

Mrs. Jeanne Burke
Clark County Historian
Indiana Historical Society

Testimony
Before the Committee on Resources
United States House of Representatives

Hearing on the Bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark Expedition and Potential
Extension of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail

What if the Civil War had started at Gettysburg? What if the Bible began with the New Testament? What if ballgames began at halftime?

For 200 years we have been telling only part of the story of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

As Clark County Historian, I'm speaking on behalf of the Indiana Historical Society and as an Interpreter at the Clark cabin in Clarksville. For 200 years, Indiana's role has been omitted from this part of our nation's history. Yet, it was at Clarksville in the Indiana Territory where the first recruits gathered awaiting the arrival of Captain Lewis in October of 1803.

There, at Point of Rock, was the house of General George Rogers Clark, military genius, amateur archaeologist, expert on the Mammoth, inventor, designer, surveyor, and Native American psychologist extraordinaire. Chosen by Patrick Henry to fight the Revolutionary War in the West, George Rogers Clark secured the entire Northwest Territory for the United States by capturing the British held fort at Vincennes, Indiana. By doing so, he acquired more land than any general in any war in the continental United States. General Clark and his small band of men endured great hardship during the war and, when it was over, he had sacrificed his future for our security. Because he signed notes for the supplies he needed for his troops, he was held personally responsible for debt amounting to about \$30,000.00, leaving him a virtual pauper after the war. George Rogers Clark was the first choice of Thomas Jefferson to lead an expedition to the West in 1783. General Clark declined, but 21 0 years later, at his urging, his younger brother, William, went in his place. William Clark helped extend America's land from the Northwest Territory to the Pacific Ocean.

William, George, and their sister, Frances Clark Thurston lived together at Clarksville for several months before the expedition began. There are indications that George Rogers Clark had input into the expedition. He designed the hinged storage boxes on the keelboat that Merriwether Lewis had built at Elizabeth, Pennsylvania. Although it has not been documented, it seems likely that he gave advice about dealing with the Indians, survival in the wilderness, and who would be a good recruit.

In 2001, the Clarksville Historical Society and the Indiana Department of Natural Resources together placed a reconstructed cabin on the old Clark farm at Point of Rock. Our guestbook has been signed by "time travellers" from Japan, England, France, Germany, Russia, Mexico, South America, and every state in in union. They come to hear about George and William Clark, about Buckongahelas, the Delaware chief, about Aaron Burr and General James Wilkinson, Thomas Jefferson and the Wea, Wyandotte, and Piankeshaw Indians. They want to stand on the site and experience what it must have been like in 1803. They want the whole story.

Please do whatever you can to extend the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail eastward and help us tell the whole story of the greatest expedition in American history. Thank you very much.