

FROM ST. LOUIS TO THE PACIFIC

LEWIS & CLARK

HIDES, WOOD & INTERPRETERS



After having purchased the Louisiana from France, US President Thomas Jefferson decided to explore the Western territories, using the big rivers of those territories as much as possible. Most of the American "white" population at that time (early '1800) was in effect installed on the East Coast of the US and the constant flow of new colonists from the Old Continent needed to be canalized towards new territories. The fur hunters that lived on those wild territories reported the opportunity to find fruitful great plains, rivers, woods, animals, etc., so Jefferson charged his Secretary (Lewis) with this mission who had to organize an explorative expedition using if possible the largest

is depicted, divided in "zones" where the players will be able to get resources, boats, horses and different bonuses, as we will see.



bild2/picture2

The others components inside the box are: 5 explorers (colored wooden meeples), 5 camps (to be initially placed in St. Louis), 5 mini card decks of 6 "basic" Personalities, 18 Natives guides (red wooden Indians),

very interesting game where players will try to acquire cards according to one possible strategy and to get the best "combo" from those cards and the smart use of their Native guides.

Each player is given an explorer, a camp, a small board, 6 "basic" cards, 3 resources and a Native. The personal board shows 1 boat with 3 places for resources (that will not cost penalties, as we will see later), 1 boat with again 3 places (1 possible penalty), 1

boat with 5 places (1 possible penalty per resource), 1 canoe for 1 Native (no penalty) and 1 big canoe for "X" Natives (1 possible penalty each). (picture2)

You start in St. Louis loading 3 resources on your first boat: You may choose to give 1 hide, 1 food and 1 tool to each player or, alternatively, 3 random resources. I strongly recommend the second option that allows for a more dynamic game: otherwise the first actions of all players will be too similar. Put your Native guide on the single canoe and your explorer into St. Louis. Mix the 54 Personalities deck and place the first 5 cards on the board. We are now ready to start our long trip inside the wilderness. The first explorer to reach the Pacific Coast will be the winner.

On his turn each player MUST perform an "Action" and MAY also do two extra options: enlist a new Personality card and/or move his camp. (picture1)

Personality cards are double-sided, the "front" shows the cost of the card (in tools), the resources, if any, that it may give to the player (hides, food, wood or tools) or the specific ACTION that it may perform (move, enlist, change resources, etc.). The "back" shows its basic resource, its value in tools if you discard it and, most important, the number of actions that can be done by that Personality, FORCE, represented by 1-2-3 Natives).



bild1/picture1

rivers (for easy of supply). Lewis immediately engaged his friend Clark and they started preparing their mission.

Players will act as members of that fabulous expedition that left St. Louis (at the estuary of the river Missouri) and moved by rivers and mountains for about 6.700 km before reaching the Pacific Ocean. (picture1)

The game's map shows the Missouri river divided into 23 cases: Our explorers will start in the Port of St. Louis (Case 6) and will move 17 cases to the North-West to reach the Rocky Mountains. Here their path will cross the mountains (9 cases) and will reach the Clearwater river (5 cases). A new mountain path (3 cases) will help our explorers to pass the mountains of Coast Range Chain before arriving to the Pacific Ocean (5 cases). In the middle of the board a typical Natives village

100 resources (colored wooden cubes: pink food, brown wood, grey tools, yellow hides, blue canoes and white horses), 12 extra boats tiles and some markers (for variants and solo games) and a deck of 54 "personalities".

The game uses a mix of different well "tested" mechanics: worker placements, deck building and racing. Rules are easy to teach and easy to memorize and result in a



bild3/picture3

COMPULSORY ACTION

Each ACTION costs one or more cards and/ or one or more Natives and you have three options:

- (a) - play two cards in front of you and may be reinforced them with 1 or 2 Natives extra
- (b) - play 1 card in front of you with 1-2-3 Natives
- (c) - play 1-2-3 Natives in the village

(a) - Normally you will play a card on its FRONT and reinforce it with the back of another card, showing its force in STRENGTH POINTS (SP): if the back shows 1 Native you may use ONCE the action of the "front" card; if it shows 2 or 3 Natives you may use TWICE or THREE TIMES the front card's action. It is always possible to RAISE the SP of a card adding 1 or 2 miniatures of natives to arrive to a maximum total of 3 SP.

(b) - As an alternative you may use only ONE card, but you must use 1-3 natives with this card. It is important to note that the Natives used in this way are not lost: when you will camp all of them will come back on your hand (and sometimes this is not good news). The cards played remain in front of each player until he will decide to camp: then he will take back all of them in his hand.

(c) - Finally you may use your Natives to perform one of the NINE possible actions inside the village. The Natives used in this way will not come back in your hand and you should recruit them again when necessary. But let's see what can be done in the village: some cases have a "restricted" capacity and may be used only ONCE, thus only the first player that arrive there takes the bonus; other cases have an "unlimited" capacity and may be used up to three times (if a player places up to 3 Natives) by each player.

- 3 restricted cases allow you to take TWO resources from the reserve: 1 food+1 hide OR 1 wood+1 tool OR 2 hides/2 wood

- 1 restricted case allows you to use an action already displayed on the table by you or another player. You play 1 Food and you perform the same action.

- 1 restricted case allows you to discard 0-3 cards from your hand (an action more and more important as long as you acquire better cards) AND discard also all the 5 Personality cards displayed on the board, replacing them with 5 new cards (interesting action when you are searching for a specific cards to perform a "combo")

- 1 unlimited case allows you to purchase 1-3 Horses for 3 different resources for each

- 1 unlimited case allows you to purchase

1-3 Canoes paying 2 Woods each

- 2 restricted cases allow you to build an extra BOAT: you pay 3 Woods and you take one special tile that you add to your personal board. There are 4 different types of boats: large boat to transport up to 3 resources without penalties; large boat to transport up to 5 different resources paying only 1 penalty; small canoe to carry 1 Native; large canoe to carry up to three Natives for only 1 penalty. The first two boats let you also take two resources, while the latter two give you 1 free Native miniature (if still available).

OPTIONAL ACTIONS

You always have the opportunity to RECRUIT a new Personality from the five shown in the board. A special track is printed on the left side of the board and shows a cost in HIDES for each position, from 1 (the first card) to 5 (the last one): to get a card you have to pay its cost in "tools" (the exact value is always printed on the personality card, as we have seen) plus the cost in "hides" of that position on the track. Purchasing the right cards at the right moment is really the "heart" of the game so all players will try to store some hides and tools on their boats in order to be able to pay a card even if it is on the left side of the track: it is sometimes very useful to spend a lot of hides for an important card and avoid that someone else will take it while you are waiting for its cost to be reduced. This happens every time that a Personality card is purchased: his place is taken by the Personality on his left, then all cards are moved from left to right and the track is refilled with a new card from the deck.

The second optional action is CAMPING: before ending his turn each player may decide to stop his explorer and set the camp in the new location along on his path. But before detailing this action we have to understand how we may get new resources and how we will move.

Four of the six "basic" cards show a different resource: "wood" for the Wood-cutter, "hides" for the Trader, "food" for the Hunter and "tools" for the Blacksmith. When you play "face up" one of them you use their action to get resources: you sum the number of symbols (wood or hides or food or tools) that you have in front of you AND the number of the same symbols that are shown in front of your right and left neighbor players. Finally you multiply the total by the number of Natives that you played. Example: you played the Trader with the back of a card that shows 2 Natives. You only have one "hide" symbol, but 2 more were played by the fellow on your right and another one on your left. In total you get 8 hides (4 symbols

by 2 Natives). Of course you need space on your boats to store those resources, so you have to carefully plan when and how to spend your resources to free space for new resources.

The fifth "basic" card shows the Interpreter: you need him to recruit new Natives (miniatures): when you play this card (with at least SP = 1) you may collect 1 to all of the Natives that are inside the village. One Native is always available each turn until the reserve is exhausted (Different numbers of miniatures are available for different numbers of play-

Pietro Cremona

A very interesting combination of racing, worker placement and deck building, taking players to the American wilderness and Native villages, for regular and expert players.

ers) while the others Natives were played on the village during the Action phases to get resources, boats, etc. After having taken the number of Natives you wanted you must discard the right-most Personality card and slide all other cards to the right. You need to collect Natives sometimes during the game as they are necessary to get new boats, horses, canoes, etc. as we have seen on the village, or to raise the SP of your cards. You may play the Interpreter even with SP 2 or 3 if you need to discard 2-3 times the right-most card ... hoping to reduce the cost of a Personality you wish to purchase or to see a new personality on the track. NEVER DISCARD the interpreter if you wish to try to win.

The last "basic" card is your Captain: he is the one that allows the movements of your explorer. If you pay 1 food you may move the explorer two cases up stream; if you pay 1 canoe you move him 4 cases up stream; if you pay 1 horse you may move 2 cases in a mountain path. If you play the Captain with



an SP of 2 or 3 you may move 2-3 times and combine different types of movement. You may, for example move 2 cases in mountain with a horse, then use a canoe to move 4 cases on the following river cases and eventually use a food to move again up stream another two cases or other similar combinations. NEVER DISCARD the Captain if you wish to try to win the game

Of course, each of the new Personalities adds a special action to your hand and the key to win a game of LEWIS & CLARK is in the "combo" of basic and new Personalities. It is out of scope of this review to list all their special actions, but some of them increase the speed of your moves, other cards gives extra resources, other allows to purchase cards with a discount, other let you transform resources in horse and/or canoes, etc.

CAMP

A player may select this special action when he wants (but beware of the penalties) or when he has no more cards and Natives in his hand and therefore he cannot perform any action: now he is obliged to camp. We moved our explorer as far as possible along the path so it is time to let him relax, but before sending him to bed players have to verify if they accumulated penalties:

- (a) - Every card that the player still has in hand is worth 1 penalty
- (b) - If the second boat is still loaded with one or more resources is 1 penalty
- (c) - If the third boat has resources, it is 1 penalty per resource
- (d) - If there are X Natives in the second canoe, well, you bet, you get X penalties.

The player adds all those penalties and moves his explorer back that number of cases: the final case reached is the place where he moves his camp. It may happens, and it happens often, especially at the beginning of the game when player are more interested in preparing their strategies (acquiring resources, Natives and Personality cards) that an explorer is obliged to go back ... past his previous camp: in this case the camp does not move (a camp may never go backwards!).

The complete path that our explorers have to follow is 39 cases long: 17 river cases followed by 9 mountains, 5 rivers, 3 mountain and 5 rivers. The winner of the game is usually decided in the "passages" between river and mountain: you may move on the river paying food and canoes, but when you reach a mountain case you must stop in the last river case before the mountain. Then you need horses to move on those mountains but again you must stop in the

last mountain case before the next river, and so on. All extra movements are lost. Therefore you have to perfectly plan your next move in order to combine river and mountain movement in the exact sequence. But you also have to consider penalties: if, for example, you succeeded in moving by river and then some cases in a mountain (with a horse) but you must camp with 3 or more penalties ... you are back on the river and you have again to program a mixed move.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

As I wrote at the beginning of this review, the rules are easy to understand and to memorize, but strategies and (mainly) tactics must be accurately programmed. 2-3 games are the minimum to understand how to proceed, which combos are better for you in relation to the cards that you were able to acquire and how to handle your own cards and natives in order to reduce your penalties to a minimum before camping.

It is not so important to rush to buy any cheap Personality; your hand may become to "heavy" and long to be used: you will not be able to camp so often and therefore you will have to program your strategy even better. I suggest to start your game acquiring resources (wood and hides are better, in this phase) and then to acquire a few cards that may give you an advantage in movement or in resources. It is also very important to purchase at least 1 card with SP 3, as you may need it for a quick run or to purchase a lot of resources when you do not have Natives to spend. Winners at our club always ended the game with at least TWO cards with SP 3. Being able to have an SP 3 move will often allow you to reach a mountain and move on the passes and still have the opportunity to remain uphill for camping. Being able to acquire 3 times the wood, for example, will allow you to purchase extra boats or canoes in the following turns. And so on: but your opponents will have similar goals, of course, and therefore you must be prepared to pay a lot of hides as soon as the first SP 3 cards will appear.

Once you acquired a few cards you have to strictly follow a strategy where you may use those cards as often as possible. So you need to acquire new cards only if they match with the existing ones: for example a card that allows you to get extra resources if you sell food should be combined with a card that gives you extra food when you collect it. It is an absolute loss of time and resources to acquire cards that you cannot use with high benefit. Also it is suggested to discard some or most of the "basic" resource cards as soon as you have better cards doing the same job: so you will have a more dynamic hand.

After more than 10 games we were unable to find a "winning" strategy as it is very difficult to get the same combos every time that you play. 54 personality cards are enough to guarantee hundreds of different games. The only suggestions that I feel important are:

- (a) - try to always have in your "hand" at least 3-4 natives as they will allow you to rise the SP of a card when needed or to purchase important items in the village
- (b) - try to purchase at least a couple of extra boats (3 is even better) and one of them must be a 5 cases boat to stock your resources with just 1 penalty.
- (c) - try to purchase at least a couple of SP 3 personalities cards, or a very minimum of ONE but only if it is coupled with 3-4 SP 2 cards. You need those extra SP especially when you will reach the mountains and you will try to get important combos.

This is not a family game! It is true that the rules are not difficult but players have to constantly program and verify their moves. Casual gamers will be upset by penalties and will not want to try the game again. On the other hand, regular players and/or expert players will love it. ☑

Pietro Cremona

INFORMATION

Designer: Cédric Chaboussit

Artist: Vincent Dutrait

Price: ca. 40 Euro

Publisher: Heidelberger 2013

www.heidelbaer.de

PLAYERS:
1-5

AGE:
14+

TIME:
150+

EVALUATION

Resources management

Users: For experts

Version: de

Rules: de en fr it

In-game text: no

Comments:

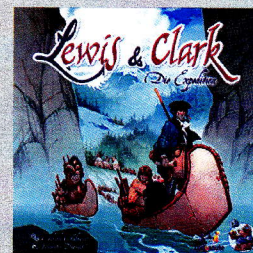
Good combination of mechanisms * Needs constant planning and adjustment of strategy and tactic * Not for the casual gamer * Interesting historic topic

Compares to:

All combinations of worker placement with racing and deck building

Other editions:

Ludonaute, France; Asterion Press, Italy



My rating:

