personal finances, helped create a man capable of extraordinary vision and intense self-deception. Immersed in the Enlightenment's intellectual currents, Jefferson was a true radical, but unlike many other intellectuals before and since he was forced to deal with the realities of life in a revolutionary world.

Ellis demonstrates how Jefferson met the challenges of that age in five periods of his life: in 1776, as he wrote the Declaration of Independence; in France, serving as the American ambassador, in the 1780s; in the ferocious partisan fighting between the Jeffersonians and the Federalists in the 1790s; as president; and in retirement at Monticello,

where he died bankrupt in 1826. Because he understands so well that no contemporary evaluation can detract from Jefferson's centrality to the Revolution, Ellis is unafraid to examine Jefferson's triumphs and shortcomings in these periods of intense change.

Ellis is right to focus on the faction-ridden politics of the 1790s as the source of the paradoxical Jefferson who has so confounded historians. In that decade Jefferson struggled mightily against forces he believed were determined to undo the American Revolution and undermine the newly formed republican government of France. His fears led him to engage covertly in intensely partisan behavior while maintaining an aura of public disinterestedness. The most infamous of these actions was his secret encouragement of the writer who exposed Alexander Hamilton's indiscretions with a married woman, for which Jefferson received coinage in kind when the same scandal-monger later printed the charges of misce-

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generation with the slave Sally Hemings that have hounded Jefferson's name ever since. His inconsistencies in that tension-ridden decade did not go unnoticed by contemporaries and have been twisted in every direction by subsequent generations of scholars.

THE FIVE PERIODS ELLIS USES TO examine Jefferson's character are widely separated chronologically, and in the hands of a lesser writer this approach would lead to fragmentation. This author, however, cleverly provides the necessary material within each section to bridge the gaps between them. This approach makes "American Sphinx" accessible to the general reader as well as to the legion of Jefferson specialists. At times Ellis engages in overwrought psychological speculations and comparisons of Jefferson's worth with that of other Founders, particularly John Adams. However, Ellis realizes that Jefferson was a real human being who lived in an era with very different values from our own, and this knowledge tempers his judgments. Ellis's clear prose and admirable lack of academic jargon will leave readers of "American Sphinx" able to reach their own conclusions about the strengths and weaknesses of his arguments.

The extended prologue and conclusion of "American Sphinx" deal with the contemporary uses of the Jeffersonian legacy, and I found them less satisfying than the five excellent historical chapters. These two sections (which might profitably have been written as one) are filled with interesting insights. But while Ellis is aware of the contradictory ways in which our third president's legacy is invoked, he generally sees Jeffersonianism as inhibiting the growth of the federal government. I believe that the relationship between the Jeffersonian rhetoric that dominates our political dialogues



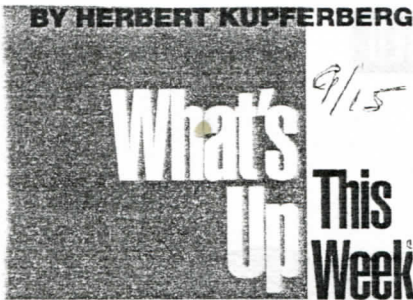
BY TERRY E. SMITH FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

and the society's institutional structures is more complex.

In recent years both major parties have campaigned on Jeffersonian themes even as the various private and public bureaucracies under their control have grown. Perhaps in some paradoxical way the anti-statist ideology inherited from the Founders has come to encourage the state's growth as well as that of the intertwined private bureaucracies that surround it. Certainly at times our devotion to Jeffersonian political language has inhibited us from effectively discussing the state's policies or the appropriate boundaries between public and private life.

Perhaps it is too much to ask Ellis to address these problems, given the parameters of his book. He has produced a vigorous study of the development of Jefferson's complex character over time and resisted applying standards of the present to the past, as happens so frequently in discussions of the Founders. And in so doing, Joseph Ellis has better illuminated the ties between Jefferson's lost world and our own.

Brendan McConville, author of a forthcoming book, "These Daring Disturbers of the Public Peace," teaches American history at the State University of New York at Binghamton



BOOKS

Natural Pathways

There's no lack of guidebooks to various regions of the U.S., but surely a special word must be spoken for a beautiful and practical series called **The Smithsonian Guides to Natural America** (Random House-Smithsonian Books, \$19.95 each). In these well-filled, handsomely illustrated paperbacks you'll look in vain for urban life, whether in big or small cities. What you'll find instead are national parks, nature preserves, wildlife sanctuaries and scenic wonders in general, all meticulously yet colorfully described. Moreover, the books are designed actually to be used by travelers, whether in cars or on foot, with routes clearly marked out. Recent editions are devoted to *Southern New England*, *The Great Lakes* and *The Northern Rockies*, the latter with more than a few traces of Messrs. Lewis and Clark, including due attention to the areas they traversed and the plants and animals they discovered.



Road signs mark Nez Perce trail

Post Register

BOISE — New signs are being installed along several hundred miles of highway in north-central and south-eastern Idaho to observe the flight of the Nez Perce Indian tribe in 1877.

The Idaho Transportation Department and National Forest Service are coordinating the effort.

New signs closely outlining the trail are also being installed in Oregon, Washington, Wyoming and Montana.

In 1877, the Nez Perce tribe trekked from near Wallowa Lake, Ore., to Bear's Paw, Mont., while fleeing government forces intent on enforcing a treaty the Nez Perce had not signed.

Congress established the Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail in 1986. The auto tour highway markers parallel the route of the trail, using highways in the five states.

The trail within Idaho begins near Lewiston, proceeds through north-central Idaho and exits into Montana near Lolo Pass. It re-enters Idaho near Lost Trail Pass and proceeds south-east, jogging northeast into Montana at Targhee Pass near Yellowstone National Park.

The trail extended 1,760 miles in all. Of this, 426 miles are within Idaho. Markers have been installed along U.S. 12 from Lewiston to Lolo Pass; U.S. 95 from Lewiston to Lucile; Idaho 13 from Grangeville to Kooskia; U.S. 93 from Lost Trail Pass to Salmon; Idaho 28 from Salmon to Leadore and from Leadore to its junction with Idaho 22; Idaho 22 from that junction to Dubois; Idaho 29 from Leadore east to Bannock Pass; I-15 from Dubois to Spencer; and parts of U.S. 20 involving county roads to the Idaho/Montana state line within Yellowstone National Park.

40 YEARS AGO

From the Lewiston Tribune
March 3, 1957
The State Senate in Boise took the first steps toward preserving as a point of historical interest, the

site on the Clearwater River where Lewis and Clark built dugout canoes for their trip down the Clearwater, Snake and Columbia in 1805.

Vancouver Historic Reserve becomes reality

Associated Press

LMT 10-4-96

WASHINGTON — Nearly a decade after it was first proposed, the Vancouver National Historic Reserve is on its way to becoming a reality under a sweeping parks bill Congress sent to the president Thursday.

The proposed 366-acre reserve in Vancouver, Wash., across the Columbia River from Portland, Ore., would commemorate a point reached by explorers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark.

It also would protect the Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, the Vancouver Barracks and the Pearson Airfield and Museum. One of the oldest airports in the country, Pearson was the landing site of Valeri Chkalov, the "Soviet Lindberg," after his 1937 transpolar flight.

"The new Fort Vancouver Historic Reserve will put on display our community's rich history," said Rep. Linda Smith, R-Wash., whose 3rd District includes the site.

The reserve was first proposed in 1988 by her pre-

decessor, former Rep. Jolene Unsoeld, D-Wash. In 1990, Congress established the Vancouver Historic Study Commission to develop recommendations for a preservation plan.

Sens. Slade Gorton, R-Wash., and Patty Murray, D-Wash., also backed the proposal that President Clinton is expected to sign.

"It's great news for Vancouver. This is something the community can be proud of. There's a lot of people who have worked on this project," Murray said Thursday.

Gorton said former Vancouver Mayor Bruce Hagensen deserved special credit for "his unwavering dedication to this project.

"It was largely because of his efforts that the Vancouver legislation will be signed into law," he said.

The bill also includes a provision to extend a moratorium on dam-building and dredging on a 51-mile stretch of the Columbia River in south-central Washington known as the Hanford Reach.