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## Passage Through the Garden; Lewis and Clark and the Image of the American Northwest.

*John Logan Allen*

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**John Logan Allen : Passage Through the Garden; Lewis and Clark and the Image of the American Northwest.** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Passage Through the Garden; Lewis and Clark and the Image of the American Northwest.:

3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Fun Geographical Lore and Old Ideas of the WestBy Dusty J, SummitIn Passage Through the Garden John Logan Allen made it clear early on that he has not intended to scribe an intimate dialogue between man and wild, whites and Indians, or explorers and the explored. Allen forgoes the details of the truly extraordinary adventure that was the Corps of Discovery led by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark in order to tell a story of perception, geographical lore, and the unwavering hopes found in western speculations. Allen's intention was to "speculate as to how the experience of the expedition served as a modifier of earlier images and as a molder of subsequent American concepts about the nature of the Northwest." [Emphasis added] (xiv)The opening pages of the book were beautiful to say the least as Allen framed the geographical lore that existed at the end of the eighteenth century. He etched the great romantic appeal of the West and quickly showed the importance and the promise of the theorized western passage. The western passage represented much more than a trade route to East Asia (though it is systemically referred to in this way throughout the entirety of the book); it was the genesis of Pacific Northwest popular identity; prosperity and opportunity was to be found out west! This identity was forged by Thomas Jefferson and it preached for a progressive nation of land-improving agriculturalists. And it is there we find the great

conflict within the book. Presented through quality writing, Allen argues that Lewis acquired the "Garden" mentality while serving as a secretary to Jefferson. The "Garden" mentality is the hope that the Northwest would be an Eden for settlers and a utopian landscape. Allen was adamant in portraying Lewis and Jefferson as immaculate priests of this idea. I found this troublesome though. The ideologies labeled as "Jeffersonian" are that of material progress through working and improving the land and using the resources provided by God. This is a very Christian ideal as well as a guiding Jeffersonian principle. However, the belief that the Northwest was a Garden of Eden seems contradictory to the hope of improving the land. If I am interpreting all of this correctly then there is a serious error and contradiction within the historiography of not only Lewis Clark and Jeffersonian ideals but also western expansion as a whole; improve the land or bask in the bounty supplied by God? What was the true motive/motives to move and explore the West? Allen's book (and apparently all others) has not addressed this question to my liking. Although, Allen's extensive research of the personal accounts of the Corp of Discovery explorers and the pre-expedition relationship between Jefferson and Lewis lead me to believe his argument. What *Passage Through the Garden* does sufficiently offer is an outstanding record of geographical lore of the eighteenth century. Allen supplies not only first hand records of outstanding geographical speculations but also a small atlas of period maps of the West. Another strong point of the book was Allen's ability to tell a story of hope and dreams. The explorers set out for a western water passage and were positive along the way about the fertility of the land and the resources it would provide. It was not until the Corp of Discovery wintered at the newly-built Fort Clatsop that they dissolved all hopes of a passage and accepted the Northwest for what it truly was. Allen's work is truly irreplaceable for its ingenuity of thought and its ability to weigh many (though not all) conflicting ideas against each other. *Passage Through the Garden* is suitable for students of Western expansion, American geography, Pacific Northwest discovery, and the Age of Exploration. *Passage* is not book for supplying information about native contact or the dynamics of Lewis and Clark's relationship; as these are often popular topics on the subject of Lewis and Clark.