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7 pp. text, 8 works cited, mostly in error.  
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### The Non-Commissioned Officers of the Lewis and Clark Expedition

The Lewis and Clark Expedition is one of the greatest examples of the importance of the Non-Commissioned Officer within our organization today. The Non-Commissioned Officers of this expedition had a significant effect on the success of the mission and they are definitely proof that the Non-Commissioned Officers of our past were "The Backbone of the Army".

President Thomas Jefferson was the visionary for the Lewis and Clark Expedition during the early 1800's. Jefferson believed that we needed put together a project to <sup>explore</sup> discover the areas northwest and look for a possible water route across the country. He began to seek support for financing his vision and accomplished this through approval from Congress on February 28, 1803 (The Lewis and Clark Expedition 3). Congress appropriated a mere twenty-five hundred dollars to fund a small expeditionary group. Jefferson called the group the "Corps of Discovery" and tasked them with the mission of exploring and documenting the uncharted West (Inside the Corps 1). recently purchased land.

Jefferson <sup>k</sup>new that he needed to ~~ensure~~ he selected ~~the~~ right people for this enormous task. He knew that leadership and discipline would be necessary in order for the mission to be a success. For leadership, he turned to his ~~Presidential~~ secretary Captain Meriwether Lewis. Lewis was given the authority to build his own team. The guidelines he was given were to select any regular Army soldier, who would be ordered to support the mission and <sup>to</sup> select any militiamen, known as today's National Guard, who volunteered for the expedition. Captain Lewis selected his long time friend

William Clark to assist him with the expedition and tasked him to recruit men that had specific skills such as carpentry and blacksmithing to add to their rosters (The Lewis and Clark Expedition 4).

The U.S. Army had a large influence of the expedition. The men followed the Army chain of command, allowing for a clear understanding of everyone's roles and responsibilities. As in today's army, the enlisted soldiers were formed into 8 man squads, also known as "messes". These soldiers were led by the Non-Commissioned Officers selected by Captain Clark. The Non-Commissioned Officers were responsible to ensure that their squad or "mess" accomplished their portion of daily activities required to uphold their "camps" (Lewis and Clark Expedition 4). The Non-Commission Officers were responsible for training soldiers and <sup>for</sup> ensuring discipline was maintained. These skills proved to be particularly beneficial during new encounters with the Indians as well as the excruciating hard work necessary to conquer the new terrain. These soldiers were pushed so hard physically by their circumstances that they often ate 10,000 to 15,000 calories a day to sustain their ability to accomplish the mission. Motivating their squad took great effort on the part of the Non-Commissioned Officers.

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There were four Sergeants <sup>who</sup> ~~that~~ made significant contributions to the success of the mission and key influencers of the NCO Corps as it stands today. John Ordway, Charles Floyd, Nathaniel Pryor and Patrick Gass were strong men who held the skills and discipline necessary to support Captains Lewis and Clark. These soldiers had training in leading troops, establishing discipline and getting the tedious but necessary tasks of the expedition accomplished. Through the leadership of these fine Non-Commissioned Officers, Lewis and Clark were able to focus on the tasks they had been assigned by President Jefferson.

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According to the information from the Public Broadcasting Site, <sup>write</sup> Inside the Corps' Sergeant John Ordway was a young but well-educated soldier who was a major contributor to the expedition. Ordway was born in New Hampshire and was the only Non-Commissioned Officer selected from the regular Army. His responsibilities included issuing provisions, appointing guard duties as well as keeping all registers and records. Due to his experience, he was selected as the First Sergeant and was therefore in charge of the expedition any time Captains Lewis and Clark were away from camp. The journals of the expedition state that there were times when the captains were absent and "on such occasions the directives of duly appointed sergeants had the same authority as the captains" (Inside the Corps, Sergeant John Ordway 1).

Members of the expedition were tasked with keeping journals of their adventures. Sergeant Ordway was religious about his writings within his journal. Due to his level of education, he was able to document with great accuracy the issues he faced as a leader as well as the land, Indians and animals they encountered. His writings were instrumental in accounting for their efforts during the journey. Lewis and Clark agreed that they should incorporate Sergeant Ordway's accounting of the mission into the published works. They bought Sergeant Ordway's journals for \$300 (Inside the Corps, Sergeant John Ordway 2).

There were nine members of the expedition from Kentucky that were known as the "Nine young men from Kentucky" (Inside the Corps, Sergeant Charles Floyd 1). Sergeant Charles Floyd was <sup>e</sup> on <sub>A</sub> of these nine and was one of the first to volunteer for the expedition. He was <sup>Ah</sup> unmarried farmer and only 22 years old. Clark personally trained Floyd <sub>d</sub> to be a soldier during the winter of 1803. In February Lewis put him in charge during the officer's absence. Lewis stated, "the commanding <sub>O</sub>fficer hopes that this proof of his confidence will be justified by the rigid

performance of the orders given him on that subject." (Musselman, Charles Floyd 1). As a result of his performance he was promoted to Sergeant in April 1804.

Due to his experience as a farmer, Floyd was able to evaluate and document the land quality, specifically the soil they encountered. This would prove to be invaluable to future settlers of the land. Although Floyd's journal was factual it <sup>held</sup> had few words, many times seemed rude and at times difficult to decipher. Unlike Sergeant Ordway, <sup>Floyd bred</sup> the other sergeants had not received any formal education. They were instructed to write their journals spelling the words as they sound, not worrying about the correct spelling, grammar or punctuation (Inside the Corps, Sergeant Charles Floyd 1).

Floyd was well respected by Captain Clark for his character and conduct believing he deserved <sup>A</sup> reward for his individual contributions during his time with the expedition. On August 20<sup>th</sup>, 1804 just one year after Floyd volunteered service, he passed away from what was later discovered to be an infection from a ruptured appendix. On this day, Clark wrote the following,

*incient* "We buried him on the top of the bluff. ½ Mile below [is] a Small river to which we Gave his name, He was buried with the Honors of War much lamented, a Seeder post with the Name Sergt. C. Floyd died here 20<sup>th</sup> of august 1804 was fixed at the head of his grave. This Man at all times gave us proofs of his firmness and Determined resolution to doe Service to his Countrey and honor to himself. After paying all the honor to our Decesed brother we camped in the Mouth of floyds River about 30 yards wide, a butiful evening" (Inside the Corps, Sergeant Charles Floyd 2). These statements <sup>ve</sup> show proof that Floyd was a strong Non-Commissioned Officer who was respected by his officers and fellow team members.

Upon return from the journey and in the process of publishing the journals, Clark explained that when the Sioux Chief's own son died, he buried him next to Sergeant Floyd, "for the purpose of

accompanying him to the other world believing the white man's future state was happier than that of the Savages", (Musselman, Charles Floyd 1). In light of this, it might be determined that Sergeant Floyd did more for the expedition's efforts posthumously than while living. ?

Upon Floyd's death, the enlisted members of the expedition voted and elected Patrick Gass of Pennsylvania to replace Floyd and he was immediately promoted to the rank of Sergeant. Gass was serving in the active army during the recruitment for the Lewis and Clark Expedition. He wanted to volunteer however his commander, Captain Russell Bissell refused to let him participate because of his exceptional craftsmanship skills. Eventually Lewis interceded and was able to get Gass transferred to the expedition in January of 1804 (Inside the Corp, Patrick Gass 1).

Lewis knew that he would need soldiers with certain skills. Patrick Gass was known as being one of the most skilled carpenters. During the expedition, the skills of this Non-Commissioned Officer proved to be invaluable. He constructed Camp Dubois (Illinois), Fort Mandan (North Dakota) and Fort Clatsop (Oregon), the three winter camps used to house the members of the expedition. In addition, he crafted canoes and wagons to further assist the explorers into the Northwest (Inside the Corps, Patrick Gass 2).

Lewis and Clark must have had faith in Sergeant Gass and his leadership abilities. On the return trip, Lewis and Clark took small detachments to handle separate missions and left the remainder of the Corps with Gass as the Commander from July 3, 1806 until August 12, 1806 when they reunited 18 miles from their start point at the mouth of the Yellowstone (Inside the Corps, Patrick Gass 2). If Lewis and Clark did not have a leader such as Sergeant Gass, a Non-Commissioned Officer that they had great confidence in, they would not have been able to accomplish certain contributions to the territories of the United States. During this time, Lewis was able to establish the northern extent of the Louisiana Purchase, map the territory and give the United

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States the claim to what we now call the Pacific Northwest. This purchase almost doubled the land owned by the United States and allowed many settlers to move to the northwest and settle this new territory.

Last but not least was Sergeant Nathaniel Pryor who was a 32 year old cousin to Sergeant Floyd and also a member of the original “Nine young men from Kentucky”. Clark considered him, “a man of character and ability” therefore recruited him despite the fact that he did not meet the recruitment criteria of unmarried men only (Inside the Corps, Nathaniel Pryor 1). *he was married?*

Both Lewis and Clark believed in dealing firmly when dealing with any acts of insubordination or misbehavior especially when it was directed against a Non-Commissioned Officer (The Lewis and Clark Expedition 9). One of the most significant contributions of Sergeant Pryor was his appointment, along with Sergeant Ordway as “presiding” authorities over Privates John Collins and Hugh Hall’s court-martial proceedings. These Privates were charged with getting drunk on duty and absent without leave (The Lewis and Clark Trail, Courts Martial 1). The Sergeants knew that they had to establish the authority of the leadership within the expedition and create an atmosphere of order and discipline to ensure the success of the Corps of Discovery. The Non-Commissioned Officers issued a severe punishment. Private Collins received 100 lashes on his ~~back~~<sup>bare</sup> back and Private Hall received 50 (The Lewis and Clark Expedition 9). This harsh punishment was surely not easy to issue, however both Pryor and Ordway knew that Lewis and Clark were expecting them to handle this issue so that they could continue on with their own mission. There were only a total of five such incidents recorded during the entire journey which is evidence that the swift and severe punishment worked to hinder the soldier’s thoughts of insubordination (The Lewis and Clark Expedition 9).

According to an entry in Clark's journal, on September 21<sup>st</sup>, 1804, "the Sand bar on which we Camped began to give way, which alarmed [Pryor], the Sergt on guard...<sup>o</sup> the Sand was giving away both above & Below and would Swallow our Perogues in a few minits, ordered all hands on board and pushed off before part of our camp fel into the river" (Inside the Corps, Nathaniel Pryor 2). Due to Sergeant Pryor's attention to his duty as the Sergeant of the guard, he was single handedly responsible for saving the camp and the boats used to transport <sup>the</sup> men and supplies.

The Non-Commissioned Officers enlisted into the Corps of Discovery were relied upon <sup>passive</sup> heavily by both Captains Lewis and Clark. The Non-Commissioned Officers were responsible for all of the training of the recruits that made up the Corps of Discovery. Camp Dubois was where the "basic training" started. Most likely the biggest contribution given to the NCO Corps by the Non-Commissioned Officers of the Corps of Discovery was their ability to train their troops and their continuous ability to provide leadership and guidance during the expedition. The journey of Lewis and Clark and the Corps of Discovery was a military expedition (The Lewis and Clark Expedition, 11). According to the Non-Commissioned Officers Guide, <sup>Lewis</sup> Sergeant Gass was instrumental in ensuring his men made the journey there and back without incident and was known for his ability to decide the outcome of several battles so that the expedition could continue. Sergeant Gass is only one example of how the NCO's of the Corps of Discovery were responsible for showing how the skills of the Non-Commissioned Officer were vital to the future of our entire Nation (xii). <sup>what source?</sup>

In conclusion, the Non-Commissioned Officers enlisted by Lewis and Clark into the Corp of Discovery contributed to expanding the territory known as the United States today. Without the training provided by these fine sergeants, the squads would not have been able to survive the journey to discover the Northwest. These NCO's contributed to almost doubling the size of the United States during the 1800's.

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