The following time line provides an overview of the incredible journey of the Lewis & Clark Expedition. Beginning with preparations for the journey in 1803, it highlights the Expedition's exploration of the west and concludes with its return to St. Louis in 1806. For a more detailed time line, please see www.monticello.org and follow the Lewis & Clark links.

1803

JANUARY 18, 1803

President Thomas Jefferson sends a secret letter to Congress asking for \$2,500 to finance an expedition to explore the Missouri River. The funding is approved February 28.

APRIL-MAY, 1803

Meriwether Lewis is sent to Philadelphia to be tutored by some of the nation's leading scientists (including Benjamin Rush, Benjamin Smith Barton, Robert Patterson, and Caspar Wistar). He also purchases supplies that will be needed on the journey.

JULY 4, 1803

The United States's purchase of the 820,000-square mile Louisiana territory from France for \$15 million is announced. Lewis leaves Washington the next day.

JULY 6, 1803

Lewis stops in Harpers Ferry (in present-day West Virginia) and purchases supplies and equipment.

JULY-AUGUST, 1803

Lewis spends over a month in Pittsburgh overseeing construction of a 55-foot keelboat. He and 11 men head down the Ohio River on August 31.

OCTOBER 14, 1803

Lewis arrives at Clarksville, across the Ohio River from present-day Louisville, Kentucky, and soon meets up with William Clark. Clark's African-American slave York and nine men from Kentucky are added to the party.

DECEMBER 8-9, 1803

Lewis and Clark arrive in St. Louis and decide to set up camp for the winter on the east bank of the Mississippi River. At Camp Dubois, they recruit more soldiers, train them, and stock up on supplies.

1804

MAY 14, 1804

The Expedition sets off on its voyage up the Missouri River in the big keelboat and two smaller pirogues.

AUGUST 3, 1804

Lewis and Clark hold their first council with Indians. They meet with a group of Oto and Missouri chiefs near present-day Council Bluffs, Iowa. They hand out peace medals and other gifts, and Lewis delivers a speech.

AUGUST 20, 1804

Sergeant Charles Floyd, a member of the Expedition, suffers from a burst appendix and dies. He is buried near present-day Sioux City, Iowa.

OCTOBER 26, 1804

The Expedition arrives at the earth-lodge villages of the Mandan and Hidatsa tribes, near present-day Bismarck, North Dakota. With 4,500 inhabitants, the villages have a greater population than St. Louis.

NOVEMBER 2-3, 1804

Lewis and Clark select a site across the Missouri River from the Indian villages and begin construction of Fort Mandan.

NOVEMBER 4, 1804

Toussaint Charbonneau, a French-Canadian trapper living with the Hidatsas, is hired to be an interpreter for the Expedition.

1805

FEBRUARY 11, 1805

Sacagawea, Charbonneau's Indian wife, gives birth to a son, Jean Baptiste, at Fort Mandan. The child is later nicknamed Pompy, or Pomp by Clark.

APRIL 7, 1805

Lewis and Clark send the keelboat down the Missouri River with a shipment for President Jefferson.

The "permanent party" of the Expedition (consisting of Lewis, Clark, 27 soldiers, York, Charbonneau, Sacagawea, and her infant son) departs Fort Mandan.

MAY 26, 1805

Lewis sees the Rocky Mountains for the first time.

JUNE 13, 1805

Lewis, scouting ahead of the main party, encounters the Great Falls of the Missouri River.

JUNE 17, 1805

The Expedition begins to prepare for the difficult, 18-mile portage around the Great Falls, a series of five waterfalls.

AUGUST 8, 1805

Sacagawea recognizes a land feature and tells the explorers they are close to the summer home of the Shoshone people.

AUGUST 12, 1805

The shipment from Fort Mandan arrives at the President's House in Washington.

Lewis ascends the Lemhi Pass and looks west from the summit, only to see more mountains.

AUGUST 17, 1805

Sacagawea is reunited with her brother, the Shoshone chief Cameahwait, and helps negotiate for horses needed by the Expedition to cross the Rocky Mountains.

SEPTEMBER 11, 1805

The Expedition ascends into the Bitterroot Mountains, with Shoshone guide Old Toby leading the way.

NOVEMBER 7, 1805

Clark writes in his journal that the Expedition is within sight of the ocean. Actually, the explorers are still 20 miles from the Pacific coast.

WINTER 1805-1806

A vote is taken on where to spend the winter. Every member of the party participates, including Sacagawea and York. The explorers set up their winter encampment, Fort Clatsop, south of the Columbia River.

1806

MARCH 23, 1806

The Expedition leaves Fort Clatsop and begins its homeward journey. They give the Fort to Coboway, a Clatsop chief.

JUNE 24, 1806

The Expedition sets out to cross the Bitterroots with three Nez Perce guides.

JULY 3, 1806

Lewis and Clark divide the men in order to explore more of the territory and to look for an easier pass over the Rockies. Lewis follows the Missouri River and Clark follows the Yellowstone River.

JULY 25, 1806

Clark names a large rock pillar on the Yellowstone River Pompy's Tower (now Pompy's Pillar) after Sacagawea's son. Clark inscribes his name and the date. Still visible today, this is the only physical evidence of the Expedition's journey.

At Camp Disappointment, Lewis tries to take solar readings, but it is too overcast and rainy.

JULY 27, 1806

Lewis and his party have a skirmish with eight Blackfeet warriors in which two of the Indians are killed. These are the only violent deaths during the journey.

AUGUST 12, 1806

The explorers are reunited near the junction of the Missouri and Yellowstone Rivers.

SEPTEMBER 23, 1806

The Expedition arrives in St. Louis. Lewis writes to Thomas Jefferson that the corps has "penetrated the Continent of North America to the Pacific Ocean."