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National Landscape Conservation System

POMPEYS PILLAR

National Monument

Billings Field Office



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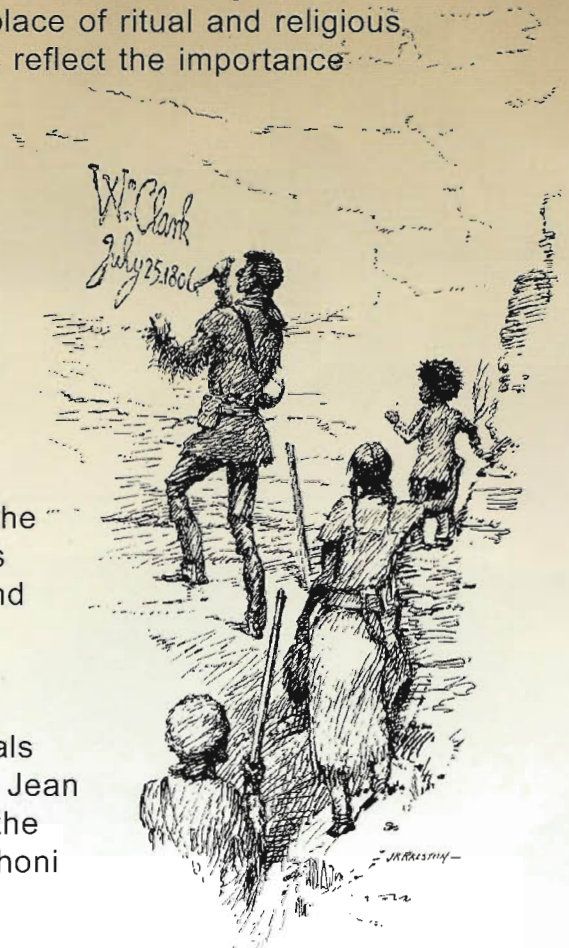
Pompeys Pillar is a massive sandstone outcrop that rises 150 feet from a two-acre base on the banks of the Yellowstone River. The Pillar, and about 50 surrounding acres, became a national monument in January 2001. It was previously designated a national historic landmark in 1965. The monument's premier location at a natural ford in the Yellowstone River, and its geologic distinction as the area's only major sandstone formation on the south side of the river, have made Pompeys Pillar a celebrated landmark and outstanding observation point for more than 11,000 years.

Hundreds of markings, petroglyphs, and inscriptions left by visitors have transformed this geologic phenomenon into a living journal of the American West. Ethnographic and archaeological evidence indicates that the Pillar was a place of ritual and religious activity. Hundreds of petroglyphs on the face of the rock reflect the importance of the monument to early peoples.

The monument's most notable visitor, Captain William Clark of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, arrived at Pompeys Pillar on July 25, 1806, on his return trip from the Pacific coast. Clark's journal recorded his stop at this "remarkable rock" with its "extensive view in every direction." He described an idyllic landscape of grassy plains, snow-capped mountains, and cliffs abutting the wandering river.

Clark marked his presence by engraving his name and the date of his visit on the outcrop. This simple inscription is the only remaining on-site physical evidence of Lewis and Clark's epic journey.

Clark named this rock Pompey's Tower. It was renamed Pompeys Pillar in 1814 when the Lewis and Clark journals were published. Pompey was Clark's nickname for young Jean Baptiste Charbonneau whose mother, Sacagawea, was the party's interpreter. Pomp means "little chief" in the Shoshoni language.



"I marked my name and the day of the month and year"