History Commentary - The Sacagawea Mystique: Her Age, Name, Role and Final Destiny

Columbia Magazine, Fall 1999: Vol. 13, No. 3

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EDITOR'S NOTE

The United States Mint has announced the design for a new dollar coin bearing a conceptual likeness of Sacagawea on the front and the American eagle on the back. It will replace and be about the same size as the current Susan B. Anthony dollar but will be colored gold and have an edge distinct from the quarter. Irving W. Anderson has provided this biographical essay on Sacagawea, the Shoshoni Indian woman member of the Lewis and Clark expedition, as background information prefacing the issuance of the new dollar.

THE RECORD OF the 1804-06 "Corps of Volunteers on an Expedition of North Western Discovery" (the title Lewis and Clark used) is our nation's "living history" legacy of documented exploration across our fledgling republic's pristine western frontier. It is a story written in inspired spelling and with an urgent sense of purpose by ordinary people who accomplished extraordinary deeds. Unfortunately, much 20th-century secondary literature has created lasting though inaccurate versions of expedition events and the roles of its members. Among the most divergent of these are contributions to the exploring enterprise made by its Shoshoni Indian woman member, Sacagawea, and her destiny afterward.

The intent of this text is to correct America's popular but erroneous public image of Sacagawea by relating excerpts of her actual life story as recorded in the writings of her contemporaries, people who actually knew her, two centuries ago. Those persons, in describing her character traits, revealed their sincere respect and admiration for her, both during the expedition and afterward.

History has accorded Sacagawea a most novel place in the hearts and minds of generations of Americans. Numerous geographic land-marks have been named for her. Sculptures, monuments and memorials have been placed in her honor. Countless artworks and literary compositions have given her prominence. Those honors testify to her well-deserved place in our nation's history.

SACAGAWEA WAS by birth a member of an intermountain Idaho band of Shoshoni Indians known today as the Lemhi Shoshoni. As can best be determined, Sacagawea would have been approximately 12 years old in 1800, which the explorers understood to have been the year she was taken prisoner by a war party of Hidatsa Indians. Her captors had forcibly removed her from her Rocky Mountain homeland and taken her east to a community of Hidatsa and Mandan villages near present-day Bismarck, North Dakota. There, Sacagawea and another captive Shoshoni girl, un-named in the journals, became the child-wives of Toussaint Charbonneau, a French-Canadian fur trader who lived among the Hidatsa and Mandan peoples.

Her age is based on a reconstruction of it by Captain Meriwether Lewis. On July 28, 1805, at the Three Forks of the Missouri River (Montana), Lewis noted in his journal:

Our present camp is precisely on the spot that the Snake [Shoshoni] Indians were encamped at the time the Minnetares [Hidatsa] of the Knife R. [North Dakota] first came in sight of them five years since…the Minnetares pursued, attacked them, killed 4 men 4 women a number of boys, and made prisoners of all the females and four boys. Sah-cah-gar-we-ah our Indian woman was one of the female prisoners taken at that time; tho' I cannot discover that she shews any immotion of sorrow in recollecting this event, or of joy in being again restored to her native country; if she has enough to eat and a few trinkets to wear I believe she would be perfectly content anywhere.

Later, on August 19, 1805, when the party was among Sacagawea's people, Lewis, while compiling a vast record of Shoshoni ethnological information, included tribal marriage practices:

The father frequently disposes of his infant daughters in marriage to men who are grown or to men who have sons for whom they think proper to provide wives….The girl remains with her parents until she is conceived to have obtained the age of puberty which with them is considered to be about the age of 13 or 14 years….Sar-car-gar-we-ah had been thus disposed of before she was taken by the Minnetares, or had arrived to the years of puberty.

Applying the discipline of documentary research methodology, Sacagawea's age has been calculated to have been 12 in 1800, "five years since" from Lewis's July 28, 1805, journal entry. This is reinforced by the point that she had remained "with her parents" during the buffalo hunt that led to her captivity, denoting that she had not yet "obtained the age of puberty, 13 or 14 years." If 12 years of age in 1800, she would have been 17 when she joined the expedition in 1805, burdened with an infant.

GIVEN TO HER by her captors, her name-Sacagawea (pronounced Sa ca GA' we a, with a hard "g") derives from two Hidatsa Indian words: sacaga, meaning bird, and wea, meaning woman. In phonetically spelling her name as she pronounced it to them, the captains followed their practice of "great object to make every letter sound in recording Indian vocabularies." The officers, who were there in time and place in the presence of their Shoshoni companion, documented her name 17 times, some with "down East" vernacular "ar" vowel variations, but always with a "g" in its third syllable. Captain Clark created the nickname. "Janey" for Sacagawea, which he transcribed twice, November 24, 1805, in his journal, and in a letter to Toussaint, August 20, 1806. It is thought that Clark's use of "Janey" derived from "jane," colloquial army slang for girl.

Captain Lewis, on May 20, 1805, honored Sacagawea by naming a tributary of today's Musselshell The design River, Montana, "Sah cah gah we a or Bird Woman's River," providing both the name's Hidatsa derivation and meaning. Moreover, both captains in their June 10, 1805, long-hand journal entries, transcribed her name in pronunciation form, making clear its syllabic structure by utilizing a comma for an accent mark, viz "Sah-cah-gah,wea." This confirms that through her Hidatsa conversancy Sacagawea clearly was consistent in her pronunciation of her own name. The Sacagawea spelling and the Sacaga'wea pronunciation, together with the Shoshoni spelling, were standardized in Bureau of American Ethnology literature by 1910.

The captains never spelled her name Sacajawea (pronounced SAC ah' jaw wee ah). The Sacajawea spelling was created by Nicholas Biddle, editor of the 1814 narrative of the journals, published two years after the Shoshoni woman's December 20, 1812, death at age 25, while living at Fort Manuel (South Dakota), a Missouri Fur Company trading post where Toussaint was then employed. "Biddle, who was unacquainted with Sacagawea's pronunciation of her own name, retained its Hidatsa "Bird Woman" meaning in his editing of Lewis's May 20, 1805, entry. For some unexplained reason, however, he altered the explorers' original

longhand "g" spelling to "j," an aberration that has resulted in wide popularity of the faulty Sacajawea form for nearly two centuries.

Over the years a number of linguistic attempts to decipher the mystery of Sacagawea's name have been published. Twentieth century "Sacajawea" advocates, in an apparent attempt to legitimize Biddle's altered spelling of the name, alleged that it is "pure Shoshone," meaning the equivalent of "boat launcher" or "boat puller." This interpretation originated in a 1920s letter to the United States Commissioner of Indian Affairs when John Rees, a Salmon, Idaho, shopkeeper and local lay authority on Lemhi Shoshoni cultural issues, offered his version of how the expedition's Shoshoni Indian woman "received her Indian name…." Rees's effort was republished in 1970 by the Lemhi County, Idaho, Historical Society as an essay titled, "Madame Charbonneau." Here Rees explains that "Sacajawea" was in effect constructed from an etymological interpretation that she "travels with the boats that are being pulled."

Dr. Sven Liljeblad, professor of linguistics, emeritus, at Idaho State University in Pocatello, analyzed the word "Sacajawea" in an attempt to trace its origin back to an antecedent Shoshoni form and meaning. He concluded that "it is unlikely that Sacajawea is a Shoshoni word….The term for 'boat' in Shoshoni is saiki, but the rest of the alleged compound would be incomprehensible to a native speaker of Shoshoni."

Certain North Dakota Hidatsa advocates vigorously promote a Sakakawea (pronounced sah KAH KAH' wee ah) spelling and pronunciation of her name. Analogous with the Sacajawea form, the Sakakawea spelling similarly is not found in the Lewis and Clark journals. To the contrary, this spelling traces its origin neither through a personal connection with her nor in any primary literature of the expedition. It has been independently constructed from two Hidatsa Indian words found in a dictionary titled Ethnography and Philology of the Hidatsa Indians, published by the Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1877.

Compiled by a United States Army surgeon, Dr. Washington Matthews, 65 years following Sacagawea's death, the words appear verbatim in the dictionary as "tsa-ka-ka, noun; a bird," and "mia [wia, bia], noun; a woman." In a 1950 North Dakota Historical Society publication, Sakakawea the Bird Woman, it is revealed that "…when Dr. Matthews's Tsakakawia is anglicized for easy pronunciation, it becomes Sakakawea…the spelling adopted by North Dakota."

This form, however, contravenes Dr. Matthews's own explanation: "In my dictionary I give the Hidatsa word for bird as 'Tsakaka.' Ts is often changed to S, and K to a, in this and other Indian languages, so 'Sacaga' would not be a bad spelling …but never 'Sacaja' [for bird] …wea means woman." On page 90 of Dr. Mathews's dictionary it is explained that there is no "j" included in the Hidatsa alphabet, and that "g" is pronounced as a "hard g."

Lewis and Clark history scholars, together with the United States Geographic Names Board, the National Park Service, the National Geographic Society, Encyclopedia Americana, and World Book Encyclopedia, among others, have adopted the Sacagawea form. This author supports the acknowledgment of the organizations listed, that the Sacagawea form of the Shoshoni Indian woman's name was uniformly established by her literate contemporaries. We owe it, unequivocally, to America's most famous Native American heroine to correctly spell and pronounce her name.

THE EXPLORERS ARRIVED among the Mandan and Hidatsa Indian Tribes on the Upper Missouri River in October 1804 and commenced construction of their 1804-05 winter quarters, which they named Fort Mandan. On November 11, 1804, Captain William Clark recorded that Sacagawea's husband, Toussaint Charbonneau, had acquired both Shoshoni girls through "purchase from the Indians," and were claimed by him as his wives, a la façon due pays (after the fashion of the country). Pregnant with Toussaint's child,

Sacagawea would have been 16 years old in 1804. Toussaint was hired by the captains as a Hidatsa interpreter for the duration of their Fort Mandan winter stay.

The Charbonneaus lived in the fort's "Intrepeters room," where, on February 11, 1805, Sacagawea gave birth to a son, recorded by Captain Lewis:

About five Oclock this evening one of the wives of Charbono was delivered of a fine boy. It is worthy of remark that this was the first child which this woman had boarn, and as is common in such cases her labour was tedious and the pain violent. Mr.]essome (a Mandan interpreter) informed me that he had frequently administered a small portion of the rattle of a snake, which he assured me had never failed to produce the desired effect, that of hastening the birth of the child; having the rattle of a snake by me I gave it to him and he administered two rings of it to the woman broken in small pieces with the fingers and added to a small quantity of water. Whether this medicine was truly the cause or not I shall not undertake to determine, but I was informed that she had not taken it more then ten minutes before she brought forth, perhaps this remedy may be worthy of future experiments, but I must confess that I want faith as to it’s efficacy.

The child was named Jean Baptiste Charbonneau, presumably in conformance with his fathers wish to perpetuate the family name lineage of the boy’s paternal grandfather. Clark nicknamed the boy "Pomp" and "Pompy," seemingly for his pompous little dancing boy" antics. The infant accompanied his parents to the Pacific and on their return to Mandan during 1805-06.

The officers, on March 11, 1805, engaged Toussaint, who was conversant in French and Hidatsa, as a member of the 33-person "permanent party" (those who would travel from Fort Mandan to the Pacific and back). Members of the cadre reflected white black (Clark's slave, York), and red racial origins, plus mixtures of the three. A 34th "member" was Lewis’s Newfoundland dog, Seaman. Sacagawea, who spoke both Hidatsa and Shoshoni, was recruited not as a guide but as an unpaid "interpretress." The two Charbonneaus were to serve as a team, with Toussaint "an interpreter through his wife" to negotiate for horses and a trail-wise guide while among the Shoshoni, whom it was anticipated the expedition would encounter upon reaching the Rocky Mountains.

But there was a complication. The captains did not speak French. To enable them to understand Toussaint, they called upon the expedition's Private François Labiche, who spoke both French and English. As Lewis noted on August 17, 1805, the officers communicated to the Shoshone through the medium of Labiche in English, he in French to Toussaint, he to Sacagawea in Hidatsa, and she tribal people in Shoshoni. In transmitting information from the Shoshoni to the captains, the interpretive process was reversed.

There is no documentation in the explorers' journals supporting the popularized "girl-guide" folklore depicted in art and fiction which purports that Sacagawea guided the expedition west to the Pacific. On the few occasions when Lewis and Clark needed first-hand knowledge of mountain travel routes, they hired local Indian guides, both westbound and returning. The captains were equipped with what were then state-of-the-art scientific instruments and trained in their application for performing astronomical navigation. The commanders' recorded progression of latitude and longitude positions, including dependent chronometer correlations governing daily time-keeping; their measured courses and distances traveled; Clark's uninterrupted mapping record from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean, combined with their journal descriptions of previously unknown western lands, natural resources, and native in-habitants are among our nation's written treasures.

When the westbound expedition reached her tribal homeland, Sacagawea, to her credit, remembered from her childhood general geographic features and river channel conditions encountered while ascending the

Jefferson River (Montana), a tributary to the Missouri. Lewis, on July 22, 1805, wrote, "The Indian woman recognizes the country and assures us that this is the river on which her relations live…this piece of information cheered the sperits of the party." Entering the foothills of the Rockies on July 24, 1805, Lewis "feared every day that we shall meet with some considerable falls or obstruction in the river notwithstanding the information of the Indian woman to the contrary who assures us that the river continues much as we see it." On August 8, 1805, while still ascending the waterway Lewis noted, "The Indian woman recognized the point of a high…she assures us that we shall either find her people on this river or immediately west of its source."

During the return journey Sacagawea did indeed provide specific travel route information that Clark valued in "Stearing my course." On July 6, 1806, Clark, while leading a detachment through her ancestral lands to "Camp Fortunate," where the westbound travelers had cached their canoes and surplus supplies, noted that "the buff[alo] and the Indians always have the best route & here both were joined. The Indian woman informed me that she had been in this plain frequently and knew it well. She said we would discover a gap in the mountains in our direction" (now Gibbons Pass, Montana), which Clark and his party crossed.

Proceeding on July 13, 1806, while en route to explore the Yellowstone River, Clark wrote: "The Indian woman who has been of great service to me as a pilot through this country recommends a gap in the mountain more south (now Bozeman Pass, Montana) which I shall cross." Of the estimated 1.25 million words recorded by the explorers, this one sentence by Clark, containing Sacagawea’s "great service to me as a pilot," formed the genesis that gave rise to the powerful 20th-century "girl-guide" mythology perpetuated in today’s embellished "Sacajawea" literature.

The journals factually reveal that Sacagawea's contributions to the exploring mission were numerous and substantive. Her services as interpreter proved immeasurably valuable when the westbound party, through remarkable coincidence, encountered her brother, Cameahawait, chief of her Shoshoni band. This bond, together with resorting to the interpreter chain of the captains, Labiche, Toussaint and Sacagawea, resulted in the explorers, on August 17,1805, successfully purchasing horses that the Shoshone could spare. Captain Lewis wrote, "We did not ask for either their horses or their services without giving a satisfactory compensation in return." The officers hired a Shoshone guide, "Old Toby," who knew intertribal trails through western mountain passes in the Rockies and Bitterroot Range within today’s Montana and Idaho. On August 21 Lewis reported, "The guide appeared to be a very friendly, intelligent old man. Captain Clark is much pleased with him."

Sacagawea's presence with her infant assured territorially established Indian nations encountered by the expedition that, as Clark recorded at an Indian village on what is now the Washington shore of the Columbia River, October 19, 1805, "The Indian woman confirmed those people of our friendly intentions, as no woman ever accompanies a war party of Indians in this quarter." The captains praised Sacagawea for her calm presence of mind in salvaging indispensable supplies and records washed overboard during a May 14, 1805, boating accident. And they accredited her knowledge of native plants for food and medicinal values that contributed importantly to the sustenance and health needs of the explorers.

Factual information about Sacagawea's physical characteristics is sparse. Except for Clark's laconic statement that Sacagawea's complexion "…was lighter than the other [Shoshoni wife of Charbonneau] who was from the more Southern Indians," none of her other literate contemporaries left a physical description of her. There is an indelible record, however, contained in the explorers' journals, and later, in fur trade diaries, that attributes to her exemplary behavioral and character traits that were sincerely respected and admired by her associates.

While drifting down the Columbia River, Clark, on November 3, 1805, recorded that a canoe arrived with a western Shoshoni woman "…whom had been taken prisoner…I sent the Interpreters wife who is a So-so-ne of the Missouri to speak to her…they could not understand each other Sufficiently to converse." Upon reaching the Pacific, the explorers established a temporary camp, November 16-25, 1805, on the north shore of the Columbia River estuary, which they named "Station Camp."

Here, on November 20, a Chinook Indian man wearing a robe of "2 sea orters skins" visited camp. Captain Lewis attempted to procure the skins to take on the return journey as evidence of the wealth of high quality fur resources awaiting Americans if a trading post were to be established at the mouth of the Columbia. The Indian exasperatingly refused all offers of trade by Lewis. Clark wrote, "we at length purchased it for a belt of Blue Beeds" that Sacagawea gave up willingly in exchange for a "coate of Blue Cloth" carried in the party's "necessary Stores."

The captains, on November 24, 1805, manifest their unequivocal inclusion of Sacagawea as one of them. Due to the absence of game and their unprotected exposure to fierce winter storms, both she and York voted equally with all the others in the first known far west American election, held for the purpose of deciding a location for the party's over-the-winter Pacific Coast encampment.

Crossing the river, the explorers built their 1805-06 winter fortification on a protected site five miles south of modern Astoria, Oregon, naming it Fort Clatsop for their neighbors, the Clatsop Indians. The fort's living quarters were completed on Christmas day. Captain Clark recorded that, "all the party fixed snugly in their huts,…" they shared in the exchange of gifts and the festivities "…of the nativity of Christ….We gave Tobacco to the men who used it, and to those who doe not [presumably including Sacagawea], we make a present of a handkerchief. I received a present of two Dozen white weazils tails of the Indian woman."

While at Fort Clatsop the party learned from local Indians that a whale had become stranded on the beach about 25 miles to the south, at present-day Cannon Beach. Captain Clark assembled some of the men to hike overland to the site of the whale to buy from Indians whale oil and blubber needed to supplement the party's monotonous diet of deer, elk, fish, and edible roots.

At first Sacagawea was not to accompany the men. Gathering her courage, she voiced her desire to go with them. The officers relented, and on January 6,1806, Captain Lewis wrote: "The Indian woman was very importunate to be permitted to go, and was therefore indulged. She observed that she had traveled a long way with us to see the great water, and now that the monstrous fish was also to be seen, she thought it very hard she could not be permitted to see either." (Sacagawea had at that point seen only the tidewater estuary of the Columbia River.)

Upon returning to Mandan, the Charbonneau family was mustered out of the expedition on August 17, 1806. Toussaint received a voucher for "500$ 33 1/3 cents" at that time. On March 3, 1807, in a post-expedition action, all the men were awarded congressionally authorized double pay and land grants; the officers, 1,600 acres; the men, 320 acres. Sacagawea did not receive any payment for her services. On August 20, 1806, in a letter he wrote to Toussaint while the homeward bound party was en route down the Missouri, Clark was contrite in acknowledging that Sacagawea had not been compensated for duties she had performed. He wrote: "Your woman who accompanied you that long dangerous and fatigueing rout to the Pacific Qcean and back, deserved a greater reward for her attention and Services on that rout than we had in our power to give her at the Mandans."

REGRETTABLY, A CURIOUS mystique completely envelopes one dimension of Sacagawea's life story: A dispute has raged for nearly a century with regard to her fate following the expedition, especially events relating to the time and place of her death. With respect to the latter, a popular theory evolved at the turn

of the 19th century which purported that Sacagawea died at age l00, on April 19, 1884, and was buried at Fort Washakie, Wind River Indian Reservation, Wyoming. There indeed was a celebrated Native American woman interred at Fort Washakie in 1884, known among her tribe as Porivo and as "Bazil's mother" by white Indian Service administrators and Euro-American missionaries. But she was not the Shoshoni woman who accompanied Lewis and Clark on their expedition.

Only two antiquarian documents have been found that provide positive identification of the Wind River woman. One, created while she was living, is the inclusion of her name on the "Census Roll of the Shoshone Tribe of Indians, Present at the Shoshone and Bannock Agency, Wyoming Territory November 1st 1877." The other is her official death record, dated Apri19, 1884. Both of these primary documents identify the woman merely as "Bazi1's mother."

With the advent of the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Centennial, celebrated in St. Louis, Missouri, and the 1905 Lewis and Clark Exposition held in Portland, Oregon, interest in the fate of Sacagawea was aroused nationwide. Through a regrettable circumstance of mistaken identity, the Wind River woman was faultily determined to be the feminine member of the 1804-06 exploring enterprise. The determination was reached through oral history interviews with aged Indians (transcribed by interpreters), and testimonials obtained from persons who allegedly understood Porivo to have been the unacknowledged "Sacajawea" on the reservation during the 1860s-1880s. Collected during the period 1905-1930, 21 to 46 years after the recorded death of "Bazil's mother," those recollections, no matter how well-intended, were unsupported by antiquarian written records of any kind that linked her to the intrepid band of explorers.

At age 100 in 1884, the Wind River person would have been 21 years old in 1805, if indeed it had been she who set out with the expedition. Claimed by her admirers to be the "child captured by the Hidatsa" in 1800, "Bazil's mother" could hardly have been the girl who had not yet "arrived to the age of puberty" in 1800, as Lewis recorded in 1805.

Contravening the Wind River theory are decisive, retrievable written records that trace an unbroken chronology of Sacagawea's life. These conclusively pinpoint her presence at Fort Manuel at the time of her death-December 20, 1812.

In the fall of 1809 the three Charbonneaus traveled downriver to St. Louis, where Clark would provide for the boy's education. Identified in the spring of 1811 by journalist Henry M. Brackenridge as persons who had accompanied Lewis and Clark to the Pacific, Toussaint and Sacagawea, "who had become sickly," were returning upriver on a Missouri Fur Company barge with fellow passenger Brackenridge, Toussaint having become "weary of a civilized life" and taken employment in the fur trade. On December 20, 1812, John Luttig, Missouri Fur Company clerk, recorded in the journal of Fort Manuel, "This evening the wife of Charbonneau a Snake Indian, died of a putrid fever. She was a good and the best woman in the fort, aged abt 25 years. She left a fine infant girl."

No records have been found that establish an accurate date of birth for the girl, later named Lisette. In this regard, however, research over the years, undertaken by medical historians seeking to solve the mystery of Sacagawea's "putrid fever" affliction, offers a plausible establishment of Lisette's entry into the world.

On June 16, 1805, Lewis, while at the Great Falls of the Missouri, expressed the severity of an illness that Sacagawea was then suffering. Lewis wrote that he believed "her disorder originated principally from an obstruction of the mensis." This, coupled with the 1811 record that she "had become sickly" while in St. Louis, indicates that Sacagawea was in frail health much of her adult life. The late Dr. E. G. Chuinard, in his book, Only One Man Died; The Medical Aspects of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, cites a medical source

that influenced him to suspect Sacagawea of suffering from "chronic pelvic inflammatory disease…probably gonorrheal in nature."

During his research, this author has found in an American Medical Association encyclopedia an interpretation of the antiquarian term "putrid fever." The reference to "puerperal sepsis" [child-bed fever] "offensive smelling lochia, a bacterial infection which originates within 10 days after childbirth may be fatal, if, in addition to other complications, the mother's resistance is low" equates remarkably with putrid fever. Thus, ironically, Sacagawea's final destiny at Fort Manuel, December 20, 1812, may also date her daughter Lisette's birth on or shortly prior to that fateful winter date.

On March 5, 1813, enemy Indians attacked Fort Manuel, killing 15 white men. Among those missing was Toussaint. It was mistakenly believed that he died also. However, he had escaped the Indian massacre and lived into his 80s, at which point he mysteriously vanished from recorded history. William Clark's confirmation of Sacagawea's death is noted on the cover of his 1825-28 account book, deposited in the Everett D. Graff Collection, Newberry Library, Chicago.

Through the jurisdiction of a St. Louis "Orphans Court," on August 11, 1813, "eight months after Sacagawea's death" Clark legally adopted her two children, Jean Baptiste and Lisette. Baptiste was educated by Clark in St. Louis. At age 18 he traveled with Prince Paul Wilhelm of Wurttemberg to Germany, where he became fluent in four languages. Baptiste returned to America in 1829 and earned fame in his own right on the frontier of the American West. He died at age 61, at present-day Danner, Oregon, and is buried there. On March 14, 1973, his gravesite was entered into the National Register of Historic Places, an appropriate recognition for a little-known person whose life represents one of the greatest cultural anomalies of the western frontier. It has not yet been determined whether Lisette lived beyond infancy; the record of her adoption by Clark in 1813 is the last known primary document noting her life.

THE SPIRIT OF Sacagawea rests within a remote, peaceful area of vast prairie grasslands on the Standing Rock Indian Reservation, South Dakota. Extensive archaeological investigations have been made at the grounds surrounding Fort Manuel, but no identifiable grave for Sacagawea has been found. Located near the abandoned community of Kennel, South Dakota, the place of Sacagawea's death is situated in the heart of America's Northern Great Plains. It overlooks the upper Missouri River, down-stream from the Hidatsa village where she joined the Lewis and Clark expedition on her march into American history. Awarded as a measure of our nation's enduring respect, the historic site designation of Fort Manuel, where Sacagawea met her final destiny, marks a fitting tribute to a most remarkable Native American heroine.

Sacagawea's factually documented personal worth is proudly acclaimed by her Fort Hall Reservation, Idaho, Lemhi descendants who "want the world to know that she is Lemhi Shoshoni." They have proposed that a cultural interpretive center be established in her honor within their Lemhi Valley ancestral homeland.

Historian Irving W. Anderson was a Seattle native, a graduate of the University of Washington, and a past president of the Lewis & Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, Inc. His historical research and writings on the Corps of Discovery can be found on the following web site: www.pbs.org/lewisandclark/Inside the Corps. Anderson died August 20, 1999, and this article is published posthumously.

MLA Citation:

Anderson, Irving W. "The Sacagawea Mystique: Her Age, Name Role and Final Destiny." Columbia Magazine. 13.3 (Fall 1999): 3-7. Date accessed http://columbia.washingtonhistory.org/anthology/explorersbysea/sacagaweaMystique.aspx.

At the age of about 15, Sacagawea was taken as a wife by the French trapper Toussaint Charbonneau, who had also taken another young Shoshone woman as a wife. Two different accounts survive of Charbonneau's acquisition of Sacagawea: he either purchased both wives from the Hidatsa, or he won Sacagawea while gambling.Â The corps commanders, who praised her quick action on this occasion, would name the Sacagawea River in her honor. By August of 1805 the corps had located a Shoshone tribe and were attempting to trade for horses to cross the Rocky Mountains. Sacagawea was brought in to translate, and it was discovered the tribe's chief was her brother Cameahwait. Clark's journal recorded the reunion Sacagawea (/ËŒsÃ¦kÉ™dÊ’É™ËˆwiËÉ™/; also Sakakawea or Sacajawea; May c. 1788 â€“ December 20, 1812 or April 9, 1884) was a Lemhi Shoshone woman who, at age 16, met and helped the Lewis and Clark Expedition in achieving their chartered mission objectives by exploring the Louisiana Territory. Sacagawea traveled with the expedition thousands of miles from North Dakota to the Pacific Ocean, helping to establish cultural contacts with Native American populations and contributing to the expedition's knowledge of Sacagawea (also Sakakawea, Sacajawea; English pronunciation: /ËŒsÃ¦kÉ™dÊ’É™ËˆwiËÉ™/ (see below); c. 1788 â€“ December 20, 1812; see below for other theories about her death) was a Lemhi Shoshone woman, who accompanied the Lewis and Clark Expedition, acting as an interpreter and guide, in their exploration of the Western United States. She traveled thousands of miles from North Dakota to the Pacific Ocean between 1804 and 1806. Clark nicknamed her Janey.[1]