

A Song for the Asking
The Electronic Newsletter of
EarthSong Photography
and
EarthSong Photography Workshops: Walking in Beauty

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Hello to All:

The Destiny of Manifest

Some people like to play with words; others like to play with people's lives. I have tried the latter; but I prefer the former.

Nothing, however, is clearly apparent. There is no fate that is obvious from the beginning, in spite of whatever you may have been led to believe or have come to accept. The cards have no memory; God has not chosen sides. The times are always changing; they are changing now before our eyes if we have the wits to see it. They will change regardless.

I wonder if the Sheepeaters – the Tukurika – thought about this as the world changed before their eyes. Did they see destiny as it manifested around them?

Interesting word, "manifest:" having meaning both as an adjective and a verb. In its descriptive sense, it is associated with being "clear or obvious to the eye or mind;" while as an action word it means "to display or show a quality or feeling by one's acts or appearance."

And you, of course, are manifestly familiar with the Sheepeaters? No, then let me share with you their story.

On October 15, 1803, Captain **Meriwether Lewis**, carefully vetting applicants in Clarksville, Indiana for what would become known as the Corps of Discovery, offered



Why Taketh We the Tortuous Road?

the rank of private and a salary of five dollars per month to a twenty-nine-year-old bachelor recently from Maysville, Kentucky, two hundred miles by the grace of the Ohio River upstream from the site of the interview. The young man's name was **John Coulter**. In that his family had moved to Maysville (then Limestone) around 1780, about the time it was settled, it may be safe to suggest that they had done so under the



Standing Bull

the guidance of **Daniel Boone** and/or **Simon Kenton**, who were among the founders of the town. Indeed, there is some indication that, at an age younger than twenty-nine, Coulter had served as a ranger under Kenton, where he had sharpened his already considerable outdoor skills that caught Lewis' attention.

Twenty-two months later, August 17, 1805, John Coulter would enter the Lemhi Shoshone village of Chief **Cameahwait**, just east of the Bitterroot Mountains. Cameahwait, as most schoolchildren once knew, was the brother (or cousin) of **Lewis**

and **Clark's** intrepid guide **Sacagawea**. The two had been separated years earlier when a Hidatsa raiding party had kidnapped the young woman and carried her, at age 12, into slavery. By all accounts it was an emotionally joyful reunion and one that put a bright luminosity over the arrival in that distant place of the captains (Clark was technically only a 2nd Lieutenant) and their charges.

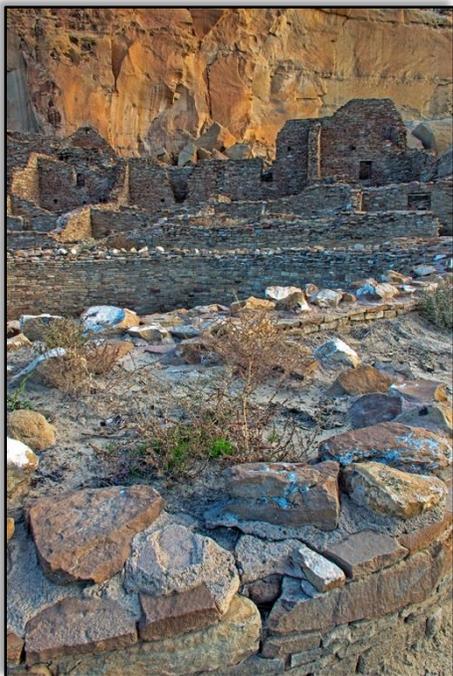
What might be convenient to overlook is the fact that had it not been for the coincidental discovery of this relationship, Cameahwait might well have been disinclined to offer the Corps of Discovery the assistance it absolutely needed at that moment to safely cross the Continental Divide and make it into the upper watershed of the Snake River, and thence on to the Columbia and the Pacific.

So much then for manifest destiny; more like destiny by Sacagawea. It has always been easy to focus on the colossus of the adventure of the Corps of Discovery – which surely deserves focus – and look past the politics of it, which offer us something entirely different to consider: a first hint at the dark underside of a very real aspect of the American experience that most would just as soon sweep under the rug, unless you are of the sadly common persuasion that anything said that suggests of not going along



Way Beyond the Shining Mountains

with the crowd smacks of treason; that America should, right or wrong, be uncriticized, or left, of which such shallowness is, to me, the most un-American thing I can imagine.



The Beautiful Pueblo

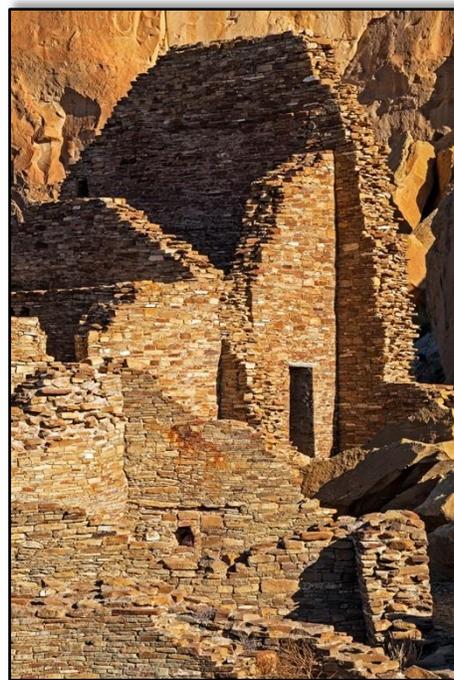
It was on December 20, 1803 that France formally transferred to the eighteen-year-old United States the land block known as the Louisiana Purchase. The price had been \$15 million in cash (francs) and debt cancellation. For **Thomas Jefferson**, nearing the end of the third year of his first term as President, it was a moment of sheer ecstasy, and he immediately began to plot how the new territory might be used.

Oh wait, did I say “purchased?” Let’s see, we’re talking about 828,000 square miles of land. While I’m at it, let me drop some names: Caddo, Quapaw, Osage, Illinois, Iowa, Omaha, Kansa, Kiowa, Cheyenne, Ponca, Sioux, Pawnee, Oto, Hidatsa, Mandan, Arapaho, Shoshoni, Crow, Arikara. There are more: those come quickly to mind; somewhere between 100-150,000 souls, give or take. Those 828,000 square miles were anything but deserted, or vacant. There had been human beings moving across them, hunting on them, gathering from

them, and yes, even living on them for perhaps 10,000 years, maybe much longer. What arrogance was it that gave France the power to offer, and the fledgling United States the power to accept, such a transaction in the first place?

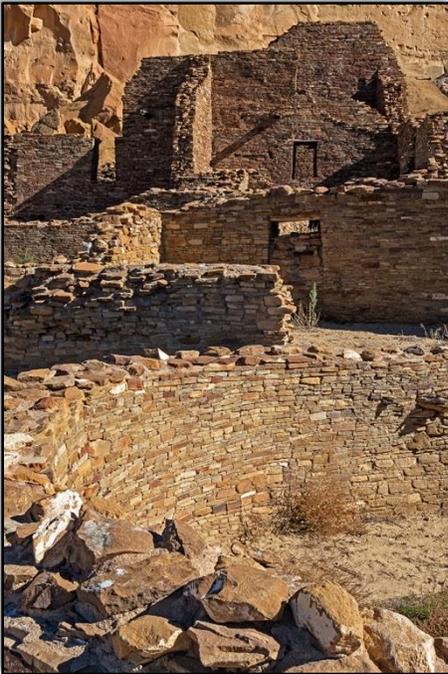
Ah, that’s right, the Doctrine of Discovery, that archaic theory of international law, originally issued as a Papal Bull on May 4, 1493 by **Pope Alexander VI**. The doctrine it set out expressed the Church’s effort to support the Spanish monarch’s strategy to safeguard its claim to exclusive rights to the real estate in the New World discovered by **Christopher Columbus** a year earlier. It drew a line on the map of the world one hundred leagues (a league being, at sea, equal to three nautical miles or one minute of arc of the Earth’s circumference) west of the Azores and Cape Verde Islands; and it set out that Spain would have the exclusive right to acquire territory and to trade in all lands west of the line. All other entities were forbidden to approach the westerly lands without special consent from the Spanish throne. For all of you fond of economic theory, this is called a monopoly.

So what does that have to do with Sheepeaters, or any other indigenous peoples for that matter? The Bull also stated that **any** land uninhabited by Christians was



Room with a View

open to being “discovered” and thus claimed and exploited – read colonized if you prefer – by Christian rulers. Any lands not ruled by Christian monarchs were prima facie barbarous and could be overthrown and brought into the Church.



Just Peering Over the Edge

The Doctrine of Discovery became the basis for all – each and every – European claims to the Americas, and it also became the foundation and legal basis for the westward expansion of the United States, beginning with Thomas Jefferson and the Corps of Discovery. It is still “good” law today.

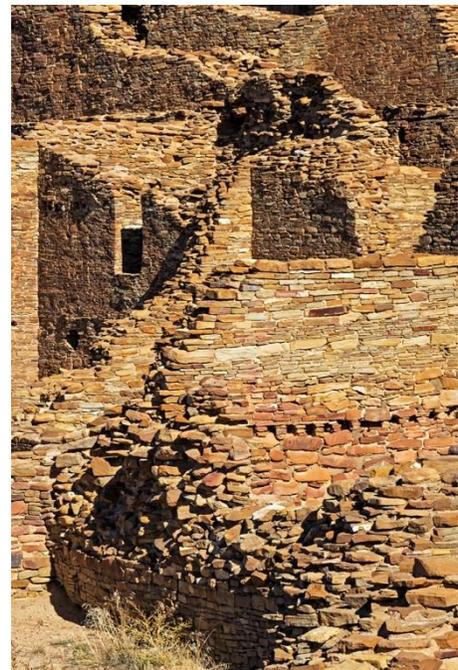
Jefferson’s express directive to Captain Lewis was to explore the Louisiana Purchase and to establish trade with, and US sovereignty over, the indigenous peoples living along the Missouri River. Spain had taken the land from the Barbarians by force; France had received the land from Spain; and the United States had, in turn, acquired it from France. By God, those Indians are ours.

As it was, Cameahwait was pleased to sell Shoshone horses to Lewis and Clark, which set them firmly on their way to the mighty western ocean over 500 raw-boned and rugged miles away, and young John Coulter was more than sufficiently impressed

with the territory of the Lemhi; so much so that, on the return trek of the Corps, on August 13, 1806, while still laying over in the Mandan villages in present-day North Dakota, he had requested and been granted a discharge so that he could return to the Rockies with the fur-trapping expedition of **Forest Hancock** and **Joseph Dickson**.

The triangle became quickly unstable and within two months Coulter was on his way back East. Again fate intervened. In early-1807, he met the expedition led by the trader and frontiersman **Manuel Lisa** headed into the High Country for trapping and trading with the tribes there. And once again he went west, reaching the confluence of the Big Horn and Yellowstone, where he helped Lisa erect Fort Raymond.

From there he roamed the countryside of what is now northwestern Wyoming, eastern Idaho, and southwestern Montana. In the fall of 1807 and winter of 1807-1808, Coulter crossed and re-crossed the Yellowstone and Teton country, becoming, in so doing, the first Caucasian to ever see the amazing geothermal sights concentrated there; and even though his specific descriptions seem more likely to refer to locations outside of what became those parks, there is no doubt



A City by Any Standard

that he covered all of that amazing region. For his incredible adventures, he is considered, justifiably, by most, to be the very first mountain man.

In the years that followed his famous expedition William Clark produced two maps of the areas covered by the Corps of Discovery. John Coulter had a hand on both of them; and although he was not the cartographer of either, it is clear that, during visits in St. Louis with his former employer, he directed the placement of the information that appeared, and with which he was quite familiar.

The earlier version, the Clark 1810 map, had made no effort to locate Native Peoples in place; however the 1814 Clark map did attempt to show the various groups where they were commonly found. On that map there are two clans mentioned, the Ne-Moy and the Yeppe; and it is reasonably certain, based on linguistic analysis, that both of these refer to Sheepstealer bands. How can we be sure that Coulter was involved with the maps? His route through the region is also marked on the document.



At the Base of the Wall



Arroyo House

and until fairly recently has retained that same negative slant. But we are beginning to learn differently, and in growing past our ignorance we are beginning to see the world of the Tukudika in an entirely new light.

The Shoshonean Peoples are an enigma wrapped inside a riddle. Where they were 12,000 years ago is a mystery; but then, the same could be said about most ancestors. Between 10- 12,000 years before the present, an ancient culture centered in what is now southwestern New Mexico, southeastern Arizona, and northern Mexico – a culture we refer to as the “Cochise” – experienced a period of “fissioning,” a fancy anthropological

While Cameahwait, Sacagawea, and their Lemhi brothers and sisters were of a Shoshone group (Eastern Shoshone) closely related to, both geographically and genetically, the Tukudikas, they were not Sheepstealers. However, if the Corps of Discovery were the first Caucasians to be in the presence of the Lemhi, then it is very likely that John Coulter was the first person of European descent to encounter the Tukudika themselves.

The post-contact press with respect to these unassuming mountaineers was not positive from the beginning,

term that means splintering or splitting apart. Elements of this culture, which ultimately became known as Uto-Aztecan, eventually ended up along the shores of an ancient shallow lake which covered most of northern and central Nevada, Lake Lahontan.

Some seven thousand years ago in the face of a period of global warming – an altithermal – Lake Lahontan began to dry up leaving in its stead a starkly arid and strangely beautiful landscape.

Then, just as surely as the Pleistocene wetness had disappeared, about four thousand



The Grasses of Chaco

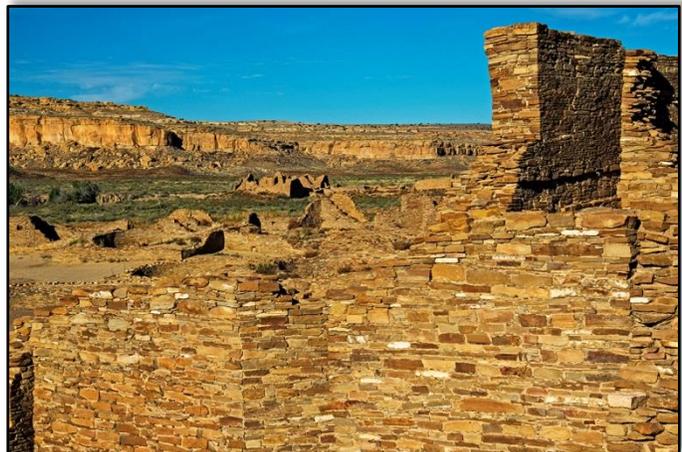
years ago climatic moisture began to return. Some of the basin lakes were reestablished along with extensive marshlands. Plants and animals that had previously withdrawn to more northern, or more elevated, conditions began to return. Around fifteen hundred years before the present, just to prove her consistent inconsistency, Nature's climate turned warmer and drier once again.

In the face of each of these environmental stresses there was new fissioning; and cultural elements that would become the

Aztecs of Mexico, the Hopi and Pima of central and southern Arizona, and other southwestern tribal groups split away.

What remained was the core of a culture we refer to as Numic. All Shoshone Peoples are Numic, and this is where the story gets interesting, and where truth is found not in the presence or absence of evidence, but rather in how that evidence is more accurately interpreted to explain a sequence of events.

Evidence suggests that Numic ancestors, living in the southern Great Basin on the eastern slopes of the Sierra Nevadas, around Owens Valley in what is now California, began to spread northward and eastward perhaps some four thousand years ago, or perhaps longer; and over the ensuing twenty-five hundred to three thousand years engaged in multiple migration episodes, culminating in the appearance of several groups of Shoshone ancestors in the area described by northwestern Wyoming, including Yellowstone National Park, the Bitterroot Mountains, the Wind Rivers, the Tetons, and the Absarokas. There is



Not Even Close to Jericho

some recent archaeological evidence that suggests these proto-Shoshone may have been in the area for much longer.

The so-called Numic expansion came to be represented by a tri-lobed cultural expression referred to as the Western, Central, and Southern. The Central lobe included most of central Nevada, northwestern Utah, southern Idaho, and the western half of Wyoming; and it was in these areas that the people we know as Shoshone arose.

As might be anticipated with any area of such tremendous diversity of material resources, the various bands of Shoshone came to be characterized by their individual material circumstances; but those differences aside, the cultural similarities were clear. If you were “Numa” – a human being – you accepted other Numa as kin, regardless if they ate salmon or buffalo, or mountain sheep.

Possibly as early as the mid-1600s the Southern Ute and the Eastern Shoshone became the first peoples beyond the Spanish settlements in New Mexico to acquire and use horses. By 1730, the remaining Central Numic groups had begun to acquire the animals from their Numic kin. This



High Rise in the Desert

single fact would become the telling truth in cultural integrity going forward, and it would eventually come to be that all of the traditional cultures of the Great Basin would be characterized by their acceptance, or rejection, of equine technology.

Sacagawea’s real people, the Lemhi Shoshone, Cameahwait’s band, were part of the larger Eastern Shoshone group, and within that context they were also Mountain Shoshone.

They were part of the Mountain Shoshone community that adapted to the horse. In contrast, their close kin, the Sheepeaters, the Tukudika,



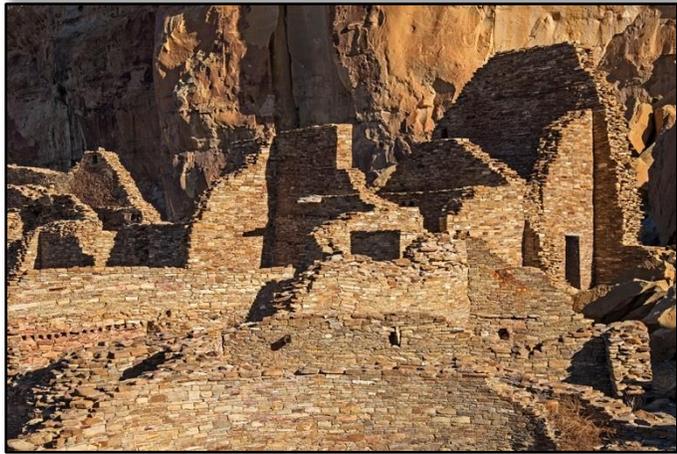
At the Foot of the Mesa

never did. Instead, they chose to wrap themselves in the secure fastness of their rugged mountains and cling to their old ways of meeting the challenges and opportunities of the world on foot.

At this point of removal from the events of three hundred years ago, it is not likely we will ever know for certain what considerations motivated the Tukudika to reject what

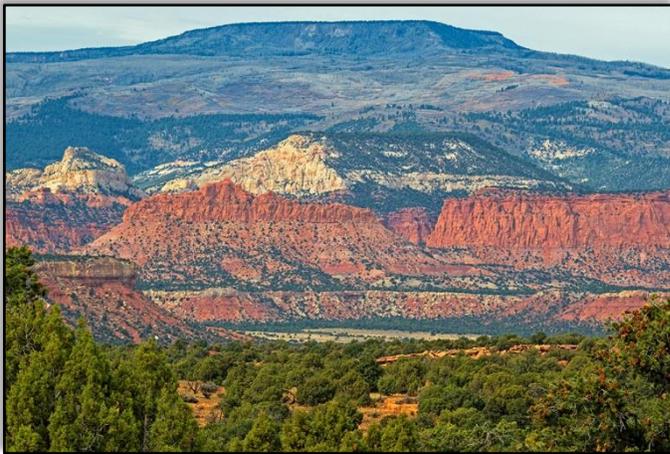
their near cousins had so handily embraced: a culture-changing, grass-guzzling critter whose presence in their midst would have likely done for them what it had done and was doing for so many others – altered life in a way not seen since the dawn of the bow and arrow.

As other Shoshone bands remade themselves, certain realities became clearer. The groups that tended toward horse-cultures were from the northern and eastern regions of the culture area, at least initially. By 1800 the Lemhi and other Mountain and Eastern bands had established considerable equine herds. They were increasingly imitative of traditional Plains Indians practices – living in tepees and hunting buffalo.



A Citadel in the Desert

They became more deeply engaged in the trading practices and warfare strategies typical of Plains Tribes. As these bands became horse-drawn, they were able to range over larger and larger areas in search of summer foods and winter encampments. Not only did they cover more ground, but the sizes of the bands themselves began to change to reflect these altered capacities and practices. All of these incredible cultural shifts were the gift of the horse. All of these gifts the greater number of Shoshone accepted, but not the Tukudika.



On Boulder Mountain

As I said, we cannot know what compelled, or merely encouraged the Tukudika to foreswear, but they did. **David S. Lewis**, in his thoughtful story in the **Montana Pioneer**, *“Yellowstone’s Sheep Eater Indians, Living among the Powerful Spirits,”* has said, “Their nature, distinct from related bands, has been

incorrectly assumed to be that of outcasts from the greater Shoshone family of tribes.”

From those who seem to have had a vested interest in denigrating the Tukudika, to those who were merely ill-informed, to those who simply reported what they did not know or should have known better, these mountain-dwelling hunter-gatherers were described from their first contact with the manifest destiny-loving Europeans as something less than human: feeble-minded, impoverished, destitute, dwarfish, almost pygmy-like, “forlorn beings, forming a mere link between human nature and the brute” (as reported by a scout to Captain **Benjamin Bonneville** in the 1830s).

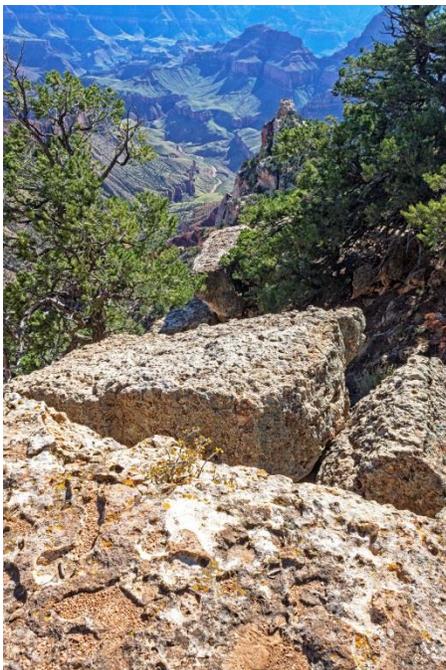
In his widely-acclaimed account of John Coulter’s exploits, the Harvard-educated

Burton Harris wrote, “(t)he only inhabitants of Yellowstone in the vicinity of the lake in Coulter’s time were the furtive Sheepeaters. The presumption is that this wretched, primitive tribe were outcasts from the various Shoshone bands, and that they lived in the region only because the other tribes shunned the geysers. The Sheepeaters possessed few weapons and had been cowed so thoroughly by their enemies that their principal method of defending themselves was to cower near geysers they feared no less than their pursuers.”

One of the West’s most well-known historians, and the first person to chronicle the history of Yellowstone National Park, **Hiram M.**

Chittenden, wrote of them: “Utterly unfit for warlike contention, they seem to have sought immunity from their dangerous neighbors by dwelling in the fastnesses of the mountains. They were destitute of even savage comforts.... Their rigorous existence left its mark on their physical nature. They were feeble in mind and diminutive in stature and are described as a ‘timid, harmless race.’”

These thinly disguised racist derogations have



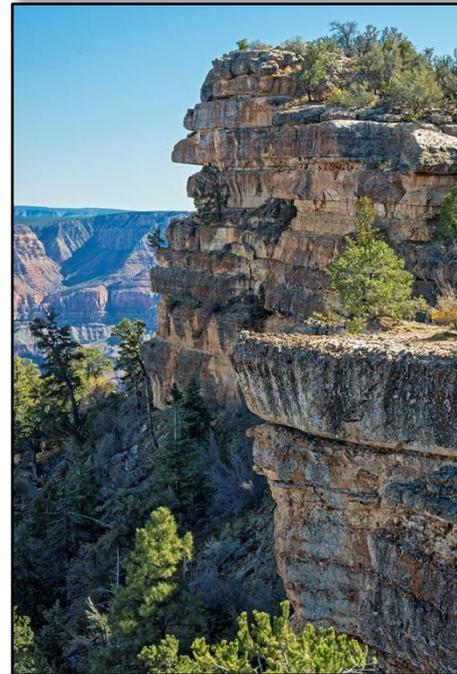
Peering into the Abyss

been repeated time

and again throughout the course of the past two hundred years, and unfortunately often, but not only, by those in association with the Park Service at Yellowstone; and like most everything else, if you say it long enough, often enough, after a while you actually begin to believe it; especially if you have an ulterior motive for your expressed belief.

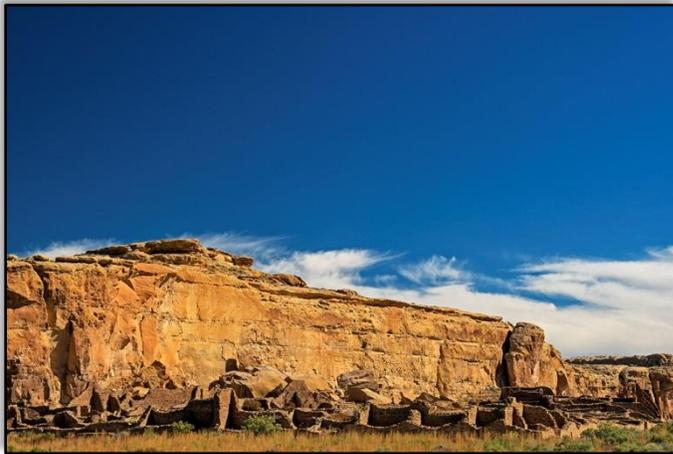
Of course there were other voices that spoke in a different vein, but they tended to be disregarded and ignored. Merewether Lewis’ own diary entry regarding the Mountain Shoshone expressed that “...notwithstanding their extreme poverty they are not only cheerful but even gay... They are frank, communicative, fair in dealing, generous with the little they possess, extremely honest, and by no means beggarly....”

Some thirty years later the well-respected mountain trapper, **Osborne Russell** traveling through and around the Yellowstone country from 1834-1841 wrote in his journal, “Here we found a few Snake (Shoshone) Indians... who were the only inhabitants of this lonely and secluded spot. They were all neatly clothed in dressed deer and Sheep skins of the



Rocks of the Final Cape

best quality and seemed to be perfectly contented and happy. They were rather surprised at our approach and retreated to the heights where they might have a view of us without apprehending any danger, but having persuaded them of our pacific intentions we succeeded in getting them to encamp with us.”



Sky Above and Rock All Around

With such an apparent wide-ranging discrepancy of observation and thought on the lives and livelihoods of a single group of human beings, perhaps our best knowledge of the Tukudika culture might come from what can be gleaned from the Shoshone themselves; and for this there is no better current authority than the research and writing of **Lawrence Loendorf** and **Nancy M. Stone**

synthesized in their compelling work, *Mountain Spirit: The Sheepeater Indians of Yellowstone*.

This recent assessment (2006) lays out the best of the archaeological and anthropological research, as well as the minority interpretations of that same evidence.

While the horse may have dramatically changed life for their kinspeople, the Tukudika continued to move about in their traditional way, on foot and employing their remarkable dogs – part wolf, part domesticated – as beasts of burden and as helpers in their hunting of sheep. They chose to remain rooted in the mountain strongholds of the greater Yellowstone, where they had found sustenance for thousands of years, eschewing the customs and habits of their plains neighbors.



Children of Dune

Though they welcomed the technological hunting advantage afforded by guns, for the most part they continued in their use of the bow and arrow, crafting bows from mountain sheep horns and elk antlers, which were equal parts technological marvel and work of priceless art.

Yet what truly set the Tukudika apart was the way of their interface with the world itself – their spirituality. The stance of hunting and gathering peoples generally is that there is no distinction between the natural and the supernatural realms. They are one and the same, existing side-by-side and in on-going relationship with each other. Spirit

infuses not only the unseen world, but the everyday world of the seen, as well.

Trees, rocks, waters, air: all are as much a part of Spirit as are the metaphysical forces of good and evil. For the Tukurika, as most other hunter-gatherers, these relationships were expressed in a hierarchy of associations, overseen as to the Shoshone by Tam Apo, “Our Father,” whose presence and omnipotence were documented long before the



A Distant Fire

missionaries sought to introduce their version of spiritual reality among the “Human Beings.”

Given this hierarchical ordering of spiritual life, it is not surprising that the Tukurika, dwellers of the higher mountains, should be considered among the Shoshone as “living among the powerful spirits,” and thus possessing a deeper spiritual connection and a more powerful “medicine” than others of the Human Beings.

And the Tukurika seem to have been quite content to try to live up to this standard, at the very least in

the material circumstances of their lives: the lifestyle they chose and the things with which they surrounded themselves.

So perhaps we can see a pattern forming which might eventually point to the reasons why the Tukurika came to be described in such warm and glowing terms by the European interlopers who invaded their country in the late-18th and early-19th centuries and gleaned their existence, at best, only from afar.

In the short span of thirty-seven years, from the time of Osborne Russell’s sojourn among them in 1835 to the creation of the Yellowstone as America’s first national park in 1872, the world of the Sheepeaters was turned on its head as the assault on their homeland continued and grew.

Thomas Jefferson was certainly familiar with the Doctrine of Discovery and used it in his day-to-day workings as President. Jefferson expressly targeted Lewis and Clark’s destination to aim for the mouth of the Columbia River so as to be able to strengthen the Discovery claim to American ownership of that territory.

The enlightening work of **Robert J. Miller** in *Native America, Discovered and Conquered: Thomas Jefferson, Lewis and Clark, and Manifest Destiny*, reminds us that “After the Lewis and Clark expedition in 1805-1806 American history was dominated by an erratic but fairly constant advance of American interests and empire across the continent under the principles of the Doctrine of Discovery. This was not an accident but was instead an expressed goal of Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, John Quincy Adams, and a multitude of other American politicians and citizens. ‘Manifest Destiny’ is the name that was ultimately used in 1845 to describe this relentless, predestined, and divinely inspired advance....”

One of the manifestations of this destiny was the organized exploration and mapping of the entire Yellowstone country, first in 1869 by the **Cook-Folsom-Peterson**

Expedition. The journals created by this trek generated the interest that incited the formation of the **Washburn-Langford-Doane** Expedition of 1870; and to put the icing on the geologic wonder cake, the **Hayden** Geological Survey of 1871 mapped and photographed the country, which was even then under serious consideration to be set



Westward Ho

aside to become America's very first national park. And this would become accomplished fact.

Of course there were Tukudika living there; what's your point? They're just Indians and our Indians at that; and besides, we've got tourists to consider.

It had been in October, 1865, that the then acting governor of the recently established Territory of Montana, **Thomas F Meagher**, had suggested that the Yellowstone region should be "protected." This voice had been echoed by Montana writer **Cornelius Hedges**, a

member of the Washburn Expedition, that protection should mean the creation of a national park. And there we were on March 1, 1872, with President **Ulysses S. Grant** signing into law the fact of Yellowstone National Park; 11,000 years of human presence, many of those years the presence of the Tukudika, be damned. Now all we want to do is make happy and invite all of our friends to see the geysers, this "pleasuring-ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people," as **Nathaniel Langford**, the park's first superintendent put it.

Please don't get me wrong, I'm so much a conservationist and a preservationist that I bleed green, but to simply ignore in the name of manifest destiny – or any other destiny for that matter – the existence of human beings who have lived in a place for so long they have become so at one with it that they merge seamlessly into its spaces is just callous disregard beyond anything I can imagine.

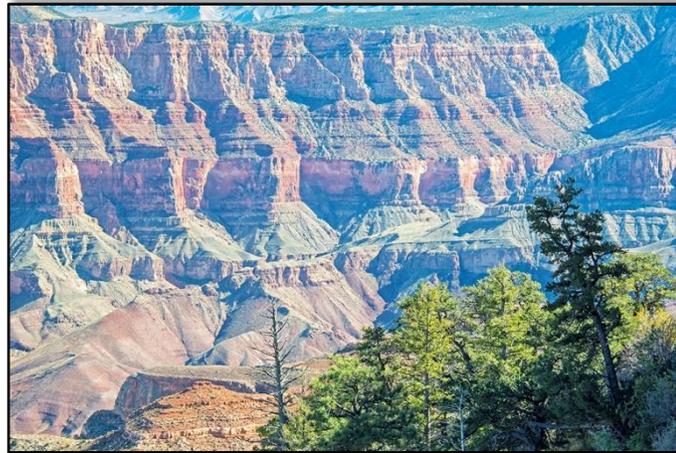
Gold and human intelligence have never held hands to walk anywhere, so in 1860, when the yellow metal was discovered on the Clearwater River in Central Idaho, the onslaught into Tukudikaland began in earnest. Between that year and 1890, the population of Idaho doubled every ten years; and the Sheepeaters, well.... Obviously at some point "there ain't no mountain high enough," as the song goes. Increasing contact between miners, settlers, tourists and the Tukudika and other Shoshone spilled over into resentment, and resentment was repurposed as armed conflict between Natives and interlopers. All of this led to the typical government response of increased military presence and the building of forts to house soldiers and make settlers feel safe.

In 1863, all the warm fuzzies exploded in the Bear River Massacre in which 246 members, mostly women and children, of a Northern Shoshone band camped at the confluence of Bear River and Beaver (now Battle) Creek in Idaho were slaughtered by soldiers of the 3rd California Volunteer Infantry Regiment. One Hundred sixty-four others were wounded or captured. Such savagery had come to represent the mindset of

the American public, not necessarily completely, but at least generally. So much so that a no-tolerance policy with regard to any Indians on non-reservation land was in place by the time Yellowstone became a park.

One manifestation of this policy was the Fort Bridger Treaty of 1868 which created the Fort Hall Reservation in Idaho that encompassed the old nineteenth century fur-trading post of the same name built by **Nathaniel J. Wyeth** along what ultimately had become the route of the Oregon Trail.

And in 1871 the new Superintendent of Indian Affairs in Montana, **J. A. Viall** was given the charge of rounding up and relocating all of the Sheepeater, Lemhi, and Bannock peoples not already removed to Fort Hall. One of the areas he was specifically directed to depopulate was the region that was slated the following



The Land of the Folded Earth

year to become Yellowstone National Park. To accomplish this he directed **A. J. Simmons** to locate the various groups and shepherd them to the Crow Reservation southeast of Billings, though in the end they would join other Shoshone already residing at Fort Hall and also the remnants of the Eastern Shoshone in the Wind River Reservation of west central Wyoming.

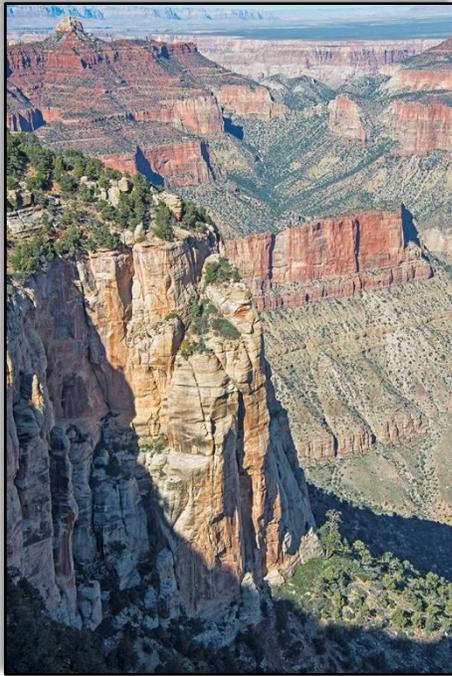
Philetus W. Norris became the second Superintendent of Yellowstone in 1877, and one of the things of which he became aware was that there were occasional sightings of Native Americans within the boundaries of the Park by tourists, including the “capture” of a group by a band of wandering Nez Perce. Norris made a special trip to the Lemhi Agency to inform its residents – Shoshone and otherwise – that they were no longer welcome in the Yellowstone country; and it is his subsequent reports that for the first time refer to the Sheepeaters as “timid” and “pygmy.”

The final nail in the cultural coffin of the Tukudika came in 1878-1879 with the erroneously named Sheepeater War. There was no war, and the Sheepeaters were wrongly accused of acts of aggression that they never committed. Between February and September of 1879, the relict band of free-ranging Mountain Shoshone, running from acts of depredation in which they were not involved, were accused of murdering two separate parties of miners and ranchers in eastern Idaho. Finally, in September, as winter set in and the soldiers were in their midst, fifty-one men, women, and children surrendered to the army and were marched to Fort Hall.

From here the official records on the Tukudika cease to exist as if in merging with the other reservation-bound Shoshone at Fort Hall and Wind River they no longer breathed as a distinct cultural entity. However interviews conducted in 1996 by **Dr. Sharon Kahin** on the Wind River Reservation show that a generation of senior residents has,

indeed, kept alive the ancestral memories along with substantial traditional Sheepeater knowledge.

It was in 1845 that **John O’Sullivan** wrote in the *Democratic Review* that it was America’s “manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the



Just a Hole in the Ground

free development of our yearly multiplying millions....” Yet **Frederick Merk**, in his seminal study *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History*, has written that “From the outset Manifest Destiny – vast in program, in its sense of continentalism – was slight in support. It lacked national, sectional, or party following commensurate with its magnitude. The reason was it did not reflect the national spirit. The thesis that it embodied nationalism, found in much historical writing, is backed by little real supporting evidence.”

When voices speak words that express ideas that on their face run counter to the values we would seek to show in the lives we lead as citizens of a great country, what is it that allows the squeaking wheel mentality to assert itself so that good people remain quiet while a minority of truculent, self-serving, self-aggrandizers seize the reins of a democratic republic and lead the nation in a direction in which it does not really wish to go?

For the Tukudika the answer to such a question is merely academic at best. Their wish had been to be left alone, to engage in the old ways, to follow the sheep, and to live peacefully in the amazing beauty that surrounded them. For them, such was the only destiny they wished to manifest. Perhaps in their lives there is a mirror through which we can see ourselves, if only darkly.

A Tip is Worth...?

The Eyes Have It...Whatever “It” Is

This is the age of photography. Daily we are bombarded – overwhelmed, really – with images. Slick advertisements, sensational news photos, dazzling entertainment that seems to recognize no boundaries, hidden cameras capturing our embarrassing moments: we often become cynical about the power of photography to do good.

Howard Zehr

The Little Book of Contemplative Photography

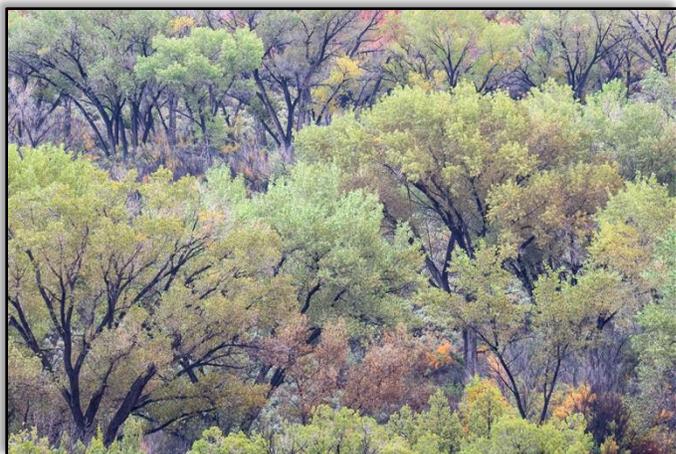
There seems to be one thing on which all photographers, and especially teachers of photography, are generally agreed. The visual world is a chaotic place no matter where you look, and perhaps it’s fair to begin with a brief overview of what our eyes see in physics terms regardless of where “no matter where” might be.

While it is indeed simplistic to say so, it is also generally accurate to declare that the

human eye sees roughly the same angle of view and with the same magnification as a 50mm focal length lens placed on a full-frame, which is to say an FX, digital sensor or a piece of 35mm film (It would also be roughly equivalent to a 33.3mm focal length lens

coupled with a Nikon DX (1.5x, or APS-C) sensor; but since it is so easy to work in 35mm equivalents, I prefer to consider 50mm and full-frame sensors as markers).

Of course, there's more to it than that. A camera lens is a single element (or set of elements), while the human eye typically works as part of a pair of lenses and is thus binocular, which creates some difference by itself. The eyes work in tandem with the brain, which also results in something beyond mere physics; but as a general matter, my initial statement stands and we humans have a horizontal focused



Cottonwood Dance

field of view of approximately 50-60° and a vertical focused field that is about the same with respect to straight ahead.

It doesn't take much thought to realize that, either way, the eyes can receive a great deal of visual information at a glance, so much, in fact, that it can easily become, as **Howard Zehr** suggests, completely overwhelming; but my purpose here is not to dwell on the biology, nor the physics, of vision, rather to suggest that we allow ourselves to come to an entire new way of seeing the visual world so that we arrive at a completely new understanding of the photographic experience.

What I am suggesting is a different way of envisioning our approach to the photographic process, a re-imagining of how that process occurs, a way of photography that engages our imaginative senses and encourages our intuitive and right-brain faculties.

I do not mean to insinuate that we will suddenly give up our technical skills or eschew our mechanical aptitudes – and in fact, the more deeply we integrate these skills, the more readily we can approach the ideas I am suggesting.

One of my favorite stories is about the experience of Dr. **Jill Bolte-Taylor**, a neuro-anatomist (read brain scientist) in Boston, who on December 10, 1996 awoke to realize,



The Comb Gets Washed

as the moments unfolded, that she was experiencing a stroke in the left hemisphere of her own brain. As the experience blossomed, she came to comprehend that her capacity to process information grew less and less; yet at the same time her awareness of her right brain's capacity to experience the incredible universal one-ness of the present moment seemed to grow and grow.

What came from all of this, in addition to a marvelously instructive book entitled *"My Stroke of Insight"*, was Jill Bolte-Taylor's realization that it is possible for each of us to, as she puts it, "purposely choose to step to the right of (our) left hemispheres" and find the intuitive and aesthetic sensibilities that are our right brain heritage.

If she is correct, and I somehow suspect that she may well be, then through some degree of conscious effort on all of our parts, we can give ourselves the opportunity to approach the process of photography more in this intuitive way.

So first of all I am positing that this new approach begins with an attitude – the notion that photography can be a medium of reflection, and even of meditation; in essence a medium that for lack of a better term can be downright prayerful, and I do not mean this in a religious sense, but certainly in a spiritual one.

Secondly, I'm suggesting that this attitude involves convincing ourselves to slow down, so that we can heighten our visual awareness and tune in to our imaginations that will allow us to see all visual experience in a more holistic way. Perhaps one of the primary awarenesses we will come to if we do this is the realization that photography – and thus the act of seeing itself – will become more about process and less about product. Seeing – the act of vision – will become an end unto itself and will come to be sensed more as play and less as work.

Perhaps a simple exercise that might be helpful in this regard is to take a stiff piece of rectangular cardboard, say 8" x 10", and cut out a smaller rectangle, say 4" x 6", or maybe 5" x 7". Then use this tool as a "seeing" device. As you draw it closer to your eyes, what you see more closely approximates something of a wide-angle scene; and as you hold it further away, it becomes more telephoto. As you use this wonderful tool reflect on what you are seeing by asking yourself if there are things you now see that you did not notice before, or if the relationships in what you are seeing have changed, or if the frame itself imposes limits of which you were not previously aware. In other words, by forcing yourself to slow down in this way, are you somehow seeing the visual field in new and more interesting ways? Are you tuning up your eyes and engaging in greater connectivity with the world around you?

I'd like to offer to you that your eyes are the windows of your soul, and that the vision works in both directions. "Who you are" is seen by others through those small portals, but how you connect with the world around you is experienced from those openings as



March of the Fern People

well. When your eyes become engaged in the service of your intuitive self then the photographic process you enter becomes the journey of mindfulness.

EarthSong Workshops: How You See the Land Really Matters **Walking in Beauty**

To keep both wonder and vision alive, we must learn, once again, to be children
Steven J. Meyers
On Seeing Nature

As I walk with Beauty
As I walk, as I walk
The universe is walking with me
In beauty it walks before me
In beauty it walks behind me
In beauty it walks below me
In beauty it walks above me
Beauty is on every side
As I walk I walk with beauty

Traditional Diné Prayer

“So to make the decision I have made is far from easy; but I know that it is the right decision for my life at this time. The coming year, 2016, will be the last year that I offer weeklong workshops other than those offered and arranged by other sources, such as Arrowmont, John C. Campbell Folk School, The Intentional Growth Center, or other such institutions and organizations. Beginning in 2017 I will offer weekend workshops in Western North Carolina. These will include the Appalachian Barn Workshops; the Wildflowers, Waterfalls, and Western North Carolina Workshop; and perhaps a couple of others. I think it’s known as “downsizing.”



The Light of Lickstone

“I want to make the last year of EarthSong Workshops as exciting and fun-filled as possible. I’ve put together a calendar of my very favorite locations, and I’ve created some of the most wonderful creative opportunities for you to experience. Some of the details are still being ironed out, but I want to share the schedule with you here. There will be no EarthSong Weeklong workshops after these.”

With these words I began the last *A Song for the Asking* of 2015, and they still reflect the decision I have made; but as I write this, the details of all of the 2016 workshops have been worked out and are in place. I am humbled and grateful to say that most of our adventures for the year have filled so that only a couple of spaces remain in several of them; and if you are interested in joining us, please send me a note so I can let you know if there is space available.

The exceptions are the Smokies Spring Workshop and the Acadia-Mount Desert Island Spring Tour. There are multiple spaces in each of these, and if you have ever wanted to experience the depth of spring in my backyard, now is the time. The same holds for the magical land of Acadia National Park, which is like a second home to Bonnie and me.



March 31-April 3, 2016: Appalachian Barn
Workshop Rite of Spring
Asheville/Madison County, NC
\$450; 8 Participants
(7 spaces filled)



April 9-15, 2016: Great Smoky Mountains NP
Spring Workshop
Townsend, TN
\$1295; 8 Participants; Deposit: \$250
(2 spaces filled)



June 15-21, 2016: Acadia NP-Mt. Desert Island
Spring Tour
Southwest Harbor, ME
\$1350; 8 Participants; Deposit: \$250
(3 spaces filled)



September 17-23, 2016: The Amazing Beauty of
the Rhode Island Coast
Narragansett, RI
\$1350; 8 Participants; Deposit: \$250
(4 spaces filled)



October 1-7, 2016: The Awesome Upper
Peninsula of Michigan Fall Tour
Hancock and Munising, MI
\$1350; 8 Participants; Deposit: \$250
(5 spaces filled)



October 10-16, 2016: The Incredible Diverse
Beauty of Cape Cod
North Truro, MA
\$1350; 8 Participants; Deposit \$250
(5 spaces filled)



October 29-November 4, 2016: The Canyon
Country of Southeast Utah Tour
Moab, Utah
\$1500; 7 Participants; Deposit: \$250
(6 spaces filled)



July 23-29 The Great Llama Trek Adventure
Cortez, CO/San Juan and La Plata Mountains.
\$1900; 6 Participants; Deposit \$250
(0 spaces filled)

This workshop will be a weeklong event in the **San Juan and La Plata Mountains** of **southwestern Colorado** and will involve **llama trekking** provided by **San Juan Mountains Llama Trekking** and my dear friend Dr. Laura Higgins

There are also two weekend workshop adventures in addition to those shown above.



August 12-14; Wildflowers, Waterfalls, and
Western North Carolina
Hendersonville and Transylvania County, NC
\$375; 8 Participants
(3 spaces filled)



November 17-20; Appalachian Barn Workshop
Full-on-Fall
Asheville/Madison County, NC
\$450; 8 Participants
(1 space filled)

If you are interested in sharing any of these extraordinary adventures with us call me at **(828) 788-0687**, or send me an email with your phone number to don@earthsongphotography.com.

Remember that for all of EarthSong's workshops, we arrange for the lodging (not included in tuition) and we scout the restaurant (meals not included) locations, so that all you have to do is show up ready to create, learn, and have fun.

Until next time, may the Spirit of Light guide your shutter release.

This newsletter is being sent only to those people who have expressed an interest in receiving it. If you no longer wish to receive it, you can be removed from the mailing list by sending an email requesting removal to don@EarthSongPhotography.com.



Sunrise, Near Chaco Culture National Historical Park, New Mexico