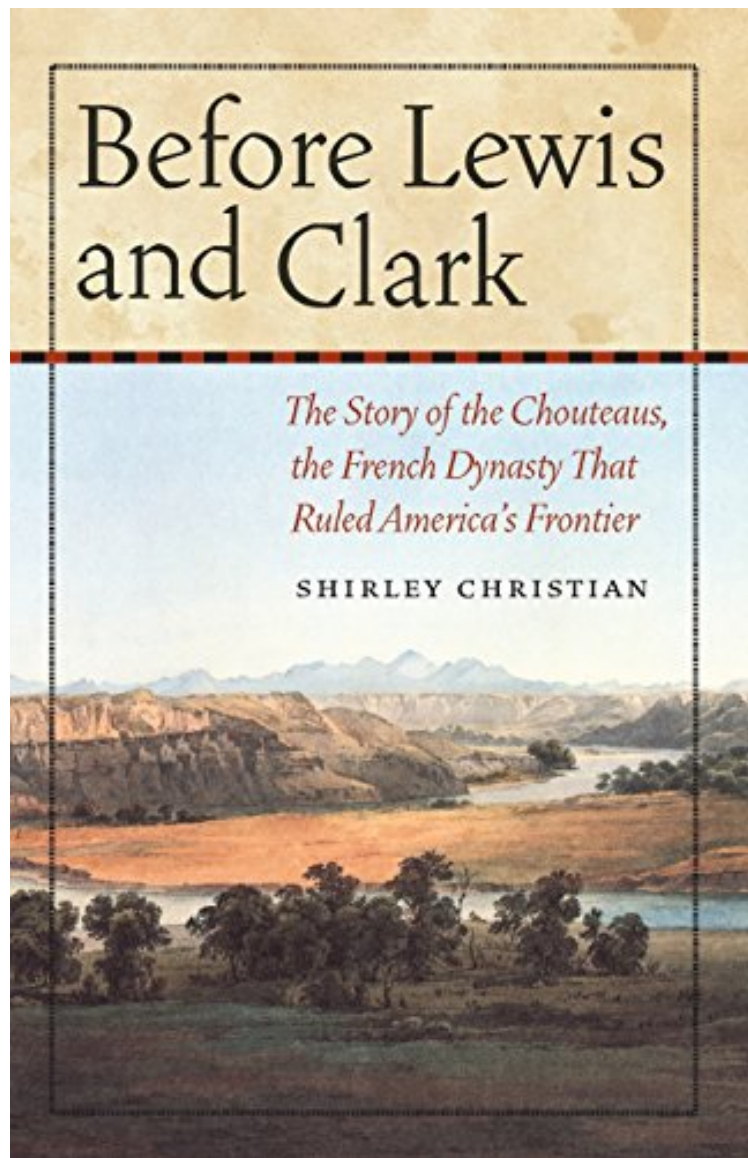


[Free read ebook] Before Lewis and Clark: The Story of the Chouteaus, the French Dynasty That Ruled America's Frontier

## Before Lewis and Clark: The Story of the Chouteaus, the French Dynasty That Ruled America's Frontier

*Shirley Christian*

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Great book . well written. Put additional light to the Lewis Clark story and the early fur trade in general. It added a lot to the geographical information of the trappers domain west of the Mississippi

Before Lewis and Clark relates the extraordinary saga of the Chouteaus, the dynastic family that guarded the gates to the West for three generations. From their St. Louis base, the Chouteaus, patrician and French in their origins, made their fortunes along the two-thousand-mile length of the Missouri River. Led by the brothers Auguste and Pierre, the family not only engaged in land speculation, finance, and the fur trade but also acted as suppliers and advisers to expeditions and enterprises between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains including the famous expedition of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark from 1804 to 1806.

From Publishers Weekly  
Before the United States' westward expansion, French settlers dominated a wide swath of territory west of the Mississippi from New Orleans to St. Louis and beyond. Pulitzer-winning journalist Christian (Nicaragua: Revolution in the Family) chronicles several generations of one of the major French families occupying this frontier territory in her fast-paced historical portrait. Born into a wealthy family, young Auguste and Pierre Chouteau moved to the town that soon became St. Louis in 1763. Their father, Pierre, one of the town's founders, came to the region from New Orleans as an explorer, but soon prospered as a fur trader. He established a very good relationship with the Osages and other Indian tribes, and he taught his sons to respect them. Auguste and the younger Pierre moved easily among the tribes to trade and sell, feeling as much at home in Indian huts as in their mansions on the Mississippi. They hosted parties for visiting American dignitaries, including Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, whose journeys reaped enormous benefits from their association with the Chouteaus. As Christian points out, the Chouteaus were instrumental in paving a smooth path in the relations between Indians and American settlers. But, as Christian observes, the settlers paid little attention to the cultivation of relationships with the Native Americans and thus encountered more resistance than the Chouteaus ever did. Christian's lively portrait of the Chouteaus opens a window on a little-known portion of early American history. Map. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.  
From Booklist  
If not for evocative histories such as Christian's, America's French heritage might molder only in vestigial place-names and ruins. St. Louis and its environs have their share, and Christian brings alive the fur trade that created them. French-Indian trade, she emphasizes, predated the founding of the city in 1764 by Pierre Laclede, but his conduct of the business generated records that, in Christian's hands, palpably project a feeling for the perils and potential riches of frontier life. This quality, in addition to the emphasis on Laclede and his Chouteau sons and grandsons' vast trading network, endows her history with more than local attraction, for it captures the uniquely amicable relationships between whites and Indians. Without idealizing the Chouteaus' affairs on their journeys into the lands of the Osage, Kansa, and other tribes, Christian underscores their peacefulness. Some arriving Americans, including Lewis and Clark, took advantage of the Chouteaus' diplomatic value, which threads through Christian's narrative to her conclusion with fur trapping's decline. A fascinating history bound to enrapture Old West readers. Gilbert Taylor  
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Christian's lively portrait of the Chouteaus opens a window on a little-known portion of early American history.  
Publishers Weekly