

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL SURVEY OF HISTORIC SITES AND BUILDINGS

1. STATE Montana	2. THEME(S). IF ARCHEOLOGICAL SITE, WRITE "ARCH" BEFORE THEME NO. XI, "The Advance of the Frontier, 1763 to 1830" (Lewis and Clark Expedition)
3. NAME(S) OF SITE Three Forks	4. APPROX. ACREAGE 1500
5. EXACT LOCATION (County, township, roads, etc. If difficult to find, sketch on Supplementary Sheet)	
6. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PRESENT OWNER (Also administrator if different from owner) State XXXXXXXXXX Administrator: Ashley Roberts, State Parks Commission, Helena, Mont.	
7. IMPORTANCE AND DESCRIPTION (Describe briefly what makes site important and what remains are extant)	

Three Forks, comprising the present day Jefferson, Madison and Gallatin Rivers, form the Missouri River near the town of Three Forks, Montana. When Lewis and Clark reached this point, they had already traveled over 2500 miles since they had left camp at the mouth of Wood River, on the Mississippi. The region through which they traveled to the Mandan villages, located some 60 miles above present day Bismark, North Dakota, was fairly well known by the whitemen. From the Mandan villages to the Great Falls of the Missouri, their information regarding the country became increasingly vague. Beyond the Great Falls they were in territory over which no known white-man at that time had traversed.

When Lewis and Clark and their men reached Three Forks the leaders were at loss to know which course to take. At Three Forks one river came from the south south-east. This they named the Gallatin in honor of Albert Gallatin, Secretary of the Treasury. The middle or south southwest fork they named the Madison in honor of James Madison, Secretary of State. The third fork which came from the southwest they named the Jefferson for President Thomas Jefferson. Prior to reaching this point, Captain Clark had gone ahead with a small party to explore the three streams. For some time the explorers had been searching for Indians who they hoped might provide them with information on the route by which they could cross over the mountains and the continental divide to the west into the Pacific drainage. Lewis wrote when he reached this point:

.... at the junction of the S. W. and Middle forks I found a note which had been left by Cap. Clark informing me of his intended rout, and that he would rejoin me at this place provided he did not fall in with any fresh sign of Indians, in which case he intended to pursue untill he overtook them calculating on my taking the S. W. fork, which I most certainly prefer as it's direction is much more promising than any other.

8. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES (Give best sources: give location of manuscripts and rare works)
Reuben G. Thwaites, Editor, Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, 8 Volumes, II, 275-280.

9. REPORTS AND STUDIES (Mention best reports and studies, as, NPS study, HABS, etc.)

10. PHOTOGRAPHS* ATTACHED: YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	11. CONDITION Good	12. PRESENT USE (Museum, farm, etc.) State Park, farm land	13. DATE OF VISIT June 1958
14. NAME OF RECORDER (Signature) <i>Ray H. Mattison</i>	15. TITLE Historian	16. DATE August 20, 1958	

*DRY MOUNT ON AN 8 X 10 1/2 SHEET OF FAIRLY HEAVY PAPER. IDENTIFY BY VIEW AND NAME OF THE SITE, DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH, AND NAME OF PHOTOGRAPHER. GIVE LOCATION OF NEGATIVE. IF ATTACHED, ENCLOSE IN PROPER NEGATIVE ENVELOPES.

(IF ADDITIONAL SPACE IS NEEDED USE SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET, 10-317a, AND REFER TO ITEM NUMBER)

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SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET

This sheet is to be used for giving additional information or comments, for more space for any item on the regular form, and for recording pertinent data from future studies, visitations, etc. Be brief, but use as many Supplement Sheets as necessary. When items are continued they should be listed, if possible, in numerical order of the items. All information given should be headed by the item number, its name, and the word (cont'd), as, 6. Description and Importance (cont'd) . . .

STATE Montana	NAME(S) OF SITE Three Forks
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believing this to be an essential point in the geography of this western part of the Continent I determined to remain at all events until I obtained the necessary data for fixing it's latitude Longitude &c.

After unloading the canoes and stowing the baggage, the party remained several days on shore to permit the men to hunt while the Captain made observations as to latitude and longitude. After waiting for about four days at Three Forks, the company on July 30, 1805, reloaded their canoes and began their ascent of the Jefferson River. The main party continued up the Jefferson to the Beaverhead and followed up the Beaverhead to the mouth of Horse Prairie Creek.

Meanwhile, before reaching that point, Lewis with several companions started out overland to find the Shoshone villages. They followed Horse Prairie Creek and Trail Creek to Lemhi Pass and crossed over the pass to Agency Creek and followed that creek on down to the Lemhi where they found the Shoshone Indians. The Shoshone were able to supply the explorers with horses to continue their trip to the Clear Water where they built canoes to descend to the Pacific.

To commemorate the Lewis and Clark Expedition, the Founders Club of Montana at Anaconda, Montana, is acquiring site for a memorial park. This organization has already acquired 21 acres for a state park. It needs 200 acres more to get the junctions of the three rivers. A railroad runs through the Three Forks area and on the northwest banks of the Missouri River at this point. A highway likewise runs through this area and follows the southeast bank of the Missouri.