

Brian Guehring  
Omaha Theatre Company for Young People  
2001 Farnum St. Omaha, NE 68102  
(402) 502-4636  
briang@rosetheater.org

# Sacagawea: Discovering History

by Brian Guehring

Draft # 3.05  
Post Production Draft

Jane is a 14 year old who is dragged along on a family road trip following the route of the Corps of Discovery led by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark. Unlike her father and brother, Jane is not excited about the bicentennial of this famous trip. History comes to life for her though when the family reaches Ft. Mandan, South Dakota, where Sacagawea, a 16 year old Shoshoni Native American, joined the 1804 expedition. During the vacation, Jane learns how Sacagawea's translation abilities, awareness of Indian culture, ability to stay calm in danger and her almost daily provision of roots, berries and herbs made her a valuable and respected member of the expedition. By the end of the summer vacation, Jane has discovered her own excitement in history.

This play was first produced by the Omaha Theater Company for Young People for school groups and public audiences in November 2002 with the following cast and production team:

## CAST

JANE/SACAGAWEA  
LOUIE/LEWIS, CHARBONNEAU, CAMEAHWAIT  
DAD/CLARK, CRUZATTE, YELLEPPIT

**Tina Dixon**  
**Brian Guehring**  
**Kevin Ehrhart**

## PRODUCTION TEAM

*Direction:* **Kevin Barratt**  
*Set Design:* **Mike Prongruber**  
*Light Design:* **Andy Vance**  
*Research Dramaturgy:* **Kevin Barratt**

*Costume Designer:* **Helen Humble**  
*Sound Design:* **Kevin Ehrhart**  
*Property Design:* **Sprite Hansom**  
*Development Dramaturgy:* **Michael Miller**

The production was then toured in the winter of 2003 with the following actors:  
**Cherisse Coleman, Brian Guehring, Kevin Ehrhart**

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# **Sacagawea: Discovering History**

## CHARACTERS:

(originally conceived for 1 female and 2 male actors)

**JANE:** 14 year old daughter dragged along on her father's Lewis and Clark trip. She doesn't connect to history. History finally comes to life literally when they reach the Mandan village and Sacagawea enters the story. Jane doesn't go anywhere with her backpack.

**DAD:** a history teacher and Lewis and Clark history fanatic who decides to take his children on a cross country trip recreating the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

ACTOR can also DOUBLES as

**CLARK:** Captain William Clark was 37 when the expedition began. Originally from Virginia. A well liked leader, Clark showed much consideration and affection for Sacagawea.

**CRUZATTE:** Private Pierre Cruzatte was an interpreter, a boatsman, and a fiddle player on the expedition. Of French and Omaha Indian blood. Cruzatte had only one good-albeit, near-sighted-eye.

**YELLEPPIT:** a Great Chief. a bold, handsome Native American. About 35 years of age.

**LOUIE:** Jane's 11 year old annoying younger brother. He loves hunting, boats and army stuff, but he still thinks girls are dumb. Louie is initially excited about the trip, but eventually loses patience with all the museums.

ACTOR can also DOUBLES as

**LEWIS:** Captain Meriwether Lewis was 33 when the expedition began. Originally from Virginia. He had a keen eye for detail and mastery of words (but not spelling). Lewis had a quick mind, a short temper, and lack of patience. Lewis was prone to extended bouts of self-doubt and melancholy.

**CHARBONNEAU:** Toussaint Charbonneau was approximately 46 years old when he joined the expedition. Of French, Canadian, and mixed blood heritage, he was prone to panic, he got into trouble easily, and he chafed under discipline.

**CAMEAHWAIT:** Sacagawea's brother. Chief of the Shoshoni when the expedition arrives at the Rocky Mountains. Easy and reserved manners

## **Roadside Attraction 2: Fort Mandan, Washburn, ND**

*(FAMILY is in front of the reproduction of FORT MANDAN.)*

### **DAD**

Fort Mandan, North Dakota. Of course the original site has long since been washed away by the changing river. This is a reproduction. Lewis and Clark built the original Fort Mandan in just 22 days.

LOUIE (*popping out from his hiding place in a "surprise attack"*)  
Was there a battle here?

DAD  
No. This fort was more of a campground. This is where they stayed during that first hars winter. This is also where they met Touissant Charbonneau and his two wives here.

JANE  
Two wives?

DAD  
Yes. Charbonneau was married to Otter Woman and Sacagawea.

LOUIE  
You mean Sacajawea, Dad.

DAD  
Actually modern research has shown that Sacagawea is probably closer to the correct pronunciation. Modern culture was basing the name Sacajawea on the poor spellings of Lewis who.....

LOUIE  
Got it, Dad. Sacagawea.... c'mon, let's go in the fort!  
(*LOUIE exits*)

JANE  
I'll pass on this one.

DAD  
Alright....but if you don't join us, you have to at least read about Fort Mandan.

JANE  
You're giving me homework?

DAD  
Don't think of it as homework you have to get through. This is a chance to imagine what happened in this very spot 200 years ago.

(*JANE gives him a look*)  
Its either that or join your brother in the fort.  
(*JANE takes the book and DAD exits*)

JANE  
*William Clark's Journal: 4th of November, 1804.*  
*A Mr. Charbonneau, interpreter for the Gros Ventre Nation, came to see us, and informed us that he came down to hear what we had told the Indians in council.*  
(*Sound effect of hammering.CHARBONNEAU enters. He is examining the fort*)

CHARBONNEAU  
They put up this fort quickly. They must have over 30 men.  
(*CHARBONNEAU knocks. CLARK enters*)

CLARK

May I help you?

CHARBONNEAU

My name is Toissant Charbonneau, from the North West Company.

CLARK

A fur trapper. I am Captain William Clark, United States Army.

CHARBONNEAU

Pleased to meet you. So tell me about this expedition, I have heard so many rumors about.

CLARK

We are exploring the Missouri River to its source. We then want to find a quick passage over the mountains and take the Columbia River to the Pacific Ocean. We plan to begin again when the Missouri thaws in the spring.

CHARBONNEAU

Well, then, you should hire me.

CLARK

Excuse me?

CHARBONNEAU

You should hire me. I will be of great service to your expedition. I am a good boatsman, great hunter and an excellent fur trapper. I have travelled up and down this river for most of my 46 years.

CLARK

Do you speak many languages?

CHARBONNEAU

French and Hitadsa.

CLARK

That's too bad. We need someone to speak Shoshoni. It is imperative that we obtain horses near the Rocky Mountains to carry our supplies and equipment from the Missouri River to the Columbia River.

CHARBONNEAU

My wives are Shoshoni. They were kidnapped in their youth, and I bought them from the Hitatsa. I can translate to a wife and she will translate to the Shoshoni.

CLARK

Excellent. You and your wives are exactly what we are looking for. The United States Army would like to hire you as an interpreter.

CHARBONNEAU

How much?

CLARK

\$300

CHARBONNEAU

\$700

CLARK

\$400

CHARBONNEAU

\$600

CLARK

\$450. Its my final offer. And you must bring one of your wives with us.

CHARBONNEAU

Fine. For \$450, I will be your interpreter, but I will not take orders from anyone, not you n Captain Lewis, nor will I do any manual labor.

CLARK

Well then we don't need you. This is a United States Army Expedition under the command of Captain Lewis and myself. Every member of the party follows the same rules and does the same work. Good day, sir.

CHARBONNEAU

Of all of the ridiculous, conceited men I have ever met! You are too pompous and self-centered to see how valuable I am. Your expedition is destined to fail.

*(CHARBONNEAU notices JANE)*

Did you see how they treated me?

*(JANE looks around)*

JANE

Me?

CHARBONNEAU

Who else would I be talking to? Did you see how they treated me?

JANE

Yes.

CHARBONNEAU

Is it not an abomination?

JANE

No.

CHARBONNEAU

What? They wanted me to work like a common man. Like that black skinned slave Capt Clark brought with him.

JANE

Actually, he just expected you to do the same as all of them.

CHARBONNEAU  
I cannot believe my own wife would speak to me in this way.

JANE  
Wife?

CHARBONNEAU  
Oh, I get it. You want me to go.

JANE  
You must have me confused....

CHARBONNEAU  
Confused? I think not. You want me to go so you can be alone with the baby here at the Mandan Village.

JANE  
I didn't say that.

CHARBONNEAU  
Fine. If you think I should go, then I think you should go. I will take you and not Otter Woman.

JANE  
You'd take your newborn baby and a nursing mother?

CHARBONNEAU  
Yes.

JANE  
And Sacagawea has no choice.

CHARBONNEAU  
No, you don't. I have decided, we will go together. I will even agree to follow their order But tomorrow, I will demand \$500!

*(CHARBONNEAU storms off. JANE is a little confused. DAD enters)*

DAD  
Jane, I think you'd like this exhibition.  
*(no response)*  
Janey? You alright?

JANE  
Yea, fine, Dad.

DAD  
Getting lost in history?

JANE  
Nah, not me. Just daydreaming.

DAD

You seen a little flushed.

JANE

Dad, what kind of man was Charbonneau?

DAD

Based on Lewis and Clark's journals, he was pretty rough around the edges.

JANE

Did Sacagawea like him?

DAD

Hard to say. The journals don't mention it.

JANE

I bet she hated him. Being told what to do all the time.

DAD

Possibly. It was a different time period, though. And, remember, she was a slave before she married Charbonneau.

JANE

Charbonneau was useless to the trip without his wives. He used them to get his money. How could she not hate him?

DAD

I guess we'll never know for sure. What Sacagawea was feeling and thinking is still a mystery. Not as much is known about her.

JANE

Why not?

DAD

She didn't keep a journal. All we know is what others said about her.

JANE

Then, where do people get information about her?

DAD

Lots of places. The Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center here is one place that has lots of information about her. For instance did you know that Sacagawea had a difficult labor. It lasted hours and hours. Lewis and Clark were worried about Sacagawea. She had a very high fever.

JANE (*guardedly interested*)

Really?

DAD

Finally, Captain Lewis had Sacagawea drink some crushed up rattlesnake rattle to help induce birth. And a couple of hours later on February 11th, she gave birth.

JANE

I guess I'd be willing read about that.

DAD

Then let's go.

*(DAD and a more interested JANE exit)*

**Roadside Attraction 3: Stanton, ND**  
(FAMILY is in car)

LOUIE

*The 7th of April, 1805. Captain Lewis.*

*I could but esteem this moment of my departure as among the most happy of my life. The party are in excellent health and spirits, zealously attached to the enterprise, and anxious to proceed. Not a whisper or murmur of discontent to be heard among them, but all act in unison and with the most perfect harmony.*

*(DAD pulls over)*  
JANE

Why are we pulling over?

DAD

We need some gas.

LOUIE

I'm going to the restroom.

DAD

Could you pick us up some snacks for the car, Janey? Just go to the machines over there

LOUIE

I want Butterfingers! And a Mountain Dew!

*(LOUIE exits)*

JANE

What do you want, Dad?

DAD

Anything is fine.

JANE

Then, I'm going to the farmer's stand across the street.

*(JANE puts on backpack, goes to farmer's stand and picks out some food)*

JANE

If I wasn't on this trip my brother and father would only eat junk food... These carrots look good.

*(Sound effect of woodland animals. LEWIS enters while JANE is looking for food. JANE does not see him)*

LEWIS



Its time to move on. Why are you over here?

JANE

Take it easy. I just wanted to get something healthy.....  
(*JANE stops when she sees LEWIS*)

LEWIS

Squaw, sorry. I don't speak Hidatsu. I don't speak your language.

JANE

Captain Lewis?

LEWIS(*speaking very deliberately and slowly*)

Yes. That's right. You must stay with the group. Its dangerous.  
(*LEWIS tries to mime a bear growling*)

What is this?

(*LEWIS takes carrots from JANE*)

JANE

Just because Sacagawea doesn't speak your language is no reason to treat me like I'm an idiot...I mean treat her like she's an idiot.

LEWIS

I don't understand you. (*indicating carrots*) Roots of some sort. Are they edible?  
(*LEWIS mimes eating*)

JANE

Yes.

LEWIS

Remarkable. By digging near the ground, you found a large quantity of these roots. And berries. Excellent. Good work. Cute baby. Good little Jean Baptiste.  
(*LEWIS pats JANE's backpack and leaves*)

JANE

His name is Pomp. At least that's what Sacagawea called her son. Besides this is just n backpack! Its not a cradle with a baby.

(*JANE checks her backpack. There is no baby there. She shakes her head and pays for food and returns to car and hands over fruit and vegetables*)

DAD

Good thinking, Jane. Its probably good to get something healthy in our system.

JANE

Sacagawea helped find food and healthy fruit for the expedition, too. Right, Dad?

DAD

Pretty good, young historian. Actually on April 9th, 1805 Captain Lewis writes about it. happened right about here. You must have read a lot about Sacajawea at Fort Mandan.

A little. JANE

DAD  
Maybe we can find you a good book about Sacagawea at the next stop.

JANE  
That's ok.

DAD  
I insist. We history teachers can't resist buying books.  
*(LOUIE returns. FAMILY starts driving)*

LOUIE  
Where's my pop? .....Ecchh. Never trust a girl to get good food.

JANE  
You don't know what you're talking about.

DAD  
Next stop Montana!