

VIDEO SCRIPT

TITLE: The Mighty Mo'

SERIES: Dakota Pathways: A History

WRITER: Paul Higbee

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V I S U A L

A U D I O

1. 1. OPEN MONTAGE (:20) Kids at Cultural Center with guide

NAT SOUND UP AND UNDER
MUSIC UP

MUSIC UNDER

2. MONTAGE Modern recreational activity on the Missouri.

NARRATOR:

Take a look at traffic on South Dakota's biggest river, the Missouri. There are fishing boats, canoes, sailboats—even jet skis.

3. RE-CREATION: Keelboat travel on natural stretch of Missouri.

This great river's been a kind of road for centuries. The Missouri runs right through the center of our state, and its traffic has been central to South Dakota history.

4. PHOTO: steamboats on Missouri

5. RE-CREATION: Bison hide boat

6. POP-UP FACT: American Indian boats were sometimes called bullboats, because bull bison hides were most often used.

American Indians built the first river boats here, stretching bison hides over willow-wood frames. Two hundred years ago, the Yankton, Teton, Arikara and Mandan peoples lived **or traded** along the river, and probably used these kinds of boats to trade goods between their villages.

7. MAP: Tribal areas and tribes listed.

Little did they know that high fashion halfway around the globe would shortly make their river a busy road.

8. DRAWING/PAINTING: Felt hats as worn in high society circa 1800's

Fine felt hats became the **coolest** things for men in Europe to wear.

9. Beaver dam with beavers

The best materials for these hats were beaver skins, called pelts.

10. Beaver pelt on stretcher.

11. MAP Trapper routes in early US

Europeans, and Americans living on the east coast, didn't know much about rivers far to the west, but they did know one thing. Lots of **beavers** lived there.

V I S U A L**A U D I O**

12. Early American drawings of trappers on the river. (Bodmer collection et al)

13. RE-CREATION: Keelboat.

14. CU: Low angle water-level shots moving with the current, past snags, past water swirling around rocks.

15. Lightning

16. Fast-moving clouds.

17. POP-UP FACT: "The movement of water in a river is called current."

18. POP-UP FACT: "The Missouri was also called Old Muddy, too, because of its dark waters."

19. PAINTINGS: Caitlin's American Indian life.

20. POP-UP FACT: "French names remain common in some American Indian families, dating back to marriages 200 years ago."

21. SUPER: French names common to Indians today.

22. PAINTINGS: Lewis and Clark

23. PAINTING: President Jefferson DISSOLVE through to:

24. Cul: Jefferson likeness on Mount Rushmore.

25. RE-CREATION: The L&C expedition.

NARRATOR:

Up and down the Missouri came American, French, and British fur trappers and traders, all hoping to make big money supplying the fashion industry.

These trappers and traders often traveled in long, wooden crafts called keelboats, powered by paddles, and sometimes by sails. The river was always dangerous. To survive, keelboaters had to understand its powerful motion. They had to watch for tree branches boaters called snags or sawyers, and surging waters they called boilers. Keelboaters spoke of reading the river, meaning studying the waters for danger. They read the sky, too, looking for lightning or approaching winds that could kill. Old-time river travelers sometimes called the Missouri the Mighty Mo, because of its power, or Old Misery, because it could be cruel.

The keelboaters had to understand something else to survive: the river belonged to the people who lived on its banks, the Yanktons, Tetons, Mandans, and Arikaras. These people usually helped outsiders traveling the river—especially if travelers asked permission and traded useful goods like sugar, tobacco, coffee, cooking pots, and clothing. Some fur trappers became close friends with native people, and even married into their families.

Also needing help from the Yanktons, Tetons, Mandans, and Arikaras were the most famous Missouri River boaters of all time, Lewis and Clark. In 1804, they led an expedition of fifty explorers up the river from St. Louis, Missouri, on a mission ordered by the President of the United States, Thomas Jefferson.

V I S U A L

26. MAP: Showing Louisiana Purchase lands.

27. WS Mountain country

28. POP-UP FACT: "Called the Louisiana Purchase, all this land was bought for \$15 million."

29. TRACKING SHOT: Moving slowly up natural Missouri near Vermillion.

30. POP-UP FACT: "Going against the current, Lewis and Clark often traveled just five miles a day or so."

31. PAINTINGS/DRAWINGS: Lewis and Clark's return, eastern cities of the era, and Catlin's American Indian artwork fading to empty river bluffs as the lost villages are described.

32. POP-UP FACT: "The worst disease native people faced was smallpox."

33. Lewis & Clark era paintings continue.

A U D I O

The United States was a country 28 years old then. The previous year it had bought land from France so that the young nation extended from the Atlantic Ocean nearly to the Pacific.

These western lands hadn't been explored much by Europeans or Americans. So Merriwether Lewis and William Clark jumped into a two-year adventure of discovery.

About three months into their journey, Lewis and Clark reached what is now South Dakota. They were impressed by the native people they met, and amazed by the wildlife they found. They kept written journals that described barking squirrels—we call them prairie dogs—and fast running goats we know as pronghorns or antelopes. Lewis and Clark also saw bison, bears, and mule deer, which were bigger than the deer they knew in the eastern United States.

The explorers made it all the way to the Pacific Ocean, and when they returned to St. Louis in 1806, they were greeted as the greatest explorers of their time. People read their journals and wanted to go west, too. The journals gave credit to native people for helping Lewis and Clark.

But the explorers, and their American Indian friends, had no way of knowing how tragic the interest in the region would be for the Yanktons, Tetons, Arikaras, and Mandans. Outsiders traveling the river unknowingly brought diseases that were new and terrible to these people, and some American Indian villages were completely wiped out by sickness.

V I S U A L

34. Bison herds, petrified bones and tortoise shells, and Catlin and Bodmer paintings.

35. POP-UP FACT: "Buffalo tongue became a delicacy in the east...leading to near extinction of the buffalo."

36. Audubon and Audubon's bird images.

37. Pierre Chateau portrait

38. Steamboat re-creation or Painting of "Yellowstone."

39. Contemporary shots of Fort Pierre and Pierre as seen from river—possibly one long pan, ending with the capitol centered.

40. Close-up images of steamboats—the paddlewheel churning, blasts of steam, boiler, boiler gauges. Then historic photos of paddlewheelers in port.

A U D I O

NARRATOR:

The newcomers were more trappers, who after a while turned their attention from beaver pelts to bison hides. There were also scientists, including some who rode west from the river to the Badlands and collected petrified bones of prehistoric animals. And there were artists, like painters George Catlin and Karl Bodmer, who helped the world understand American Indian life.

Another artist who journeyed up the river, John Audubon, painted mostly wildlife.

The river also brought town builders like Pierre Chouteau. He came up the Missouri in 1832 on a big steam-powered boat called the Yellowstone, and he built a trading post and fort for the American Fur Company. Today we pronounce his first name—Pierre—differently than he did. But Fort Pierre on the west side of the river, and our state capital of Pierre on the east side, are named for Chouteau.

Steamboats like the Yellowstone were also called paddlewheelers, because of the churning wheels that moved the boats. The power came from steam created in red-hot tanks called boilers. It was tricky technology, and a mistake could cause the boilers to explode, sending the paddlewheeler and its passengers to the river bottom. But when everything worked correctly, the boats had tremendous power, and moved lots of people and goods into the region.

V I S U A L

41. Nineteenth century river town photos, and photos of the 1881 flood (I think USD has a good collection of flood pictures).

42. Moving steam locomotive.

43. Film images of old trains, and any historic stills of bridge construction we can find.

44. Old-time car film images.

A U D I O

NARRATOR:

River towns sprang up—Fort Pierre and Pierre, and also Vermillion, Yankton, and many smaller places. Springtime floods threatened the towns. The worst one happened in March, 1881. Hundreds of buildings washed away, the town of Vermillion was almost entirely destroyed, and many big boats sank. So disastrous was the flood that it signaled the end of the Missouri being the area's main road. Towns were rebuilt, but some companies didn't have enough money to replace their boats. By the 1880s those river boats had new competition...

Trains.

For railroads, the Missouri River was a big headache. Some people in the 1880s said no one could make railroad bridges across the Mighty Mo that would survive floods. But bridge building crews went to work to prove those people wrong, and they spanned the river with two train bridges, at Mobridge and Pierre, in 1907.

Cars were becoming popular in 1907, so South Dakotans asked, why not bridges for drivers? In the early years of cars, people got their automobiles from one side of the river to the other by ferry boats. Or they drove across on ice in winter. Sometimes the ice wasn't as solid as it looked, and cars broke through.

V I S U A L**A U D I O**

45. Same shot of the capitol seen earlier, and then Norbeck's portrait. Then a map showing where the five bridges were. Photos or a re-creation of John Kirkham, a colorful figure who stood just 5' 2" and was always dwarfed by his workers. End with Mobridge dedication photos.

46. POP-UP FACT: "The name Mobridge means 'Missouri Bridge.' "

47. Historic shots of Kirkham's bridges. Then aerial shots of the four dams, and a map showing where they are.

48. POP-UP FACT: Figures about the river's volume of water, and miles of shoreline, after the dams were created.

49. Tom Brokaw

50. The two bridges over Lake Francis Case at Chamberlain.

51. Shot of Oahe, and then stills or film of Kennedy.

52. POP-UP FACT: "Senator Francis Case was the South Dakotan most responsible for the four dams."

NARRATOR:

So in 1919, Governor Peter Norbeck got the state legislature to put up a little more than two million dollars to build five Missouri River car bridges. In charge of construction was John Kirkham, a man from Indiana who came west to be a lawman, and who looked like a lawman as he led the bridge work, wearing a gunbelt and six shooters. The first of the five bridges to open was the one at Mobridge. By then William McMaster was governor. At the bridge opening, McMaster called the moment "a victory won over the treacherous river." (Or "Voice Over" quote if we have exact words?)

John Kirkham guessed his bridges would stand 500 years. Instead, they lasted less than 40, but not because of floods. In the 1950s and 1960s, South Dakota's piece of the Missouri changed completely. Four flood control dams were built to make the river less treacherous, and to use the Mighty Mo's power to create electricity.

Tom Brokaw describing what it was like to live at Pickstown during the Fort Randall Dam's construction. He'd be in an excellent position to describe how changing geography impacted the history of this spot during his lifetime: damming the river created the town from scratch. Then Pickstown went bust after construction, and now it's growing because of fishing and hunting.

Behind each of the four dams, wide lakes formed. That meant that new, longer car bridges had to be built.

In 1962, a little less than 160 years years after President Jefferson sent Lewis and Clark to explore the river, another President came to see for himself how the river had been changed. President John F. Kennedy came to Pierre for the Oahe Dam dedication, and he did so because a Pierre school girl invited him.

V I S U A L

A U D I O

53. Oahe dedication with Kennedy and others.

VOICE OF WOMAN WHO INVITED PRESIDENT KENNEDY description of how she got the President to the dedication. (or On Camera)

54. I believe the woman who invited Kennedy to Pierre is still there

55. Pulling walleye from Oahe or Francis Case lakes.

NARRATOR:

56. POP-UP FACT: "The dams were built by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers."

The dams not only delivered flood control and electricity, but some of the finest fishing in the United States. But nothing as big as that project happens without controversy.

57. WS Missouri river dam

58. Larry Mendoza ON CAMERA

LARRY MENDOZA:

sharing his memories of the dam's development, the loss of towns and land and how compensation efforts continue fifty years later.

59. Both summer and winter scenery along the river.

NARRATOR:

The changed Missouri is still powerful, in ways that have to do with currents, and in other ways, too. For South Dakotans, it's the dividing line between two halves of our state: East River, the land of farms and many towns, and West River, the place of ranches and open spaces.

60. John Steinbeck

One of the nation's best 20th century authors, John Steinbeck of California, went so far as to say the Missouri River in the Dakotas divides all America. One side of the river, he wrote:

61. Scenery illustrating Steinbeck's observation.

VOICE OVER: "JOHN STEINBECK"

"...is the eastern landscape, eastern grass, with the look and smell of eastern America. Across the Missouri...it is pure west, with brown grass and water scorings and small outcrops. The two sides of the river might well be a thousand miles apart."

62. Closing credits.

Closing music.
