

# Point of Departure: A celebration of Lewis, Clark and Western Expansion

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer  
May 14 2016 10:51 AM



**SEE VIDEO BELOW:**

**HARTFORD** - White tents, steel cannons and men in strange uniforms abounded at the **Point of Departure Weekend** at the **Lewis and Clark State Historic Site**.

The weekend is a celebration of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark's departure from Wood River Creek to explore the Louisiana Purchase with the Corps of Discovery for U. S. President Thomas Jefferson. That departure took place on May 14, 1804. Historic Site Interpreter Pam Imes said the event this year was one of the first times in the event's 14-year history when the notable date fell on a weekend.

She also said it was one of the first times the event has not been in the rain. She described Saturday morning's cold and windy conditions as "perfect."

"Lewis and Clark left here in the rain," she said. "I describe any day of this without rain as perfect. We may have had two or three of those."

While the weather held the rains at bay, several men and women dressed in period clothing roamed across the site's grounds in its rebuilt fort, historic cabin, and billowing tents. Terry Sorchy, who portrayed Corps of Discovery Sergeant John Ordway said his purpose at the event was to answer questions and teach people about the history of the adventure.

He and his wife, Nancy Sorchy, were taking part in the cooking of a period meal, which included such delectable items as: pickled beef, salt pork, cheese, bread, eggs, lots of turnips and a rock-like concoction called "hard bread."

"They made it this hard on purpose so it wouldn't rot," Terry Sorchy said, holding a flat cookie-like piece of hard bread. "They could fry it in the grease they cooked their meat in to soften the flour a bit and make it like a biscuit, or they could boil it in water to make it like a dumpling."

Terry Sorchy was also well-versed in the clothing of the time. He wore a military uniform fitting the time, and was able to illustrate the various smocks and overalls of his fellow regiment members. He said any depiction of Lewis, Clark, and the rest of the Corps of Discovery as fur-clad woodsmen was historically inaccurate.

"They were not buck-skinners in fringed outfits," he said. "They left in full dress, in military uniforms."

Also accompanying the corps were nine riflemen from Kentucky. They were selected as marksmen to hunt game along the journey. Terry Sorchy said the regular military men at that time were not trained for marksmanship. He illustrated this fact by comparing two guns from that time side-by-side.

"The marksman rifle had a rifled barrel and a smaller caliber," he said. "It was accurate up to 250 yards, and the projectile could travel up to half a mile. The musket had a

similar travel distance, but was only accurate between 75 and 100 yards. It was also of a very large caliber. This one is a 69 caliber actually."



The Corps of Discovery were not the only period regiment at the fort. Representatives portraying the Second Regiment of the U.S. Artillery in the War of 1812 were also at the site. They brought their homemade cannons.

"We built them," Larry Boshen said. "We did the steel work, leather work and we make a lot of our clothes ourselves."

Boshen was in a group with several other period militia men. The group built both a howtizer and verbruggen style cannon. Boshen said they are able to fire them when enough members of the public show interest. Their cannons were actually a part of a New Orleans reenactment of the War of 1812.

