

AMERICA

The Legend of the West





Once Upon a Time in America...

The universe of the Far West has fascinated us since its discovery, we could say exactly 200 years ago. John Wayne westerns, Lone Ranger comics and countless novels exist that tell us the fabulous adventures of the “Wild Wild West”. Billy the Kid, Jessie James, Sitting Bull and Geronimo are all personalities embodied in legends imprinted from our youth... Who does not imagine swinging saloon doors, “wanted” signs, lone cowboys, frontier towns and, more solemnly, the struggle of Native Americans to keep their land, of battles for power and gold, and for heritage and culture?

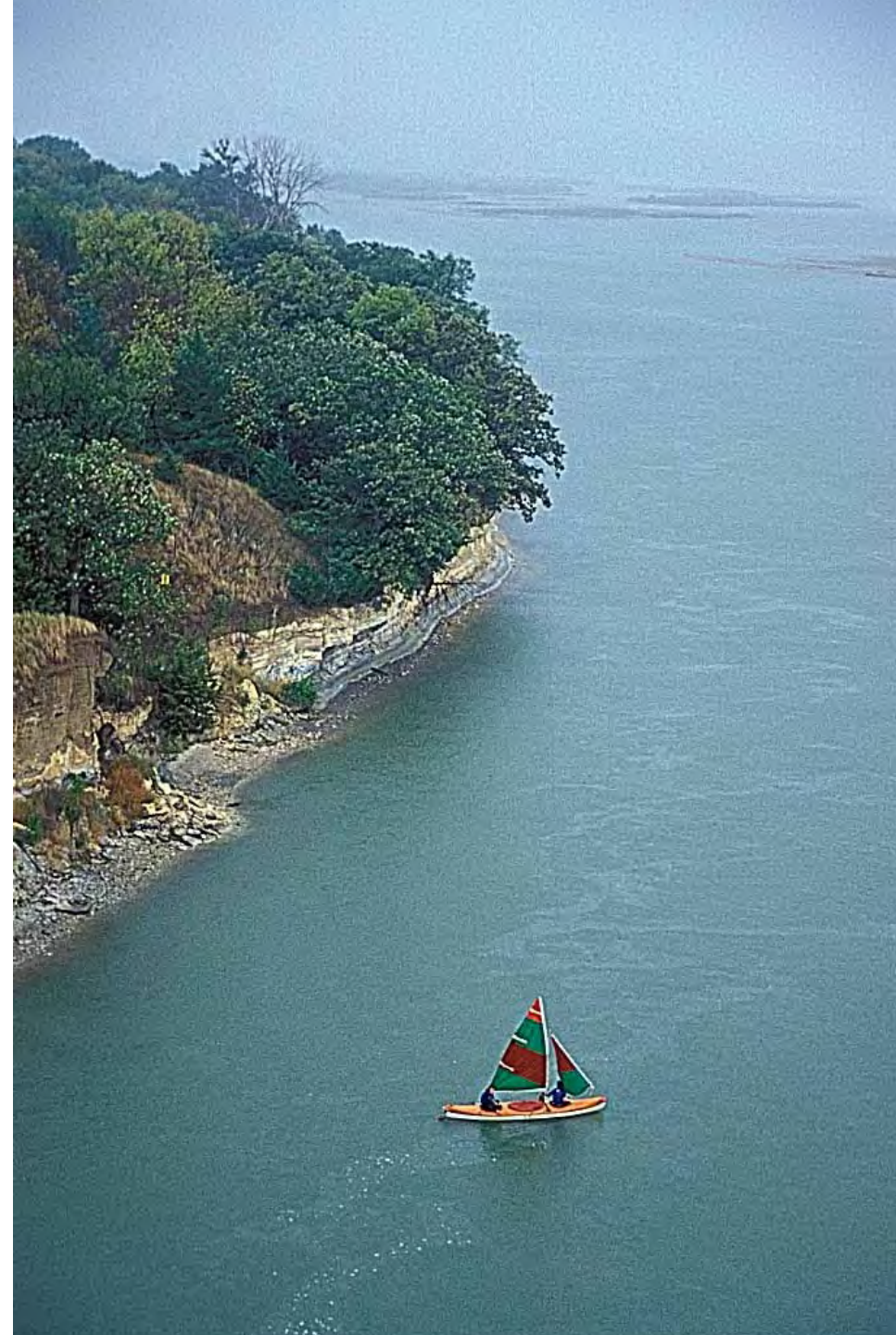


Opening the Doors of the West

Following secret negotiations between Napoleon and the American President Thomas Jefferson, France ceded Louisiana to the United States in 1803. The young America's destiny is now in her own hands...

In 1805, for the first time in history, a Franco-American expedition crossed the continent, from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Aided by Metis and French-Canadian interpreters, the Lewis and Clark expedition were to discover during 2 years, a river without end, never before seen plants and animals, giant bears, tribes generous and hostile, while crossing endless prairie and the formidable Rockies before finally ending at the Pacific Ocean.

Their epic journey remains one of the great adventures of history and one of the founding legends of the history of the United States. In their footsteps, the migration west began and so her legends...





The Discovery of Legends Past and Present

We ask the question: How did it begin and what has happened since?

200 years later, we have created our own Franco-American team to relive this journey across the continent, from the east coast to the Pacific - in canoe, by horse and on foot.

We participated in 6 months of adventure and meetings to explore this great land of the American West, who gave birth to many of these legends, but also to understand America today, with her dreams, her aspirations and her difficulties...



Our Proposal

Rather than recant the numerous stories of Lewis and Clark, we propose to mix stories of people today with legends of the past: from Missouri to the Pacific states of Oregon and Washington. Legends of fortune and failure, of lawlessness and justice, of sorrow and hope abound...

The pioneer spirit lives on, in our own adventure of discovery, in the lives of people we meet, and always, in the legends of the West.

Outline

We propose a full color illustrated book with text to give life to these legends through contemporary meetings. We suggest five chapters:

1. Lower Missouri River
2. The Prairie
3. The Upper Missouri
4. The Rockies
5. To the Pacific

In each chapter there would be approximately 5 steps that would highlight the regions (people, places, adventure) we passed. In each of these steps, we would then combine legends from that region/state through the people we encountered, who often shared with us the legends of their area, and through our own discovery and adventure of reliving part of this fascinating history.

Examples could be: the legend of Pierre La Charette through the eyes of an historian who has spent his life recreating the trading post; the legend of tunnels that were built by Chinese immigrants under the town of Virginia City through the eyes of a local Blacksmith; the legends of personalities in the historic town of Arrow Rock through the eyes of a resident...And of course, we could always include the more popular legends of Jesse James and Wild Bill Hickock, of Belle Starr and Wyatt Earp, all personalities who headed west through the areas we crossed and who made names for themselves...

Chapter 1: The Lower Missouri

The east coast is no surprise: a never-ending suburb of huge commercial centers, of highway interchanges...The old trading post of St. Charles, just outside St Louis is our jumping off point. On the banks of the town, the mighty and muddy Missouri River, carries tree trunks swiftly downstream.

America commemorates the 200th anniversary, the birthday of the American West: Cans of Coke are adorned with the portraits of Lewis and Clark; re-enactors are remaking the voyage over 3 years, dressed in period clothing; an historian spends his life recreating Fort La Charrette; old-time farmers, settlers of this land, love to tell the legends of the west, of wild Bill Hickock and Jesse James...Against the current, we push off in our canoe with sail in the midst of rolling farmland - the American Heartland.





Chapter 2: The Prairie

Wide open spaces, clear skies, billowing grasses, the prairie is a site of abundance and of survival. Some say the Lewis and Clark expedition was the beginning of the end for Native Americans, others prefer not to acknowledge it. 200 years later, hope prevails. It exists in the Cheyenne River and Mandan-Hidatsa tribes, in pow-wows and buffalo reintroduction projects; it exists in the hard earned living of cowboys and wranglers, holding strong to values of family and land; and it exists in the awe-inspiring beauty of the land itself.







Chapter 3: The Upper Missouri

After the huge lakes of the Dakotas and Eastern Montana, the river returns in a state of glory through the White Cliffs, then twisting and winding its way along Wolf Creek Canyon, to the headwaters and beyond. Stories of gold, of blacksmithing, of beadwork, and of love for the river greet us and illustrate the captivation of heading west, whether now or then.





Chapter 4: The Rockies

Adventure is the name of the game – 200 years ago and still today. The acquiring of horses a dilemma for them and for us. Luck in their cards, luck in ours. As we head over Lemhi Pass into the Salmon Valley, home of Sacajawea, we encounter perhaps the only Shoshone woman still living on native lands. A hatmaker and totemmaker in the Bitterroot Valley show us their craft, the Bitterroot range looming to the west. What the expedition lived 200 years ago when crossing Lolo Pass with snow, cold and treacherous paths, and many others following, lay directly ahead for us.





Chapter 5: To the Pacific

The Columbia is not the same river. Its enormity is like a monster that will take us between its jaws and ferry us down its throat to the Pacific. Yet, as we enter the Willamette Valley, her rich green earth is an invitation to stay after the hardships of the Rockies. Many on the Oregon trail stopped here, to forge new lives, while others continued on, to the Pacific Coast. We proceed on to greet the Pacific Ocean face to face, with only the water as our witness.

200 years after the epic expedition of Lewis and Clark, we have had impressed upon us all that has changed to the “Wild West”. And yet, amidst all those changes, for good or bad, the legends of the west, past and present, live on. We can only hope that is one thing that will never change...





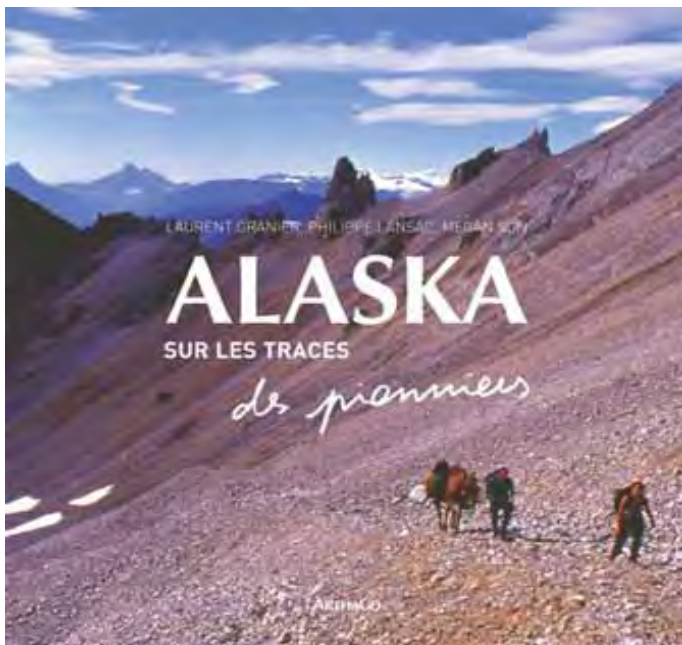
The Team

Laurent Granier and Philippe Lansac

Laurent and Philippe pass their time in photography and radio. They realize their passion for travel and adventure through articles in the press, radio chronicles, expositions and conferences.

Megan Son

An American national, Megan spent most of her life in South Korea. Passionate about travel and adventure, she writes for different magazines in Korea, the USA, Canada, and the United Kingdom.



Books :

Alaska, sur les traces des pionniers (Arthaud 2004)

Le Grand Nord, sur les pas de Jack London (Garde Temps– 2004)

L'inde des Parfums (Garde Temps – 2004)

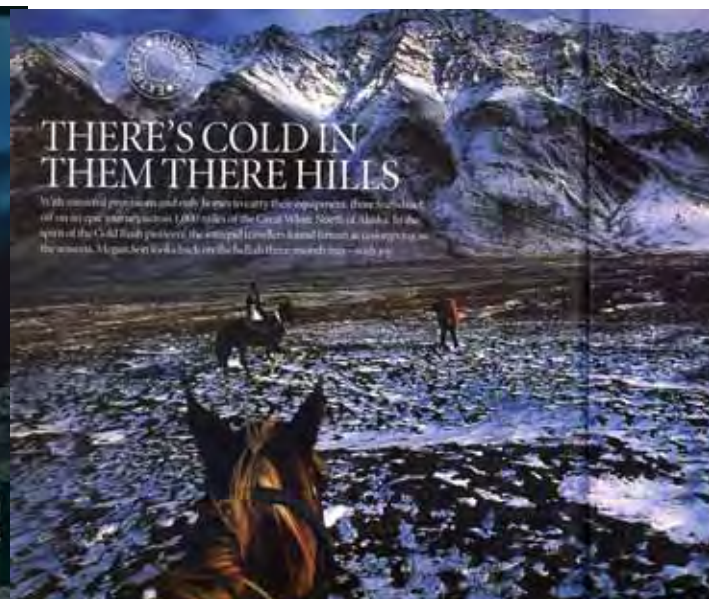
Aux Sources du Massages (Garde Temps – 2004)

Paris-Tokyo (Coéditions Radio France – Garde Temps - 2004)

Paris-Séoul, on the roads of Eurasia (GNC média - 2003)

Press:

They collaborate on articles published in France and abroad.



Radio:

Philippe Lansac and Laurent Granier have worked with Radio France for several years:

France Inter : « Un lundi sur la Terre »

France Info : « Les Aventuriers »

Centres de création de Radio France : « Le bout du Monde, c'est pas si loin... », « Canada : Les Nouveaux Pionniers »

Film:

A documentary of 52 minutes is to come.



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