

House Resolution Number

Whereas, it has been written in many journals and history books that "York", a black slave and body servant to army Captain William Clark (famous explorer of the historic Lewis and Clark Expedition), made significant contributions to the Corps of Discovery, specifically:

(1) "York" shared in all the adventures of the 8,000 mile journey across uncharted regions in North America west of the Mississippi and south of Canada which led the way to the addition and settlement of 11 states to the existing 17 states of the United States, namely: Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota, Montana, Oregon, and Washington; and

(2) "York" was a remarkable phenomenon to remote Indians because of the color of his skin, strength, and large stature; and

(3) "York" was "big medicine" and the talk and awe of Indian tribes and thus Lewis and Clark realized that he was a valuable member of the expedition when obtaining needed supplies and horses from the Indians to trail blaze through the wilderness to the Pacific Ocean; and

(4) "York" was skillful with a rifle and longbow, and when food ran short he hunted elk and buffaloes along with other men of the expedition despite the fact that slaves were forbidden to carry weapons; and

(5) "York" was allowed to vote along with other members of the Corps and thus became the first black to vote; and

(6) "York" was a kind man, as testified to by the care he gave the dying Sergeant Floyd, the only member lost on the expedition; and

(7) "York" was loyal. He searched for Captain Clark at risk to himself during the violent storm at the Great Falls in Montana. Furthermore, it is most likely that "York" had the opportunity to leave the expedition and become a member of an Indian tribe and be treated like a chief. He chose the Corps over freedom; and

(8) "York" was a man with a sense of humor who uplifted the spirits of his fellow comrades on gloomy days and nights; and

Whereas, "York" was not recognized as a member of the Corps of Discovery. On January 15, 1807, Meriwether Lewis sent Secretary of War Henry Dearborn a roster of the men who had served with the expedition. In his closing remarks, Lewis wrote:

"With respect to all those persons whose names are entered in this roll, I feel a peculiar pleasure declaring, that the ample support which they gave me under every difficulty; the manly firmness which they evinced on every necessary occasion; and the patience and fortitude with which they submitted to and bore, the fatigues and painful sufferings incident to my late tour to the pacific Ocean, entitles them to my warmest approbation and thanks; nor will I suppress the expression of a hope, that the recollection of services thus faithfully perform will meet a just reward in an ample remuneration on the part of Government."

"York's" name was left off the roster; and

Whereas, "York" was freed by Clark in 1811, five years after the disbandment of the Corps of Discovery. "York" never received appropriate thanks for services faithfully performed nor a just reward in an ample remuneration from the government of the United States; and

Whereas, it is too late to make amends to "York" personally for not having received "a just reward" within his lifetime. However, it is not too late to honor "York" by including him along with Lewis and Clark on statues and in paintings and murals. As well as with stories about trail blazing with Lewis and Clark, "York Day" celebrations, reenactments, public parks, statues, monuments, and buildings bear his name; and

Whereas, a United States postage stamp of "York" would be a great way to honor "York" during the celebration of the 200th Anniversary of the Lewis & Clark Expedition:

Now, therefore, be it resolved that we, the members of the Missouri House of Representatives, Ninety-second General Assembly, hereby request the Citizens Stamp Advisory Committee (CSAC) and the Postmaster General that a picture of "York" be printed on a United States Postage Stamp by January 15, 2007, the 200th Anniversary of Meriwether Lewis' report to Secretary of War Dearborn, from which "York" was omitted; and

Be it further resolved that the Chief Clerk of the Missouri House of Representatives be instructed to prepare properly inscribed copies of this resolution for the Citizens Stamp Advisory Committee and Postmaster General John E. Potter.

Offered by _____
Representative Yvonne Wilson
District No. 42

I, Catherine L. Hanaway, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Ninety-second General Assembly, Second Regular Session, do certify that the above is a true and correct copy of House Resolution No. _____, adopted _____, 2004.

Catherine L. Hanaway, Speaker