A Selective Bibliography of Exploration
Relating to the United States

Introduction

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Because of the Lewis and Clark bicentennial celebrations the history of North American exploration is undergoing a renaissance. Thus it is appropriate that during this bicentennial year we should create a bibliography of works that is useful and selective rather than exhaustive, especially since it is aimed at the public as well as the scholar or collector.

The scope of this bibliography is confined to voyages and expeditions that impinge on the United States and its interests in Alaska and the Far North from the early Spanish and English voyages down to 1908, though I have also included the Vikings, which have long been a serious interest of mine. Due to length restrictions, I have also not included American expeditions to Africa, Asia and South America. Canadian exploration, an exciting field for future work, has also been excluded. But extensive coverage of this subject can be found in William H. Goetzmann and Glyndwr Williams, *The Atlas of North American Exploration: From the Norse Voyages to the Race to the Pole*, New York, Prentice Hall, 1992. Many volumes on Canadian exploration can be found in The Champlain Society publications in Toronto, Canada.
The history of American exploration has been one of the mainstreams of American history since the publication of Justin Winsor's *Narrative and Critical History of the United States*, Boston, 8 vols., Houghton-Mifflin, 1884-1998. Over the years exploration history has had political implications, especially in the contested Far West and in relation to U.S.-Mexican and Canadian-American boundary negotiations. But at the same time it has been characterized by the romance of adventure; its form usually a narrative chronicle of men versus nature. It features heroes and the heroic. This was underscored by Bernard De Voto who characterized the Rocky Mountain explorer of the mid-19th Century, Tom "Broken Hand" Fitzpatrick as "The Wing-shod Fitzpatrick," presumably a reference to the Greek God Hermes. The heroic activities of American explorers like Daniel Boone of course underscored American nationalism just as Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations, Voyages and Discoveries of the English Nation*, published in 1598-1600, celebrates its explorers and discoverers, vis a vis those of rivals Spain and Portugal, a work that is continued in the present day by London's Hakluyt Society.

Exploration is not discovery. It is the seeking, often unglamorous, of the "new," with discoveries as happenstances along the way. It is, however, usually purposeful and its aims governed by the culture from which the explorer left. However, exploration is full of surprises, as when the mid-19th Century American African explorer Paul Du Chaillu first discovered—a gorilla! The gorilla died on its voyage from West Africa to New England, Du Chaillu went back and captured another specimen of the creature that also died. Dr. Jeffreys Wyman of Harvard dissected the unfortunate beast and declared it non-human. This reminds us that exploration also is focused on science and the existing concepts that yield the intellectual and cultural history of a people. In my own works, *Exploration and Empire: The Explorer and the Scientist in the Winning of the American West*, (N.Y., Knopf, 1966) and *New Lands, New Men: America and the Second Great Age of Discovery*, (NY, Viking, 1982), I have been primarily interested in the intellectualizing of exploration and it's context as well as the periodization of the characteristic kinds of exploration. Thus, as far as post-Columbian exploration is concerned, at least two stylistic periods of exploration took place. The first age of discovery was oceanic and looked for new lands and peoples to conquer, or at least to find exotic things like gold, spices and ivory to enrich the mother country, as well as spreading the Christian religion. Then there occurred a second age that operated with the benefit of science, perhaps beginning in the late 18th Century with Captain Cook's voyages. I have called this "The Second Great Age of Discovery" that ends with the penetration of outer space—a Third Age of Discovery.

This bibliography thus provides an example of exploration in the first and second ages or those of terrestrial exploration.

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**Bibliography**
Part I. Atlases and General Works

The exploration literature relating to the United States is perhaps more abundant than that of any other nation except Britain and Spain—both proprietors of vast empires.


Part IIa. The Discovery and Early Exploration of America


**Part IIb. Early British and American Continental Explorers**


Part IIc. Early British and American Continental Explorers


Another series is Charles Wilkes, Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition During the Years, 1838-1842, 5 vols., C. Sherman, Philadelphia, 1845. See especially vol. IV for exploration of Hawai and the Pacific Coast overland from the Straits of Juan de Fuca to San Francisco. This was an important expedition in re: the Oregon boundary question. A splendid secondary account is William Stanton, The


**Part III. Post Civil War Exploration**


**Part IV. American Expeditions to Alaska and the Arctic**

There have been many American expeditions beyond the lower forty-eight states. For most of these see Goetzmann, *New Lands, New Men*, op. cit., also see Goetzmann and Williams, *Atlas of North American Exploration*, op. cit., Part I.


**Part V. American Arctic Explorers**


**Conclusion**

Finally, it should be clear that exploration has not been without its critics. England's Dr. Johnson deplored it as victimizing native peoples. And such criticism has always followed the European and American explorers and their nationalist writings which some have called "imperial" or "imperialistic." Foremost of those critics in modern times is Edward Said whose diatribe on this subject of "the others" in Orientalism has made his work a classic. Certain historians of the American West have made exploration one of the prime evils of conquest, while at the same time destroying the interest and romance of western American history. This bibliography of American histories of exploration is intended to bring back not only the adventure and romance of American exploration but its profound reflection of a country and a culture born and guided by the Second Great Age of Discovery.