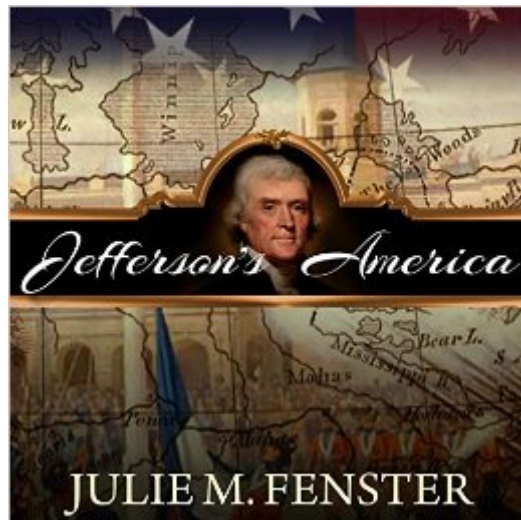


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Jefferson's America: The President, The Purchase, And The Explorers Who Transformed A Nation



Synopsis

At the dawn of the 19th century the stakes for American expansion were incalculably high. Even after the purchase of the Louisiana Territory, Spain coveted that land and sought to retain it. With war expected at any moment, Jefferson played a game of strategy, putting on the ground the only Americans he could: a cadre of explorers who finally annexed it through courageous exploration. President Jefferson most famously recruited Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, but at the same time other teams did the same work in places where it was even more crucial. William Dunbar, George Hunter, Thomas Freeman, Peter Custis, and Zebulon Pike were all dispatched on urgent missions to map the frontier and keep a steady correspondence with Washington about their findings. They weren't always well-matched-with each other and certainly not with a Spanish army of a thousand soldiers or more. These tensions threatened to undermine Jefferson's goals for the country, leaving the United States in danger of losing its foothold in the West. Jefferson's AmericaÂ rediscovered the robust and often harrowing action from these seminal expeditions and illuminates the president's vision for a continental America.

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Customer Reviews

Readers and History aficionados may take away a breath of historical insight of an additional part of the history of Thomas Jefferson and the next age of discovery of the New World that extends within the early territorial boundaries that would eventually comprise of the beginning of the United States of America to the West. Many are familiar with the expeditions of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, but add to the historical narrative of expeditions that led to the western expansion such as the

Lewis and Clark and the Corps of Discovery and wrote of their observations as well, George Hunter and William Dunbar, Thomas Freeman, Peter Custis, and Zebulon Pike. One may ask who exactly were these individuals and how did they become a part of Historian Julia M. Fenster's writing of Jefferson's America: The President, The Purchase, and the Explorers Who Transformed a Nation? She takes inspiration from her research of George Hunter's journals that were originally published in 1963 by Dr. John Francis McDermott and then delves much further back into history to Jefferson's interpretation of William Dunbar's journals to name a few; and to infuse each accounts, Fenster refers to Lewis and Clark's legendary journals to compile the contents of what become the book. Fenster meticulously creates a narrative that flows with much understanding of the time period that spans from the 1780s to the 1790s and the most pivotal years of 1802-1804.

I was sent an uncorrected proof copy of JEFFERSON'S AMERICA: THE PRESIDENT, THE PURCHASE AND THE EXPLORERS WHO TRANSFORMED A NATION by Julie M. Fenster, in exchange for an unbiased review. Ms. Fenster has written several works of American history and her attention to detail and exhaustive research is impressive. The book is fascinating - a living history experience. It is a very readable narrative and is enhanced by its access points: a map (Jefferson's America, 1803-1804); introduction; table of contents (listing 22 chapters); acknowledgements; notes and bibliography. (I especially liked the notes/explanations of certain terms in the various chapters to be very helpful.) The star of this book is the vast territory of the North American continent, specifically the area of the Louisiana Purchase. The geographical knowledge to be gained from this book is incredible. I often referred to the map and several North American atlases. I learned so much. The geographical information reinforced my knowledge that all early movement of peoples, travel, transportation, exploration and trade - all was due to the vast North American waterway system. Recurring themes and events of this book are: surveying; navigation, exploration; presidential politics; farming; the Louisiana Territory; diseases (smallpox, typhoid and malaria); the Lewis and Clark Expedition (based on the soundest navigational and scientific principles of the time); the Vincennes Tract (surveyed by Thomas Freeman); the Ouachita Expedition led by W. Dunbar and G. Hunter (the 1st government sponsored expedition/science project in the U.S.).

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