Lewis and Clark By Air: a Pictorial Tour of the Historic Lewis and Clark Trail

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back. And that’s just one episode in the more than forty years Charbonneau spent on the Missouri as a trader, guide, and longtime government interpreter.

At the same time, Nelson also examines the controversies concerning Sacagawea, whose place in history grew to almost mythic proportions but whose heritage and ultimate fate remain in dispute. Nelson presents much material to dispute Grace Hebard’s theories about Sacagawea’s ultimate fate. The book also details the equally interesting life of Charbonneau and Sacagawea’s son Baptiste, the European-educated fur trader who led the Mormon Battalion to California.

Although rich with Missouri River lore, there is little in the book that directly relates to the stretch between Sioux City and Hamburg. Nonetheless, W. Dale Nelson has produced a fine book sure to be appreciated by anyone with a passing interest in the history of the Missouri River.


Reviewer Ryan Roenfeld has worked as a museum guide at the State Historical Society of Iowa’s Western Historic Trails Center in Council Bluffs. His primary interests relate to various developments in the Missouri River valley.

Released just in time for the Lewis and Clark bicentennial celebration is this coffee-table quality book by two brothers and self-described “amateur explorers” who flew over the Lewis and Clark trail in just three weeks in June 2002. The book’s strongest point is the more than 500 photographs taken with a unique Aircam aircraft that took six months to build.

The photographs of the modern trail are interspersed with brief descriptions and corresponding excerpts from the Lewis and Clark journals. (The enclosed CD-ROM features additional journal entries along with more images of the Webster brother’s journey across the continent.) Of particular interest is the contrast in scenery, with views of almost pristine wilderness and recognizable landmarks such as Missouri’s Tavern Rock amidst the modern sprawl of highway and railroad bridges, industrial complexes, reservoirs, and riverside communities, from the sprawling Kansas City skyline to the tiny hamlet of Big Sandy, Montana. The book also provides graphic evidence of the effects that channelization has had on the lower Missouri, as the river’s ecology has been drastically transformed from floodplain forest and prairie into orderly fields of corn and beans.
The accompanying descriptions are more detailed from Montana west, and the photographs more numerous as the Missouri winds its way past the remnants of the Great Falls into the Gates of the Mountains. The remainder of the journey across the Bitterroots to the Pacific is also covered in greater detail.

Even the compelling scenery, however, cannot make up for the haphazard historical research, with several omissions and a few glaring errors. The stretch of the Missouri bordering Iowa is particularly neglected, with little historical background and not even a shot of the mouth of the Platte River that was long considered the historical divide between the upper and lower stretches of the Missouri.


Reviewer Timothy R. Mahoney is professor of history at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. He is the author of Provincial Lives: Middle-Class Experience in the Antebellum Middle West (1999) and River Towns in the Great West: The Structure of Provincial Urbanization in the American Midwest, 1820–1870 (1990).

Iowa readers will find much that is useful in Kim Gruenwald’s new regional history of the eastern Midwest centering on Ohio and the Ohio River. Iowa history, like that of the Midwest in general, is often placed within or relegated to regional history operating within but separately from the broader forces of national history. Iowa’s identity, like that of any locale or state, is rooted in a sense of place drawn from the experiences and perceptions of its residents acting within a network or set of local economies and societies spread across a generally similar spatial, topographical, economic, and social context that might be defined as a region. The identity of this broader region, however, is continually changing as the interactions between its residents and the broader national economy, society, political system, and culture change. Kim Gruenwald is right to note, therefore, that it is within the region, the space between local and national, that much, if not most, of place-making occurs.

Gruenwald’s River of Enterprise makes a fine contribution to the growing literature on regional history, regionalism, and the construction of regional identity by analyzing how these issues worked in the history of early Ohio. Gruenwald seeks to recover the region of the “western country” that emerged across the frontier between 1790 and the 1840s. That region, Gruenwald argues, was defined by economic,