

***Prunus pensylvanica* at the Lewis and Clark Herbarium**

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While doing research for my book, *Plants of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* I became aware of some problems with the identification of several specimens in the Lewis and Clark Herbarium at The Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia. In August of 2003, I examined the specimens at the Academy and determined that PH-LC 180 should be *Prunus pensylvanica* (rather than *P. virginiana*).

A label, in Pursh's hand, on the sheet with this specimen reads, "Prunus A Cherry found near the beaver bents on the Missouri-Augst: 10th 1806." According to the information on the label, it was Lewis who most likely collected this specimen since he passed the "beaverbends" (Lewis's term) when he camped near the "white earth river" on August 10, 1806. Lewis and Clark's "white earth river" is the present Little Muddy River near Williston, N.D., which the Expedition had named on April 21, 1805, and not the present day White Earth River, which is over 50 air miles to the east, and was not named by the explorers. The "beaver bends" are the bends of the Missouri River, where they found beaver abundantly, between the Yellowstone River and the "white earth river" as described by Lewis on August 8, 1806.

On August 11, Lewis was shot in "my left thye about an inch below my hip joint" by Cruzatte, who apparently mistook Lewis for an elk. On August 12 Lewis's party caught up with Clark. Lewis then wrote his last journal entry, "as wrighting in my present situation is extreemely painfull to me I shall desist until I recover and leave to my frind Capt. C. the continuation of our journal. However I must notice a singular Cherry which is found on the Missouri in the bottom lands about the beaverbends and some little distance below the white earth river." Lewis's journal then continued with a detailed botanical description of a "new" species of

cherry that Lewis contrasted with the more familiar chokecherry. Lewis's last journal entry is thus a description of one more "new" plant species, showing his dedication to the science of botany.

During my visit to ANS, Dr. Alfred E. Schuyler and I examined PH-LC 180, and compared it with specimens of *Prunus pensylvanica* and *P. virginiana* from the general herbarium. We found that PH-LC 180 consisted of several leaves and a short section of stem material. Two of the leaves were fully intact, and have the long, tapering (acuminate) leaf tips that are characteristic of *P. pensylvanica*. In contrast, the leaves of *P. virginiana* are much more abruptly acute at the tip. In addition, the bud scales of the specimen are uniform in color, lacking the two-toned coloration characteristic of *P. virginiana* bud scales.