

assigned Meriwether Lewis and William Clark to head up an exploring party. In 1804, the Lewis and Clark Expedition left Missouri with a group of about thirty men, including Clark's black servant, York.

Because York was a slave, there is not much information available about him. In the diaries of the expedition, Clark makes mention of York's abilities as a hunter and his



York of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

general resourcefulness on the trail. Legend has it that York was very popular with the Native Americans, particularly the women, who were fascinated with the color of his skin and his sense of humor. The Lewis and Clark party arrived at the mouth of the

Columbia River in the winter of 1805, camped for several

months, and then traveled back to Missouri. The expeditions were considered a tremendous success and York was given his freedom in 1806. He soon left Missouri for parts unknown, but rumors from native Americans at the time indicate that York went back west and lived with the various tribes he had met during the expedition.

Marcus Lopez and York are the only black explorers we know about during this time. It is safe to assume that others probably existed, as the area was popular with fur traders, sailors and other adventurers.

The Settlers

In the early to middle 1800's, the United States did not offer much opportunity for black people. Slavery was still in existence in the South, and blacks were not considered citizens, even if they were born free. The basic rights to own land, travel freely and pursue a chosen profession were not widely available to blacks. In fact, Missouri had a law on the



*George Bush,
Early Settler*