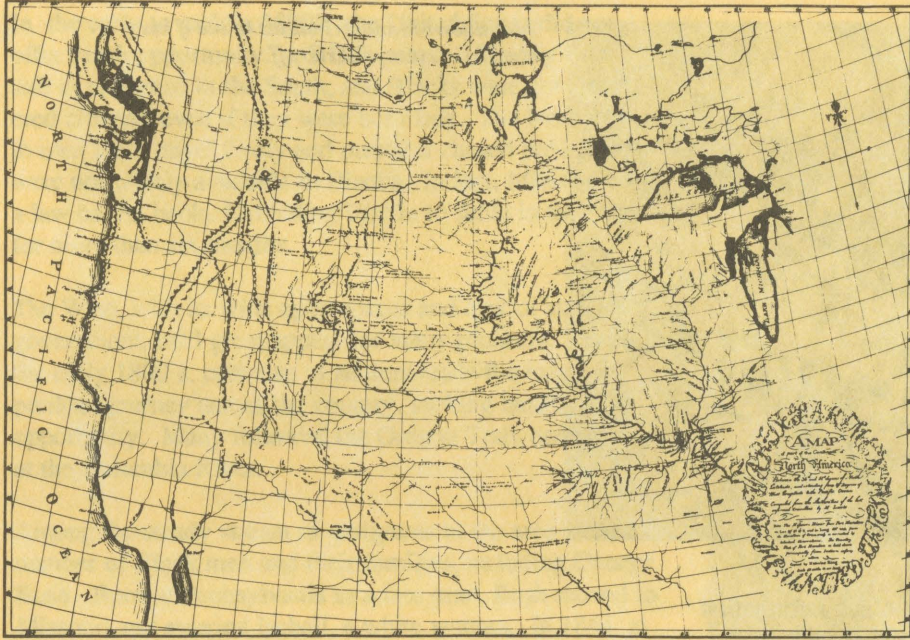


The Explorers



Tracing copy of the original map by Meriwether Lewis to President Jefferson from Fort Mandan, April 7th 1805

Captain Robert Gray set out for the Pacific Northwest fueled by stories told by hunting and fur trading adventurers about the richness of game in the region. Trade with China was the ultimate goal of his first expedition, and to that end he sailed from New England around the Horn of South America to reach the Pacific Ocean. Finally, he landed in what is now Tillamook, Oregon, in late summer of 1788. Accompanying Captain Gray was a young man named Marcus Lopez, a native of Cape Verde Island near West Africa. Lopez started off as a cabin boy and was promoted to crew member by the time the sloop “Lady Washington” pulled into shore. Marcus Lopez became the first Black man to set foot in the Pacific Northwest. Unfortunately, his visit was a short and fatal one.

The Native Americans around Tillamook seemed friendly when they first met up with Gray’s Party. Later, some equipment from the explorer’s camp was discovered missing, and it was assumed that the Native Americans

had taken it. Marcus Lopez volunteered to meet with the Native Americans to negotiate a return of the goods, but he was later discovered dead by fellow shipmates.

Captain Gray continued to China with his cargo of valuable furs and eventually returned to the Pacific Northwest in 1792, where he discovered the mouth of the Columbia River and its entry to the Pacific Ocean.

While Gray was trying to find a route by water to the Pacific Northwest, Thomas Jefferson was concerned with an overland route. He had just negotiated for one of the largest land acquisitions in history, the Louisiana Purchase. Jefferson had heard rumors about the rich resources of the area and 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.