

# Re-enactors discover life of 1804

By MICHELLE REAGAN  
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The white uniform of an engagé is noticeable aboard the small pirogues floating the dark Missouri River.

As Alexander Carson with the Discovery Expedition of St. Charles, Steve Wyatt has stitched his clothes and made his leather-work to be authentic to the 1804 Lewis and Clark expedition.

Wyatt, who works locally for the Department of Conservation, will travel with the official re-enactors of the bicentennial event several times during their trek to the Pacific Ocean.

Other local men will volunteer for weeks to operate the keelboat and two pirogues, including Dick Gaffney, Bill Shansey, Bryan Norman, Dave Clifton and Bob Plummer.

Cliff Olsen changed from his French frontier character to an officer's uniform Tuesday to have the chance to guide the keelboat under the bridge to the Noren Access.

Volunteers with the St. Charles group assume characters from the original expedition of about 30 men, Wyatt said.

Wyatt's character, Carson, joined the Lewis and Clark expedition at St. Louis, after being recruited by George Drouillard along with eight others.

Voyageurs, like Carson, annually traveled to Ft. Mandan, where the expedition acquired Sacagawea, to trade in the winter seasons, Wyatt said. So they knew the territory.

The Missouri River was unpredictable then, Wyatt said. Corps members often carried their own baggage and necessities, while sometimes also toting the boats around impasses in the shallow, wide river, he said.

"That's why they were such small crafts," Wyatt said.

The Voyageurs were leery even of the size of the pirogues and keelboat, since they knew lifting would be involved. And rather than trade goods for one season, the crew carried enough for three years.

"But they're a hardy lot of men," Wyatt said in character. "We'll be OK and we'll show them a few things along the way.

"If we make it from the Mississippi (River) to the Missouri River, then we can make it."

Carson was engaged only to Ft. Mandan, Wyatt said.

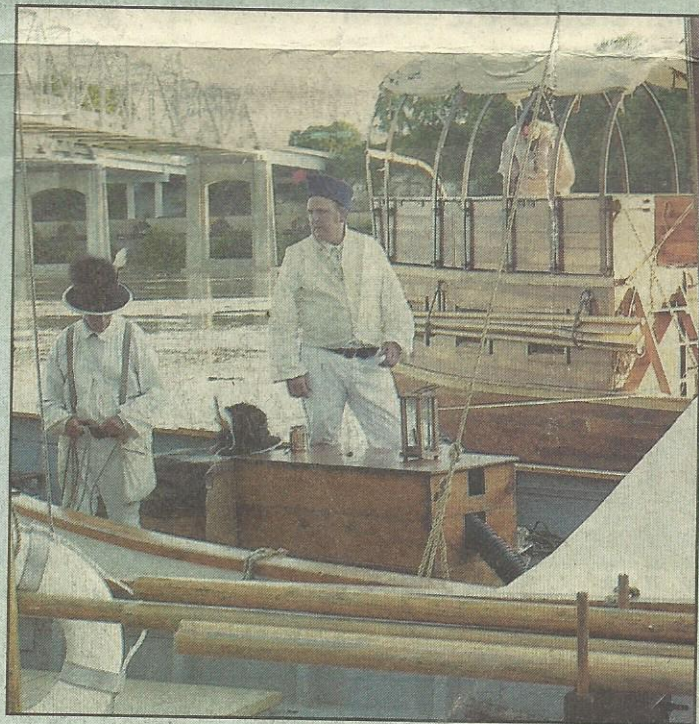
"I have no desire to go beyond, it would upset the kin-folk," Wyatt said as Carson.

The expedition will travel on to Lupus Friday, Huntsdale Saturday and Rocheport Sunday.

## Sounds of 1804 permeate encampment, too

The soundtrack of the early 1800s military has been recreated by the Lewis and Clark Fife and Drum Corps of St. Charles.

Several of the fife and drum team, which is the official youth organization of the national Lewis and Clark bicentennial commemoration, are at the Turkey Creek Encampment for the local commemoration.



Steve Wyatt, in middle, who portrays a French voyageur Alexander Carson, directs boatmen tying the wooden keelboat to the pirogues, already berthed for the evening at the Noren Access. This group is the Discovery Expedition of St. Charles and is recreating the journey of Lewis & Clark. Stephen Brooks/News Tribune

The Discovery Expedition of St. Charles, the official re-enactors of the Lewis and Clark national bicentennial, also will remain at the Noren Access event until Thursday morning.

"They are not musicians," said Scott Mandrell, who portrays Capt. Meriwether Lewis with the expedition and coordinates the fife and drum corps.

"They spend hours in the heat in (authentic) wool uniforms. They are soldiers."

The hundreds of pages of music memorized by the youth, ages 10-18, were the military's communication element of the pre-20th century, said Mandrell.

"Any soldier would be completely familiar with these tunes," the Alton teacher said.