RECENTLY DISCOVERED LETTERS BY LEWIS REVEAL LEADER IN COMMAND, BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER THE EXPEDITION
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On the cover
This is how Meriwether Lewis may have looked in present-day Montana near the Continental Divide. It is documented that he was wearing his military chapeau at this time, and in this painting, he has on an Indian-style leather war shirt, which has strips quilled in the Mandan fashion on each arm. Expedition members sent a couple of these war shirts to President Jefferson. Lewis also has on a pair of undecorated, plains-style mocasins. His linen overalls are well patched and stained. Lewis mentioned in his journals that he strapped his knapsack for the first time in the mountainous region of present-day Montana. His hunting equipment consists of a leather hunting bag, a powder horn with a carved and blackened spout and a rifle. The Lewis family owned the English telescope Lewis is holding until the early 1970s, and family members believe Lewis carried it on the expedition. Its main tube is a beautiful honey-colored wood with brass fittings.
The Right Stuff

I am sure many of you remember both the book by Thomas Wolf and the stirring movie, *The Right Stuff*, about the seven original Mercury astronauts. It also featured another aeronautical explorer in his own right, Chuck Yeager. The story is a favorite of mine. I saw the movie several times and still show it to my sons when I can get them to sit still for a couple of hours. I really love the theme of seven individuals from different walks of life brought together by an interest in exploring the unknown and a willingness to test the limits of those who had explored before them.

I remember sitting in school in 1961 as the loud speaker in our classroom blared a live radio broadcast of Commander Alan Shepard’s first space flight in Freedom 7. We did not have a television in the classroom so we had to listen and imagine. I remember it like it was yesterday. It was thrilling to listen to that broadcast. I recall that later there were a couple of minutes when John Glenn was out of radio contact during his flight, and we were on the edge of our seats hoping to hear from him, which of course we did. That spirit of adventure captured our country’s collective imagination like nothing I had ever seen.

I have always believed there is a direct link between modern space explorers and the Corps of Discovery we celebrate as members of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation. Author Stephen Ambrose likened the corps’ pathway to space exploration: “Never knowing what was around the next bend … every step was a new discovery.” In fact, today at the Johnson Space Center in Houston, astronauts study the Lewis and Clark story for its lessons in team building, leadership and survival techniques.

I was reminded of this connection recently when a friend sent me an essay on early nineteenth century explorers written by a current astronaut. The astronaut highlighted the dominant characteristics of those early explorers, including Lewis and Clark—vision, insight, cultural sensitivity, attention to detail, decisiveness and refusal to accept failure—and explained that they are the keys to being a successful astronaut (or leader). He also noted that an explorer’s ability to handle isolation, resupply, maintenance, health care and crew morale is essential for the success of present-day space missions, as crews live onboard the International Space Station for upwards of six months at a time.

All of this is to remind us that the Corps of Discovery is completely relevant to what we are accomplishing today. Space exploration is but one area. You could make the same connection to the boardroom, the classroom and virtually any job where sound leadership skills are required for success and positive employee morale is essential. Dare I say it is relevant right in your own home?

This is a very long lead into the message I would like to leave with you. In October at our annual meeting, “Courage Unadament—The Final Journey,” in Olive Branch, Mississippi, we will be examining Governor Meriwether Lewis from nearly every possible angle. Our meeting-planning team, co-led by Bryant Boswell who has portrayed Captain Lewis for several years with the Discovery Expedition of St. Charles, has put together an interesting schedule of presentations, interactive discussions, tours, teacher workshops, a commemorative ceremony, and some southern fun for our enjoyment and education. Our kickoff banquet will be held in one of the most ornate and beautiful venues I have seen, the Peabody Hotel in Memphis. The list of scholarly presentations is truly impressive. The tours will take you to historic places you have read about, but perhaps nev-
Jim Brooke floated the upper Missouri River through the White Cliffs region with his sons and has been passionate about the trail and the Foundation ever since.

er seen. Noteworthy are the planned involvement of the local school district leadership and the inclusion of school children in encampment activities.

The ceremony honoring Lewis will be most dignified and will include national dignitaries as well as representatives of the U.S. Army. I was reminded that Lewis never received a proper funeral or memorial that recognized his contributions to our country. We plan to right that oversight during this annual meeting. This truly will be an annual meeting to remember. I encourage you to register through our Web site (www.lewisandclark.org) and bring your family and friends.

As co-captain of the Corps of Discovery and Governor of the Louisiana Territory, Meriwether Lewis left a legacy of "right stuff" to be studied, honored and emulated. I am grateful our Foundation performs this service as "Keepers of the Story, Stewards of the Trail." See you in Memphis in October!

—Jim Brooke
President, LCTHF
jamesrbrooke@aol.com

“Well researched and insightful.”

Meriwether Lewis
by Thomas C. Danisi & John C. Jackson

Praise for Meriwether Lewis

"Independent historians Danisi and Jackson offer a meticulously researched ... account of Meriwether Lewis's life... well researched and insightful."

Publishers Weekly

"This excellent biography does much to let the man shine forth. Highly recommended."

Library Journal
Starred Review

Indepeendent scholars Thomas C. Danisi and John C. Jackson have written this definitive biography based on twelve years of meticulous research, re-examining the original Lewis and Clark documents and searching through obscure and overlooked sources to reveal a wealth of fascinating new information on the enigmatic character and life of Meriwether Lewis.

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The commemoration of the 200th anniversary of Meriwether Lewis's death on October 7, 2009, is taking on the deep significance the occasion demands. An oversight of history will be set right as people from across the United States gather at Lewis's grave to consider his life as a whole. Rather than as a one-dimensional figure from history books, Lewis will be seen as a real person who overcame the challenges of his time to accomplish much for the young nation, and also as a man who suffered for his sacrifices and died while serving his country.

There is no record of a funeral for Meriwether Lewis. Despite the fact that Governor Lewis was one of the most powerful office holders in the country at the time, there was no public memorial service. Perhaps his supporters were so stunned by the reports of the manner of his death and the stigma then associated with it, that they remained silent in the face of negative stories immediately told by his political enemies. Other than appointing Lewis's replacement, the federal government never even acknowledged his death until 1925 when his grave was designated as one of the first national monuments in the South. Only one friend is recorded as having gone to his unmarked grave to mourn him. Through most of the 1800s, Lewis's grave was described as abandoned, lonely and overgrown.

Tennesseans have assembled at the grave to honor the hero who rests in our state. In 1843, the state created Lewis County as a perpetual memorial and appropriated funds to erect a monument over Lewis's grave. The Tennessee-Meriwether Lewis Memorial Association successfully petitioned President Calvin Coolidge to designate the grave a national monument and hosted several events at his grave to honor him. In 1991, the Lewis County Historical Society held a local event to lay wreaths and provide a military salute. The National Park Service held a ceremony in 2001 to rededicate a reconstructed monument. In 2006, the Daughters of the American Revolution placed a marker near Grinder's Stand. Those events were all local or regional, attended primarily by residents of Tennessee and the Natchez Trace Parkway states.

On October 7, 2009, Meriwether Lewis will receive a memorial service he was due two centuries ago. For the first time, members of the Lewis family and the Clark family, a representative of the Thomas Jefferson Foundation, government officials, members of the military and Masons—all representatives of people who were important to Lewis—will gather at his grave along with Lewis scholars, Lewis and Clark Bicentennial reenactors and people from across the country who respect him. Lewis will be seen in both human and heroic terms.

The tragedy of his short life will be mourned and his timeless achievements celebrated. It is an honor any fellow citizen is due—certainly one who contributed so much. For the first time, the ceremony at the grave will be national in scope and the focus will be solely upon Lewis, the man.

Too much about the end of Lewis's life has remained unsettled. This honor left undone all these years is one thing we can still do for Meriwether Lewis, and it is the most appropriate way to observe the 200th anniversary of his death.

Tony Turnbow
Hohenwald, Tennessee

Conspiracy theory challenged

For some months a continuing, serialized debate has been conducted between Kira Gale and me in the Letters column of this journal. I can only hope that this debate has been at best edifying, at worst entertaining, for the readers of WPO. Letters most often involve corrections to material that appears in featured articles, but frequently lapse into emotional responses rather than reasoned arguments backed with solid evidence.

In responding to Ms. Gale, I constantly find myself having to plead with her for some shreds of historical evidence to debate, rather than an emotional response along the lines of, "I believe he was murdered." We already
acy theory challenged; November issue to arrive early

know on which side of the question of Meriwether Lewis's death each of us falls; the task at hand should be to convey our reasons for our beliefs with logic and evidence rather than emotion.

The problem with conspiracy theories on Lewis's murder is that trustworthy and honorable historical figures are always maligned. When David Leon Chandler wrote his book about Lewis's death, for instance, it was titled The Jefferson Conspiracies and implicated not only bad apples such as James Wilkinson, but also Lewis's best friend, William Clark, and Lewis's mentor and surrogate father, not to mention the author of the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson, in the process. Ms. Gale believes that Indian Agent James Neelly was part of a conspiracy to kill Lewis, but she gives no evidence to back her claim and accuses John Jackson and me, in our biography of Lewis, of not meeting standards of accuracy and accountability in our version of the incidents leading up to his death.

The evidence I can provide is this: James Neelly was recommended as Chickasaw agent by the Colbert brothers, themselves part Chickasaw. They knew him as "the old gentleman" who was not "fond of speculation" as his predecessors were. In other words, he was trustworthy in the eyes of the tribe. Neelly held the position of agent from July 1809 to 1814, which included the War of 1812. If he were untrustworthy, he certainly would have been removed during the war. William Clark, who many historians agree was a good judge of character and did not suffer fools gladly, was Neelly's boss from 1811 to 1814 and easily could have removed him.

Ms. Gale agrees with Captain Gilbert Russell, commanding officer at Fort Pickering, who blamed Neelly for Lewis's death. Russell did not know Neelly, who first arrived at the fort on September 18, 1809, three days after Lewis's arrival. Neelly and Russell had scant interaction between that time and January 1810, when Russell wrote his letter to Jefferson maligning Neelly.

Ms. Gale's other argument against Neelly is that he retained Lewis's watch and pistols. John Marks, Lewis's half-brother, apparently traveled to Neelly's residence in 1811 and picked up a horse and rifle. No mention was made of the watch and pistols at that time, but the watch had been found in Lewis's trunk in 1810. No evidence regarding the pistols has emerged; although Vardis Fisher made great use of the fact that they never turned up for his own murder conspiracy theories. There is no document or evidence linking their disappearance with Neelly, and just because the pistols were not found does not mean Neelly kept them.

John Jackson and I believe that Neelly took Lewis directly on the Natchez Trace to Grinder's Stand. Lewis was terribly ill and could not sustain a trek to the Chickasaw Agency, which would have taken him 100 miles out of his way. The Frankfort Argus, the first newspaper to report Lewis's death just days afterward in 1809, stated that Lewis was en route from the Chickasaw Bluffs (the location of Fort Pickering) to Nashville.

Ms. Gale also claims that she has in possession "20 documents relating to Meriwether Lewis's death and a narrative with extensive notes entitled, The Case for Murder." In her own book she states that of these 20 documents "most are second-hand or even third-hand accounts. They are a mixture of truth, lies, rumors and outright forgery. Two hundred years have passed, and this is all the evidence that has been found ..."

I would like to challenge Ms. Gale to lay out her basic accusations regarding the death of Meriwether Lewis in the form of a fully documented article with endnotes. It would be interesting to see such an article so that we all might be able to read and understand a succinct and logically developed argument advocating a murder and conspiracy, rather than digesting occasional bits and pieces of unrelated and unsupported information in a scattered fashion. Her forthcoming book covers some of this ground, but throws a lot of lengthy transcriptions of historical documents at the reader without ever boiling the material down into a succinct thesis supported by evidence.

Thomas C. Danisi
St. Louis, Mo.


November issue to arrive in October

The November issue of We Proceeded On will include articles on Meriwether Lewis by authors who will be making presentations at the Foundation's 41st annual meeting October 4-7 in Tupelo, Mississippi, and Hohenwald, Tennessee. The November issue will be released in early October this one time only to coincide with the annual meeting and the commemoration of the 200th anniversary of Lewis's death. The deadline for submitting letters to the editor for that issue will be September 1, 2009.

The deadline for submitting letters for the February 2010 issue is the usual January 1.

Wendy Raney
Editor

WPO welcomes letters. We may edit them for length, accuracy, clarity and civility. Send them to us c/o Editor, WPO, P.O. Box 3434, Great Falls, MT 59403 (e-mail wpo@lewisandclark.org).
Issue explores the triumphs and accomplishments of Lewis's life through newly discovered letters he wrote before, during and after the expedition

This year marks the bicentennial of the death of Meriwether Lewis. As the readers of WPO well know, a cloud of mystery surrounds his death. Many people believe Lewis was murdered, while others are certain he took his own life along the Natchez Trace on October 11, 1809. While the anniversary of Lewis's death seems the perfect time to further debate this topic, we determined to forego that subject in favor of publishing three letters written by Lewis that focus on the triumphs of his life and reveal him at his very best.

All three letters have been discovered in the last several years and to our knowledge, two of them have never before been published. One of the letters was published in the fall 2004 issue of Ohio Valley History, but we believe that very few We Proceeded On readers have seen it and find it worthy of reprint in this issue.

Most of the information we have about the Lewis and Clark Expedition and the lives of its members comes from the expedition members' journals, letters and government documents. Much of that information can be found in Gary E. Moulton's The Definitive Journals of Lewis & Clark and Donald Jackson's Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition with Related Documents, 1783-1854. To fully research almost any topic related to the 1804-1806 expedition, one must review Jackson's compilation and the journals.

More than a decade ago, Foundation members were the first to recognize the profound significance of the bicentennial and they took steps to ensure it was commemorated in a respectful and thoughtful way. During that time, nationally known historians, eager students and local enthusiasts began to look deeper into a variety of issues related to the expedition. The result was that more books, articles, literature, travel guides and art were produced in the decade surrounding the bicentennial than in the previous two centuries.

The prevalence of information published on Lewis and Clark and the high interest in the expedition among a certain segment of the population, particularly our membership, has led to the recent discovery of several letters that provide invaluable insight into the man who co-led the Corps of Discovery across the continent and back. The bicentennial of Lewis's death seems a most appropriate time to share these important letters and highlight many of the accomplishments and achievements of his life.

This issue of WPO first explores a letter discovered by Lorna Hainesworth as she searched for a connection between the expedition and her home state of Maryland ("Planning for a Transcontinental Journey," page 8). Her discovery of a letter written by Meriwether Lewis in 1803 to William Linnard led her on a scholarly journey spanning several years and numerous states. She has had the opportunity to review countless historical documents, explore the letter's contents with well-respected Lewis and Clark scholars and travel across the country on a quest to better understand the letter's contents and what they mean in the overall context of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

The letter to Linnard reveals that Lewis, already famous for his leadership on the expedition, "was a fastidious quartermaster, a meticulous project director, an exceptional logistics manager and a superb bureaucrat who was scrupulously devoted to detail," Hainesworth writes.

Reviewed alongside several other letters Lewis wrote during this time period, we are able to follow the steps Lewis took in gathering provisions for a journey of unknown length into uncharted country. From our vantage point we can see that Lewis's careful and thoughtful planning were essential to the success of the mission and the expedition's safe return.

The second letter in this issue recognizes a high point in Lewis's life and as previously mentioned, it has been published once before, though not when Lewis intended. It is "the earliest known written report by a member of the Corps of Discovery about the American West they had set out to explore," according to Jim Holmberg ("Fairly launched on my voyage of discovery," page 20). In September 1804 from roughly 1,000 miles up the Missouri River, Lewis wrote a detailed report of the Missouri River Country he had recently traveled through to his friend James Findlay of Cincinnati, likely assuming Findlay would share his report with a broad audience through newspapers. No evidence has been found to show that Findlay shared Lewis's report, which certainly would have disappointed the captain.

This letter languished in obscurity for nearly two centuries because it is missing one or more pages, particularly the page that would have contained Lewis's signature. Upon seeing the date of the letter and its origin, "Missouri River above the Poncarra Village," an observant librarian suspected the letter was written by Lewis and she quickly verified through several sources that Captain Lewis was, indeed, the author.

The final letter in this issue is from Lewis to Secretary of War Henry Dearborn written at the end of July 1807 ("Observations and Remarks from Lewis to Dearborn in 1807," page 32). Thomas Danisi discovered
the letter as he conducted research for a biography he co-authored on Lewis. The letter counters claims that Lewis neglected his duties as governor of the Louisiana Territory from the time he was appointed in March 1807 until he arrived in St. Louis to officially assume his post in March 1808.

“The letter shows Lewis exercising his duties as governor in absentia, answering crucial questions regarding the territory and the future of the United States on the frontier that could not be addressed by Clark, Bates or Dearborn. The letter presents a picture of a clearheaded administrator delayed in the East by duties other than those of his post, but one who will be quite ready to assume those duties upon his arrival in St Louis,” Danisi writes.

It has been my pleasure to work with the authors of these articles, who each came about their discoveries in completely different manners for entirely different purposes. The passion each brought to sharing these new discoveries with the readers of WPO has been refreshing and invigorating.

Danisi writes that a most exciting component of conducting historical research is the possibility of discovering new information.

Today, perhaps more than at any previous time, we better understand that we may never locate all of the existing documents related to the expedition. They may be locked away, unbeknownst to anyone, in old trunks, dusty attics and little-searched archival collections, or in plain view, but missing key identifying characteristics such as a signature or date. It is the potential for discovery that will bring many of us back again and again to explore new topics and review old documents. For those who are fortunate to discover new pieces of information on the Corps of Discovery, there will always be an audience of readers anxious to review, analyze and debate it.

—Wendy Raney
Editor
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PLANNING A TRANSCONTINENTAL JOURNEY

A neglected letter sheds light on Lewis’s preparations for the western expedition

BY LORNA HAINESWORTH

In the spring of 2006, while searching for connections between my home state of Maryland and the Lewis and Clark saga, I came across a photocopy of a handwritten letter dated June 6, 1803, from Meriwether Lewis to William Linnard, U.S. military agent. Both men were in Philadelphia at the time the letter was written. The copy of this letter was part of the Lewis and Clark materials on file at the Historical Society of Frederick County in Maryland. The importance of the letter was readily apparent as it contained a detailed set of instructions intended to get Lewis’s supplies from Philadelphia and Harpers Ferry to Pittsburgh. It also contained a description of the team and driver to be engaged for the task. In the letter, Lewis prescribed the route of travel, gave an estimate for the departure date and the weight of his supplies, named the individuals to be seen along the way, elaborated on the method for transporting his mathematical instruments and provided information on accounting for transport expenses.

Subsequently, I learned that no transcript of this letter appeared in either edition of Donald Jackson’s compilation of correspondence, Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition with Related Documents, 1783-1854. Stephen Ambrose did not reference the letter in Undaunted Courage. Paul R. Cutright’s article “Contributions of Philadelphia to Lewis and Clark History” and Richard Dillon’s Meriwether Lewis: A Biography do not refer to the June 6, 1803, letter. The texts of these three historians clearly indicate familiarity with another letter Lewis wrote to Linnard in Philadelphia dated June 10, 1803, which does appear in Jackson’s Letters. Further investigation confirmed that most Lewis and Clark researchers and experts were unaware of Lewis’s June 6 letter to Linnard, serving to increase its importance in illuminating Lewis’s preparations for the expedition to the Pacific Coast. Contact with the National Archives and Records Administration revealed that it has the original June 6 and June 10 letters, and I obtained copies of both.

To determine why the June 6 letter was not in Jackson’s compilation, I traveled to Colorado Springs, Colorado, in August 2008 to review Jackson’s notes. I thought perhaps he had written notes about a phrase Lewis used in the June 10 letter, “in a former communication,” which doubtlessly referred to the June 6 letter. I did not find any such notation. It is possible this letter was overlooked or misfiled when Jackson prepared his first edition. It appears that when Jackson compiled the second edition of his work he did not review the sources he covered in his first edition, but instead included only new sources.
The June 6 letter provides insight into Lewis's preparations for the expedition and introduces, through its references, a cast of characters with whom Lewis dealt in obtaining and transporting his supplies from Philadelphia and Harpers Ferry to Pittsburgh. Other statements in the letter help to define the route Lewis's stores probably traveled to reach Pittsburgh. More importantly, this letter is the centerpiece of five crucial letters Lewis wrote that pertain to supplies and their transport. In addition to the June 6 letter to Linnard, the other letters were written that same year on April 15 to General William Irvine; April 20 to President Thomas Jefferson; June 10 to Linnard; and July 8 to Jefferson. Reviewed together, not only do these documents highlight a group of participants in Lewis's expedition preparations, but they also provide a travel timeline for Lewis and his stores while delineating the westward routes taken during the spring and summer of 1803. Insight into the types of wagons used to transport Lewis's goods also can be gleaned from these letters.

**The cast of characters**

Several individuals are referenced in the June 6 letter. Easily recognizable is the name “Mr. Ellicott” as that of Andrew Ellicott who lived in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, from 1801 to 1813 and taught celestial navigation along with surveying techniques to Meriwether Lewis. The letter also includes the names of four other individuals who are less well known: William Linnard, Israel Whelan, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas H. Cushing and Joseph Perkins. General William Irvine and George W. Ingels complete the small cadre of Army personnel that helped Lewis assemble, pack and ship his supplies.

Although the duties of many U.S. Army positions were not fully documented in 1803 and Army regulations did not spell out the duties of many staff members until 1813, adequate descriptions of who each of these men were and how they related to Lewis's preparations for his journey can be determined from existing documents.

Irvine was the superintendent of the Schuylkill Arsenal from 1801 until his death in 1804. As part of the Quartermaster’s Department, he was responsible for storing, distributing and accounting for military supplies at the warehouse. From Lancaster, Pennsylvania, on April 20, 1803, Lewis wrote to Jefferson describing various letters that he had sent “to forward as much as possible the preparations ... I have also written to Genl. Irvine [sic] of Philadelphia, requesting that he will have in a state of preparation [sic] some articles which are necessary for me, and which will be most difficult to obtain, or may take the greates[t] length of time in their preparation [sic].”

The journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, along with correspondence written by individuals associated with the expedition, have provided insight into the famous journey. Lewis is depicted here in Auguste Chouteau’s garden writing a letter to President Thomas Jefferson describing his first botanical discovery west of the Mississippi River—the Osage Orange. Along with this letter, Lewis sent small cuttings or slips taken from the Osage Orange tree under which he sits. Correspondence related to the expedition continues to be discovered, shedding new light on individuals and their roles in the expedition.
The June 6, 1803, letter from Lewis to Linnard (above, and transcribed on the following page), is published here for the first time. Few Lewis and Clark scholars have known of the existence of this letter until recently. Some assumptions and conclusions may need to be updated based on this new source of information. The letter shows that Lewis meticulously planned nearly every detail of the trip preparations down to how many horses should be used to haul his goods, and often and where the driver should stop.

We proceeded on August 2009
Sir,

Mr. Israel Wheelin, the P[er] of P[ublic] Supplies, has in charge certain stores, which have been prepared under my direction by order of the Secretary at War and which are to be transported from hence to Pittsburgh with all convenient dispatch. You will be informed by Mr. Wheelin when those stores are in perfect readiness for trans=por=tion; this will most probably happen in the course of six or seven days. You will be pleased to employ for this service a strong effective team, with a driver in whose fidelity, sobriety, sobriety and discretion you can place the necessary confidence: he must be instructed whatever way he may think best, presuming he will do that, by which he can perform the journey with the most ease and facility. At Lancaster he will call on Mr. Elliott for any article that I may think proper to leave there with a view to be taken up by the waggon: he will in like manner call on Col. Cushing at Fredericktown for the same purpose. At Harper's Ferry, Mr. Perkin, the Conductor of the Armory, is directed to deliver to the waggoner on application such stores as have been prepared for me at that place—The stores thus directed to be taken up by the way will most probably fall short of seven hundred #. —

A Box containing my Mathematical Instru=ements which Mr. Wheelin will point out to the driver, is to be particularly attended to, no=thing heavy is to be put on it in loading the waggon, and it must be placed in a situa=tion the least liable to accidental injury, observing always to keep the proper side up.

You will be informed as early as possible after my arrival at Washington, to what acct. you are to charge the expense incurred for transporting these goods, as well as preparing the Boat etc at Pittsburgh —

I have the honor to be with much regard

Your Ob. Humbl. Serv.

Meriwether Lewis, Capt
1st US Reg't Infantry

Mr. Leonard
Military Agent US Cap: Meriwether Lewis 6 June 1803
at Philadelphia Respecting the transportation of sundry's under his charge from here to Pittsburg with direction of the rout to be taken by the Waggoner

Philadelphia June 6th 1803.

Here Lewis refers to his letter of April 15, 1803, sent to Irvine from Frederick, Maryland. Lewis already knew of Irvine from their respective involvements in the Whiskey Rebellion during October 1794. As a private enlisted in the Virginia volunteer corps, Lewis was with the militia when it camped at Winchester, Virginia, on October 4, 1794, then marched to Cumberland, Maryland, and on to Uniontown, Pennsylvania, all the while moving toward Pittsburgh. This experience may have been a major factor in determining the route Lewis would travel from Harpers Ferry to Pittsburgh in the summer of 1803.

The April 15 letter from Lewis to Irvine sometimes is referred to as the “Portable Soup” letter because in it Lewis requested 200 pounds of this useful emergency ration. Jackson’s compilation of letters does not include a transcription of the April 15 letter; he noted the letter was not available for publication. Since the time of Jackson’s compilation, the letter has passed from a private collection to the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial Archives in St. Louis, Missouri. Additional significance attaches to the “Portable Soup” letter because it is a very early written reference to the planned expedition and is the only known instance where Lewis signed as the private secretary to the president. Israel Wheelan purchased the “Portable Soup” on May 30, 1803, from a cook named François Baillet. Although Lewis wanted 200 pounds of soup, he received only 193 pounds at a cost of $289.50 ($1.50 per pound), which exceeded his $250 budget limit.

Whelan’s name appears frequently in conjunction with the acquisition of items Lewis needed for the expedition. The position of purveyor of public supplies, which Whelan occupied from 1801 to late 1803, was established by an act of Congress on February 23, 1795, and was initially within the Department of the Treasury. Later, by a congressional act of July 16, 1798, the position was transferred to the War Department. Whelan was a civilian employee who obtained supplies from contractors who had entered into agreements with the government. The supplies were delivered to a military unit or post where the purveyor stored and issued them as needed. Lewis’s list of requirements was rather unique, and it appears that Whelan gathered several items specifically for him rather than issuing them from the supplies on hand.

Similarities existed between the position of purveyor of public supplies and William Linnard’s position as military agent. He, too, was a civilian employee of the War Department who was authorized by the Army
to purchase materials and services, particularly those involving land or water transport. The main difference between the two jobs was that a military agent engaged merchants directly for the sale of particular items (usually one-time purchases), while the purveyor obtained goods (usually by contract) that were used on a regular or recurring basis.\textsuperscript{21}

On March 16, 1802, the Seventh Congress approved an act fixing the Military Peace Establishment of the United States including a section (number 17) describing the duties of a military agent, which stated in part “to purchase, receive, and forward to their proper destination, all military stores, and other articles for the troops in their respective departments, and all goods and annuities for the Indians...”\textsuperscript{22} In the letter of June 6, 1803, Lewis requested that Linnard transport certain stores he had gathered for the expedition from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh. To this, Lewis added his preferences regarding the team and driver Linnard would hire.\textsuperscript{23} He also included instructions on how his box containing mathematical instruments should be loaded and maintained. He wrote a separate instruction on how his supplies were to be weighed, invoiced and packed. This may have been intended for Whelan, Ingels or Linnard, but clearly showed Lewis planned to obtain materials that the Army already had on hand (such as military blankets) at no cost to the expedition.\textsuperscript{24}

Sixty years after the Lewis and Clark Expedition, General Winfield Scott remembered Linnard in his memoirs:

William Linnard, long “military agent,” without army rank, and only made quartermaster-general, with the rank of colonel, in 1813, was a public servant of the rarest merit in his way. For thirty-three years he made, at Philadelphia, all disbursements on account of the army (saving the monthly payments to troops), amounting to fifty-seven millions, without the loss of a cent, and at the smallest cost in storage, clerk hire, and other incidental expenses ever known. He personally performed double, if not treble, the amount of ordinary labor. His integrity, at his death in 1835, had long been proverbial.\textsuperscript{25}

On March 25, 1804, Linnard submitted his invoice for $226.98.\textsuperscript{26} In his June 6 letter, Lewis had promised to inform Linnard “as early as possible after my arrival at Washington, to what ac’ [account] you are to charge the expence incurred for transporting these goods.”\textsuperscript{27}

The “Portable Soup” letter from Meriwether Lewis to General William Irvine on April 15, 1803 (transcribed on the following page), was in a private collection when historian Donald Jackson compiled letters associated with the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Jackson knew of the letter, but was not able to include a transcription of it in Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition with Related Documents, 1783-1854.

On February 27, 1797, Major Thomas H. Cushing (Massachusetts) of the First United States Infantry (formerly 1st Lieutenant Massachusetts Line Continental Army), was appointed by the President, with consent of the Senate, to be “inspector.” He by law was also required to do the duty of “adjutant-general.” ... On the 25th of March, President Jefferson sent the following nomination...
Fredericktown, Apr. 15th 1803

Sir,

It is probable that in the course of ten or twelve days I shall have the pleasure of being with you in Philadelphia; the object of my visit to that place is principally to provide the articles necessary for my intended expedition in the western country. Portable-Soup, in my opinion, forms one of the most essential articles in this preparation, and fearing that it cannot be procured readily in such quantity as is requisite, I have, in order to save time and to guard against possible disappointment, taken the liberty to request, that you will procure two hundred pounds of it for me, and that should so large a quantity not be attainable ready made, that you would be so good as to contract with some person to prepare the balance as soon as possible. I have supposed that the soup would cost about one dollar per lb, but should it however, come much higher the quantity must be limited by the sum of 250$. as more cannot be expended in it's purchase.—

Your attention to this subject will much oblige

Your friend & Ob'l. Humb' Serv.

Genl. William Irvine.

Portuguese-Soup, for me, and that Secretary of War Henry Dearborn wrote Cushing on Linnard that the driver transporting his stores should call on Cushing “for any article that I may think proper to leave there with a view to be taken up by the waggoner.” It appears Lewis was comfortable entrusting Cushing with certain supplies, though there is no record of any supplies having been left there.31

Secretary of War Henry Dearborn wrote Cushing on June 16, 1803, instructing him to “direct the recruiting officer at Carlisle, to select eight of the most faithful and sober of his recruits” for the western expedition.32 On June 20, 1803, Cushing wrote to Lieutenant William A. Murray telling him to “select eight of the best ... for immediate command in Pittsburgh.”33 Lieutenant Moses Hooke took command of the men in Pittsburgh pending Lewis’s arrival. On July 9, 1803, Cushing wrote to Lewis with details regarding the party of recruits.34 When Lewis wrote his letters to Linnard, Joseph Perkins was the conductor of the armory at Harpers Ferry. “Conductor” in this usage referred to a civilian employee of the War Department who supervised the armorer at a government-owned and -operated arsenal. This included the acceptance of contract weapons and munitions; the storage, repair, maintenance and issuance of arms and related accouterments such as cartridge boxes; and making, storing and issuing cartridges and other ammunition. Perkins had been a gun maker and an inventor in the Philadelphia area during the early 1790s. He was assigned to undertake much of the construction of the Harpers Ferry Armory and Arsenal in the late 1790s. Perkins was superintendent of the armory from 1798 to 1807.35 On March 14, 1803, Secretary Dearborn wrote to Perkins instructing him to give Lewis whatever he requested and have it ready as soon as possible. Joshua Wingate, chief clerk of the War Department, wrote similar letters to General Irvine and Israel Whelan on the same day.36 Lewis carried those letters with him when he left Washington, D. C., in the spring of 1803.

LEWIS’S TRAVELS FROM MARCH TO JULY 1803

Close scrutiny of the five letters regarding Lewis’s expedition preparations also reveals important information about the routes Lewis traveled through parts of Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia and today’s West Virginia. He did a fair amount of traveling by land from March through July of 1803.

The predominant mode of travel during the two previous centuries had been by water and so roads were not held in the same regard as rivers. However, as the development of industry and agriculture expanded westward, the demand for new and improved roads grew. By the end of the first decade of the 1800s, the United States was on the brink of a massive road-building effort.37

March 15, 1803—Lewis left Washington, D. C., and could have traveled two possible routes to Harpers Ferry where he arrived on March 16 and stayed until April 15.38 He may have followed the Potomac River, which flows southeast from Harpers Ferry to the capital. Following the shoreline of the Potomac can be quite challenging as it is rocky and has some fairly high bluffs. He also could have traveled along the ancient Native American trail.39 Both routes are about 60 miles, however the latter is easier to travel.

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April 15, 1803—Lewis was in Frederick, Maryland, where he wrote the “Portable Soup” letter. He had traveled there after having spent roughly a month at Harpers Ferry. The distance between Harpers Ferry and Frederick is about 20 miles. Lewis probably took a road that evolved from an Indian trail, which had its beginnings as a game trail. Many routes were not much more than trails, fairly suitable for horse and rider, but certainly not for wagon or carriage. Others were simply post roads intended to facilitate the delivery of the mail from one place to the next. The road to Frederick has several names including the Frederick Road, Urbana Pike, Rockville Pike and in Washington, D.C., Wisconsin Avenue. The road going to Harpers Ferry is called the Jefferson Pike.

April 19, 1803—Lewis arrived in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and the following day wrote a lengthy letter to President Jefferson in which he explained why he had spent a month at Harpers Ferry. Going as far back as 1751, a road existed between Lancaster and Frederick, which has been called “The Great Waggon Road to Philadelphia.” The distance between the two locations is about 90 miles and would have taken approximately three days to travel comfortably by horseback.

May 10, 1803—Lewis spent about three weeks with Andrew Ellicott in Lancaster and then went on to Philadelphia. The distance from Lancaster to Philadelphia is about 65 miles. To address the demands for a more adequate road between the two locations, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania passed legislation establishing the Philadelphia and Lancaster Turnpike Road Company on April 9, 1792. The turnpike formerly known as the Great Conestoga Road, and later the Lancaster Pike, was built of broken limestone and gravel of different sizes. This is undoubtedly the road Lewis traveled to Philadelphia.

June 17-19, 1803—Lewis left Philadelphia and arrived in Washington, D.C., where he wrote the letter to William Clark requesting that he join the expedition. Due to the significant amount of travel along the Atlantic Coast, a
continuous road for stagecoach and wagon traffic from Boston, Massachusetts, to Charleston, South Carolina, was built by 1750. Eventually bridges were built across rivers and streams and by 1774 the road could accommodate the largest carriage in reasonable safety. It originally was known as the King’s Highway, but after the American War of Independence other names such as the Boston Post Road, the Great Coast Road, the Potomac Trail and the Virginia Path were preferred.46

July 5, 1803—Lewis was in Frederick, Maryland, to find a wagoner to transport his goods from Harpers Ferry.47 He had left Washington, D.C., July 5 and traveled the roughly 40 miles to Frederick, probably arriving there by evening.48

July 8, 1803—Lewis wrote to Jefferson that he was in Harpers Ferry intending to leave by about 1 p.m. that day. He told Jefferson that he would take “the route of Charlestown, Frankfort, Uniontown and Redstone old fort to Pittsburgh.”49 Lewis was familiar with the route, as he had traveled it during his military service. This was the famous Braddock’s Road, carved out by General Edward Braddock in 1755 during the French and Indian War. From the vicinity of Uniontown, Lewis followed “the extension James Burd made to the Monongahela at Redstone.”50 Later the road from Cumberland, Maryland, to Brownsville, Pennsylvania, became the National Road. It was the first federally funded road, approved by Jefferson on March 29, 1806.51 Albert Gallatin, Jefferson’s secretary of the treasury, had agitated for many years to have a road built across the Allegheny Mountains and convinced Congress that such a road was essential to commerce between the western and eastern portions of the United States.52 Lewis previously had an opportunity to become familiar with this route when he traveled from Pittsburgh to Washington in the spring of 1801 en route to become Jefferson’s private secretary.53

July 15, 1803—Lewis arrived in Pittsburgh at 2 p.m. and immediately wrote to convey this news to Jefferson.54

WAGONS TRAVEL TO PITTSBURGH

Lewis’s letters also can be used to trace a reasonable chronology for the travels of the wagons carrying his supplies from Philadelphia and Harpers Ferry to Pittsburgh.

June 6, 1803—Lewis wrote to William Linnard, “You will be informed by Mr. Wheelin when those stores are in perfect readiness for transportation; this will most probably happen in the course of six or seven days.” Lewis continued, “You will be pleased to employ for this service a strong effective team, with a driver in whose fidelity, sobriety and discretion you can place the necessary confidence.” Then he requested that the wagon follow a particular “route by Lancaster & York in Pen[ns] y[vania], & Fredericktown in Maryland to Harper’s Ferry in Virginia.”55 Predating The Great Waggon Road that connected Philadelphia to Frederick, an old Indian trail known as the Monocacy Path (which probably originated from a bison trace) went from Philadelphia to Harpers Ferry. In Maryland this route was known as the Susquehanna Path.56 Once the wagon driver arrived in Harpers Ferry, he was to travel to Pittsburgh “by whatever way he may think best.” Perhaps he followed the same route Lewis traveled to Pittsburgh, or he may have used the Forbes Road, created in 1758 during the French and Indian War and built by General John Forbes. This route went from Fort Loudon to Fort Bedford to Fort Ligonier57 and on to Pittsburgh roughly following today’s Lincoln Highway.

June 10, 1803—Lewis called on Linnard but apparently did not see him, so wrote again to emphasize “the necessity of providing a strong and effective team for the transportation of the public stores under my charge destined for Pittsburgh.”58 In the June 6 letter, Lewis estimated the weight of his supplies would be less than 700 pounds. In this letter, he changed the estimate to 3,500 pounds and stated, “the road mentioned in a former communication...is by no means good.” Here Lewis may have meant the entire route from Philadelphia through Harpers Ferry to Pittsburgh. Lewis asked Linnard to provide a team with five horses due to the weight of the stores and the condition of the road. He wrote, “I expect every thing will be in readiness by tuesday or Wednesday next,” bringing the departure date for the wagon to June 14 or 15, 1803.59

June 28, 1803—Lewis wrote from Harpers Ferry on July 8, 1803, that the wagon from Philadelphia passed through Harpers Ferry on June 28, 1803. He told President Jefferson, “The waggoner determined that his team was not sufficiently strong to take the whole of the articles ... and therefore took none of them.”60 Lewis learned of this while he was in Frederick, Maryland, on July 5, but it is not known how he obtained this information. (It is possible that after the wagon passed through Harpers Ferry without taking Lewis’s supplies that Joseph Perkins sent word for Lewis at Frederick.) The wagon traveling from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh was long gone by the time Lewis learned his material was still at Harpers Ferry.

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July 9, 1803—According to his July 8, 1803, letter written at Harpers Ferry, Lewis hired "a person with a light two horse-waggon," in Frederick on the evening of July 5, 1803. The driver was supposed to leave Harpers Ferry on the morning of July 8, 1803, but Lewis wrote, "he has disappointed me." When the wagon from Frederick didn't show up, Lewis explained, "I have been obliged to engage a second person who will be here [Harpers Ferry] this evening in time to load and will go on early in the morning." That would make July 9 the departure date for the wagon from Harpers Ferry. Lewis did not wait for the second wagon to arrive and depart, but rather left Harpers Ferry on July 8 around 1 p.m.

July 22, 1803—Lewis wrote to Jefferson that "The Waggon from Harper's Ferry arrived today." Figuring the wagon left Harpers Ferry on July 9, the wagoner made the trip to Pittsburgh over the course of about 14 days at a distance of roughly 220 miles or an average of 16 miles per day. In this same letter, Lewis mentioned that the "party of recruits that were ordered from Carlisle ... have arrived."62

CONCLUSIONS TO BE DRAWN FROM LEWIS’S LETTER TO LINNARD

The June 6, 1803, letter shows Meriwether Lewis at his organizational and strategic best. His attention to detail resulted in a very precise set of instructions for Linnard that included what needed to be done and by whom, when to transport goods and how to transport them, what route to take and whom to visit along the way. Lewis was a great expedition leader, but his letters reveal a fastidious quartermaster, a meticulous project director, an exceptional logistics manager and a superb bureaucrat who was scrupulously devoted to detail. The success of the expedition depended greatly on Lewis's ability to select, gather and transport the myriad items needed for the journey to the Pacific Ocean and back. The excellent work Lewis did during the preparation phase often has been credited with much of the success of the expedition and conversely saving it from failure.

Lorna Hamesworth is a Foundation member as well as a member of multiple LCTHF chapters. Grateful acknowledgement is extended to Dr. Robert Moore, Jr., historian at the National Park Service's Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, for his in-depth editing of this article. Appreciation also is extended to Richard Prestholdt, James Holmberg, John Fengo, James Mallory, Christopher Calvert, Jerry Garrett and Mark Hudson.

NOTES
2 Jackson lived near Colorado Springs during the last years of his life. Jackson's widow, Mary Catherine, donated all of his notes to the Colorado Springs Pioneer Museum in January 2000. I was able to speak with Jackson's nephew and director of the museum, Matthew Mayberry, who said his uncle would not be surprised that there are Lewis and Clark letters that are not in his compilation. Mayberry said he believed such a discovery would delight Jackson.
3 When going through the materials at the National Archives and Records Administration, Jackson commented to Lewis...
Conestoga wagons unlikely candidate for hauling Lewis’s stores

Several Lewis and Clark historians have alleged that the type of wagon Linnard hired for Lewis was a Conestoga wagon. According to information available from the Army Transportation Museum in Fort Eustis, Virginia, the U.S. Army made extensive use of these large freight wagons during this period. Conestoga wagons were a civilian transport vehicle that the Army usually contracted to haul supplies and equipment. In 1803, these wagons were particularly popular in the more established eastern regions of the United States. However, at the time of the expedition, the roads in northern Virginia, western Maryland and southwestern Pennsylvania did not lend themselves to the use of large, heavy vehicles such as a Conestoga wagon. This situation changed dramatically with the construction of the National Road. The earliest segment of this road, built between 1811 and 1818, went from Cumberland, Maryland, through Uniontown, Brownsville, and Washington, Pennsylvania, to Wheeling, Virginia (now West Virginia), making the use of Conestoga wagons possible in these areas.

In his letter of June 10, 1803, Lewis told Linnard that he had about 3,500 pounds of goods to transport and asked for a team of five horses. The standard number of animals used to pull a Conestoga wagon was four to eight horses, mules or oxen. Although Lewis did not request a particular type of wagon, by suggesting a team of five immediately following the weight of the load, perhaps he was implying that the wagon should be a Conestoga. However, this raises a question as to whether a large and sturdy, but heavy, Conestoga wagon would have been used to haul a mere 3,500 pounds? Conestoga wagons were designed to haul from 10,000 to 16,000 pounds of cargo.

Even with some of that cargo space filled with fodder for the animals, plenty of capacity remained. Considering the Army’s difficulty in finding skilled drivers, not to mention the cost of paying them, using a Conestoga wagon for less than two tons of cargo appears economically unsound.

If the wagon Linnard hired had been a Conestoga wagon, there would have been ample room for the supplies from Philadelphia and Harpers Ferry and fodder for the team. Lewis assessed that a “light two horse-wagon” could carry his goods from Harpers Ferry, which weighed around 900 to 1,000 pounds. When the 3,500 pounds from Philadelphia is added to the weight at Harpers Ferry, the total comes to around 4,500 pounds, well within the carrying capacity of a Conestoga wagon. However, we know the driver from Philadelphia did not take the material from Harpers Ferry. This casts real doubt on the wagon being a Conestoga pulled by a team of five.

—Lorna Hainesworth

and Clark scholar James P. Ronda that the Old Army Records were both vast and largely untapped. Ronda said, “When Don first explored them, they were not microfilmed and were in several un-air-conditioned warehouses. I suspect that Lewis and Clark materials will continue to turn up now and again for a good long time.” According to Cynthia Fox, a supervisor at NARA, their records show the series of files containing Lewis and Clark Expedition materials arrived there around 1943. Chris Semancik, the Arms and Ordnance Curator at the Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, said that this particular record group (Office of the Quartermaster General) is not well organized, although conditions and organization at NARA have improved greatly in recent years.


6 Information on this subject was provided by Keith E. Gibson, museum curator, Virginia Military Institute; Mark Hudson, executive director, Historical Society of Frederick County; David Keough, Collections Division, Military History Institute of the Army Heritage and Education Center, Army War College; Elaine McConnell, rare book curator, U.S. Military Academy, West Point Museum; Robert J. Moore, Jr., historian, National Park Service, Jefferson National Expansion Memorial; Glenn F. Williams, senior historian, U.S. Army Center of Military History.


armed resistance], was a popular uprising that had its beginnings in 1791 and culminated in an insurrection in 1794 near Washington, Pennsylvania, in the Monongahela Valley. The rebellion was the result of an excise tax (a tax charged on goods produced within the country) being imposed on whiskey.


Jackson, Letters, p. 82.

This letter is part of the Grace Lewis Miller Papers at the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial Archives, http://www.nps.gov/jeff/historyculture/grace-lewis-miller-papers.htm, donated by her sons Jefferson and Philip Miller. The letter was purchased in May 1938 for $135 from the American Autograph Shop in Merion Station, Pennsylvania. It was purchased again from Parke-Bernet Galleries, Inc., New York, New York, by Joseph S. Blume on December 4 or 5, 1944, for $85 and given to Grace Lewis Miller as a Christmas present. “Dear Grace To you for a Merry Xmas-Joe,” was written on the Parke-Bernet purchase slip.” On the back of Blume’s receipt, Grace Lewis Miller wrote, “Mr. Blume Rec’d-Palm Springs Winter 1949.” Documentation provided by Jennifer Clark, archivist, Jefferson National Expansion Memorial; and Dennis Northcott, associate archivist for reference, Missouri History Museum.


Ambrose, p. 86. Description of soup contents varies greatly from the recipe included in Saindon, Vol. 1, p. 103.


Jackson, Letters, pp. 71 and 79. See entries for “4 Tin blowing Trumpets” & “4 Tin horns,” respectively, as examples.

Ibid., p. 54, editor’s note.


John F. Callahan, Military Laws of the United States relating to the Army, Marine Corps, Volunteers, Militia and to bounty lands and pensions from the foundation of the government to the year 1863 (Philadelphia: George W. Childs, 1863), p. 146.

Lack of awareness of the June 6, 1803, letter resulted in a few writers drawing some erroneous conclusions, among which is that Lewis hired Linnard to drive the wagon with the supplies he had gathered overland to Pittsburgh. See Crighton, p. 17 and National Park Service, http://www.nps.gov/archives/jeff/ LewisClark2/CorsOfDiscovery/Preparing/Preparing.htm; and http://www.nps.gov/ar/travel/lewisandclark/Preparing.htm.

Jackson, Letters, pp. 92-93; Musselman, “Schuykill Arsenal to Wheeling.”


Musselman, “Schuykill Arsenal to Wheeling.”

Meriwether Lewis to William Linnard, June 6, 1803, Consolidated Correspondence file, 1794-1890, entry 225, “Lewis and Clark Expedition,” Record Group 92, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.


Rodenbough and Haskin, pp. 5-6.

T. H. Cushing letter from Inspector’s Office, City of Washington, August 20, 1802, National Archives and Records Administration Microfilm Publication M565, roll 1, Letters sent by Office of Adjutant General, Main Series, Correspondence, 1800-1899, Volumes A-B (Sept. 9, 1800-Dec. 6, 1803), Record Group 94, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

Mark Hudson, “The Lewis and Clark Expedition in Frederick?” (Historical Society of Frederick County, Maryland). Harry L. Decker, who during his lifetime served as a local historian for Frederick, Maryland, amassed much of the contents for the Lewis and Clark vertical files at the Historical Society of Frederick County. According to Hudson, “... no ... inventory has been identified for the Inspector’s Office in Frederick. Unfortunately many of the correspondences between Colonel Cushing and the War Department were destroyed by the British during their raid on Washington in 1814. As such, we may never know all of the details of activities at the Inspector’s Office in Frederick.”

Henry Dearborn to Thomas H. Cushing letter of June 16, 1803, M6, roll 1, Letters sent by the Secretary of War Relating to Military Affairs, Volume 1 (November 12, 1800-June 21, 1803, Record Group 107, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

Jackson, Letters, p. 67.

Ibid., p. 107.

Glenn F. Williams, senior historian, U.S. Army Center of Military History, and Keith E. Gibson, museum curator, Virginia Military Institute, provided information on Perkins.
The following experts provided information on the various roads in existence in 1803: Marc Cheves, land surveyor and editor, The American Surveyor; Robert Cullen, resource manager, American Association of State Highway & Transportation Officials; David T. Gilbert, Web manager, National Park Service, Harpers Ferry Center; Doug MacGregor, museum educator, Fort Pitt Museum, Point State Park, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Frank Muhly, historian, Philadelphia Chapter, Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation; Robert Nipar, nineteenth-century engineer/surveyor, Fort Necessity and Friendship Hill; and Paul Shogren, historian, Garrett County Historical Society Museum, Oakland, Maryland.

The ancient Native American trail approximates today's Maryland Route 355 or Interstate 270. This route goes through a stretch of rolling hills and arrives in Frederick, Maryland. A sharp left onto what is today's U.S. Highway 15 proceeds through some more rolling hills onto U.S. Highway 340 and brings the traveler into Harpers Ferry.


Joshua Fry and Peter Jefferson, A map of the most inhabited part of Virginia containing the whole province of Maryland with part of Pensilvania, New Jersey and North Carolina (London: Thos. Jefferys, 1755), Library of Congress Geography and Map Division, Washington, D.C.


Jackson, Letters, pp. 57-60.


Ambrose, p. 102. Lewis would have traveled along today's Maryland Route 355.


Jackson, Letters, p. 110.

MacGregor provided information; “The Main Indian Paths And Migration Trails In Pennsylvania,” http://www.mcn.org/2/noel/Westmoreland/MigrationTrails.htm.


Jackson, Letters, pp. 53-54.

Ibid.

Ibid., pp. 106-107.

Ibid.

Ibid., pp. 111-112.

Ibid.
Meriwether Lewis’s expedition letter to James Findlay provides new information on the Missouri River country up to Fort Mandan

By James J. Holmberg

In this bicentennial year marking the death of Meriwether Lewis, the sad and tragic circumstances of his passing cannot, and should not, be ignored, but neither should the triumphs and accomplishments of his life. One such triumph was, of course, Lewis’s epic journey to the Pacific Ocean as co-leader of the Corps of Discovery with his friend William Clark. Almost all we know about this adventure comes from written sources created by members of the Corps of Discovery and their contemporaries. Without the journals, reports and letters of the expedition we would have little documentation regarding this most famous of American exploring ventures.

The number of documents written by the captains and their men during the expedition is not known. Donald Jackson in gathering together the number of letters and documents he did for Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition with Related Documents, 1783-1834 accomplished a monumental achievement. However, it was impossible to locate all of them, and today more continue to be “discovered.” In 2003, two expedition-date letters by Meriwether Lewis were found in a collection of the Cincinnati Historical Society Library of the Cincinnati Museum Center. The letters are part of the large Torrence Papers collection at the library and had been overlooked by Lewis and Clark scholars. Both are significant and were published in the fall 2004 issue of Ohio Valley History. Many readers of We Proceeded On likely have not seen these letters. The first was written on March 26, 1803, from Harpers Ferry concerning the recruitment of John Conner for the expedition. The second was written on September 6, 1804. Both were written to Lewis’s friend James Findlay in Cincinnati. The 1804 letter is quite significant and is reprinted here for WPO readers to enjoy and learn from, and as a way to remember one of the high points of Captain Lewis’s life in this anniversary year of his passing.

Who was James Findlay that Lewis would write to him in the midst of this journey? Was there a purpose to the letter? Why write to Findlay rather than one of his Washington or Philadelphia friends? Why Findlay rather than President Thomas Jefferson or Secretary of War Henry Dearborn, both of whom would have welcomed such a report?

James Findlay was born in Mercersburg, Pennsylvania, in 1770. Casting his lot with the Ohio country, Findlay moved to Cincinnati in 1793 where he opened a store. Findlay later became a lawyer and was active politically. Over the course of his career, he served in a number of appointed and elected positions, including the territorial and state legislatures, U.S. marshal, mayor of Cincinnati, militia officer (rising to the rank of brigadier general)
and U.S. representative. He died in Cincinnati in 1835. It almost certainly was in his capacity as a merchant that Findlay met Lewis and Clark. In December 1794 William Clark was in communication with the firm of Smith and Findlay and appears in their 1794-1795 store accounts. Lewis also spent time in Cincinnati while serving in the Ohio country in the mid-1790s and must have made Findlay's acquaintance at that time. The three became friends and maintained at least an occasional correspondence. As he came down the Ohio River in 1803, Lewis spent a week in Cincinnati. Details regarding his stay are not known, but he definitely spent time with Findlay, who accompanied Lewis to Big Bone Lick to gather specimens of prehistoric animals for Jefferson. Thus it was an established friendship.

During the expedition Lewis and Clark wrote letters to family members and friends, which they intended for publication in newspapers throughout the country. Given the nature of this letter to Findlay—its length, detail and structure—it is clear that Lewis intended the letter for publication. It would have been an important update of the corps' progress and discoveries four months after beginning its ascent of the Missouri River. The letter reached Findlay but apparently it never was published. At some point, page five and any additional pages were separated from the first four and lost. Whether they survive is not known. Its incomplete status was a factor in the letter remaining unnoticed by historians. No signature or address leaf is present. The Torrence Papers inventory listed the letter's date and where it was written, but no author. To those unfamiliar with the history of the expedition, "Missouri River above the Poncarra Vilage, September 6th 1804" meant little if anything and elicited no further investigation. In 1948 a flicker of interest in the letter occurred but failed to ignite more than brief curiosity among the library staff. This was not the case in 2003. Librarian Anne Shepherd noticed the listing for the letter in the inventory and immediately suspected it was from the expedition. Upon examination and comparison with Lewis's March 26, 1803, letter, she concluded it was written by the explorer. Gary Moulton and I were consulted, and the letter's author and authenticity were verified.

Lewis's September 6, 1804, letter to Findlay is quite significant. Penned from roughly one thousand miles up the Missouri, Lewis provided news of the expedition and a description of the country through which the explorers had passed. He did all this after dispensing with a matter much on his mind—land interests in Ohio. We are very fortunate to have even the first four pages of the letter. Knowing this letter exists and having those four pages certainly make one wish the rest of the letter had not separated and gone missing. This letter contains a more concise description of the Missouri River country up to that point than is given in extant expedition journals, reports and letters. The most similar document is Lewis's March 31, 1805, letter to his mother, written prior to leaving Fort Mandan. In fact, in comparing the letters, portions of the March 31 letter and this one are essentially the same. Entire sentences are repeated word for word, but the internal order of the information in the letters is different. In reading both letters one can speculate that the missing portion of this letter might have contained a description of the Missouri River up to that point in the journey. Lewis must have been referring to some report that he or Clark had prepared on
Page 1:

Dear Findley,

Missouri River above the Poncarra Village, September 6th 1804

I here inclose twenty dollars in bank bills intended for the payment of the taxes which are now, or may hereafter become due on a certain tract of Land entered and recorded in the name of John Marks, lying on the waters of brush Creek & containing about 4,000 acres; you would much oblige me therefore by transmitting this money to the Auditor, or other proper officer of your State for the receipt of taxes on the lands of nonresidents. I have paid the taxes on this land until the year 1804 inclusive, and had made the necessary arrangements as I conceived for the payment of the taxes on this land as the same might become due, until the year 1805 inclusive; but from information received about the moment, and in the hurry of my departure from St. Louis, I have reason to believe that the gentleman to whom I had intrusted this business has not executed it with good faith. should this be the case I fear with=--out the timely attention of some of my friends, that the land may be lost, or at least in part forfeited for the payment of its taxes. -- this tract is undivided; 840 acres of it only belongs to me; 1333, to the orphan child=--ren of John Marks, and the balance to the heirs or assignees of John Todd dec'd. -- shou[d] any part of this land have been sold for taxes, will you be so good as to re=--cover it in my name by some compromise with the purchaser, that portion of it at least which belongs to the orphans I presume may be recovered by payment of the arrears of the taxes due on it; and it is my wish that if any sacrifice is to be made that it should fall on

Page 2:

that proportion which belongs to myself II --

I now feel myself fairly launched on my voy=--age of discovery, having now ascended this river nearly eleven hundred miles. my object is, if possible, to dis=--cover a practicable water communication across the Continent of North America to the Pacific Ocean, which I hope to effect by means of this river; and the Colum=--bia or Oregan river, which discharges itself into the Pacific Ocean about two hundred miles south of Nootka Sound -- there are substantial grounds for a belief that these rivers derive their sources from the same quarter of the continent, and I think it not improbable that some of their navigable streams may pass contiguous to each other; be this as it may I am determined to leave no expedient untried to effect a passage to the Ocean either by water or land. My party consists of twenty six healthy, robust, active young men, accustomed to fatigue and danger; most of them good hunters & all of them good boatmen, and above all who feel equally with myself, an enthusiasm in accomplis=--hing the objects of this enterprise. we are well armed, and have now but little to fear from the opposition of the Savages, having passed those nations from whom most danger was to be apprehended. game is very abundant, and seems to increase as we progress. on the lower portion of the Missouri, from its junction with the Mississippi to the mouth of the Osage river we met with some deer, Bear & turkies -- from thence to the Canoez river, the deer were more abun=--dant, a great number of bear, some turkies, Gees Swan and ducks; from thence to the mouth of the river Platte, an immensity quantity of deer, some Bear Elk & turkies some geese swan and ducks -- from thence

Page 3:

to the mouth of the river Souix, some deer, a great quant=--ity of Elk, the bear disappear almost entirely, some turkies gees swan and ducks; from thence to our present station, vast herds of Buffaloe, & Elk; some deer and turkies; we have also seen a few Cabré or wild goat, and a few deer of a different species from that common to a large proportion of the continent of N. Ame=--rica; but as I have not been able as yet to procure a subject of either of those animals I cannot enter into a minute discription of them. The Cabré, as nearly as I could discover from a distant view with a small refracting telescope, is about the size, and somewhat the form of the Scotch goat, tho' reather more delicately formed; the back, sides, and neck appeared to be of a whiteish brown colour, the belly and inner part of the thighs, fore legs, & brest, nearly white; I could discover neither horns or beard, tho' they certainly possess the former. this animal generally feeds in the open praries, is extremely watchfull and verye fleet, insomuch, that they seldom flee to the woods to avoid pursuit, but placing a just confidence in their own superior fleetness take their course through the open plains, and seem to set their pursuers at defiance, while they invite pursuit. The Ottoes, Missouris and Souixs, whom I have seen, inform me that they have frequently pursued the Cabré on horseback, but from their fleetness and durebility found it impracticable to overtake them. it would be almost impossible to take or kill this animal was it not from his inquisitive disposition; of this the hunter takes advantage, and concealing himself in some convenent place confines a handkerchief a piece of cloth or skin to the end of a stick which he holds up to the view of the Cabré taking care to keep it in constantly in motion.

Page 4:

the attention of the Cabré being thus attracted the hun=--ter is almost certain of success as he will then approach within a very few paces, particularly if the wind blows and the hunter is to the leward. The Black-tale Deer my hunters have seen, and from their discription as well as that of French Engages [continued on page 26]
Dear Turkey,

At Sea between you twenty one and eight thousand
for the payment of the three which was now in my hand to become one with a certain
trust of forty others to receive the same. In their whole to the nation in the nature
of their Apositions which two same are more more
and here to the business in the nation. In your same are more more
and here to the business in the nation. In your same are more more
and here to the business.

This motion which is to myself?

I was now myself at home in the nation. In your same are more make your
and here to the business.

In your same are more make your
and here to the business.
the country to write such similar—even identical—passages in letters written almost seven months apart. If that journal or report exists, it has escaped attention. Lewis’s natural history observations survive but do not contain a description of the pronghorn as detailed as the one given Findlay. Only Clark’s September 14, 1804, entry describing a “Goat” he killed exceeds this one, yet some of the information is different.

One logically concludes that perhaps Lewis did keep a journal or additional field notes during this time, which he used to write this letter and that they apparently have not survived. This is speculated upon and debated today.

There is no record in the journals of the captains sending letters downstream in the late summer or fall of 1804 so it is unknown how this letter was delivered to Findlay. Some of the engagés returned downriver after being discharged in early November. It is possible they carried letters. Jefferson and others make references in late 1804 and early 1805 to receiving reports of Lewis and Clark. It is uncertain how they were conveyed. If anything was written and sent back downstream before the spring of 1805, it has not been found—until this letter to Findlay. It is possible that Lewis started it in the fall but did not send it until April 1805, but that seems unlikely. It is more likely that a trader or returning engagé carried it down the Missouri.

A search for any reference to this letter in Findlay’s papers and contemporary newspapers yielded nothing.

If Lewis, in fact, considered this a progress report on the expedition to that point, he likely would have been disappointed it was not disseminated. Findlay lived in the western United States and possessed the resources to have such a report published in a newspaper and thus disseminated throughout the country. Findlay would have known that Lewis wanted the letter published. Lewis might have stated as much in a subsequent, but missing, page. The Cincinnati newspaper The Western Spy would have been an excellent means of spreading expedition news. Findlay almost certainly would have shared Lewis’s letter with others, including the newspaper, and the latter would have published a summary of it at the very least. It published other expedition news, as was the established practice.

Upon the expedition’s return, the Frankfort, Kentucky, Palladium published William Clark’s September 23, 1806, letter to his brother Jonathan reporting the corps’ return and updating expedition news since leaving Fort Mandan in April 1805. That letter was reprinted in newspapers across the country. If Lewis’s September 6, 1804, letter was published or at least reported on by The Western Spy, it has been overlooked or that particular issue is not extant. Other papers almost certainly would have reprinted it, and the fact that nothing has been found in other papers leads to the conclusion that for some reason, Lewis’s first western report of his “voyage of discovery” failed to achieve its purpose and instead lay forgotten for 200 years. With the rediscovery of his letter we now have the earliest known written report by one of the members of the Corps of Discovery about the American West they had set out to explore.

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Notes (8–14 refer to Lewis’s letter on pages 22 and 26)

1 As Lewis prepared for the western expedition, acquiring the services of a reliable and competent Indian interpreter was an important priority. Lewis believed John Conner of Indiana would be a good choice and he apparently was the first recruit
The mainstay of the men's diet on the expedition was the supply of wild game killed by various members of the expedition. While in present day North Dakota the men had the chance to hunt the mighty buffalo and traveled distances across the snowy plains to secure the meat necessary to feed the men at the fort. The hunters used various sized sleds to bring the meat in, some pulled by a horse and others pulled by the hunters themselves. They've wrapped some of the meat in the buffalo's skin and are preparing to sled it out.

Lewis sought for the journey. While at Harpers Ferry, Lewis sent letters in triplicate to Conner outlining the expedition and inviting him to join it. One of those letters was sent to James Findlay for forwarding. Conner declined to join the expedition and George Drouillard was hired as an interpreter.


3 James Findlay Web sites: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Findlay_(Cincinnati_mayor); http://www ohiohistorycentral.org/entry.php; http://www.findlaymarket.org/gen_james_findlay.htm (there is some good information on this site but the name of Findlay's business partner is stated incorrectly (John not James Smith) and it contradicts itself as to when Losantiville was renamed Cincinnati (1790)); Clark to Smith and Finley [Findlay], December 8, 1794, Torrence Papers, box 4, no. 48, CHSL; Smith and Findlay's Ledger, 1793-1795, Torrence Papers, Vol. 15; Sudler's Book, 1795, Torrence Papers, box 56, no. 6.


5 Holmberg, "Fairly launched," pp. 19-23.


8 On September 5 the Corps of Discovery had passed Ponca Creek, which was the Ponca village Lewis mentioned. Ponca Creek empties into the Missouri in Knox County, Nebraska, near the present town of Verdel. The Ponca were a small Siouan-speaking tribe. They were horticulturists who journeyed to the plains for buffalo. Lewis and Clark failed to meet with them because they were away on a buffalo hunt. The expedition's campsite on September 6, 1804, was in present-day South Dakota across the Missouri from the Knox-Boyd (Nebraska) county line. Moulton, Vol. 3, pp. 48-52.

9 Even hundreds of miles up the Missouri, Lewis and Clark did not forget their business interests back home. The land Lewis was concerned about is located southeast of present Hillsboro...
in Highland County, Ohio, on the east fork of Brush Creek and the Elk Run branch of the east fork of Brush Creek. Lewis's late stepfather, John Marks, left the land as part of his estate. Lewis had been trying to obtain patents on the two tracts since at least 1801 when he enlisted the help of William Clark. The latter had stopped in Washington in June 1801 while traveling from Virginia to Philadelphia and apparently visited his friend (and perhaps met with Jefferson). Before they parted, Lewis gave Clark an authorization to investigate where the matter stood, attempt to get the plats and certificates for the parcels and determine how to best proceed in obtaining the patents. On July 2, 1803, before setting out from Washington on the expedition, Lewis sent the patents for the two Marks children's portion of the land (apparently totaling 1,333 acres) to their mother, Lucy Meriwether Lewis Marks, in Charlottesville by way of Thomas Jefferson. Therefore, Clark's efforts and probably those of others had been successful in confirming title to at least 2,173 acres. In 1798 Lewis's half-brother John Hastings Marks sold 700 acres of the tract. He had previously sold 300 acres. Since Lewis referenced the entire 4,000 acres it would seem that Lewis was unaware of his half-brother's actions. Who Lewis had entrusted with payment of the taxes on the land and who he believed had neglected that duty is not known. John Todd (1750-1782) was a native of Pennsylvania and educated in Virginia. He studied law under and served as military aide to Lewis's relative General Andrew Lewis. Todd came to Kentucky in 1775, served with George Rogers Clark in his Illinois Campaign, was appointed civil governor of the Illinois country by Patrick Henry and was one of Kentucky's most prominent citizens. He was killed in the Battle of Blue Licks and left extensive land holdings in Kentucky, Tennessee, and, from Lewis's comment, apparently in Ohio. It is interesting to note Lewis's sense of responsibility and honor that he is trying to resolve this matter while hundreds of miles up the Missouri in the midst of this momentous undertaking, and that he wants any loss of land that might occur in the matter to be taken from his share. Clifford Neal Smith, comp., Federal Land Series (Chicago: American Library Association, 1986), Vol. 4, part 1, pp. 54 and 144; Meriwether Lewis to William Clark, June 27, 1801, William Clark Papers, box 11, folder 7, Missouri History Museum, St. Louis; Jackson, Letters, Vol. 1, pp. 101; John E. Kleber, et al., eds., The Kentucky Encyclopedia (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1992), p. 887.

10 Lewis and Clark's destination had been a poorly kept secret early on. It was publicly speculated as early as the summer of 1803 that reaching the Pacific Ocean was their goal. The captains officially announced their objective in December 1803. Thus, Lewis's statement of the corps' objective was no surprise to Findlay. One could speculate that Findlay might have heard the real goal of the journey from Lewis himself. Not only had Lewis written him in March 1803 for help in contacting John Conner, but he also spent time with him in late September—early October of 1803 in Cincinnati on his way down the Ohio to rendezvous with Clark in Louisville. When Lewis left Cincinnati on October 4 or 5 for Big Bone Lick, Kentucky, Findlay accompanied him. Discovering the fabled Northwest Passage was of course one of the corps' primary directives from Jefferson. Since it did not exist, the explorers failed to find it. Jefferson, Lewis and others were disappointed in this but it did help lay the myth of a "practicable water communication across the Continent of North America" to rest. The Oregon River did not really exist. It had been included on maps of the West—largely fanciful and speculative maps—as the "Great River of the West," whose headwaters rose near those of the Missouri. A practicable portage between the two rivers would establish that imagined/theorized transcontinental water route. West of the Continental Divide the corps relied on the Columbia River system to carry them to the Pacific. By the early 1800s the Columbia was generally believed to be that "great river" but geographers were uncertain. The trouble was that geographers did not know where its headwaters lay and they projected them being due east at about the same longitude that the Missouri was believed to begin. This might be the reason that Lewis mentions both rivers. His mention that "these rivers derive their sources from the same quarter of the continent" refers to the then widely-accepted pyramidal height-of-land theory that stated the major rivers of the West all rose from a plateau in the Rocky Mountains and radiated outward from there. Another accepted concept was that of geographical symmetry in which the western half of the North American continent would basically mirror the eastern half. Thus Lewis and Clark were anticipating the Rockies being similar in size and appearance to the Appalachians. One of the many accomplishments of the expedition was disproving both of these long-held and accepted theories. Using Nootka Sound as his reference point reflects how well the northwest coast of North America was mapped due to the voyages of James Cook, George Vancouver and others. Jackson, Letters, Vol. 1, p. 127; John Logan Allen, Lewis and Clark and the Image of the American Northwest (New York: Dover Publications, 1991), pp. 19, 23, 26 and 30-31 [originally published as Passage through the Garden: Lewis [continued from page 22] who are acquainted with this animal, they differ very little from the red deer; perhaps in no other part is it more particular but that of the colour of the tale.—I am agreeably disappointed in the opinion I had formed of the country bordering on the Missouri, particularly of that portion of it above the mouth of the river Platte, which from previous informa=tion I had been led to believe, was barren, sterile & sandy; on the contrary I found it fertile in the ex=ten=treem, well watered, the soil consisting of a fine black loam from one, to twenty feet in depth, inter=mixed with particles of talc [talc], and a sufficient quan=ity of sand only, to induce a luxuriant growth of grass and other vegetable productions, particularly such as are not subject to be much injured or intirely destroyed by fire, to the ravages of this element, in my opinion, is justly attributable the great scarcity of timber we find from the river Platte to this place. the country bordering on this portion of the Platte Missouri, and extending on both sides to an immense distance, is one continued Prairie, in which no tim=ber appears but a few detached and scattered copse which from their moist situations, or the steep decli=ves of hills, are sheltered from the effects of fire, the face of the country is level, insomuch as the perception of the eye will enable the spectator to [remainder of letter missing]
The expedition encountered bison in tremendous numbers as the explorers ventured onto the Great Plains. It became a staple of their diet. Joseph Field killed their first buffalo on August 23, 1804.


11 It seems strange to us today that Lewis referred to the party in the singular possessive rather than as being both his and Clark’s. He did the same thing earlier in the letter when he referred to “my voyage.” Such phrasing was very typical during that time. Clark also did this on occasion. By early September the permanent party was not yet set but the corps was coalescing into a true team and family. An analysis of the permanent party roster—taking into account Charles Floyd’s death, Moses Reed being expelled from the party, Frazer not yet joining the permanent party as Reed’s replacement and John Newman still a member—accounts for Lewis’s stated 26 young men, provided only the enlisted men are counted. Perhaps George Drouillard was not included due to his civilian rather than military status. There were indeed many good hunters among the men, particularly Drouillard and the “Nine Young Men from Kentucky.” The unpredictable and dangerous Missouri River had made all the men excellent boatmen. Their quick action and skill saved the keelboat from serious accident on a number of occasions. Lewis did not include the French engaged or the temporary detachment of soldiers helping the expedition advance up the Missouri as far as the Mandan villages in his count. He did refer to them in the letter, so he was drawing a definite distinction between the permanent and temporary detachments of the party. William Clark’s enslaved African American, York, also was not included in Lewis’s count. Lewis did not mention his co-captain, William Clark, in the extant pages of the letter. It is very likely he would have mentioned him in some way since he knew that Findlay and Clark also were friends. He most probably was mentioned in the missing portion of the letter. Jackson, Letters, Vol. 2, p. 378.

12 This was a major misapprehension on Lewis’s part. The corps’ most serious confrontations with Indians were still ahead of them. In fact, their confrontation with the Brulé Teton (Lakota) Sioux was less than three weeks away. They would have tense relations with other tribes, and Lewis would be involved in a fight with a party of Blackfeet that resulted in the death of one and possibly two Indians. The tribes the corps had been warned about and whom Lewis believed posed the greatest threat to them were the Kansa and Yankton Sioux. They did not encounter the Kansa and had a friendly visit with the Yankton.

13 Lewis’s overview of the type and amount of game being encountered is very similar to the phrasing and content of his March 31, 1805, letter to his mother. The order of the subjects in the letters is different, however. In his letter to Lucy Marks, Lewis described the countryside before he described the game. The concise overview, first to Findlay and later to Lewis’s mother, does not appear in that form in other expedition documents to this author’s knowledge. Lewis’s description of the pronghorn (often incorrectly referred to as an antelope) is largely unique. He clearly was excited to have seen this “new” species, one he had inquired about to the Indians. The explorers made their first sighting of the “goat” or “cabré” on September 3. Lewis noted on September 5, in his natural history notes, that they had not been able to get close enough to them yet to even describe their color. Clark noted that they observed goats on the evening of September 6. Perhaps this was when Lewis was able to make his detailed observation of them through his telescope, and with the zoological thrill being so fresh in his mind he related it to Findlay—and in no other form. Lewis noted measurements of a male pronghorn on September 14 using the one Clark killed that day. Clark’s description in his journal for that same day was similar to Lewis’s September 6 description. On September 17, Lewis described the pronghorns’ habits while trying to acquire a female specimen but gave no physical description. If Lewis wrote a description of the pronghorn other than the one in this letter, it is lost. The black-tailed deer mentioned were mule deer and were observed for the first time on September 5. Clark briefly described one on September 17, but Lewis did not. Jackson, Letters, Vol. 1, pp. 222-225; Moulton, Vol. 3, pp. 44, 46 n., 48, 50, 70-71, 73 n., 81-83 and 86 n.; Cutright, Pioneering Naturalists, pp. 81-82.

14 Some of the content in this paragraph is also very similar to Lewis’s March 31, 1805, letter to his mother. Two such similar descriptions again strongly suggest that Lewis was working from a master document of some kind. It is known that he kept both botanical and natural history notes on the journey. Some of this information is scattered in the expedition journals and reports, but a survey of them and known correspondence failed to reveal a similar statement—especially one that could have served as the model for his letters to his mother and Findlay. If he did have such a document it is unknown today. Lewis’s observation about the fertility of the plains they were passing through was not acknowledged for many years. The treeless nature of the plains had led previous travelers and subsequent explorers to believe them to be barren—the “Great American Desert.” This misconception lasted into the mid-nineteenth century when homesteaders began venturing onto the grasslands and realized the region’s “breadbasket” potential. What else Lewis wrote his friend back in the Ohio Valley can only be speculated. Lewis’s letter to his mother can be used as a possible guide. Perhaps he also related his observations on the Missouri River. Jackson, Letters, Vol. 1, pp. 222-225; Moulton, see volumes 2 and 3 for journal entries and reports regarding this leg of the journey.
CAPTURING THE CORPS
"IN A SNAPSHOT OF TIME"

Artist Michael Haynes has redefined our mental image of Jefferson's explorers

By Jim Merritt

Michael Haynes's first memory of Lewis and Clark goes back to childhood. He was 10 or 11 at the time and looking through a book (maybe in a school library, he doesn't recall) when he came across a photograph of a signature—"Wm Clark"—carved in rock at a place in Montana called Pompey's Pillar. Under the name, in the same hand, was a date: "July 25 1806."

The name William Clark scarcely registered, but July 25—Haynes's birthday—jumped out at him. Not only that, his year of birth was 1956, so Clark had carved his famous graffito exactly 150 years before Haynes was born.

"It made a real connection," Haynes says.

Call it fate. Haynes would grow up to become an accomplished artist whose paintings of the Corps of Discovery would redefine our mental image of the expedition. His collaboration with historian Robert J. Moore, Jr. led to Tailor Made, Trail Worn: Army Life, Clothing & Weapons of the Corps of Discovery, a seminal work about the explorers' clothing and accouterments and daily life in camp and on the trail. The book also gave readers a greater appreciation for the expedition's military nature, a factor crucial to its success.

Haynes grew up in St. Louis, near where Meriwether Lewis and William Clark's 28-month odyssey started and finished, and for as long as he can remember he wanted to be an artist. (Art runs in the family. His brother and two sisters are artists; his dad, an executive at Monsanto, painted avocationally and was good enough to exhibit and sell his work.)

He studied art at Auburn University, and after a year as a staff illustrator at the St. Louis Post-Dispatch he became a freelance commercial artist.

A person of high energy and multiple talents, he was also a drummer in a band and played semipro soccer. As if that were not enough, he joined a cavalry unit of Civil War reenactors and soon was fighting in mock battles all over the South and Midwest. This in turn led to film work. With his fellow horse soldiers he can be seen in the Civil War movie Glory and in Son of the Morning Star, a made-for-TV epic about Custer and the Little Bighorn. Look closely and you also might spot him in Far and Away, about the Oklahoma Land Rush, and as an Afghan rebel in Rambo 3.

It was only natural that he started painting Civil War scenes. He produced work on commission for collectors...
Sergeant Nathaniel Pryor is in command as Privates Thomas Howard and William Werner demonstrate their military prowess to visiting Indians. Clothed in their full dress uniforms for the occasion, these figures reveal a glimpse into the more formal occasions that the men of the expedition attended. As a civilian recruit from Kentucky, Pryor (left) probably wore one of the uniforms that Captain Meriwether Lewis had made for the original corps. Pryor wears his “drab” colored wool coat that was made in Philadelphia by seamstress Matilda Chapman. Along with the brass-handled short sword on his left hip, he has a scarlet sash for non-commissioned officers around his waist and a scarlet and wool epaulet on his right shoulder indicating that he is a sergeant. His overalls are of dark blue wool. Howard (center) is wearing a full dress coat, blue with red lapels and white turnbacks, which were quite elegant in appearance but only for show. Along with his full dress coat and white wool overalls, Werner has on his full dress “round hat.” The black round hats were dressed with bearskin crests.

and magazines that was prized for its historical accuracy.

His career as a historical painter took a turn when he read Undaunted Courage, Stephen Ambrose’s 1996 biography of Lewis. Haynes, who with his wife, Lynndean, and their two daughters lives in Wildwood, Missouri, realized he was just seven miles from a spot where the expedition might well have ended a mere two days after it began—a 300-foot-high bluff overlooking the Missouri River. It was there that Lewis slipped and nearly fell to his death on May 23, 1804. (After a 20-foot slide he broke his fall by plunging his knife into the hillside.)

After some research to find the location of the near-fatal accident, Haynes explored the site near the present-day village of St. Albans, and then went to work in his studio. The result was a dramatic tableau depicting Lewis scrambling for a foothold in the scree high above the looming river. It was the first of what Haynes estimates are well over a hundred Lewis and Clark paintings he’s done in the intervening dozen years. (The painting, Lewis Escapes Death Above Tavern Cave, is one of many by Haynes that can be seen on his Web site, www.mhaynesart.com.)

Early on, Haynes ran into a problem with painting the Corps of Discovery in a historically faithful way. As a reenactor and artist in a well-documented field like the Civil War, he could draw on a rich lode of information about the uniforms of combat units. “Choose a regiment,” he says, “and you can find out exactly what kind of buttons they were wearing at what battle. I assumed the same was true of Lewis and Clark. Boy, was I mistaken. I started searching high and low and came up with very little.”

On a visit to the Museum of Westward Expansion, located under the Gateway Arch on the St. Louis waterfront, he asked around for anyone knowledgeable about President Thomas Jefferson’s explorers. Someone suggested he check with Bob Moore, the museum’s historian. “Bob showed me some articles he’d written for wpo and I showed him some of my sketches,” Haynes recalls. “One thing led to the next.”

The historian and artist first worked together on a print series of the Corps of Discovery in full-dress uniforms, then expanded the scope of their research with the aim of producing a definitive work on the expedition’s entire material culture. They examined Jefferson-era uniforms in archives and museums, perused portraits and other period art, and scoured the Lewis and Clark journals, company record books and other primary sources for clues about the explorers’ clothing, weapons and equipment, keeping in mind that the expedition included soldiers, a slave, an Indian and mixed-blood engages. “We shared this passion for really digging until we felt like we’d gotten as close to the bone as we could on everything.”

The result was Tailor Made, Trail Worn. Published in 2003 by Farcountry Press, it is an exhaustive study that fundamentally changed how artists portrayed the explorers. Gone, for example, were the peaked beaver caps and coonskin hats favored by earlier generations of painters. The soldiers of the expedition now were shown...
Music played an important role on the expedition: lifting the members' spirits, building camaraderie, providing an escape from the grinding physical demands and offering a sentimental reminder of home. On many occasions, expedition members gathered around the fire to sing and dance to the tunes of the two known fiddle players, Pierre Cruzatte and Private George Gibson. Gibson was one of the “nine young men from Kentucky,” and Cruzatte was a half French Canadian, half Omaha Indian who joined the expedition in St. Charles, Missouri. Cruzatte (left) was an excellent boatman and occasionally served as an interpreter. He is dressed in leather trousers and a short, double-breasted blanket coat with brass buttons. His blue toque bounces rhythmically to his dancing. Not much is known about Gibson’s early life, but his musical background certainly would have been different from that of his counterpart. Violins of the period had no chin rests so there were at least two styles of playing, the more familiar style that Cruzatte employs and the method that Gibson demonstrates. The butt of the violin was pressed against the chest and played lower on the body.

clean-shaven, as per Army regulations, rather than bearded. They wore cloth more than buckskin, and on the return journey some sported conical—some might say comical—reed hats purchased from coastal Indians at Fort Clatsop.

Haynes thoroughly researches a subject before painting it. If he is portraying an episode from the Lewis and Clark journals, he visits the location in the same season as it happened. “You have to feel it and smell it,” he says.

He has been on field trips for up to a month at a time, packing his gear in a truck and exploring territory by foot, mountain bike and kayak. He recalls North Dakota in winter, “when the light is so thin it gives everything a bluish cast at mid-day. You could never paint that without seeing it.”

He walks the ground, takes photos and does watercolor sketches to get his palette. Then it is back to the studio, where he goes through numerous pencil sketches before arriving at a composition he likes. During this initial phase, if he is working on a commissioned piece he encourages input from the client.

Haynes’s medium is watercolor on gessoed Masonite panels. Executing a painting is an iterative process involving multiple layers. He starts with a pencil sketch on the gesso (a flat white plaster), and then coats the sketch with matt medium, a clear acrylic. To the matt medium he applies a base layer of paint, and then puts
on a varnish, followed by another coat of matt medium and paint. He might do five or six such layers before the image is complete. He applies a final coat of varnish to protect the colors from ultraviolet light. From start to finish the process can take weeks or months.

Multiple layers allow Haynes to add a wealth of detail in a fairly small space—although lately he has favored larger formats, a typical painting is 24 by 36 inches. “The paint isn’t absorbed by the matt medium but sits on top of it,” he says, which renders elements in sharp detail. Also, because matt medium is transparent, light penetrates it. The light reflects off the gesso and passes back through the layers, creating an effect that Haynes likens to light passing through stained glass.

His most recent Lewis and Clark work is a series, commissioned by Boston art collector Tim Peterson, titled “To the Western Ocean.” The 14 paintings are on display through this summer in the Whitney Gallery of Art at the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Cody, Wyoming.

Peterson wanted to include 10 group portraits of 30 members of the Corps of Discovery organized around various roles they played on the expedition, for example as hunters, blacksmiths, interpreters, cooks and musicians. The series (viewable with explanatory text at www.mhaynesart.com/WesternOcean.html) also features individual portraits of Lewis, Clark, York and Sacagawea.

Portraits, whether individual or group, are Haynes’s forte. He always employs models. He takes pictures of them in a variety of poses using a digital camera, then works from the photographs as well as from life studies. While landscape is an important element in many of his paintings, he says, “For me the people of the expedition are primary. I want them to look like living, breathing individuals caught in a snapshot of time. Moments before they were doing something different and moments later they were moving on to another task.”

There are many Lewis and Clark episodes Haynes still wants to paint, particularly from the less-portrayed return journey. Among them are Lewis’s deadly encounter with the Blackfeet on Two Medicine River, Clark carving his name at Pompey’s Pillar, and Sacagawea and Charbonneau’s farewell to Clark at Knife River. He is intrigued by another incident that is “not significant historically but has great visual appeal.” It took place August 7, 1806, on the Missouri River below its junction with the Yellowstone, when Lewis’s party came upon a still-burning campfire with the remnants of one of the reed hats purchased at Fort Clatsop—proof that the party led by Clark had just passed this way.

Lately Haynes has been exploring the Rocky Mountain fur trade and other post-expedition themes related to the American West. He is not giving up on Lewis and Clark, however. Although the bicentennial ended three years ago, he still sees plenty of interest in the expedition and the art depicting it. “I think there will always be a market for the subject and I’m always happy to work on it. A lot of people assumed that by now I would have fully moved on to other things, that I’d be fed up with Lewis and Clark, but nothing could be further from the truth.”

Jim Merritt is a former editor of We Proceeded On (2000-2006). He lives in Pennington, N.J., and has been a member of the Foundation since 1981. He wrote about artist Charles Fritz in the May 2009 issue.
Observations and Remarks from Lewis to Dearborn in 1807

A recently discovered letter reveals an in absentia governor in control

By Thomas C. Danisi

One of the exciting things about conducting historical research is that on almost any topic one chooses to investigate there is always the possibility of the discovery of new information. This information can take many forms. It might lie in associated or even previously unrelated manuscripts or records that make reference to the same events or individuals one is studying. Even more exciting is the occasional discovery of a previously unknown, misplaced or overlooked manuscript relating directly to the subject matter of the historian's investigation. During the many years of exhaustive research that John C. Jackson and I needed to prepare our recent biography of Meriwether Lewis, I ran across many such pieces of information. One would think, after 200 years and the close scrutiny of so many authors, researchers and historians that the bones of the Lewis and Clark story's skeleton would be picked pretty clean. However, this is not the case, and there may be even more material still buried in voluminous archives, libraries and attics yet to be discovered.

The subject of this article, in fact, is a letter that was hidden in plain sight within one of the best-known collections in the world—the National Archives in Washington, D.C.

Finding the Letter

One of the essential sources for the biography of Meriwether Lewis was the examination of surviving military records of the period. Short of purchasing all of the microfilm necessary for a thorough look at these records, I decided in November 1998 to visit the National Archives, Central Plains Region Branch, in Kansas City, Missouri, which had a complete set. After two days of examination (punctuated by giving up my seat every half hour to genealogists), I photocopied about 300 pages. However, after returning home and reading through the material, I found that I had not secured all that I needed. I realized then that it was foolhardy to waste so much time driving across the state of Missouri, staying in a hotel, using timed microfilm readers and then paying for photocopies.

From the letters I read in several reference works such as the Territorial Papers, I realized that a serious study of Meriwether Lewis warranted the purchase of the necessary microfilm, both for initial research and for later reference. The National Archives published a microfilm resource catalog, which was helpful in determining what to buy. The guide did not indicate specific locations of any individual Meriwether Lewis letters—it was just a microfilm guide of the governmental record groups listed by year.

Clarence Carter, editor of the Territorial Papers, cited numerous documents in the National Archives as references, so it appeared that his footnotes could be followed on the microfilm rolls; however, it was not that easy. While the documents were located on the microfilm, more often than not, they were out of sequence by date. That meant that instead of using the fast forward or
reproduce the process, I would have to turn the microfilm roll by hand and painstakingly look at each frame. At first I was annoyed at the glacial pace of this type of investigation, but when I began to discover new or at least unheralded documents, my mood began to change. In the very first batch of microfilm that I received, I found an 1808 letter from Denis Fitzhugh to James Madison, forwarding a bill of exchange from Meriwether Lewis for $500, which had been allocated for Joseph Charless’s printing press in St. Louis. By 2004, I had amassed an extensive library of National Archives microfilm. I also had implemented a new personal standard for advancing a microfilm roll—with my index finger, frame by frame. As each day passed and I continued to discover a cornucopia of new information, I grew increasingly anxious about how I was going to be able to remember, much less find, where all the facts were stored—in notebooks, photocopies, and other primary and secondary sources. The scale of the research was becoming enormous.

The old stand-by index card method, or the newer method of placing categorized notes in a word processing file, were both unsatisfactory. As I was lamenting to a friend the way in which I was slowly becoming immobilized and overwhelmed by huge amounts of information, she suggested a novel method—to use an Excel spreadsheet and create a database completely searchable by columns. It took nine months to enter the microfilm information into eight columns of data, which eventually totaled 3,600 entries. Despite the enormous amount of time and effort it took to create it, I found this database to be highly efficient when trying to locate tiny pieces of strategic information or just helpful in following the history of a given topic. Additionally, the database made it easy to copy the exacting footnotes that are the foundation of this article and of the Lewis biography. Carter incorrectly cited some important letters and other historians copied his mistakes, so inspecting the microfilm became a mandatory exercise that eventually led to the discovery of the Meriwether Lewis letter featured in this article. On February 18, 2003, I had received two rolls of National Archives microfilm from the M222 series. The descriptive pamphlet for this microfilm stated, “On the 34 rolls of this microfilm … are reproduced letters, with their enclosures, that were received by the Secretary of War … but, for one reason or another, not registered.” The pamphlet writer continued, “The letters are arranged by year and thereafter alphabetically—most by the initial letter of the surname of the officer, but a few by the initial letter of the subject.”

Placing roll two on the spindle, I began to advance it slowly. Categories from A to K held nothing of importance for the biography, but at frame 0555-58 under the letter “L,” I found “Expenditures in Capt. M. Lewis Expedition to April 1805.” At frame 0571, a Captain Bruff wrote General James Wilkinson that he had succumbed to the ague (malaria) and could not report for some time. At frame 0657, Meriwether Lewis addressed Secretary of War Henry Dearborn in a letter dated October 1806 at St. Louis, apologizing for signing a large number of drafts. This section of the microfilm details much business concerning expedition members and some merchants.

The following day I reached frame 0772. William Clark had written on May 9, 1807, about his participation in a treaty and council with the Yankton and Teton nations. At frame 0974 Rodolphe Tillier, the factor at Belle Fontaine, wrote that illicit traders were telling various Indian nations that Spain would regain Louisiana and expel the Americans.

Reaching the end of the reel, I started to rewind the film by hand. At frame 0952 I noticed something peculiar under the “S” category, which stood for Secretary of War. The letters were from officers in the field detailing expenditures or asking for monetary relief. The letter did not have a date. I continued backing up the reel, but stopped and thought to myself, “That letter looks like Lewis’s handwriting.” When I returned to the frame, I was surprised. It was indeed a letter from Lewis, and one that I had never before seen.

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From the winter of 1804-1805 at Fort Mandan when Lewis and Clark worked together on "A statistical view of the Indian nations inhabiting the territory of Louisiana, and the countries adjacent to its Northern and Western boundaries," Lewis had been writing his "Observations and Reflections on the Subject of Governing and Maintaining a State of Friendly Intercourse with the Indians of the Territory of Louisiana." His appointment as governor of the Louisiana Territory in March 1807 gave Lewis the impetus to complete the treatise and submit it to Secretary of War Henry Dearborn by August 1807. (American State Papers, Indian Affairs, Vol. 1, pp. 707-721.) The exact date of the letter from Lewis to Dearborn (above and transcribed on the following page) is not known.
Transcription of the letter from Meriwether Lewis to Secretary of War Henry Dearborn

Page 1:
Observations and remarks of M. Lewis on the several subjects embraced By the inclosed communications which were referred to him by the Secretary at War. —

I think it would be well in answer to Genl. Clark's letters of the 18th of May and 1st of June — to instruct him to contract for the running gear and stones of a horse-mill to be prepared in Kentucky, transported to St. Louis and delivered to Mr. P. Chouteau for the use of the Osage nation — also to engage a discrete Blacksmith to reside at the Osage Village for the purpose of repairing their arms and implements of husbandry, provided such prices have been made by our government.

This smith should be engaged for the term at least of two years, and to be held responsible for his conduct to the Superintendent of Indian affairs as the Agent for that nation — stipulate with him that he shall be furnished with a set of tools, have a Cabbin and shop built for his accomodation and allowed dollars per year as his wages (with this perquisite of certain stipulated prices which being agreed on he may have a right to exact from the Indians individually for the services he may render them either to settle with and pay Mr. Dorion the amount of the proceeds derived from their fur at their option and at the rate of $1.25 per lb for beaver $2 — for a buck and $1 for a doe skin. — it might be well to instruct Genl. Clark to settle with and pay Mr. P. Dorion the amount of his wages and the accounts of expenditures he has transmitted, and to confine the future expenditures of Mr. Dorion to such objects and to such amounts only as he, Genl. Clark shall think absolutely necessary to the public service — Mr. Dorion having been ordered to reside among the Osages is worthy of approbation, as is also the course Genl. C. has taken with respect to the deputation from the Yanktons & Tonkans —

I think it would be well to instruct Genl. Clark to take measures for the recovery of the Osage prisoners, should your letter reach him previous to his leaving St. Louis and if otherwise to inform him of your having in such case confided that duty to Mr. Bates — it might not be amiss to suffer Genl. Clark to engage the blacksmith of whom he speaks for the service of the Sauc and Foxes, provided he can be obtained on moderate terms. —

Page 2:
the compensation from the Indians to be received by him in peltries or fur at their option and at the rate of $1.25 per lb for beaver $2 — for a buck and $1 for a doe skin. — it might be well to instruct Genl. Clark to settle with and pay Mr. P. Dorion the amount of his wages and the accounts of expenditures he has transmitted, and to confine the future expenditures of Mr. Dorion to such objects and to such amounts only as he, Genl. Clark shall think absolutely necessary to the public service — Mr. Dorion having been ordered to reside among the Osages is worthy of approbation, as is also the course Genl. C. has taken with respect to the deputation from the Yanktons & Tonkans —

I think it would be well to instruct Genl. Clark to take measures for the recovery of the Osage prisoners, should your letter reach him previous to his leaving St. Louis and if otherwise to inform him of your having in such case confided that duty to Mr. Bates — it might not be amiss to suffer Genl. Clark to engage the blacksmith of whom he speaks for the service of the Sauc and Foxes, provided he can be obtained on moderate terms. —

The hyphen mark customarily is used to divide a word at the end of a line, but Meriwether Lewis chose instead a double hyphen to stylistically differentiate a divided word at the end of a line. (See page one, paragraph two, line eight, end of the line: "promise." ) As early as February of 1801 Lewis had implemented this unique artistic mark when writing to friends and family and, a month later, to government officials. Lewis had used the double hyphen prior to becoming Jefferson's private secretary and may have learned the technique when serving as a military paymaster. This small punctuation mark is a reminder of his business acumen in correspondence. (Merievther Lewis to Col. Nathaniel Massie, February 18, 1801, box 7, Meriwether Lewis Collection, Missouri History Museum; Meriwether Lewis to Thomas Jefferson, March 10, 1801, document 18909, reel 22, Thomas Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress; and http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/collections/jefferson_papers/.)

Page 3:
In answer to Mr. Bates's letter of the 15th of May, it would be well to inform him that Govr. Harrison had been instructed to make every exertion to recover the Osage prisoners in his territory, and request of Mr. Bates, in the event of Genl. Clark not being at St. Louis, to use his exertion for the same purpose among the Indians of Louisiana — inform him also that Genl. Clark had been instructed to contract (furnish) for the Horse-mill which had been provided the Osages — on the subject of the Horse-mill and Blacksmith that have been promised the Osages.

I think it would also be well to instruct Mr. Chouteau to make compensation to the Osage for the horses which were purchased from them by Lieut. Pike and Wilkinson — to inform him of the measures taken in order with a view to provide the Horse-mill and Smith for the Osages and request him to communicate this information to that nation in order to satisfy them for the present — inform him of the measures taken relative to the Osage prisoners, and request that also to be communicated to them. —

Page 4:
It will be necessary to write to Govr. Harrison fully on the subject of the Osage prisoners. I am convinced that it is much more in his power to obtain them than any other officer in that quarter, as it becomes more immediately his duty as those prisoners are among the nations in his territory — as a matter of general policy it appears to me that it would be well to mention to Mr. Bates, Genl. Clark and Govr. Harrison on the subject of recovering these prisoners, that nothing should be given to the individuals possessing them for their delivery, and that it would be better to give double the amount to the chiefs of some of their more powerful neighbours to compel their delivery than to re-

M. Lewis
Entitled, “Observations and remarks,” Lewis wrote this letter at the end of July 1807 to Henry Dearborn, who was not in Washington at the time. Lewis’s letter consisted of a lengthy answer to many questions on Indian relations and Indian trade posed by Dearborn in referencing two letters from William Clark (dated May 18 and June 1, which were received at the War Department on June 29 and July 7) and a letter from Frederick Bates (dated May 15 and received on June 29). Dearborn either forwarded the original letters to Lewis along with his own queries, or had the Clark and Bates letters transcribed and enclosed so that Lewis could read them. In reading all of these letters it must be borne in mind that Lewis was the governor of the Louisiana Territory, even though he had not as yet arrived in St. Louis to assume his position full time.

We know from other sources that at the time Lewis answered the Dearborn letter he recently had traveled from Philadelphia to Washington. Lewis departed Philadelphia on July 21 and arrived in Washington a few days before a meeting with William Simmons, the accountant of the War Department. We don’t know if Lewis took a night coach, which would have taken two days from Philadelphia, or rode a horse, which would have taken four more days to reach Washington.

Interestingly, Lewis was not idle in Philadelphia from the time of his arrival on April 14 until his departure three months later as some historians have claimed. Lewis had employed individuals to draw botanical illustrations and scenery for the publication of the journals, met with publishers and printers, paid newspapers to run his ad for the journals, began editing the journals and prepared additional material for another volume. He also attended three meetings at the American Philosophical Society, having become a member in November 1803.

In light of this new letter, I believe that he also was writing his treatise on the business of Indian trade in the Louisiana Territory, entitled, “Observations and Reflections.” Donald Jackson, editor of the Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, contended that Lewis wrote the greater part of this treatise before he departed Washington in August 1807. This letter proves that Jackson was correct.

The letter itself is clearly thought out, pragmatic, lucid in its detail, and refers to specific topics that involved William Clark, Pierre Chouteau and the Indian agency. Clark’s letters of May 18 and June 1, to which Lewis was responding, brimmed with territorial business.

Foremost on Clark’s agenda were the frequent visits of various Indian nations and how to deal with them. Since Spanish colonial times, Indian tribes had arrived in St. Louis asking for gifts of food, clothing and shelter. Nothing in this respect had changed although Jefferson had conveyed to Lewis that when on the expedition, he should invite as many tribes to Washington as he saw fit. Soon the news of the Indian delegations led by Pierre Chouteau, Amos Stoddard and others made its way back to the Louisiana Territory, and the leaders of Indian nations heard that the “Great White Father” in Washington was generous indeed. This prompted a huge influx of Indians into the town of St. Louis. Clark’s May 18, 1807, letter stated that “The Great Chief and about 120 Osage Warriors left this place three days ago; they were here for some time.”

Clark’s letter opened by stating that he had made arrangements since his arrival in St. Louis “to send the Mandan chief to his Town in Safety.” Dearborn had instructed him to use no more than 16 soldiers because there were few remaining in St. Louis, and barring that, Clark could entice traders going up the Missouri River with exclusive licenses. This is exactly the strategy that Lewis employed a year later. Under this arrangement, Clark obtained an additional escort from a private trading outfit and also a returning delegation of Sioux Indians. Clark feared that the Arikara might prove hostile to the group and felt that the larger party, almost 88 people, would help to deter them. Two other large companies of traders and trappers set out from St. Louis on May 1 intending to trap in the Rocky Mountain area for a period of two to three years. A smaller outfit also departed St. Louis in March; author John C. Jackson believes that it was led by John B. Thompson, who was bringing supplies upriver to John Colter. Thompson and Colter were members of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

Clark also spoke in detail in his letters about various Osage complaints, the most prominent being that they had been promised a mill to be built at their village and a blacksmith to reside with them. These complaints were not to be taken lightly as the Osage were the most powerful tribe on the lower Missouri River and a potential American ally. The tribal leaders also complained that James Wilkinson, son of General James Wilkinson, took seven horses and promised to pay for them, which had not been done. Indian nations from the eastern side of the Mississippi had taken some Osage prisoners and had returned only a few.

Clark informed Dearborn that a Sauk had murdered
a Frenchman at the mouth of the Missouri. He had dispatched Nicholas Boilvin to the Sauk nation to demand that the chiefs deliver the murderer. To the west the Spaniards had assembled an Indian conference and informed the nations that the Americans were untrustworthy. From the north came word that the British had felt the necessity of giving the Sioux the presents. Having encompassed the entire fur commerce of the region, Clark believed that the new company could injure the trade that the United States was trying to establish. The furs and peltries would fall into the hands of the British and various Indian nations and local Creole merchants would be deprived of the means of supporting their families.

Pierre Dorion, an Indian sub-agent, showed up in St. Louis with a large band of Sioux who had been invited to visit the president in Washington. Clark had no instructions on the subject of these sudden appearances of Indian tribes and wanted Dearborn to enact some policy to guide him in the future. Clark did not want to reject the Indian tribes because their friendship was important to the stability of the region. He decided to give them about $1,500 worth of presents, which would “give their bands an exalted opinion of the Paternal affection of the President to all the Natives who seek his protection.”

Dorion had not been paid since General Wilkinson appointed him to his official position in 1805 and demanded that Clark pay him. Though Clark refused, he felt the necessity of giving the Sioux the presents. Having resided with the Sioux for close to 30 years, however, Dorion’s influence in keeping the Sioux at peace was paramount. Clark asked Dearborn for additional money so that he could pay Dorion. Clark closed the letter by stating that the militia of the territory, as well as their arms and ammunition, were deficient.

Clark also sent Dearborn a letter dated June 1, 1807, which was almost a repetition of the May 18th letter. Boilvin had returned from the Sauk nation without the murderer but was promised him in due time. A Mr. Ewing, who had been sent to the Sauks in May 1804 to teach them farming, had been recalled and it was Clark’s job to inform Ewing. The Sauks also wanted a blacksmith and a St. Louis farmer had offered his services.

Bates’s letter of May 15 did not add any new information but one can discern that he did not want to become involved in the Indian business. While that was his intention three months into his tenure as territorial secretary, he also believed in free trade for American citizens. When Clark departed St. Louis in August 1807, Bates began issuing licenses to trade without restriction.

In response to Clark’s letters concerning the Indian business, Lewis was on point. He laid out detailed answers and told Dearborn what should be done. His answers regarding Dorion, the blacksmiths, Governor Harrison and Bates’s role after Clark’s departure show that Lewis was in command of the Indian business. On August 18, 1807, Henry Dearborn copied Lewis’s words almost verbatim to Clark and Bates, reminding us that Lewis was held in great esteem even at the highest levels of government.

This newly identified Lewis letter affords us a glimpse of the man during a period in mid-1807 from which we have little surviving written evidence. This lack of information has caused some rather wild speculation by some biographers, imagining Lewis reveling in a life of debauchery, or at least indolence, during a period when he was expected to travel to St. Louis to take up his duties as territorial governor. The letter shows Lewis exercising his duties as governor in absentia, answering crucial questions regarding the territory and the future of the United States on the frontier that could not be addressed by Clark, Bates or Dearborn. The letter presents a picture of a clear-headed administrator delayed in the East by duties other than those of his post, but one who will be quite ready to assume those duties upon his arrival in St. Louis.

There may be other letters still out there, undiscovered or unrecognized, that will provide more insight into the Lewis and Clark story. Just as we should go through microfilm frame by frame, the discovery of these letters, if they exist, also will be a slow and painstaking process, but a highly rewarding one for scholars and enthusiasts.

Foundation member Thomas Danisi lives in St. Louis. He and John C. Jackson co-authored Meriwether Lewis, which was released by Prometheus Books this year. The author thanks Dr. Robert Moore Jr. for his careful editing and insightful suggestions throughout this article.

Notes
2 Carter, Territorial Papers, Vols. 13 and 14; General Records of the Department of State, Dennis Fitzhugh to James Madison, August 15, 1808, RG59, M179, roll 22, p. 88, National Archives and Records Administration, hereafter cited as NARA.
I compiled a spreadsheet to track the delivery time of letters that Lewis, Clark, Bates and military personnel at Belle Fontaine wrote from St. Louis to Washington. Delivery time averaged 30 days. Curiously, Bates's letters arrived sooner than Lewis's or Clark's. Lewis's letters were the slowest to arrive and one important letter took 100 days. Some of his bills of exchange took even longer—132 days. The evidence from the data suggests that an adversary may have intentionally delayed Lewis's correspondence. The database will eventually be available for sale—probably through a Web site.

Records of the Office of the Secretary of War, Meriwether Lewis to the Secretary of War, RG107, 1807, S-1807, M222, roll 2, frames 0952-54, NARA.


Roll 2 piqued my interest more than roll 1 because of the dates, 1805-1807. Roll 1 includes the dates 1789-1804 and contains letters from Captain Amos Stoddard describing some of Lewis's requests sent from Fort Mandan.

L-1806, RG107, M222, roll 2, frames 0657-81, NARA.


William Clark to the Secretary of War, May 18, 1807, C-280, and June 1, 1807, C-282, RG107, M221, roll 5, frames 1326-36; Frederick Bates to the Secretary of War, May 15, 1807, B-243, M221, roll 4, NARA.

Lewis was appointed governor of the Louisiana Territory by Congress on March 3, 1807; he arrived in St. Louis to assume the role of full-time governor almost exactly one year later, on March 8, 1808.


For a transcription of the two letters see William Clark to the Secretary of War, May 18, 1807, and June 1, 1807, Carter, Territorial Papers, Vol. 14, pp. 122-125 and 126-127; and http://digital.library.umsystem.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?sid=81e778d2acb3898c845d0e696d235b&rec=3umlib;idno==urnlib000005.

Danis and Jackson, Meriwether Lewis, pp. 117, n. 13; 119, n. 53; and 128, n. 17.


Ibid. The Mandan chief Sheheke-Shote was enticed by Lewis and Clark near the conclusion of their 1804-1806 expedition to leave his home in present-day North Dakota and travel back with them to meet the president in Washington. Because of a hostile outbreak among the Arikara, who blocked passage to all on the upper Missouri River, a military expedition to return Sheheke-Shote failed in 1807, and was forced to return to St. Louis. This was the topic of Clark's letter. Following this failed expedition, the Mandan chief and his family languished in St. Louis. Lewis and Clark had promised the chief and his people that he would return within a year of his departure and had failed to keep this pledge, which prompted the efforts of many to find a solution for Sheheke's safe return in 1808 or 1809.

Since Clark mentioned that this incident took place "last fall," and Lewis mentioned Lieutenants Pike and Wilkinson, it is certain that this slight arose from preparations for Zebulon Pike's Southwestern Expedition in 1806. On August 27 of that year, when Pike and his command were staying with the Osage in southwest Missouri, he recorded in his journal that they procured six horses from the Indians. Lieutenant James B. Wilkinson was Pike's second in command, and may have been in charge of procuring the horses; he later led a detachment to explore the lower Arkansas River. Wilkinson split off from Pike's main party on October 28, 1806, and returned to St. Louis later that year. See Donald Jackson, The Journals of Zebulon Montgomery Pike (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1962).


Dorion pleaded with the Secretary of War to be paid but his request went unanswered. Pierre Dorion to the Secretary of War, November 19, 1807, D-208, RG107, M221, roll 6, frame 1903. Lewis finally paid Dorion. Meriwether Lewis to the Secretary of War, April 15, 1808, L67 and L68, M22, roll 4, NARA.


Secretary of War to William Clark and Frederick Bates, August 17, 1807, RG107, M15, roll 2, frame 0147, p. 328, NARA.
C.A. Grende's statue of Lewis and Clark shaking hands stands near where the two explorers joined forces at Clarksville, Indiana on their historic expedition to the Pacific Ocean and back.

"When they shook hands the Lewis and Clark expedition began"

Stephen Ambrose

Much of the Lewis and Clark story came to light during the 2003-2006 Bicentennial of the Expedition. In a way, it wrote a new chapter in our history books. Not only did we hear the untold story of Native American tribes, but we learned much about the Eastern Legacy of the Expedition.
Some biographies are written to honor a life of accomplishment, and others to reveal long-hidden secrets. Still others strive to correct unjust perceptions. A small number are written to settle old scores and vent grudges. *Meriwether Lewis*, the new biography of the famed explorer by Thomas C. Danisi and John C. Jackson, seems to belong to a biographical genre that seeks to fill notable gaps in the subject's record by introducing significant and newly found information as a result of careful and scholarly research.

"This biography is the belated defense of a good man," Jackson and Danisi declare in their preface. According to them, earlier biographers and others have been guilty of "uncritical reliance" on the Lewis and Clark journals, which in turn has led—though just how is never explained—to false judgments about the explorer's character and his untimely death.

Jackson and Danisi make it clear that they are not of the same school of "historians"—a word they employ in a near-derogatory sense—who have made such mistakes. They accept neither the murder theory nor the suicide theory. Instead, they point to a chronic malarial infection as the real cause of Meriwether Lewis's self-destruction. Indeed, their strong convictions about his death were clearly a chief motive for the writing of this biography. Before addressing that grim event, however, they review the explorer's pre-expedition life, cast a critical glance at the expedition itself and defend Lewis's later career as governor of the Louisiana Territory.

To their credit, Danisi and Jackson have uncovered much new information about Lewis's life and times. Pouring through archival materials in Washington, D.C., and Missouri, they have turned up a wealth of previously unheralded facts and commentary about the U.S. purchase of Louisiana and the territory's early days.

The authors shed fresh light on Lewis's connection with Philadelphia's scientific community. In an original approach, they draw on the papers of congressman and doctor Samuel Latham Mitchell (an enthusiastic expedition supporter) and those of Lewis's good friend, Philadelphia lawyer Mahlon Dickerson.

Lewis's servant, John Pernier, gets a more respectful treatment in this biography than in any other work on the explorers. The authors give the free black man credit for his loyalty to the troubled governor and his obvious sense of responsibility to the Lewis family and to Jefferson. This testimony to Pernier's faithfulness is a positive note in this otherwise dark tale of betrayal and disease.

Despite all their dedicated research, Danisi and Jackson have trouble constructing a coherent narrative. Like a boiling, eddying river current, their account slips back and forth in time and space with dizzying speed. A single paragraph on page 170 begins with Lewis in 1807 and abruptly finishes with him in 1802, a pattern repeated on many other pages.

The dense prose is sprinkled with stranded pronouns referring to things or people named many lines before, forcing the reader to backtrack in search of the "it" or "they" concerned. All too often, conclusions are attached to paragraphs that do not logically support them; in other cases, a paragraph begins with a strong statement of opinion, only to continue with unrelated observations.

It is only when the book reaches the point of Lewis's final decline that the narrative becomes lucid and the authors give their best arguments. Marshalling facts from expedition journals, medical
Adventure biography may inspire new enthusiasm

Meriwether Lewis Off the Edge of the Map
Janet and Geoff Benge
Emerald Books
$8.99 / 232 pages

This 232-page paperback published in 2001 is part of Janet and Geoff Benge’s Heroes of History series, which was developed to appeal to young “adventure” readers. They have some 50 narrative biographies to their credit, including Abraham Lincoln and Alan Shepard in this series. The model for this teen-oriented book is Undaunted Courage by Stephen Ambrose, which, in fact, is one of only four sources cited. Ambrose’s bestseller was the “hook” that interested thousands of readers in learning more about the Corps of Discovery, so this book might entice youth looking for a quick read to learn more for themselves.

Serious followers of Lewis and Clark will be amazed at the factual errors in this narrative of the journey, such as the expedition took a year to travel from St. Louis to Fort Mandan and that Lewis’s Newfoundland companion was named Scannon. (We now understand that early historians misread Seaman’s handwritten name.)

The return trip from Fort Clatsop is summarized in just 30 pages, and the book ends questioning whether Lewis was murdered or committed suicide as if the mystery will be solved in a sequel.

The authors purposely highlight adventure scenes in the story, adding their own dialogue to give the story suspense and excitement. Sometimes they leap ahead in time, using place names that were given to geographical landmarks long after Lewis and Clark had passed through the area. Rather than relying on the awe-inspiring journal entries to tell the stories of the expedition, the authors occasionally put words in expedition members’ mouths, such as the salt makers reporting “whales and dolphins swimming just off shore” while they worked on the Pacific Coast in January 1806.

Yet, this seems to be the license given to storytellers who often succeed in bringing people into a more serious study of historical figures. While this book lacks the careful research of most volumes in the libraries of Lewis and Clark enthusiasts, it might open doors for new readers to seek more information and travel the trail. If only the publishers would have listed the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation Web site as the next step for these readers! We can suggest many more ways to experience this story, including a look at the roles of the Indian tribes Lewis and Clark met along their journey.

—Larry McClure
Author makes disturbing argument for murder in the death of Lewis

How fun should history be? In recent years we may have heard it said more than once in praise of a grade school teacher or college professor that he or she "makes history fun." Naturally history has a dark side, too, but if we are not personally linked to the crimes, plots and assassinations we are discussing, it should all be part of the fun—or should it?

Questions such as this came to mind as I finished The Death of Meriwether Lewis, subtitled "A Historic Crime Scene Investigation," the new work by Kira Gale and James E. Starrs. Gale, who obviously was the moving force behind this project, clearly has a fun-loving side. She is the author of Lewis and Clark Road Trips after all, and in this present volume she has helpfully included road maps and a list of family-friendly attractions to be found near Lewis's gravesite.

A sense of fun is also found in the lengthy transcript of the 1996 coroner's inquest on the death of Meriwether Lewis held in Hohenwald, Tennessee, which forms roughly the first half of the book. Joseph Baugh, the district attorney of Franklin, Tennessee, who presided over the hearing (187 years after the fact) is without doubt a man with a sense of humor, and deftly managed to inject light moments amid the somber testimony of experts. Baugh was clearly in his element questioning witnesses, and his examination of forensic expert Dr. James Starrs is especially entertaining. The give-and-take during the inquest makes the transcript the liveliest section of this three-part book.

In general, the transcript is enlightening and interesting. The participants were speaking in person to a jury in a hot National Guard armory in June. We hear the emotional intensity of Professor John Guice, the kindly scholarship of the elderly Dr. Reimert Ravenholt, and the spit-and-polish professionalism of the FBI handwriting expert. We are able to read a variety of viewpoints and learn a bit more about the people who hold them. Even if the outcome of the hearing turns out to be a sober legal finding in favor of exhuming the 200-year-old remains of Governor Lewis, the transcript itself makes for enjoyable reading.

Despite its entertainment value and the tourist trade tie-ins, The Death of Meriwether Lewis also tries to be a serious work of historical analysis, and it is precisely there that the fun stops and the danger begins.

There is a distinctly different flavor to the second and third parts of the book, which are written by Kira Gale. Gale is a fluent writer who knows her purpose: to pin the blame for Lewis's death on someone other than the explorer himself. What is troubling, at least to this reader, is how single-mindedly and with little regard for the truth she pursues this goal.

To summarize, Gale's thesis is that Lewis was the victim of a plot led by the famous intriguer, General James Wilkinson, who was at least partly complicit in Aaron Burr's conspiracy and other nefarious schemes. According to Gale, Wilkinson was terribly threatened by Lewis's presence as governor of Louisiana and wanted him gone. Hence, Gale insists, the murder. To bolster this theory, she relies heavily on guilt by association in the time-honored American tradition of the Salem witch trials and the late Senator Joseph McCarthy. Anyone who was appointed to an army post by Wilkinson or was otherwise a "close associate" of the general is presumed to have been a cat's-paw of the assassination plot. In her "Introduction to the Documents and Evidence," Gale's prose is a tissue of suppositions stitched together with a "most likely" here and a "probably" there, but very thin when it comes to historical evidence for her key points.

Most disturbing is the arbitrary manner in which the fun-loving
tour guide author brushes aside the testimony of Thomas Jefferson and William Clark like so many crumbs off the family picnic table. These contemporary friends of Meriwether Lewis accepted the idea that he had willfully ended his own life. Responsible historians have always given their testimony important consideration, but not Gale. She writes that Clark was duped by forged letters, though Gale admits these letters “have never been found,” and it is not clear how she knows they were forged. Jefferson’s famous letter to Paul Allen in which he explicitly referred to Lewis’s “undaunted courage” and his “sensible depressions of mind” is dismissed as “contradictory.” Then, to further discredit the witness, Gale alleges that the Sage of Monticello “had very close ties to General Wilkinson.” Well, that settles it—or at least it does for Gale.

At no time does Gale attempt serious rebuttal to the idea that Lewis was clinically depressed and suicidal; this is treated as if it were a mere slander on the hero of the western expedition.

The book ends with an odd twist. After presenting 365 pages of analysis about Lewis’s demise, Gale suddenly declares, “Rather than dwelling on Meriwether Lewis’s death ... I prefer to keep an image in mind of a happier time. I imagine Lewis taking a hike in St. Louis ... to climb the great Indian mound overlooking the Mississippi River and enjoying the view.” Somehow, the faithful dog Seaman and a French-Mandan orphan boy are woven into the picture. At the end of a book crammed with dark conspiracy theory, this pleasant image is a jarring note, but Gale’s fun scenario has at least one thing in common with the conspiracy to kill Lewis, most likely neither of them ever happened.

—Mark Chalkley
Old newspapers hold historical treasures for those willing to hunt

BY E.W. GIESECKE

Early newspaper accounts of the Lewis and Clark Expedition await researchers willing to spool through microfilms of these aged and often hard-to-read documents. (The newspapers most often were discarded decades ago, yellow-brown and brittle.) In many cases these early-nineteenth century letters to the editor and news items never have been republished. On occasion, a researcher may find significant details of the expedition in these rare documents. I have made my own discoveries in this manner, first in the Norfolk Gazette and Publick Ledger where I found several news items related to the Lewis and Clark Expedition from 1806 and an announcement of Meriwether Lewis’s death in 1809. I searched for, but did not find, a republication of these articles.

In the November 3, 1806, Norfolk Gazette and Publick Ledger the Corps of Discovery’s September 22, 1806, arrival at Fort Belle Fontaine, Missouri, was announced by way of a letter from St. Louis. “On their arrival we fired a salute of 17 guns.” The unidentified writer of this brief note appears to have been quite excited. He left the men at the fort to mail the note to St. Louis. “On their arrival we fired a salute of 17 guns.” The unidentified writer of this brief note appears to have been quite excited. He left the men at the fort to mail the note to St. Louis. “On their arrival we fired a salute of 17 guns.” The unidentified writer of this brief note appears to have been quite excited. He left the men at the fort to mail the note to St. Louis.

The same edition of the Norfolk Gazette included an official government announcement of the party’s return. This announcement most likely was given to the press by the direction of President Thomas Jefferson. On October 24 he had received Lewis’s well-known letter written from St. Louis upon the expedition’s arrival there. Jefferson’s pronouncement said: “It is with the sincerest pleasure that we announce to our fellow-citizens, the arrival of captain Lewis, with his exploring party at St. Lewis.” The four-paragraph announcement summarizes the letter Lewis wrote to Jefferson on September 23 announcing the party’s successful return and provides details of the Corps of Discovery’s return trip from Fort Clatsop. (The letter took 31 days to reach Jefferson.) The article concludes: “Capt. Lewis expected to remain at St. Louis some days to settle with and discharge his men.”

It is interesting to consider how little public interest there appears to have been in the Lewis and Clark Expedition. This first government announcement of their safe return appeared on page two of the Norfolk Gazette, while advertisements on shipping and commerce, articles on Napoleon’s rampage through Europe and details of General James Wilkinson’s military and political maneuvers appeared on page one. Perhaps exploring uncharted territory in the great wilderness was not perceived by the public as the remarkable feat we might imagine.

The death of Meriwether Lewis on October 11, 1809, received similar treatment in newspapers. The Nashville Democratic Clarion reported on October 20, 1809, on page 3:

[Lewis] had shot a ball that grazed the top of his head, and another through his intestines, and cut his neck, arm and hand with a razor. When in his best senses he spoke about a trunk of papers that he said would be of great value to our government. He had been under the influence of a deranging malady for about six weeks—the cause of which is unknown, unless it was from a protest to a draft which he drew on the secretary at war, which he considered tantamount to a disgrace by government.

The Norfolk Gazette published an article on Lewis’s death in its November 20, 1809, issue that contained considerable details of his tragic death. The Norfolk Gazette used the Clarion article as a major source for its information, according to historian Donald Jackson. The Norfolk Gazette also included a letter from Lexington, Kentucky, with its source identified as a “gentleman from Nashville” who reported the following: “... an1, in addition to shooting himself twice in the body, and cutting his throat, shot himself in the head, and cut the arteries in his thighs and arms.”

In the death of governour Lewis the publick beheld the wreck of one of the noblest of men. He was a pupil of the immortal Jefferson: by him he was reared—by him he was instructed in the tour of the sciences—by him he was introduced to publick life, when his enterprising soul, great botanical knowledge, acute penetration and personal courage, soon pointed him out as the most proper person to command a projected exploring party to the N. W. Coast of the American continent.

He accepted the arduous command on the condition that he might take Mr. Clark with him. They started — The best wishes of the American people attended them. After an absence of two years (to us of anxious solicitude) we were cheered with the joyful return of our countrymen. A new world had been explored — additional knowledge in all the sciences obtained, at a trifling expense —
The voice of fame echoed the glad tidings through the civilized world—the name of Lewis was the theme of universal praise: The national legislature voted a complimentary donation to the brave little band.

Scarcely had the governor time to pay his respects to a widowed mother, before he was again called into active service. The Upper Louisiana had been torn to pieces by party feuds, no person could be more proper to calm them—he appeared and all was quiet.7

The November 17, 1809, edition of The Enquirer of Richmond, Virginia, included a letter from Staunton dated November 3 announcing Lewis’s death. The letter is short but bears comment on the writer’s suspicions as to the cause of Lewis’s death—bills for which the government refused to reimburse him. The bills that Lewis presented to the government for his “debt of a public nature; ... were protested [by federal government officials]—he was seized with a delirium, and in the fit, discharged a pistol at his forehead—the ball glanced; he discharged a second pistol at his breast.8

One cannot judge with fairness to Lewis, to what degree his financial problems may have aggravated any health problems.

Contemporary letters and obscure published items can add to our understanding of the pressures, demands and difficulties Lewis faced, and the honor and self-respect he struggled to maintain. The life and untimely death of Lewis already has been addressed in a considerable number of articles and books. It is unlikely that even a score of such newspaper articles from 1809 could change any significant part of his biography or clarify the circumstance of his death. However, we can glean small details that enhance the body of knowledge regarding some of the most celebrated and intriguing chapters in our nation’s history.

This is the beginning of the October 20, 1809, article on Lewis’s death, the first known printed report, which appeared in The Democratic Clarion of Nashville. Portions of this article appeared in several other newspapers.

Foundation member E.W. Giesecke is a published writer in Pacific Northwest exploration and maritime history. He has been a college instructor and is a retired colonel.

Notes
1 Norfolk Gazette and Publick Ledger (November 3, 1806), p. 2, col. 2. The September 22 letter reprinted in the newspaper is perhaps the earliest-known documentation of the expedition’s safe return.
2 Ibid., p. 2, col. 1. This appears to be the official U.S. Government announcement of the Corps of Discovery’s return to St. Louis. The author has not found it reprinted in any publication.
3 Ibid., The Norfolk Gazette’s source of this November 3rd printing was Washington City’s National Intelligencer, likely October 27 or a day or two later. The fact that Lewis planned to remain in St. Louis to release his men from official service was not in his September 23 letter to Jefferson and was reported for the first time in Jefferson’s announcement.
4 Nashville’s The Democratic Clarion (October 20, 1809), p. 3, cols. 1-2. This article is the earliest known printed report, nine days after Lewis’s death. A transcript of this article was published this year in Meriwether Lewis by Thomas C. Danisi and John C. Jackson (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 2009), pp. 329-330.
6 Norfolk Gazette (November 20, 1809), p. 3, col. 2.

7 Ibid.
8 The Enquirer (November 14, 1809), p. 2, col. 1. This report of a second shot at his breast differs slightly from “another through his intestines” as first reported in the Clarion’s October 20 article, but it affirms that the shot to his head grazed the skull. No third shot is mentioned in The Enquirer, leaving the Norfolk Gazette as the only known source to report that suggestion.

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Rivers deep and shallow: Robert Southey on Lewis and Clark

BY ALBERT FURTWANGLER

William Foley’s recent article (WPO, May 2009) about early British views of the Lewis and Clark Expedition features Robert Southey as a typically snobbish British reviewer. As Foley puts it: “Southey’s biting commentary on Lewis and Clark’s travels published in the Quarterly Review [of 1815] captured the tone and flavor of popular British writings on the subject. Reviewers especially delighted in poking fun at the place names Lewis and Clark assigned to their discoveries.” If Southey differed from his peers, it was because he had more flair in taking “a swipe at America’s lack of cultural sophistication.” As a clever poet he could weave American place names into 17 lines of satirical verse, lines which Foley quotes in full.

Southey’s little poem is undeniably entertaining and condescending, but it deserves a closer look. Its author does, too, especially in light of his accomplishments as a wide-ranging reader and writer. The poem happens to touch a nerve about the different ways British and American readers thought (and still think) about their landscapes, and it was presented in a very long review article in which Southey made an intelligent, engaging and balanced presentation of the Corps of Discovery.

Southey is a hard figure to pin down in brief terms. At first glance, his claim to fame seems to have been his career as a poet. He was, after all, the poet laureate for 30 years. He also lived near William Wordsworth, was brother-in-law to Samuel Taylor Coleridge and had notorious quarrels in verse with Lord Byron. In this light, he appears as a celebrated poet, member of the literary establishment of the early nineteenth century and conservative supporter of the Regency court. However, his latest biographer, W.A. Speck, stresses his steady output of writings of all kinds and repeats Byron’s comment that in Southey’s time, he was “the only existing entire man of letters.”

Southey developed from an ambitious poet and political radical in his teens and twenties into an assiduous and rather conservative cultural journalist and historian in his thirties and forties. In 1803 he moved to the Lake District to share a large house with Coleridge (their wives were sisters). Coleridge soon separated from his wife, leaving Southey as the main support for two families. He also faced financial demands from other in-laws and his younger brothers and was constantly pressed for money. A childhood friend had provided him with a modest annuity years earlier, after he gave up thoughts of being a doctor or minister and began the study of law, but Southey made most of his income by his pen. By the time he became poet laureate in 1813, he had written so much prose that he had set his hopes on becoming Historiographer Royal. Instead, he became a target of ridicule for the odes he had to turn out on royal occasions—and received a stipend that was less than his old annuity. In order to put bread on the table and keep his landlord in good humor, he had to worry from month to month, proposing projects, negotiating with publishers, cajoling collaborators, and dealing with editors’ assignments and vexing alterations.

Yet he evidently loved the scholarly side of writing for a living. When he settled into Greta Hall after Coleridge left, he fitted up a large upstairs drawing room as his study, with a carpet and white curtains and shelves for his large library. “Think of the joy it will be,” he wrote to his brother, “to arrange my books, and see them all together, and worship them every day.” There were 4,000 such books by 1809, and more than 14,000 by the time he died in 1843. Day after day he kept to a strict routine at his desk except for meal times and a morning walk, and so produced reams of poetry and prose including translations, editions of others’ writings, popular biographies of John Wesley and Lord Nelson, multi-volume histories of Brazil and the Peninsular War, frequent long articles in the Quarterly Review and other journals and a rambling novel that eventually ran to seven volumes. Some years he received dozens of books for review, and so applied himself to study history, economics, political arguments, religious controversies and diplomatic documents. He also liked exploration literature: “There is much amusement in reviewing Travels, and much intellectual profit.”

Around the time that Southey was reviewing the Lewis and Clark Expedition, Coleridge was working on the early chapters of his autobiography. There he developed a long passage about Southey’s works, and especially commended his prose writings as both learned and appealing:

Reflect but on the variety and extent of his achievements! He stands second to no man, either as an historian or as a bibliographer; and when I regard him as a popular essayist, (for the articles of his compositions in the reviews are for the greatest part essays on subjects of deep or curious interest rather than criticisms on particular works) I look in vain for any writer, who has conveyed so much information from so many and such recondite sources, with so many just and original reflections, in a style so lively and poignant, yet so uniformly classical and perspicuous; no one in short who has combined so much wisdom with so much wit; so much truth and knowledge with so much life and fancy. His prose is always intelligible and always entertaining.
These points all bear on Southey's review of the London edition of Biddle's *History of the Expedition*. The essay runs to more than 50 printed pages. It is not a topical critique of Lewis and Clark so much as a detailed presentation of the explorers' movements and discoveries from stage to stage across America, from St. Louis to the Pacific and back. To repeat Coleridge's words, it conveys much new information along with many just and original reflections. For readers of 1815, the review could have served as both an advertisement for the Biddle account and an engaging, briefer version for readers who would never buy it or read it through. Since the Quarterly Review circulated widely and was collected in bound volumes, this essay may well have introduced readers to Lewis and Clark's travels for many decades and in places where the Biddle *History* itself never reached.

Southey evidently came to this subject with substantial interest and preparation. In 1805 he had published a long poem about Madoc, a legendary Welsh prince who led forces across the Atlantic Ocean centuries before Columbus, and engaged in wars with the Aztecs. Madoc was mentioned twice in the review, in connection with searches for lost Welsh tribes along the Missouri. Southey also may have reviewed Patrick Gass's journal of the expedition for the Quarterly Review in 1809, for he mentioned that review and cited and quoted Gass several times. He referred to other North American explorations, particularly those of Jonathan Carver, John Evans and Alexander Mackenzie. In some places, he seems to have had several relevant books at hand as he wrote. A good example is his discussion of the mysterious sounds of explosions that Lewis and Clark heard in the Rocky Mountains, for he cited and quoted similar reports from travelers in Brazil and Mexico.

Finally, Southey seems thoughtful and evenhanded in appraising the that they should so carefully have observed all that they saw and recorded as it appeared to them. A reader who traces his comments to corresponding passages in Biddle soon will note what Southey himself must have perceived, that the two captains kept steadily recording details of several kinds at once. They were observing river dynamics on the same pages as bears' habits, and shrewdly taking notes on minerals, fish, birds, plants, mammals, reptiles, sounds, storms and compass bearings, often in very odd combinations. Yet the results were worth the retelling. Southey concluded that with the expedition's arrival back in St. Louis, "they reached the spot from whence they had set out, after having traveled nearly 9000 miles, and performed with equal ability, perseverance, and success, one of the most arduous journeys that ever was undertaken."

In the long sweep of Southey's article, therefore, the passage about place names and its little poem about rivers were minor touches. They amount to a playful digression. Yet even here Southey had more in hand than a modern reader might suppose.

The underlying joke in these lines is that a lot of American streams have shallow beds matched by trivial or shallow names. Southey had a tic of his own in noticing odd place names, but here he also had a particular provocation. Any reader of the journals can see that in early May 1805 along the upper Missouri, Lewis and Clark's inventiveness touched bottom, in every sense. They came upon a series of dry creek- and riverbeds, and according to Biddle's account they named them, in succession, Littledry,
Creek, Bigdry Creek, Bigdry River, and (again) Bigdry River. Southey protested sharply: “Of all the people who ever imposed names upon a newly discovered country the Americans have certainly been the most unlucky in their choice.” At this point he unrolled a list of absurd river names and the satiric poem about them. The poem opens with “Big-muddy” and ends with a nonexistent or composite river, the “great Big-Little-Dry.”

Ye plains where sweet Big-muddy rolls along,
And Tea-Pot, one day to be famed in song,
Where swans on Biscuit and on
Grindstone glide,
And willows wave upon Good
Woman’s side!
How shall your happy streams in after time
Tune the soft lay and fill the
sonorous rhyme?
Blest bards, who in your amorous verse will call
On murmuring Pork and gentle
Cannon-Ball;
Split-Rock, and Stick-Lodge, and Two-Thousand Mile,
White-lime, and Cupboard, and
Bad-humour’d Isle!
Flow, Little-Shallow, flow! and
be thy stream
Their great example, as it will
their theme!
Isis with Rum and Onion must
not vie,
Cam shall resign the palm to
Blowing-Fly,
And Thames and Tagus yield to
great Big-Little-Dry.

All but one of the American stream names were taken directly from Biddle, and the exception may have been miscopied. “Rum” may be Southey’s mistake for “Rush,” a creek that appeared along with Big Muddy and Grindstone in the same entry dated May 30, 1804. That date, of course, is at the very beginning of the expedition up the Missouri, when the party was passing landmarks others had named. So Southey’s attack here is on Americans, who generally “imposed names on a newly discovered country.” It is also worth noting that directly after his poem he paid close attention to the dry rivers, following the explorers’ example. “These Bigdry and Littledry rivers were all on the south of the Missouri, and plainly show what the rains must be in the wet season; Captain Clarke supposed that the channels were dry during the summer, autumn and winter. In the whole country which they had traversed since they left the Mandans they had seen only two fine springs of fresh water; all others were small and mostly impregnated with salt, with which they believed the Missouri itself to be tainted.”

To return to the poem, the opening lines have fun with silly juxtapositions—swans on a biscuit, willows on a good woman, a murmuring pork, a gentle cannonball. The last five lines make a starker contrast, between great and petty streams—the Isis (a tributary of the Thames), Cam (of Cambridge), Thames and Tagus (of Lisbon) versus the likes of Rum, Onion and Blowing-Fly. The final line mockingly imagines rivers that flow through great world ports being surpassed by streams that hardly flow at all. That is, American streams will surpass Old World rivers in some far-off future when this new and arid country “shall have its civilized inhabitants, its cities, its scholars, and its poets.”

As the poem proclaims: “How shall your happy streams in after time/ Tune the soft lay and fill the sonorous rhyme!” Southey, of course, was merely kidding. How can people who cannot name a river sensibly ever rise to the grace of really sonorous poetry?

Speaking of such far-off American poets, Southey gave a further flourish by suggesting an example for them—an example with an edge:

Flow, Little-Shallow, flow! and
be thy stream
Their great example, as it will
their theme!

Though it is almost invisible to modern readers, these lines allude to a long tradition in English poetry, a century and a half of verses linking rivers and poems, deep and shallow.

The tradition begins with a poem by John Denham called Coopers Hill, which was finished around the middle of the seventeenth century and influenced English poetry in two important ways. It displayed a new subtext in the handling of iambic pentameter couplets, and it seemed to initiate a new genre in English as a poem that described and celebrated a significant landscape. The leading couplet artists of the next century, including John Dryden and Alexander Pope, praised Denham as a pioneering master and copied his techniques. “Praise the easy vigor of a line,” Pope wrote in An Essay on Criticism, “Where Denham’s strength and Waller’s sweetness join” (lines 320-321).

In his Life of Denham late in the eighteenth century, Samuel Johnson praised him in other terms, as well: “Cooper’s Hill is the work that confers upon him the rank and dignity of an original author. He seems to have been, at least among us, the author [i.e., originator] of a species of composition that may be denominated local poetry, of which the fundamental subject is some particular landscape to be poetically described, with the addition of such embellishments as may be supplied by historical retrospection or incidental meditation.”

This is the pattern that would shape such famous later poems as Pope’s Windsor Forest, Thomas Gray’s Elegy Written in a Country Church Yard, Oliver Goldsmith’s The Deserted Village and Wordsworth’s Tintern Abbey, not to mention thousands of poems devoted to natural scenery since the Romantic era.

Denham included four lines in Coopers Hill that also took on a life of their own. They still can be found in collections of familiar quotations, for they were echoed by poets great and small to such an extent that Denham’s modern editors refuse to list all the variations. The poet stands on a high hill, where he can look across the
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Thames river basin. He addresses the river as his inspiration while it flows gently through the English heartland and connects that realm to the oceans of the world and the wealth of empires:

O could I flow like thee, and make my stream
My great example, as it is my theme!
Though deep, yet clear, though gentle, yet not dull,
Strong without rage, without over-flowing full! 16

Little wonder these lines echoed for so long, for they concentrate all of Denham's powers into one neat capsule: intricately balanced couplets, a finely wrought description of the Thames, and a deft celebration of that river as a symbol of British power and gentleness.

The price of fame is distortion, and probably the most famous imitation of Denham's passage was the twist that it got from Pope. Pope's mock-epic The Dunciad contains a series of attacks on his enemies and rivals, including a minor poet and critic named Leonard Welsted. He now would be long forgotten except that Pope preserved him forever as a fool and a tippler:

Flow, Welsted, flow! like thine inspirer, Beer;
Th' stale, not ripe; th' thin, yet never clear;
So sweetly mawkish, and so smoothly dull;
Heady, not strong, and foaming th'o' not full. 17

Obviously, Southey's lines wink back at both Pope and Denham. They are satiric couplets on the theme of rivers and empires. Was Southey aware of all these implications, and did he expect his readers to be? That is impossible to know. With a poetic allusion it is always hard to tell how fully the copier comprehends his source, affirms it or means to transcend it. Here, with Southey alluding to Pope's allusion to Denham, the echoes are far from simple. Simply by resorting to allusion Southey makes a point. He shows that he belongs to a world where poems overlap with other poems, and where a central landscape has been cultivated and familiarized by decades if not centuries of a common literature.

Could Americans with their shallow little rivers ever aspire to such intricate connections of landscape and literature? This question is still worth raising. Can America sustain significant, symbolic landscape poetry, or does New World geography call for radically new forms of art, just as Europe found in John Denham a new kind of poet for the Thames?

In retracing their route, Southey fully understood that Lewis and Clark were mapping great rivers as well as small. What he did not seem to see is that they thereby were realigning the tensions between geography and poetry. Their assigned task was to explore the Missouri River to its source and follow the most direct water route from there to the Pacific. One of their major findings was that a huge, high, complex barrier of Rocky Mountains divided these two river systems. Ever since their expedition, Americans have had to relate to a country far too vast for intimate familiarity. There is no Coopers Hill here for an American poet or succession of poets to stand on, and no single "pyramidal height-of-land," either, such as Thomas Jefferson had imagined might be the source of all the great Western rivers. 18 By pushing on and adding the Columbia watershed to the Mississippi-Missouri basin, Coles of Discovery vaporized any dream an American poet might have had of extolling just one American heartland, with a river running through it.

LCTHF member Albert Furtwangler has written about the expedition in Acts of Discovery (1993), Bringing Indians to the Book (2005) and in articles in WVO and other journals. He is a retired professor of English at Mount Allison University.

NOTES
3 Ibid., pp. 118, 126 and 254.
4 Ibid., p. 132.
6 [Robert Southey], review of Travels to the Source of the Missouri, and Across the American Continent to the Pacific Ocean (1814), in Quarterly Review, Vol. 12 (Jan. 1815), pp. 317-368; mentions of Madoc on pp. 320 and 327.
7 Ibid., pp. 319, 320, 332, 334-335 and 338.
8 Ibid., pp. 342-344.
9 Ibid., pp. 331-332.
10 Ibid., p. 368.
12 Southey, pp. 335-336.
13 Ibid., p. 336.
14 Ibid., p. 335.
2009 annual meeting promises to be memorable
Attendees will retrace the final journey of Meriwether Lewis

BY WENDY RANEY

When the August issue of *We Proceeded On* arrives, the Foundation's annual membership meeting normally is underway. This year, to commemorate the bicentennial of Meriwether Lewis's death on the Natchez Trace, the Foundation is breaking from tradition to hold its meeting in October. The planning committee has been developing the program and making arrangements since summer 2007 and its members have organized a first-rate event to celebrate Lewis's life and honor his memory.

The 41st annual meeting, "Courage Undaunted—The Final Journey," begins with a welcome reception, dinner and period dance on Sunday, October 4, at the Whispering Woods Hotel and Convention Center in Olive Branch, Mississippi. The first full day of the meeting includes traditional events such as the Foundation business meeting and annual awards luncheon. From there the meeting breaks new ground by providing special programming on the Lewis and Clark Expedition for the general public.

Every effort is being made by the planning committee to attract new audiences including teachers, students, young families, Boy Scouts and first-time annual meeting attendees. The agenda includes a mix of scholarship, entertainment, and opportunities for discussion and debate.

Formal presentations begin with an overview of the Chickasaw Trail and Natchez Trace to orient attendees and welcome them to the south, followed by a look at "The Enduring Legacy of Thomas Jefferson" by Daniel Jordan, president emeritus of the Thomas Jefferson Foundation.

The authors of *By His Own Hand?* (Jay Buckley, James Holmberg, John D.W. Guice and Clay Jenkinson) will present their theories on Lewis's death and later will hold an open roundtable discussion with meeting attendees. Thomas Danisi will share "A New Perspective on the Death of Meriwether Lewis—An Attempt to Clear His Name," and David Nicandri and Clay Jenkinson will discuss "Meriwether Lewis—A Life of Complexities," moderated by Stephenie Ambrose Tubbs.

Michael Petty will discuss "Lewis and Clark's Tennessee/ Mississippi Connection" and attendees will have the opportunity to learn about "The Lewis Airgun and Pistols" from experts Ernie Cowan, Rick Keller and Michael Carrick (followed by a chance to fire a reproduction of the airgun).

The schedule includes music around evening campfires; original Lewis documents and artifacts on display; dinner at the living history encampment pavilion; and a tour on October 7 to Hohenwald, Tennessee, where attendees will honor the life and achievements of Meriwether Lewis.

The local planners, with assistance from volunteers, enthusiasts and experts around the country, have planned a spectacular event with a special emphasis on providing enjoyable educational experiences for young people. The Foundation continues to explore ways to attract youth and young families to the trail and this meeting provides opportunities like no other. The registration deadline is September 15, 2009. For more information on the meeting or to register, visit www.lewisandclark.org.
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Check out the highlights:

Optional Pre-Tour: Memphis Queen III Riverboat Trip & Ceremony at the Site of Ft. Pickering, October 4, 2009

Lewis & Clark Lectures, Presentations & Demonstrations

"By His Own Hand?" Debate

Travel the Chickasaw Trail & the Natchez Trace

Commemorative Service at Grinder's Stand

Optional Post-Tour: Natchez to New Orleans, October 8 - 10, 2009

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