

Jonathan Carver, American Explorer:

Jonathan Carver (1710 – 1780) was an American explorer. He was born in Weymouth, Massachusetts on April 13, 1710, the son of a prosperous gentleman. The family later moved to Canterbury, Connecticut, and at the age of 36, having received the best education available, Carver married Abigail Robbins and embarked in the shoemaker's trade.

In 1755, with the outbreak of the French and Indian War, he joined the colonial militia. He worked his way up through the ranks, becoming a captain in 1761. Two years later he left the army.

He taught himself map-making and surveying and was hired by Robert Rogers to undertake a journey to some of the western tribes "to explore the most unknown parts" of the "vast acquisition of territory" that Britain had gained from the war. Carver believed – accurately as it turned out – that the Mississippi River would one day be a main path of commerce.

Carver journeyed to the Mississippi and up that river to a point several days' journey above the present site of Minneapolis. In the spring of 1767 he returned to Prairie du Chien, in what is now Wisconsin, where by Rogers' orders he joined the expedition to search out the "Western Ocean." When their journey northwestward was prevented by war between the Sioux and Chippewa, they ascended the Chippewa River and crossed to Lake Superior, the coast of which they followed to Grand Portage.

Carver went to London in 1769 with the intention of publishing a narrative of his travels and of pressing claims for compensation of his services, for Rogers, having exceeded his authority in employing Carver, could not pay him.

After nine years of struggle and poverty, Carver published the first edition of his *Travels through the Interior Parts of North America in the Years 1766, 1767, and 1768* (1778). The popularity of this book, the first English account of the upper Great Lakes and Mississippi region, is attested by the 32 editions, or more, through which it passed.

The book remained a prominent force, influencing the poets Schiller and Byron, and possibly encouraging Thomas Jefferson to send Lewis and Clark on their transcontinental journey. Carver's work was able in its way to enlarge people's thinking about the still largely unknown continent of North America, and it is further honored in the name of a Minnesota county as well as several geographical features in the areas which he explored.

- Ann K.D. Myers, *The Adventures of Jonathan Carver*
- The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition