

State Bird
Western Meadowlark



State Flower—Oregon Grape

State of Oregon

Capital: Salem Pop: 142,914 (approx. as of 2008)

Statehood: February 14, 1859 - 33rd State Admitted

Nickname: Beaver State

Motto: Alis Volat Propiis (She Flies With Her Own Wings)

State Bird: Western Meadowlark

Flower: Oregon Grape

Tree: Douglas Fir

State Song: Oregon, My Oregon

SIR FRANCIS DRAKE (1540-1596)

Garry Gitzen believes Sir Francis Drake spent five weeks in Nehalem Bay, Oregon, in the summer of 1579, not in a bay in California as has been previously asserted. In his new book he attempts to set the historical record straight using historical documents, archaeological evidence, maps, surveys, and Native American life and language.

This is a bold and ambitious project undertaken by an independent historian using the extensive library of the late Wayne Jensen, a curator at the Tillamook Museum and member of the Oregon Archaeological Society. While Gitzen is not a professional writer, the book is well-organized and makes a strong case that Drake did not land in California at all, but in Oregon. It is also an amazing story featuring stone carvings, maps, and a pioneering spirit on both the part of the sailors and of the researchers trying to understand our past.

Why does this matter? As Gitzen explains, "The compelling and groundbreaking discovery of hard evidence that Francis Drake was in Nehalem Bay in 1579 is rewriting Pacific Northwest's first contact history, exploration, and colonization of the North American continent." (p.22) As Harvey Steele, Life Member of The Oregon Archaeological Society, has written, "Uniquely, Gitzen presents long well-organized sections on each of the key issues...One reason this tome is so valuable is in Gitzen's reprinting of many obscure sources and bringing them to one publication."

For the reader, this is a real-life treasure hunt on two levels: first, there is the exciting story of Drake sailing up the coast, surveying the land, and meeting the Indians, and, second, there is the amazing story of various independent researchers and university scholars trying to piece together what happened so long ago. To the layman, it comes as a shock that we actually know so little about where these explorers landed. The state of navigation in the late 1500s was quite primitive by our standards, and the entire coast was called "California," including the Pacific Northwest, at that time.

If Gitzen's theory is true, Drake named this new land - Nehalem Bay - Nova Albion or New England! Somehow this has all been lost in the sands of time.

Francis Drake in Nehalem Bay 1579: Setting the Historical Record Straight" by Garry Gitzen is available at Ekahni Books, 387 Laneda Avenue, P.O. Box 64, Manzanita, Oregon 97147. Contact Peg Miller, Ekahni Books owner (phone: 503-368-6881), at pegmiller@nehalem.tel.net or visit the bookstore.

Lewis & Clark and the Oregon Trail

1803, President Thomas Jefferson organized a secret mission to send a small party overland to the Pacific--a daunting trek that no one before had tried. Congress met covertly to approve the trip, because Lewis and Clark would be venturing beyond the United States--onto British soil.

Jefferson chose his old friend and neighbor Meriwether Lewis to lead the venture; and Lewis in turn picked rough-hewn frontiersman William Clark to be co-leader. In May of 1804, their contingent of a few dozen men started west up the Missouri River.

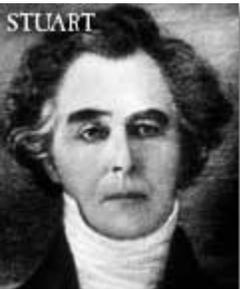
Jefferson's hope was that Lewis and Clark would find an easy water route to the Pacific--a simple way west for traders and emigrants alike. He also wanted Lewis and Clark to gather scientific information about the region--after all, no white man had seen the west's plants or animals.

The journey took so long, many assumed the expedition had perished. But on December fifth, 1805, Lewis and Clark reached the Pacific. William Clark wrote "We now discover that we have found the most practicable and navigable passage across the continent of North America."
He was dead wrong.

Lewis and Clark's route was much too difficult for wagon traffic. No pioneer wagon would ever follow in their footsteps. Lolo Pass, where the expedition crossed the most difficult section of the Rockies, is a rough haul even today--almost two centuries later

But their expedition was still considered a success. That's because their detailed maps and notes provided a wealth of solid scientific data. The West was a mystery no more.

The second major westward expedition was not funded by the government; it was backed by the world's richest man--John Jacob Astor. Astor had read about Lewis and Clark's journey and by 1810 he saw an opportunity to make money. His plan was to set up a fur-trading enterprise at the mouth of the Columbia River. Just one problem--how to get his men across the uncharted American West. Astor sent two groups--the first traveled by ship around Cape Horn. They arrived safely, but their ship was later destroyed in a conflict with Native Americans in the area.



A second group traveled overland; the first to try since Lewis and Clark. But things did not go well. At Caldron Linn, a particularly rough spot on the Snake River, one of the overland party's canoes capsized--causing the death of one man and a substantial loss of supplies. Hunt soon discovered that the river did not become more placid downstream.

Reluctantly, he came to the inevitable conclusion--the Snake was unnavigable. There would be no easy water route to the Pacific; an unfortunate twist of geography that would frustrate pioneers for the next hundred years. In the end, Hunt's overland party did make it to the Pacific, but the enterprise was in deep trouble. Their only hope was to send a few men back east to get help from Astor. Robert Stuart led the mission back to St. Louis--a difficult journey that took nearly a year.

Along the way, Stuart made an incredible discovery--he found a 20-mile wide gap in the Rocky mountains--the one passage where wagons could get through. Named South Pass, this find would become the key to western migration. Over a half-million emigrants would eventually follow the ruts through South Pass. Where Lewis and Clark had failed, Robert Stuart had unwittingly succeeded.

Robert Stuart (1785-1848) was the son of Charles Stuart, a partner of John Jacob Astor who as one of the North West Company men, or Nor'westers, enlisted by Astor to help him found his intended fur empire. Young Robert was on the Tonquin on its voyage around the Cape to found Fort Astoria, and it was he who held the pistol to the head of the ship's Captain Thorn when he attempted to leave the Falkland Islands without Stuart's uncle David, and another of the Nor'Wester partners of Astor's Pacific Fur Company.

Because he accompanied the overland expedition from Fort Astoria to St. Louis when the fort was sold off to the North West Company, Robert Stuart is credited as an explorer who was one of those who effectively blazed the Oregon Trail, though his achievement was not recognized until much later. His journal is a detailed account of his wintertime trip from Fort Astoria in what is now Oregon to St. Louis. Washington Irving's Astoria is said to be based on this journal.