

BOOK REVIEW written and contributed by Gerald Keith of Springdale, AR, about:



**RIVER HORSE, A Voyage Across America by Small Boat**

Author: William Least Heat-Moon  
Houghton Mifflin Publishers 1999

This is the final of a trilogy of Americana stories by the author; the previous two, Blue Highways and PrairyErth relate the land some view from the Country's backroads.

In his most ambitious journey ever, the author sets off aboard his small boat from New York City in hopes of entering the Pacific near Astoria, Oregon. Years of dreaming, followed by two intense years of planning have convinced him such a trip can be done in a single season....if he can find the right boat, if he can convenience the right friends to join the venture, if it is not a dry season, if the snow melt comes as predicted; if the tows don't push him under; if the operators of the multitude of man-made structures cooperate and so on.

Up the Hudson, across the Erie, (short portage), down the Allegany and eventually to the mighty Missouri and the Continental Divide leading to the Snake and the Columbia. This is the route—right across the Nation's heartland. As a native Missourian he carries the Lewis-Clark records, for this is as much a trip into history and a story of the people he meets as it a boating voyage.

His is a new, 22' C-Dory built on the West Coast and transported to NYC. With a 6" draft, two 45 hp four stroke Hondas it looks like a cross between a Maine lobster boat and an old harbor tug. On top is a Grumman canoe with a 4 hp for the shallows and willow breaks.

At 500 pages the book seems daunting. Fortunately, each of the 12 chapters is divided into numerous short stories. The format lends itself to several evenings of relaxed anticipation of the next river section. River Horse is not a "how to" book. It is a log book tying daily motoring adventures to the Nation's history, ecology, river residents and least, but not last, the numerous participants required to make the trip a success.

We all live downstream.