

Passages west and south, the guns of August and a presidential profile.

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Meriwether Lewis and William Clark forged perhaps the most famous partnership in American history, but for 200 years Clark has had to settle for second billing. It was Lewis to whom Thomas Jefferson originally entrusted the transcontinental mission, and Lewis who further endeared himself to posterity by dying tragically young, a suicide at 35. Clark, no brooding romantic, made less of an impression. He even has been partially eclipsed by Sacagawea, whose image adorns the \$1 coin.

But it was Clark, not Lewis, who nursed Sacagawea when she was ill and who later paid for her son's education. It was Clark who wrote the misspelled journal entry -- "Ocian in view! O! The Joy!" -- that so charmingly evokes the moment when their party finally sighted the Pacific. And it was Clark who enjoyed the more interesting life, as Landon Y. Jones makes clear in *William Clark and the Shaping of the West* (Hill and Wang, \$25).

The focus here is not on the 1804-06 expedition but on the rest of Clark's long career, which stretched from the Indian campaigns of Mad Anthony Wayne to Tecumseh's federation to Black Hawk's War. This period of frontier history occupies a dimly lit corner of the national imagination. Most people can dredge up mental images of Daniel Boone in buckskins and Lewis and Clark crossing the Rockies, and that's about it. Yet it was during these decades that the United States fully occupied the lands between the Appalachians and the Mississippi River, shoving aside the Shawnee and other once- powerful tribes.

The enduring popularity of the Lewis and Clark expedition is thanks in part to its pacific nature -- only a few Indians were killed, and those in self-defense. But Clark, in his later career as Indian superintendent in St. Louis, laid the groundwork for the Trail of Tears. "It is to be lamented that the deplorable situation of the Indians do not receive more of the human feeling of the nation," he wrote to Jefferson in 1825, with his usual idiosyncratic spelling. Clark was conflicted but not troubled enough to deflect him from the task at hand. By the time he died in 1838, relatively few Indians were left east of the Mississippi.

Sailors seldom venture around Cape Horn anymore, but readers still thrill to narratives that carry them through the Drake Passage into the teeth of a westerly gale. The mystery novelist, playwright and sailboat racer Dallas Murphy is a connoisseur of such tales, several of which he weaves into *Rounding the Horn: Behind the Story of Williwaws and Windjammers, Drake, Darwin, Murdered Missionaries and Naked Natives -- A Deck's-Eye View of Cape Horn* (Basic, \$25.95). Despite his title, the Cape was, for Murphy, less a passage than a destination.

Cape Horn, which belongs to Chile, is the south-facing headland of a small island that rises dramatically from the sea south of Tierra del Fuego. In the fall of 2000, Murphy and some friends traveled to Ushuaia, Argentina, the world's southernmost city, from which they ventured out to the Cape on a 53-foot sloop. "It was due to blind geologic chance that South America ended this way, in a sublime upswung black-rock cliff, instead of, say, a low, flat, featureless beach," Murphy writes. "Look around in all directions, look at that leaden sea and the outsize swells, the moody clouds, the Southern Cross, the light itself. Nature, making extravagant statements and gestures everywhere, would not have missed the opportunity to put appropriate punctuation at el fin del mundo." To the south, 600 miles away, the tip of the Antarctic

Peninsula marks the other end of the passage. East and west there is nothing but water, all the way around the world: the great Southern Ocean.

Old-time voyagers rarely saw the Cape -- avoiding it was rather the idea -- but it can be visited during breaks in the violent weather that almost perpetually scours the Drake. Rounding the Horn is in part the story of Murphy's trip, but it's also a hugely entertaining history of this beautifully desolate region, from the days of Magellan to the windjammer era, which petered out after the Panama Canal opened in 1914. Murphy's breezily written digressions encompass such staples of Cape Horn lore as the New England whalers, the naval explorers, the China clippers and the local Yahgan natives in their bark canoes. All are gone now. Relatively few people live in the region, and few vessels ply its waters apart from tourist charters -- and some watchful Chilean gunboats, jealously asserting their authority over a landscape few covet.

Epic disasters inspire an epic demand for explanations, which is not easily satisfied. Despite the 9/11 Commission's recent exertions, its report is unlikely to be the last word on the subject. The 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor still generates a new book almost every year. And World War I, the catastrophe to which so many 20th-century horrors can be traced, remains a fertile field for speculation, 90 years after the guns of August spoke their piece.

The latest addition to the Great War whodunit genre is *Europe's Last Summer: Who Started the Great War in 1914?* (Knopf, \$26.95), by David Fromkin, whose previous books include *A Peace to End All Peace* and *In the Time of the Americans*. Fromkin fingers Germany's generals, especially Army Chief of Staff Helmuth von Moltke, as the primary villains. Europe was profoundly at peace that summer until a Bosnian Serb murdered the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne on June 28. The assassination set off the month-long chain of events that ended in war -- and in four years of unprecedented slaughter, from which the world in some ways has yet to recover.

Europe's Last Summer seems designed to supplant Barbara Tuchman's 1962 classic *The Guns of August*, which Fromkin asserts has been superseded by subsequent research. His own version, billed as a survey of current scholarship, is at times repetitive and even contradictory. ("In retrospect," he writes, "it is clear the problem was that Germany's post-1890 hunger for empire could no longer be satisfied except by taking overseas territories away from the other European countries." But later he argues that "it was not imperialism that caused the war; it was the war that produced a new wave of imperialism.") And some readers may raise an eyebrow when Fromkin characterizes Henry Adams, that eloquent naysayer, as "optimistic." But Fromkin's focus on Moltke's plot to engineer a pre-emptive war against Russia will be of particular interest to Americans in 2004. In Fromkin's telling, the kaiser merely wanted to help the Austrians chastise Serbia; it was Moltke and his fellow generals who pushed for a wider war. They considered a conflict with Russia and France inevitable, and preferred that it come sooner rather than later. They got their wish but not their desired result.

Few presidents have entered office under less auspicious circumstances than those confronting Chester Arthur in September 1881. James Garfield had chosen Arthur as his running mate to appease the Stalwarts, a powerful Republican faction to which Arthur belonged. Once elected, Garfield fell out with the Stalwarts over patronage appointments, and Vice President Arthur openly sided with his old friends. Then a deranged office-seeker shot Garfield. "I am a Stalwart," the assassin proclaimed, "and Arthur will be president."

Mortified, Arthur rose to the occasion by endorsing the cause of civil service reform. But, as Zachary Karabell notes in *Chester Alan Arthur* (Times, \$20), the 21st president "lacked the x factor usually associated with leadership and greatness." Arthur, an amiable and effective machine politician, had never even run for office before 1880. As president, he scored a minor triumph merely by exceeding the nation's low expectations for him. But the Republicans declined to renominate him in 1884. By 1886 he was dead, and well on the way to historical oblivion.

The Gilded Age was not kind to presidential reputations, and few major events marked Arthur's term. He merits a new biography only because Times Books is publishing a comprehensive "American Presidents" series edited by Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., who in due course enlisted Karabell to profile Arthur. Karabell's

previous book, *Parting the Desert*, was about the building of the Suez Canal. Here he does a nice job of condensing Arthur's 56 years into a compact and readable 143 pages. (The author is not infallible, however; for example, he identifies the censorious Anthony Comstock as postmaster general, a title Comstock never held.) The problem is that, paradoxically, a short book about a minor president is less interesting than a longer version would be, because Arthur is worth reading about only in the full context of his times. He was a decent man, thrust into a terrible situation, who did his best. But his impact was limited. "For those who want presidents to be heroes, and, failing that, villains, for those who expect them to be larger-than-life figures, Arthur's term in office isn't satisfying," Karabell ruefully concludes. Note to series editor Schlesinger: Karabell's point is well taken, but it doesn't exactly whet one's appetite for Millard Fillmore.

Mark Lewis is books editor at Forbes.com. He is writing a book about America's colonial experience in the Philippines.

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