

What Happened to Sacagawea After the Journey?

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The author's notes at the beginning of *Streams to the River, River to the Sea* tell us, "[Sacagawea] had two sons, lived for some eighty years, and is buried in the Wind River Valley of Wyoming" (p. ix). In truth, there are many tales about what happened to this Shoshone woman.

Many tales support the story that, after the expedition, Sacagawea and Charbonneau went back to the village where they first met, Metaharta. They lived with the Minnetarees for about three years.

William Clark was excited to give Charbonneau and Sacagawea's son Jean Baptiste a good education. At Clark's invitation, the family moved to be not too far from St. Louis, Missouri, where the boy started school. From this point forward, it is unclear what really happened to Sacagawea. Some say she died in her mid-twenties, others say she lived to be an old woman. It will be up to you to put the facts together for yourself.

In 1811, a fur dealer met Sacagawea and wrote in his journal that she was "sickly and longed to revisit her native country." At some point, Sacagawea gave birth to a little girl and named her Lizette Charbonneau. Then on December 20, 1812, a clerk at the trading post recorded that "...the wife of Charbonneau, a Snake (Shoshone) Squaw, died of putrid fever." He added that she was "aged about 25 years. She left a fine infant girl."

It is believed that Charbonneau died in an Indian attack on the trading post only a few months after Sacagawea's death. Fifteen men died in the attack. Records list the clerk and Lizette as survivors. Then on August 11, 1813, William Clark became guardian of Jean Baptiste and Lizette.

There is another story, told by the Shoshone tribe. There was a Shoshone woman named Porivo who came to live with them. She talked about a long journey she made with several white men. She even had a peace medal like the ones Lewis and Clark carried on their trip. She had a couple of sons who could speak several languages, including English and French. This woman died on April 9, 1884. Many say that she was Sacagawea.

What we know for sure is that Sacagawea's story lives on. More streams, lakes, landmarks, parks, songs, and poems pay tribute to Sacagawea than to any other woman in American history. Many books and movies tell her story. There are ten memorials that honor her, as does a cultural and educational center in Salmon, Idaho, near her homeland.

There were no pictures taken of Sacagawea, so no one knows what she looked like. However, there are eighteen statues of her in spots all around the United States. She is even on a dollar coin minted by the U.S. Treasury.

Resources:

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Drumm, S. (1920). *Journal of a Fur-trading Expedition on the Upper Missouri: John Luttig, 1812–1813*. St. Louis, Missouri: Missouri Historical Society.

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