

The Salt Works

Lewis and Clark National Historical Park
Seaside, OR



Arrival at the Coast

On December 7, 1805 Captains Meriwether Lewis and William Clark established winter quarters at Fort Clatsop. Here the Corps of Discovery wintered and prepared for its long journey home.

"We haveing fixed on this Situation as the one best calculated for our Winter quarters," Clark wrote on December 8, *"I deturmined to go as direct a Course as I could to the SeaCoast..."* His main purpose was to locate a route for a salt-making party.

Though Clark was indifferent to salt, the rest of the corps wanted it as seasoning since their diet range was small--elk, fish, roots and dog; salt improved the taste of their food and thus their morale.

The Salt Camp

On December 28th, the captains sent five men to establish a salt camp. Five days later this group found a suitable place on the seacoast about fifteen miles southwest of Fort Clatsop. At this site the seawater had a high salt content; and stones (for building a fireplace), wood, game and freshwater were abundant.

Near some houses of the Clatsop and Tillamook People, they "commenced making salt" and found that they could make from three quarts to a gallon a day. Captain Lewis pronounced it *"excellent, fine, strong & white."*

Three men were constantly at work. Using five kettles, the saltmakers boiled approximately 1,400 gallons of seawater over the next several weeks. About three-and-one-half bushels of salt were produced for the return trip.

On February 20, 1806, the sea coast camp was abandoned. Little remained beyond the stack of fire-blackened rocks which were once the furnace.

Remembrance

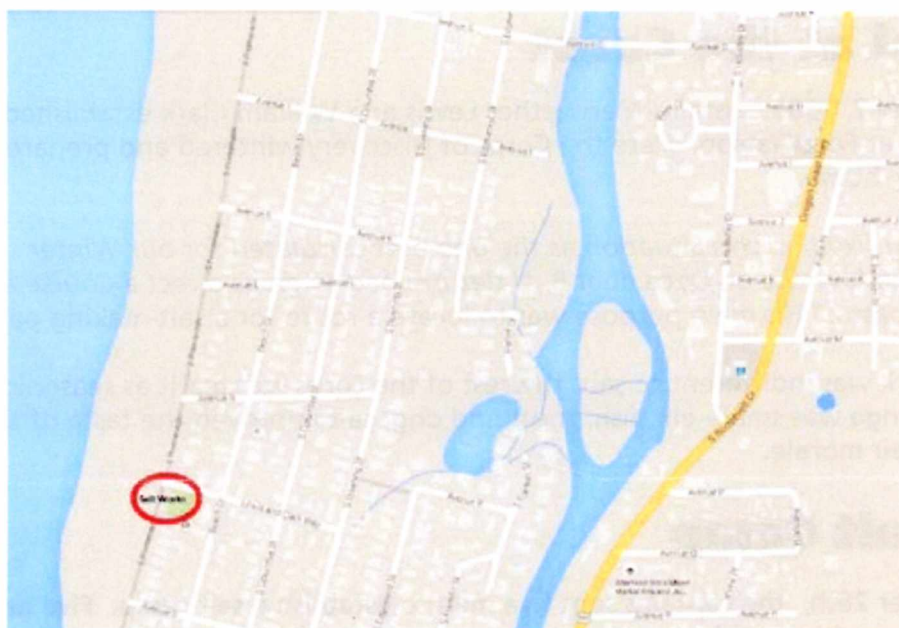


In 1900, the long-forgotten site was re-established by the Oregon Historical Society as a memorial to the Corps of Discovery. It was based on the rockpile and the testimony of Jenny Michel (1816-1905) of the Clatsop Indian Nation, who recalled her mother's stories of white men boiling water on that spot.

In 1979, the site was donated by the Oregon Historical Society as an addition to Fort Clatsop National Memorial, now Lewis and Clark National Historical Park.

What remains today are the only touchstones to the time of the Corps of Discovery saltmakers.

How to Get There



To reach the salt works, drive on U.S. Highway 101 to the town of Seaside. Turn west (towards the ocean) on Avenue G, follow the signs to South Beach Drive and Lewis and Clark Way. The site is on Lewis and Clark Way which ends at the Promenade walking path, so please park on South Beach Drive.

In visiting the salt works please drive carefully, and respect the property rights of the residents living there today.

For more information:
(503) 861-2471
www.nps.gov/lewi

The Salt Works is a unit of Lewis and Clark National Historical Park