THE FINAL JOURNEY

A solitary hero — Lewis’s land warrant — Medical mysteries
The Death of Meriwether Lewis
Exploring the myths and probabilities surrounding the controversy
By David J. Peck

Meriwether Lewis’s Land Warrant: An Untimely Reward
By Thomas C. Danisi

Reviews
The Fifth Generation: A Nez Perce Tale; William Clark: The Further Journey; Lewis & Clark: Weather and Climate Data from the Expedition Journals

L&C Roundup
Foundation presents awards; Thom earns Indiana writing award;
Foundation hosts 12th conference on national scenic and historic trails

Soundings
Lewis carried a pair of “gentleman’s” flintlock pistols on his final journey

Flintlock pistols, p. 39

On the cover
This illustration shows Meriwether Lewis traveling on the Natchez Trace just before he reached the Grinders’ cabin where he met his untimely end some eight to ten hours later. Today, this small section of the Natchez Trace Trail is rarely seen or walked upon and has remained nearly unspoiled over the years. It lies just a few yards off Highway 20, which runs between Hobenwald and Ssummertown in Tennessee, close to the Natchez Trace Parkway entrance.
Editor's Note

Issue previews annual meeting presentations

I have been fortunate to attend each Foundation annual meeting since 2004, which has provided me the opportunity to listen to exceptional scholarly presentations, experience segments of the Lewis and Clark Trail first hand, and enjoy the fellowship and enthusiasm that are hallmarks of our organization. Each year I share some of the presentations in *We Proceeded On*. This issue we bring several presentations to readers on the front end of our annual meeting and look forward to sharing several more in upcoming issues.

As most WPO readers know, this annual meeting has been moved from August to October to commemorate the death of Meriwether Lewis. The first week of October, members and scholars will gather in Olive Branch, Mississippi, to honor Lewis and remember his legacy.

This issue of WPO opens with an article by David Nicandri ("Meriwether Lewis: The Solitary Hero," page 8), who will make a keynote presentation at the annual meeting on the complexities of Meriwether Lewis. His article is an interesting analysis of how Lewis may have orchestrated the western expedition so that he alone could experience the grandest moments of discovery: the Great Falls of the Missouri, the first glimpse into the Columbia country from the crest of the Continental Divide, the Pacific Ocean and several others.

In May 2006, WPO was dedicated to "The Guns of Lewis and Clark." That issue stands out as one of the most popular issues in our journal's 35-year history. Michael Carrick contributed an article to that issue of WPO, and at this year's annual meeting, new theories on the land warrant Lewis received as compensation for his exploratory expedition to the Pacific Coast ("Meriwether Lewis's Land Warrant: An Un timely Reward," page 32.)

Finally, in this issue, we feature a discussion and analysis of the medical theories that have long been proposed regarding Lewis's death. ("The Death of Meriwether Lewis," page 22.) Dr. David Peck presents the various medical theories, compares them with information in the historical record and discusses their plausibility based on modern medical science.

At the Foundation, and in WPO in particular, we have made every attempt to focus on the achievements of Meriwether Lewis and the tales of adventure and exploration he crafted. For those interested in pursuing a debate over whether his death was a suicide or murder, the Foundation's 2009 annual meeting provides ample opportunity. Scholars Jay Buckley, James Holmberg and John D.W. Guice will present a panel discussion led by moderator Clay Jenkinson on how Lewis died. Jenkinson also will moderate a roundtable discussion on the same issue that is open to participation from all meeting attendees. Throughout the 2009 annual meeting, new theories on
his death will be presented and information associated with his last days will be discussed.

I am looking forward to presenting fresh topics and introducing new scholars in upcoming issues of \textit{WPO}. I am particularly excited about an issue that will be co-edited by Dr. Jay Buckley, a professor at Brigham Young University, and include articles by his students.

Foundation members cannot help but notice there have been significant changes at the Foundation in recent months. I want to take this opportunity to assure you that you will not be seeing any major changes in the way we produce and deliver \textit{We Proceeded On}. A Foundation mailing early this summer announced that we are "going green." While we will be transitioning \textit{The Orderly Report} to an online e-newsletter this fall, we do not plan to make changes to this publication.

\textit{The Orderly Report} will be delivered on a quarterly basis by e-mail to those members who have supplied the Foundation with that information. Foundation headquarters will mail a paper copy of \textit{The Orderly Report} to members who call to request it.

**Goodbye to a dear friend**

This morning as I prepared to send this issue to the printer, I learned that a longtime, very dear friend of the Foundation and \textit{We Proceeded On} passed away. It is with deep sadness that I share with readers of \textit{WPO} the passing of Bob Hunt of Seattle, Washington. Bob was a prolific contributor to \textit{WPO}, writing more than 20 published articles, and he attended annual meetings for two decades, until declining health prevented him from doing so in 2007. We will include a full obituary on Bob in the February 2010 issue. The Foundation staff and board of directors extend their deepest sympathies to Bob's wife, Pat, and their family and friends.

—Wendy Raney
Editor
wpo@lewisandclark.org
Opportunities for discovery continue; Lewis’s death

It is very exciting to read in the August issue of We Proceeded On that letters and documents related to the Lewis and Clark Expedition are still surfacing after a passage of 200 years. In reading James Holmberg’s article (“Fairly launched on my voyage of discovery,” p. 20), I was particularly impressed by the astuteness of librarian Anne Shepherd, who identified an unsigned letter from Lewis to his friend James Findlay with only the date of the letter and place of posting. Lewis and Clark scholars previously had not found this letter because the last page, presumably containing the signature of Meriwether Lewis, is missing.

Perhaps someone stole the signature page hoping to sell Lewis’s signature to autograph collectors. Maybe this page resides in someone’s autograph collection given that the full page of a signed letter, rather than the cutout signature, is more valuable.

I encourage members of the Foundation who are knowledgeable in the autograph-collection field to please post requests on appropriate Web sites and forums asking any collectors who have Lewis and Clark material to please forward photocopies to the editor of WPO. It should be stressed that they could be forwarded anonymously, to relieve the fears of those who are afraid they might be accused of theft or asked to return the document. Researchers are only interested in the content of the documents.

Michael F. Carrick
Tualatin, Ore.

I have been a Foundation member for 20 years and read each issue of WPO with reverence from cover to cover. In my opinion, the August 2009 issue was the best issue ever. Thanks for everything you do at WPO to get us great historical information. Keep up the good work.

Bill Daniel
Atlanta, Ga.

Reports of his death were premature

The debates about the death of Meriwether Lewis have bottomed out, leaving us mired in a rut of repetitive theories and redundant debate. The tiresome “suicide versus murder” controversy is alive, if not well, and the “usual suspects” scheduled to speak at the annual meeting promise just more podium thumping for attendees who either made up their minds long ago or have ceased caring. Lacking compelling
new hard evidence, physical and documentary—not the contradictory, fragmentary and hearsay “testimony” of suspicious characters—the issues of how, when and even where Lewis died will never be resolved. The last truly verifiable aspect of Lewis’s final journey was the day he left Fort Pickering.

Let’s proceed on issues never investigated. Since all good history begins with a compelling question, let’s stop haggling over how Lewis died and ask whether he really died in 1809. I challenge my fellow historians to consider—and thoroughly research—this proposition: Meriwether Lewis did not die by any means anywhere in 1809. His “death” was faked, a well-coordinated ruse that allowed him to retire from public office as he and others wished and disappear to enjoy an extended life in obscurity. Resignation would have been seen as cowardly and a presidential dismissal, humiliating. Either would have played into the hands of Lewis’s enemies in St. Louis, while his “death” evoked sympathy and gave Clark greater prominence in dealing with them.

That fresh perspective is no more fictitious than the sheer speculations and mere suppositions derived from uncorroborated folktales. Besides, it is the only hypothesis that addresses all of the perplexing issues: the lack of the corpse; no real proof that Lewis even made it to Grinder’s Stand; the inability of anyone other than Pernier to recognize Lewis (there were no widely circulated portraits); and inaccurate marksmanship and egregious contradictions about wounds (there were none, only people who forgot their “lines”). Most importantly, the non-death of Lewis would explain the “inexplicable”—the seeming callousness of Jefferson and Clark in failing to investigate the Tennessee affair or even to retrieve their dear friend’s body for proper Christian burial with military honors. That has always aroused disbelief and even outrage (see John Young’s letter in WPO, August 2008).

What if Jefferson and Clark were so nonchalant because they knew that Lewis was alive and were afraid to arouse public attention with even a pseudo-official inquiry? Was it not very convenient (and odd) for Clark to be in Kentucky while Lewis was away, because if he had remained in St. Louis, his inaction would have been suspicious? Was it a mere coincidence that another government-funded explorer, Thomas Freeman of the Red River Expedition, just happened to be close enough to transport the invaluable Lewis and Clark Expedition journals to Monticello?

Does not an elaborate ruse best explain why Neely raced to Nashville without a corpse, sent an “urgent” dispatch to Jefferson that took five weeks to reach him and then gave contradictory reports to the Nashville press?

Without the huge, dark shadow cast by the rigid prejudgments of the suicide and murder camps, a researcher beginning with a clean slate could use this hypothesis to stimulate new investigations of the trans-Appalachian West in the early republic. Could Lewis have vanished without being detected? Where would he have gone? The Mississippi Territory was huge and sparsely settled but contained many Virginians. “Neely’s Chicsaksaws” would have honored him for crushing their Osage enemies with a dispossession treaty in 1808. Spanish territory was a possibility, and the old spymaster General James Wilkinson might have assisted Lewis’s escape to silence his accusations of misdeeds to the relief of the government. Finally, there was Louisiana, governed by a seventh-generation Virginian, William C. C. Claiborne, a staunch Jeffersonian who had married a Lewis.

If we devote 150 years to these inquiries, as we have done for the issue of Lewis’s presumed death, some fascinating—and finally fresh—insights might emerge.

Dr. J. Frederick Fausz
Floissant, Mo.

I would like to respond to the criticism raised by Thomas Danisi (WPO, Letters, August 2009) to a series of letters I have written to WPO in the last year. Danisi wrote, “I constantly find myself having to plead with her for some shreds of historical evidence to debate.” There are plenty of “shreds” to debate.

Among the most important pieces of historical evidence related to Meriwether Lewis’s death are two letters by Captain Gilbert Russell to President Thomas Jefferson. The information in those letters challenges disinformation spread by those who conspired in Lewis’s death. Russell wrote in those letters that Lewis was healthy when he left Fort Pickering and he did not mention prior suicide attempts by Lewis.

That counters two letters William Clark received from Russell. Clark wrote to his brother Jonathan on November 26, 1809, that he has just received letters from Russell, the commander of Fort Pickering, with information that “Govr. Lewis was there detained by him 15 Days in a State of Derangement most of the time and that he had attempted to kill himself before he got there.” Clark also wrote that “Capt. russell Sais he made his will at the Bluffs and left Wm Merrewether & myself Executers and decreted that I Should dispose of his papers &c. as I wished.” I contend that these letters were forgeries, not written by Russell. These letters are missing, so the handwriting cannot be examined, but their content is obviously false.

In Captain Russell’s letters to Jefferson (dated January 4, and 31, 1810), he reported that Lewis “in about six days was perfectly restored in every respect & able to travel.” He goes on to say that Lewis waited at Fort Pickering for six or eight more days with the expectation that Russell would receive permission from General James Wilkinson to travel with him to Washington. Russell also was having trouble getting reimbursed for government expenses. Wilkinson denied Russell’s request to travel. The letters to Jefferson are filled with details of Lewis’s last days. He made no mention of attempted suicides, mental derangement or a second will written at the fort.

The first will was written September 11, 1809, at New Madrid on Lewis’s trip down river to Fort Pickering. The brief will left everything to his mother, Lucy Marks. Historians have searched in vain for a second will written at Fort Pickering.

I finally realized there was no second will and that Clark had received forged letters. I believe the forged letters contained mention of a second will to convince Clark of their authenticity and lend support to the story that Lewis committed suicide. Instead, the mention
Letters (cont.)

of a second will, along with other pieces of disinformation, proves the letters were false. If, indeed, a second will had been written at Fort Pickering, Captain Russell certainly would have reported this fact to the president.

Jerry Richards, a former head of the Federal Bureau of Investigation Documents and Photos Division, testified at the 1996 Coroner’s Inquest [into Lewis’s death] that Captain Russell’s statement dated November 26, 1811, was neither written nor signed by Captain Gilbert Russell or Major Jonathan Williams, whose names appear on it. The “Russell Statement” contains the same kind of disinformation found in the letters that William Clark received and often is cited as proof that Lewis committed suicide.

Only after assembling these documents for publication did the evidence of a “cover story” become clear to me. Unfortunately, this “cover story” has distorted the truth concerning Lewis’s last days.

I would like to congratulate Mr. Danisi for finding the letter written by Lewis to Secretary of War Henry Dearborn in July of 1807, which he wrote about in the August 2009 issue of WPO.

KIRA GALE
Omaha, Neb.

In recent issues of WPO, those in favor of the theory that Meriwether Lewis was murdered tend to be scoffed at, and their information brushed aside to make way for statements in support of suicide theories, which usually involve the same repeated statements and information. William Clark’s reaction to Lewis’s death, which he shared in a letter to his brother, Jonathan, on October 28, 1809, has been used to support suicide theories:

I fear this report has too much truth, tho’ hope it may have no foundation. [sic] My reasons for thinking it possible is founded on the letter which I rec’d [sic] from him at your house, in that letter he says he had some intimation [sic] of going thro’ by land ...

Many historians believe the letter may have revealed a great deal about Lewis’s mental state and was a major reason Clark immediately believed Lewis killed himself. This one of the places where I believe that historians are wrong.

Clark wrote to Jonathan that he thought the news had some truth to it because of the contents of Lewis’s letter, but did not say that Lewis experienced any emotional or psychological abnormalities.

If Clark had sensed that Lewis was unstable, he surely would have told his trusted brother in the letter. When people say that Clark never doubted Lewis committed suicide, they ignore the fact that he was surprised by the news of Lewis’s death and that he had no immediate reason to distrust the newspaper accounts.

Kira Gale and James E. Starr’s book The Death of Meriwether Lewis: A Historic Crime Scene Investigation, revealed to me startling new information on letters written by Captain Gilbert Russell. It was already apparent that Russell’s 1811 statement and the letters he wrote to President Thomas Jefferson on January 4, and 31, 1810, were very different in content and tone. In 1811 he wrote about Lewis more harshly than he had in the previous letters and he used a more melodramatic tone.

Also, Russell mentioned a prior suicide attempt by Lewis, which he did not mention in the previous letters. Various handwriting experts have found that Russell did not write the 1811 statement nor did any of his known secretaries. It appears to be a forgery. I believe this issue calls for more research and investigation.

I also challenge the suicide theory based on the ballistics report on the weapons purported to have killed Lewis, but I will save that for another time. Regardless of how Lewis died, it was a great tragedy and he deserves to be properly honored. This man did more in 35 years than most people accomplish in twice that time.

SHANNON KELLY
A.P. History Student
Post Falls, Idaho

Since 1809, mystery has shrouded Meriwether Lewis’s death. Lewis and Clark historians and devotees have debated ceaselessly about what caused it. Did he die by his own hand or was he murdered as the victim of a robbery or a conspiracy led by some nefarious character? There continues to be no consensus on how he died and there are no reports of an eyewitness to the shooting.

This debate began in 1809 when Lewis’s mother, Lucy Marks, believed he was murdered, while President Thomas Jefferson and William Clark accepted reports of suicide. Less than forty years later, in 1848, the Tennessee Legislature appointed a committee to oversee the design and construction of a monument over Lewis’s grave. The committee opened the grave to make sure the monument would be placed in the correct location and examined the upper portion of the skeleton. They concluded, “It seems to be more probable that he died by the hands of an assassin” than by suicide.

In 1996, an eight-person Lewis County, Tennessee, Coroner’s Jury heard sworn testimony of historians and scientists. The jury unanimously concluded that there is “very little tangible evidence” for a credible ruling on the manner of his death and that an exhumation should take place. The District Attorney General sought a state court order for an exhumation, but the National Park Service (NPS) intervened through the federal district court in Tennessee, which ruled that the Archeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) permit process was the only way to secure authorization for an exhumation.

Since 1996, a group of Lewis family members have sought the necessary ARPA permit. In January 2008, Lyle Laverty, assistant secretary of the interior for fish, wildlife and parks, determined that the exhumation was appropriate and in the public interest and that final approval of the ARPA permit would be subject to compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act.

On June 17, 2009, Dan Wenk, the NPS acting director re-affirmed this statement on behalf of the Department of Interior and the NPS. The necessary environmental assessment is now underway.

Today, many Lewis family members seek the truth about his death, to set the historical record straight for us and for future generations of Americans.
We have launched a Web site, www.solve themystery.org, and undertaken a public relations campaign to call attention to this initiative.

Some historians and other scholars have objected to our campaign for an exhumation. Frankly, their resistance puzzles us, as good scholarship is a search for the truth. There are those who think an exhumation of remains may be inconclusive so we should not disturb the burial site. While there is the chance that the project may not give us definitive answers, we believe it necessary to give science a chance to solve the mystery and provide us more information than we now have.

In the words of President Thomas Jefferson: "For here we are not afraid to follow truth wherever it may lead ..."

THOMAS C. McSWAIN, JR.
Shepherdstown, W.V.
HOWELL LEWIS BOWEN
Charlottesville, Va.
JANE LEWIS SALE HENLEY
Weems, Va.

The authors are great-great-great-great nephews and niece of Meriwether Lewis.

EDITOR’S NOTE
The previous letter is not to be taken by readers as an endorsement by the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation for exhumation at Meriwether Lewis’s gravesite. The Foundation’s board of directors discussed the proposed exhumation at its May 2008 board meeting in Atchison, Kansas. The board unanimously approved the following motion: “That the LCTHF thoughtfully and respectfully decline to take a position on exhumation of the Meriwether Lewis gravesite.”

Those interested in this topic are invited to attend the Foundation’s annual meeting and participate in discussion and debate on this and other issues.

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@lewisanclark.org). The deadline for submitting letters for the February 2010 issue is January 2, 2010.

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MICHAEL HAYNES

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A life-size statue of Seaman, the Newfoundland dog that accompanied the Lewis and Clark Expedition will be installed at the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Interpretive Center in Great Falls, Montana. A smaller version cast in bronze is available in a limited edition of 100.

Renowned wildlife sculptor Joe Halko of Choteau, Montana created the clay model prior to his death in March 2009. It was Halko’s last project before he passed away. Halko worked as a full-time sculptor for more than 25 years and had a keen sense for injecting personality into his pieces.

The project is partially sponsored by Dr. James and Carol Mungas, whose Newfoundland dog Windsor was popular among tourists during the Center’s early years. Windsor’s photos served as the model for the sculpture.

The Foundation is offering a smaller version of the life-size Seaman statue in bronze on a maple base (shown here). The bronze measures approximately 10 inches high and 11 inches long. Sales from the smaller bronzes will fund the large statue.

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November 2009 We Proceeded On — 7
Having sighted an opening to the Pacific Ocean on November 8, 1805, members of the Lewis and Clark Expedition anticipated one more day's worth of travel would take them to the end of their voyage. In a turn of events in keeping with Greek mythology, the expedition became marooned for the better part of a week at a location William Clark fittingly named “dismal nitch.” After days of pummeling by the tempestuous weather, on November 14th Meriwether Lewis jumped ship, in a manner of speaking, and with a few other men rounded “Point Distress,” a promontory that had kept the party placebound. Clark and the bulk of the party were left exposed to the elements back at the nitch. Lewis's departure begs for scrutiny and doing so sheds considerable light upon the actual working relationship between the two men, in contrast to the bromides frequently offered about their co-captaincy.

Consider first that Lewis's “object” in this undertaking, per Clark, was to “examine if any white men were below within our reach.” This explanation strains credulity. John Colter had just returned from the bay around “Point Distress” and conveyed the news that no traders or explorers were to be found. Colter hardly would have missed sighting ships around the point if there had been any. Private Joseph Whitehouse said Lewis ventured off to visit the Indian village Colter saw at the mouth of the river—abandoned at the time—an even less credible scenario.

There is a more plausible explanation for Lewis's evacuation from Dismal Nitch. Clark's journals, which form the predominant record of transactions from the time the expedition left the Nez Perce villages, inevitably favor the author’s activities in terms of their visibility. Notwithstanding this bias, from the time of Meriwether Lewis’s profound sickness that literally laid him low on the Clearwater River, he rarely figured in the Columbia River story, that is, until November 14th at Dismal Nitch. Lewis’s maneuver was grounded neither in the quest for the safety of the party, nor an ethnographic inquiry. His motivation was narrow and purely personal. Colter's report of Alexander Willard and George Shannon proceeding on along that “sandy beech” risked that someone other than Lewis might be credited with the ultimate moment of discovery—reaching the Pacific and that first dramatic
Lewis had nearly all the other epochal moments of discovery to himself. He was the first to see the Great Falls of the Missouri, and he had that legendary first glimpse into the Columbia country from the crest of the Continental Divide. Was an enlisted man going to beat Lewis to the western edge of the continent? Lewis developed a case of what mountaineers call "summit fever."

Several clues substantiate this thesis. First, there is the curious phrasing Clark used to describe Lewis leading an advance party out of Dismal Nitch. Contrary to the usual practice of characterizing all major decisions through the use of the semantically inclusive "we," Clark states forthrightly that "Capt Lewis concluded" on this course of action. Then there is the evidence embedded in a note Lewis posted at Fort Clatsop just prior to its abandonment in March of 1806. Lewis's hope was that some "civilized person" might stumble upon the fort with his note still attached to its walls. Thereby the "informed world" would learn of the expedition that was "sent out by the government of the U' States." In this missive Lewis explained that the party penetrated the continent by way of the Missouri and Columbia rivers, "to the discharge of the latter into the Pacific Ocean, where they arrived on the 14th November 1805" (emphasis added). This date was purposely misleading on two counts. The great preponderance of the party on the 14th of November remained marooned east of Point Distress. William Clark and the bulk of the detachment would not successfully depart Dismal Nitch for another day. Secondly, the Colter party rounded Point Distress, the last impediment to westward travel, on the 13th.2

Lewis had made a habit of doing the same thing he did to Clark at Dismal Nitch. It was no coincidence that Lewis was the first to see the Great Falls of the Missouri or the Continental Divide; he engineered those moments. As Lewis and Clark College Professor Stephen Beckham phrases it, Lewis "was quick to ... dash for the prizes of discovery." Clay Jenkinson was the first scholar to note this tendency, observing that "Lewis took command at critical moments in the Expedition. He seems to have wanted to make the great discoveries of the Expedition alone." Lewis, Jenkinson writes, was a man "who struck poses."3
With most explorers, this penchant for egotism would not have presented much of a problem. Lewis, however, had a co-commander. The lore of the expedition holds that the captains always saw eye to eye. There were, in truth, no overt disturbances in what Gary Moulton terms “their remarkably harmonious relationship,” and from this he concluded, “Lewis apparently treated Clark as ... a partner whose abilities were complementary to his own.” However, a deconstruction of the journals proves that Clark occasionally was disappointed by Lewis’s behavior and possibly annoyed by it.4

From the beginning of the venture Clark was disadvantaged by his relationship to Lewis. Clark shared in the command of the expedition, Clay Jenkinson writes, “by virtue of Meriwether Lewis’s magnanimity rather than in actual rank.” Lewis had failed to deliver on Clark’s promotion to captain. This gaffe resulted in both men having to pretend Clark was equal to Lewis in actual rank. Consequently, as the second man in, it should not surprise us that Clark would have been, as James Holmberg states, “very conscious of titles, rank, and his pride.” Clark later reminded Nicholas Biddle that in rank and command he was “equal in every point of view” (emphasis in the original). When considered in conjunction with the larger body of Clark’s crafty edits, demurrals and disavowals in his own record plus those he later embedded in Lewis’s journals, his post-expeditory comment to Biddle was tantamount to a protest. Clark was insistent that posterity not see his work in the field as that of a second in command or a junior officer even if, in practical reality, his rank was lower than Lewis’s, as those in power in the nation’s capital would have known too well.5

It was only through the fateful turns in Lewis’s life that Clark had access to his associate’s expeditory record. Tellingly, Clark’s first expressed concern after learning of Lewis’s death was to ask rhetorically, “what will become of my” corrected to “his papers” (emphasis added). Clark had his own sense of ownership about the expedition and he knew the journals Lewis was carrying when he died were essential to history’s appreciation of their joint venture.6

Clark occasionally was able to partially correct or otherwise recalibrate the record so as to more accurately reflect his contributions to the expedition. Clark never had access to certain documents (e.g., manuscripts other than the journals) and when Lewis went unchecked there is no doubt about whose expedition it was. In a private letter to his mother written shortly before the expedition departed Fort Mandan in the spring of 1805, Lewis described having “arrived at this place ... with the party under my command” (emphasis added). Excluding Clark may have been understandable if not excusable while writing to a close family member. However, Lewis later published a prospectus for the forthcoming account of travels and took credit not only for the prospective narrative but also the master map, which work had always been Clark’s specialty. This map was to be compiled “from the collective information of the best informed travellers through the various portions of that region, and corrected by a series of several hundred celestial observations, made by Captain Lewis during his late tour” (emphasis added). This was double diminution of Clark’s role: Lewis deigned to correct Clark while at the same time minimizing his primary contribution. It was precisely this hauteur that David McKeehan skewered in defense of his right to publish Sergeant Patrick Gass’s journal in the face of Lewis’s opposition to unauthorized accounts of the expedition.7

Though the expedition’s journals have the surface appearance of being an empirical chronology of events, they are, often as not, autobiography. In her explication of the exploratory genre, Barbara Belyea distinguishes between the narrative form of “the ‘I’ who writes and the ‘me’ who is written about.” Inevitably, Belyea states, the explorer as writer becomes “the main textual subject.” Though this narrative phenomenon was normative for explorers, Lewis took it to extremes. Consider, for example, Lewis’s famous description of the scene when the expedition departed Fort Mandan. First, Lewis explicitly referred to Columbus and Cook, and secretly to Alexander Mackenzie via his expropriation of the term “darling project.” Next he introduced the excitement associated with entering “a country at least two thousand miles in width, on which the foot of civilized man had never trodden.” Lewis then wrote: “I could but esteem this moment of my departure as among the most happy of my life” (emphasis added). Framing this sentence Lewis consciously struck over the word “our” before “departure,” so this solitary construction was no accident. As Clay Jenkinson says, here “Lewis’s self-absorption is nearly complete.” Lewis reduced a moment of common endeavor to what University of Rochester Professor Thomas Slaughter calls a “singular and possessive accomplishment” that had the effect of reducing poor Clark “to the status of crew.” Slaughter maintains that the ethos of exploration required of Lewis that he pose as the “singular hero.” Indeed, departing from Fort Mandan Lewis effectively edited Clark out of the narrative.
Conversely, a year earlier, when the expedition left the Wood River campsite of 1803-1804 on the Mississippi River, Lewis wrote himself into a story when in fact he was not with the party on the first leg up the Missouri, joining it by going overland from St. Louis.

As Clay Jenkinson avers, "at the critical moments of the Expedition, Lewis pushes the rest of the company out of his consciousness." Lewis's jumping ahead of Clark and leaving him at Dismal Nitch was a calculated stratagem in keeping with a tendency visible from the very beginning of the "collaboration" with Clark, aimed at putting himself in the historical spotlight should circumstances lend themselves to that eventuality. Consider, then, Clark's plight. During the course of the expedition he had to regularly bear the indignity of reading how Lewis constructed this posed narrative when making a copy of Lewis's reflective journal entries.

The first notable instance of Lewis's questing for glory west of Fort Mandan occurred during the approach to the Yellowstone River's confluence with the Missouri—what Lewis termed a "long wished for spot"—several miles east of the present-day border between North Dakota and Montana. Unfavorable winds had been retarding the progress of the watercraft for several days in late April 1805. Knowing from the reports of the hunters out ahead that the Yellowstone was not far away, Lewis determined to avoid any further "detention." He proceeded ahead by land with a few men "to the entrance of that river" to make the astronomical observations that would fix its position, "which I hoped to effect by the time that Capt. Clark could arrive with the party." When Clark finally caught up they quibbled a bit over the best location for the emplacement of a future trading post.

Lewis's most famous discovery was the Great Falls of the Missouri. The Hidatsa told the captains that reaching this feature was the sure sign that they were on the correct route to the Columbia. This point was so axiomatic in the expedition's understanding of western geography that it served as the solution to the quandary faced by the party at the surprising appearance of the Marias River. Then and there Pierre Cruzatte and the other men in the detachment forced the captains' hands on the question of which branch of the river was the route to the headwaters of the river. Lewis complained that, contrary to his and Clark's opinion, Cruzatte, "an old Missouri navigator ... had acquired the confidence of every individual of the party ... that the N. fork [the Marias] was the true genuine Missouri." Indeed, the men were "so determined in this beleif, and wishing that if we were in an error to be able to detect it and rectify it as soon as possible it was agreed between Capt. C. and myself that one of us should set out with a small party by land up the South fork [the Missouri] and continue our rout up it untill we found the falls."

Tensions now emerged within the joint command because of what historian Thomas Slaughter calls the conventions of exploration as a "solitary event." As Lewis phrased it in his approximately 1,400-word account about the decision at the Marias, "this expedition [in search of the falls and thus the true Missouri] I preferred undertaking as Capt. C [is the] best waterman &c. and determined to set out the day after tomorrow." William Clark's corresponding report numbers less than 200 words. Of Lewis's decision to jump ahead he writes...
tersely about effecting a cache of one pirogue, tools, powder and lead, and as soon as “accomplished to send the South fork.” The absence of any nouns or pronouns in this last phrasing may be telling. His only mention of Lewis by name is to report that his co-commander was “a little unwell to day,” and that he had to take “Salts &c.” This would be the start of another pattern—Lewis becoming physically ill on those occasions when the fate of the expedition seemed to hang in the balance, which must be seen as equivalent in Lewis’s mind to his prospective reputation as a solitary and heroic explorer. Lewis described his illness as “disentary.”

In Slaughter’s view, “companions create narrative problems for the explorer.” In Lewis’s case, Clark’s presence was merely the most obvious one. When Lewis “jumped ship” on his quest for the Great Falls and exploratory glory, George Drouillard, Joseph Field, George Gibson and Silas Goodrich accompanied him. However, a few days later, when Lewis encounters the “sublimely grand spectacle” these men virtually disappear from the narrative. The experience with one of nature’s wonders is Lewis’s alone.13

Later that summer, once the expedition reached the Three Forks of the Missouri, the next great moment of discovery loomed—“seeing the head of the missouri yet unknown to the civilized world,” as Lewis phrased it, and the Continental Divide from which it sprang. During this segment of the trip Clark had been proceeding ahead of the flotilla on land with the hunters, and he relished being in the vanguard. We know this from Lewis himself who noted that “Capt C. was much fatigued[,] his feet yet blistered and soar,” yet he “insisted on pursuing his rout in the morning nor would be consent willingly to my relieving him at that time by taking a tour of the same kind” (emphasis added). This remarkably revealing entry becomes even more interesting when posed with Lewis’s next comment: “finding [Clark] anxious I readily consented to remain with the canoes.” Something more than Clark just toughing it out is clearly at play here. Even Nicholas Biddle sensed the tension and attempted to sanitize the account by substituting the more neutral “deturmined” for the vexatious “insisted” found in Lewis’s original text.14

Clark’s intention was “to proceed on in pursuit of the Snake Indians,” the gatekeepers to the Rocky Mountain passage. An encounter with the Shoshones would have insured Clark a central moment in the master narrative of the expedition’s putative glories. Lewis, two days behind Clark, knew that his co-commander had “pursued the Indian road,” had found an abandoned horse and “saw much indian sign.” Meanwhile, Lewis and the balance of the expedition labored in poling and hauling the canoes over the riffles in the riverbed.15

On July 25th, Clark and his advance guard reached the
for Clark wrote expectantly, “affords a great deal of water and appears to head in the Snow mountains...” Here was Clark’s main chance. Lewis himself observed that on the basis of a note left for him at the Three Forks that Clark was on a course “in the direction we were anxious to pursue.” Unfortunately for Clark, his continued exertions in defiance of blistered and bruised feet (the result of repeated exposure to prickly pear cactus) and a somewhat straitened diet (not so much from supply but opportunity to eat), combined with oppressive midsummer heat, made him sick. Suffering from a high fever and chills, constipated, and losing his appetite altogether because of the fatigue brought on by his vigorous march ahead of Lewis and the canoes, Clark turned back to the Three Forks, exhausted. There he met up with Lewis and the main party.16

For two days beginning July 28, 1805, Lewis doctored Clark at the Three Forks. Lewis had “a small bower or booth erected” for Clark’s comfort because the “leather lodge when exposed to the sun is excessively hot.” Clark’s fever dissipated slowly and though the recovery had begun, he complained of “a general soreness in all his limbs.” Lewis, however, was anxious to get going. On the 30th, the detachment broke camp, but now it was Lewis on foot in that pivotal vanguard of hunters, while Clark and the voyageurs brought up the rear. After only one day with this arrangement Lewis admitted having “waited at my camp very impatiently for the arrival of Capt. Clark and party.” Becoming by his own admission “uneasy” with this pattern, Lewis determined on the next day “to go in quest of the Snake Indians.” Lewis took George Drouillard, Toussaint Charbonneau and Sergeant Patrick Gass on this mission. As had happened to Lewis when he jumped ahead of Clark in pursuit of the Great Falls, once again the excitement of becoming the exploratory hero brought on “a slight desantery.” Lewis packed away a sheaf of papers with which to record notes that might be adapted into a narrative worthy of posterity’s reading.17

The day Lewis leapt ahead, August 1st, happened to be Clark’s birthday. Clark reported tersely: “Capt. Lewis left me at 8 o’Clock...” Left behind to slog up the gravelly bed of the Jefferson River with the canoes, Clark’s physical problems mounted when his ankle swelled. One day ahead of the main party, Lewis reached the forks of the Jefferson and determined that the tributary stream known today as the Beaverhead River, with its warmer water and the gentler flow, was the more navigable route. Lewis deduced that the Beaverhead “had its source at a greater distance in the mountains and passed through an opener country than the other.” Lewis left a note for Clark on a pole at the Jefferson forks instructing him on the recommended route for the canoes should he not return to this spot before the main party got there.18

Once a few miles up the Beaverhead fork of the Jefferson, Lewis could now see that this watershed headed in a “gap formed by it in the mountains...” With that promising prospect in front of him Lewis wrote: “…I did not hesitate in believing the [Beaverhead] the most proper for us to ascend.” Better yet, “an old Indian road very large and plain leads up this fork.” This was the path to the Shoshones, the Continental Divide, waters that drained to the Pacific and to glory.19

Down below, Clark was barely able to walk. The “poleing men” and those hauling the canoes were “much fatigued from their excessive labours...very weak being in the water all day.” After his initial reconnaissance of the Beaverhead, Lewis returned to the forks of the Jefferson River expecting to find “Capt. C. and the party...on their way up.” Lewis was dismayed because upon reaching the forks he discerned that Clark had not taken the recommended route up the Beaverhead, but one to the northwest known today as the Big Hole River. Lewis sent Drouillard after him and later “learnt from Capt. Clark that he had not found the note which I had left for him at that place and the reasons which had induced him to ascend” the more rapid northwesterly branch. In a comic twist, a beaver had gnawed down the post holding Lewis’s directions with near disastrous consequences for poor Clark, who had simply followed the stream with the greatest flow—a fundamental hydrological principle that had always guided the expedition.20

Lewis referred to this rather pointedly as Clark’s “mistake in the rivers.” Clark’s spirits were as dampened as the baggage that been under his care going up the Big Hole. In his journal Lewis charmed himself with his narrative on naming the tributaries of the Jefferson River the “Wisdom” and the “Philanthropy, in commemoration of two of those cardinal virtues” of the president who dispatched them. Clark recounts nary a word about this fanciful stuff in his account of that dismal day. He rather sparingly reported instead about Drouillard catching up with him with the news that the route he was on “was impracticable” and that “all the Indian roads” led up the fork that Lewis had scouted. Clark, “accordingly Dropped down to the forks where I met with Capt. Lewis & party,” he wrote with a tinge of resignation. Clark’s sore ankle
In his invitation to Clark on June 19, 1803, Lewis wrote, "... your situation if joined with me in this mission will in all respects be precisely such as my own." This image of the captains as "loyal friends" belies Lewis's intentions to claim moments of glory for himself.

was "much worse than it has been," the physical pain compounding the embarrassment of having taken the wrong turn.21

The captains traveled together for two days up the Beaverhead fork of the Jefferson but by the end of the second, August 8, 1805, Lewis had had enough. He decided to "leave the charge of the party, and the care of the lunar observations to Capt. Clark" while he would proceed ahead the next day "with a small party to the source of the principal stream of this river and pass the mountains to the Columbia." The boil or cyst on Clark's ankle had "discharged a considerable quantity of matter" but it was still swollen and left him in "considerable pain," Lewis reported. The morning Lewis forged ahead "to examine the river above, find a portage if possible, also the Snake Indians," Clark recorded a most poignant observation: "I should have taken this trip had I have been able to march."22

Clark's expression is one of the most suggestive of any to be found in the millions of words in the journals of the expedition. It exudes chagrin about not being able to make contact with the Shoshones, and more particularly the Columbia River. Furthermore, one can intuit from it that after Lewis's previous forays in pursuit of the Yellowstone and the Great Falls that Clark, for certain, and maybe both captains had concluded it was Clark's turn for glory. Elliott Coues was the first to observe that "Captain Clark was sadly disappointed at not being able to take the lead in the trip." More recently Stephen Ambrose said, "Clark wanted to lead" this reconnaissance, but
that in the end it would prove Lewis’s “most important mission.” This, of course, gets to the heart of what was bothering Clark. 23

Fate, in the form of an ulcerous sore, denied Clark the opportunity to be the first over the Continental Divide. At the moment Lewis left Clark on the headwaters of the Missouri, Clark’s rendezvous with destiny dissipated. Everyone in the party saw the consequences. As Sergeant John Ordway put it, Captain Lewis had gone on ahead “to make discoveries.” 24

Three weeks later, when the expedition was about to depart the company of the Lemhi Shoshone, Lewis let slip his characteristic outlook when he referred, once again, to resuming what he called “my voyage.” Such egotism has been an easy target from as early as 1807 in the form of Thomas McKeehan’s broadside in defense of his client, Patrick Gass, wanting to publish an account of the voyage. Nevertheless, Lewis was not completely oblivious about his obligations to his friend and co-commander. Lewis named the Clark Fork of the Columbia after him, in partial reciprocation for Clark having named the Lewis (Snake) River. Whereas Lewis had, in fact, been the first to the Columbia’s waters, Clark’s honor was a mere gratuity. As Elliott Coues observed, Clark had not been the proverbial “first white man” on the waters named for him; or at least, no more so than any other man in the expedition since he was with the entire party when it crossed into the Bitterroot/Clark Fork watershed. 25

Throughout his joint venture with Lewis, William Clark’s modesty shone through, a virtue not easily lent to his partner. Years later, Clark grumbled about the predicament his co-captain had put him in, referencing the “trouble and expense” of getting the journals into print. Clark, in the end, was up to this task, and possessing the advantage of having been the more diligent, if less florid, journal keeper, he repeatedly exercised the option of editing the expedition’s documentary record in order to create a more accurate account of events. In this respect, Clark was both the expedition’s first historian, and later the historian’s friend, for the benefit of posterity. We are left to wonder, had Lewis lived to write his account, how would Clark have fared in that narrative? 26

Notes
6 Holmberg, Dear Brother, p. 218.
10 Moulton, Vol. 4, pp. 66, 70 and 77.
11 Moulton, Vol. 4, p. 271.
13 Slaughter, Exploring Lewis and Clark, p. 29; Moulton, Vol. 4, p. 283.
15 Ibid., Vol. 4, pp. 418 and 423-424.
16 Ibid., Vol. 4, pp. 427-428, 433 n. 9 and 436.
18 Ibid., Vol. 5, pp. 29 and 40.
19 Ibid., Vol. 5, pp. 44-45 and 51 n. 2.
20 Ibid., Vol. 5, pp. 43, 47, 52 and 54.
21 Ibid., Vol. 5, pp. 53-55.
24 Moulton, Vol. 9, p. 199.
26 Holmberg, Dear Brother, p. 236.
The bicentennial commemoration of Meriwether Lewis's tragic death is but one chapter in the enduring saga of the Corps of Discovery. Few events related to the expedition have generated more debate and controversy than his mysterious death. Historical records indicate that he died in the early morning hours on October 11, 1809, at Grinder's Stand along the Natchez Trace en route to Washington, D.C. Records involving his death are controversial and historians have debated how and why he died for nearly two centuries.

Many interesting, though highly speculative, theories regarding Lewis's death have been proposed. Some authors have taken the thinnest shreds of evidence and built a scenario that is stated as "fact," or worse yet, "scientific fact." Others have developed theories that have no basis in medical science. It is pointless and detracts from sound discussion to perpetuate medical myths related to Lewis's death.

If we view history through a modern medical lens, it will not give us an authoritative answer regarding what happened at Grinder's Stand 200 years ago, but we can view the various possibilities in a clearer, more reliable manner. Some theorists have argued Lewis was an alcoholic and/or opium addict. Others claim he suffered from depression. Some have said that tertiary syphilis or cerebral malaria contributed to his death, while still others believe he poisoned himself with mercury. It is not possible, with the information we have in hand, to determine exactly how Lewis died or what factors may have contributed to his mental condition if, in fact, Lewis did shoot himself at Grinder's Stand. We can, however, examine clues in the historical record alongside these various medical theories to determine their plausibility.

**Malaria**

A belief that Lewis suffered from malaria is frequently cited as a contributing factor in his death. The two most common blood-borne parasites that caused malaria in early America were *Plasmodium vivax* and *Plasmodium falciparum*. These parasites are passed along to a human host through the bite of an Anopheles mosquito. Malaria is caused by a parasitic infection of oxygen-carrying red blood cells and its symptoms result from destruction of red blood cells, which the human body continuously produces in bone marrow. As red blood cells travel through blood vessels they can flatten and change shape, squeezing through tiny capillaries to release life-sustaining oxygen, while the liquid portion of the blood (plasma) nourishes hungry cells with its energy-rich glucose. These red blood cells live for several months traveling through blood vessels in every part of the body. There are, at any given moment in our blood, red blood cells that are from a few hours to a few months old.
For nearly 200 years, people have debated how and why Meriwether Lewis died. The truth likely will never be known, but sound medical science helps determine the plausibility of many of the theories.
The most severe form of malaria generally is caused by *P. falciparum*. One reason for its severity is that, unlike *P. vivax*, the parasite *P. falciparum* attacks red blood cells of all ages. *P. vivax* infects only young red blood cells. In addition to infecting more red blood cells, *P. falciparum* also alters the cell membrane's pliability, preventing it from changing shape to easily slip through the microscopic capillaries. The resulting relatively stiff and rigid red blood cells can clog and thus stop blood from circulating in capillaries supplying the brain, kidneys and other organs with life-sustaining oxygen and glucose. This “roadblock” in the capillaries may lead to organ damage and death.

Malaria caused by *P. falciparum* is the only type of malaria that can result in “cerebral malaria,” which develops as brain capillaries become clogged with parasite-laden red blood cells. These “traffic jams” are thought to produce impaired consciousness and coma. Victims of cerebral malaria usually suffer from low blood sugar, anemia and kidney failure, dying within days. A victim would have been unable to travel rough trails by horseback for 10 days as Lewis did immediately preceding his death.

It is unlikely that the fever, chills, headache and nausea associated with the less severe form of malaria caused by *P. vivax* would have caused a natural death, and it is less likely that such symptoms would have triggered a suicide attempt.

**Syphilis**

Few diseases have produced the sense of mystery and attracted the public's attention that syphilis has throughout the ages. Although controversy still swirls around the origins of the disease, it is known that the grand coming-out party for “Louis Veneri,” as Lewis and Clark referred to syphilis in their expedition journals, was at the end of the fifteenth century in Europe. The disease then spread from Europe to India, China and Japan, and on to the rest of the world. Syphilis is known in medicine as “the great imitator” due to its many symptoms that mimic other diseases. It usually is spread by sexual contact and is characterized by five distinct phases of the illness: incubating, primary, secondary, latent and late syphilis.

The disease is caused by the helical bacterium *Treponema pallidum*. Generally, within hours after sexual intercourse with an infected person, the bacteria penetrate the mucous membrane lining of the penile urethra or vaginal mucosa, spreading throughout the body. Any organ in the body can be invaded, including the central nervous system, kidneys, liver and even bone.

Incubation, the time from when the bacteria enter the body until the onset of symptoms, is about three weeks, but can range from three days to three months.

At the site of bacterial infection, and during the primary disease stage, a painless skin lesion generally appears, which lasts from two to eight weeks. The secondary stage is characterized by diffuse skin rashes, low-grade fever, fatigue, sore throat, loss of appetite and weight, achy joints, and highly infectious lesions on the lips, mouth, and vaginal lining or penis. Up to 40 percent of victims have symptoms that involve the brain or spinal cord, commonly with headache and stiff neck.

Syphilis may enter its latent phase when there are no clinical symptoms, but the disease continues to progress. This phase can last up to four years. Relapses of the secondary stage may recur during the latent phase, mostly during the first year.

Late syphilis is a slowly progressive phase and can affect the nervous system with manifestations of personality changes such as marked mood swing, paranoia, megalomania, delusions and hallucinations, and decreased memory, poor judgment and insight. It can cause vision loss, slurred speech and deafness. Syphilis also can attack the walls of the body’s main artery, the aorta, causing it to weaken, and it can form a bulge, or aneurysm. A significant syphilitic aneurysm can lead to the aortic heart valve becoming incompetent, which results in very poor exercise tolerance or death. Late syphilitic manifestations can take from three to 25 years to develop, and occur in 10 to 20 percent of those who are untreated or inadequately treated. Given prevailing medical practices in early nineteenth century America, and particularly on the expedition, it is likely that at least some members of the Corps of Discovery were
inadequately treated for syphilitic infections. Medical author Reimert Thorolf Ravenholt wrote that Meriwether Lewis suffered personality changes caused by neurosyphilis, and that Lewis realized he was suffering from neurosyphilis and committed suicide to avoid progression of the disease. Neurosyphilis is a tertiary form of syphilis that causes progressive degeneration of the spinal cord and peripheral nerves, affecting both mind and body. Ravenholt stated that Lewis caught the disease during the corps’ stay with the Shoshones, evidenced by Lewis’s writing of skin eruptions several weeks later on September 19, 1805. Ravenholt also stated that a board of “world class epidemiologists” had concluded that neurosyphilis was the most likely explanation for the symptoms Lewis experienced during his final days.

Lewis could not have known for certain that he was suffering from neurosyphilis because the condition was not described in the world of medicine until 1882, when French physician Gaspard Laurent Bayle described “dementia paralytica” or paretic neurosyphilis. It was the first psychiatric disease for which a specific cause was found. Lewis may have suspected he had syphilis, but this scenario is unlikely.

Men from several Indian tribes offered young women to the captains for bed partners, but there is no evidence in the journals that they accepted. In fact, the captains wrote about the Indians’ irritation at their refusals. Therefore it is presumptive to assume that Lewis caught syphilis anywhere along the route of the expedition.

Lewis could have contracted syphilis after his return to civilization in September of 1806 and subsequently suffered from the effects of neurosyphilis in 1809. This diagnosis also would be presumptive. Edmond C. Tramont, writing in one of the most respected textbooks on infectious disease, noted that neurosyphilis mimics:

... any degenerative neurologic process, or disorder that causes chronic inflammation (e.g. tuberculosis, fungal or sarcoid meningitis, tumors, subdural hematoma, Alzheimer’s disease, multiple sclerosis, chronic alcoholism), or any disorder affecting the vasculature of the central nervous system. The axiom that syphilis can mimic any disease is particularly apropos with regard to the central nervous system.

Since it is very unlikely that Lewis was suffering from a subdural hematoma, multiple sclerosis or Alzheimer’s, we effectively can eliminate those from the list.

As noted earlier, the journals’ references to “skin eruptions” are cited as evidence of syphilis. This generic term used by the captains could refer to one of several hundred types of skin rashes, sores or manifestations of myriad infectious diseases other than syphilis. The early stages of syphilis were well known by the captains, so it seems they would have referred to these eruptions as the “pox” as they did on other occasions. Lewis likely would have treated himself with mercury if he knew he had contracted syphilis, but no journal keeper mentioned Lewis using mercury for the several weeks it would have been necessary. Perhaps Lewis did contract syphilis and did not treat himself or his method was ineffective. Perhaps Lewis forbade journal keepers from recording his condition. Perhaps he did everything possible to hide his treatment. If we assume that Lewis did contract syphilis and did not treat himself, or his treatment was ineffective, we cannot know for certain what the outcome would have been.

There have been two major studies on the progression of syphilis in untreated victims. They were performed in the twentieth century in Oslo, Norway, and the United States. These studies showed that only about a third of syphilis victims who did not receive treatment progressed to having neurologic involvement. Most people who die from complications of syphilis, die from cardiovascular disease by developing inflammations in their aortas and accompanying complications. If Lewis knew he had contracted syphilis, he would have treated himself with mercury so the likelihood that he had neurosyphilis is very minimal.

If Lewis treated himself for a presumed case of syphilis with the usual mercury treatment of the time, could he have poisoned himself to death, or induced a neurological state that would have precipitated a suicide attempt?

**Mercury poisoning**

The iconoclastic physician Paracelsus popularized the use of mercury in the treatment of syphilis in the sixteenth century and it was a mainstay of treatment for this disease until the early twentieth century. It was administered to members of the Corps of Discovery as mercury ointment or calomel (mercurous chloride—HgCl or Hg₂Cl₂). The ointment was applied to the skin and the calomel was administered orally, often until the patient began to salivate excessively, a sign that medical practitioners of the early 1800s believed indicated the body was ridding itself of the syphilis. Today, we know this to be one sign of mercury poisoning.

Calomel ionizes in the gut when administered orally, but is poorly absorbed with only about 15 percent of
the dose going into the circulatory system. Elemental mercury, (the elemental form is, by definition, not ionized) is very poorly absorbed from the gut and is not considered toxic. Toxic results of the short-term use of oral calomel would be its caustic effects on the intestines and kidneys. The intestinal effects may have produced nausea, vomiting, bloody stools and extreme bowel movements. Kidney damage would result in increased urination, followed by kidney failure if the dose was massive. If toxic doses of calomel were discontinued, recovery of the intestines and kidneys would occur in eight to 14 days. Side effects from mercury absorption through an ointment applied to the skin took longer to appear than through oral treatment.

It is clear that the normal treatment of early syphilitic symptoms in the early 1800s produced at a minimum, mild mercury poisoning. Neuropsychiatric manifestations of mercury poisoning would result from the prolonged and heavy use of oral calomel, beyond the dose generally administered during a “salivation.” Members of the Corps of Discovery took Dr. Benjamin Rush’s “Bilious Pills”—which contained calomel and jalap, both potent laxatives—for numerous illnesses, but only for short periods of time, and therefore the more serious toxic side effects likely would not have occurred.

The mercury ion from calomel does not cross the “blood-brain barrier” readily, due to a physiological roadblock that prevents this form of mercury from entering the brain. The psychiatric symptoms of mercury poisoning include attention deficits, anxiety, emotional lability, agitation, depression, impaired memory and learning, hallucinations and slurred speech, among others. Although a case could be made that Lewis exhibited some of these symptoms toward the end of his life, it is not logical to assign them primarily to mercury poisoning.

**ALCOHOL ABUSE**

There are references associated with alcohol—a dram, a drink of “spirits,” grog—throughout the journals and Lewis and Clark often described the “affect” it had on the men. Lewis was documented as a heavy drinker at times in his life, including the period immediately preceding his death.

There are various types of alcohol molecules, some of which—methanol and isopropyl alcohol—are poisonous to humans. Ethanol, also called grain alcohol and drinking alcohol, is produced as a metabolic product whenever microscopic yeast cells come in contact with a solution that contains sugar. The yeast takes in the sugar as food and splits it into alcohol and carbon dioxide molecules. This process continues until the alcohol content of the liquid reaches about 15 percent, at which point the alcohol kills the yeast cells and the fermentation stops. Stronger alcoholic beverages result from distilling weaker alcoholic beverages or adding distilled ethanol to wines and other beverages.

Many physicians in the late eighteenth century believed that “fevers” and “melancholy” were the result of a state of debility brought on the victim by abnormally relaxed fibers that made up the body. Physicians of that era believed that such patients required a “tonic” to stimulate these relaxed fibers back into a state of health. Both alcoholic spirits and opium were considered by many physicians of the day to be effective stimulants for treating these problems. One of the most influential physicians of the late eighteenth century, and one whose medical philosophies directly influenced the thinking of Benjamin Rush, was Scotsman John Brown. Brown gave lectures in London regarding his system of medical care while flasks of whiskey and laudanum (opium mixed with distilled spirits) rested on his podium. Brown seldom got through a lecture without taking at least four doses from each flask.

Early manifestations of ethanol intoxication often are viewed as positive behavioral traits. Loss of social phobias, relaxation, hypersexuality and increased gregariousness have been sought since man took his second drink.

The chronic use of alcohol by an individual over time produces a tolerance for the drug. A person who
habitually drinks will have to drink more and more ethanol to get the same result. This tolerance develops when various enzyme systems within the body increase their metabolizing capacity and rid the body of ethanol more efficiently. The central nervous system’s neurons adapt in the presence of chronic alcohol and change their neurotransmitter functions. Alcoholics are able to modify their behavioral patterns as a result of repeated alcohol abuse. This was never so effectively illustrated to this author as when I saw an elderly female patient with a .35 percent blood-alcohol content, which is more than four times the level at which a person is considered legally vomiting. The most severe type of ethanol withdrawal more effectively. The central nervous system’s neurons habitually drinks will have to drink more and more when various enzyme systems within the body in increase their metabolizing capacity and rid the body of ethanol more efficiently. The central nervous system’s neurons adapt in the presence of chronic alcohol and change their neurotransmitter functions. Alcoholics are able to modify their behavioral patterns as a result of repeated alcohol abuse. This was never so effectively illustrated to this author as when I saw an elderly female patient with a .35 percent blood-alcohol content, which is more than four times the level at which a person is considered legally vomiting. The most severe type of ethanol withdrawal is called the DTs (delirium tremens) and can include headaches, irritability, agitation and confusion, delusions and hallucinations. Severe post-drinking depression and anxiety, accompanied by sleep disturbances and panic attacks, can last for weeks.

Humans who repeatedly drink to excess can develop a physical dependence on ethanol that results in serious and even life-threatening symptoms if they abruptly cease drinking. Ethanol withdrawal produces “the shakes,” high anxiety, high blood pressure and heart rate, excessive sweating, rapid breathing, nausea and vomiting. The most severe type of ethanol withdrawal is called the DTs (delirium tremens) and can include headaches, irritability, agitation and confusion, delusions and hallucinations. Severe post-drinking depression and anxiety, accompanied by sleep disturbances and panic attacks, can last for weeks.

Addiction specialist Dr. Philip Flores views alcoholism and other addictions as the result of unhealthy interpersonal attachments. He states, “Not everyone with inadequate attachment experiences will become addicted, but everyone with an addiction suffers with attachment difficulties.”

Young men in late eighteenth century Virginia were taught that they were superior and should never take an insult from an inferior being. As an example, a father praised a young boy in colonial Virginia for hacking to death a goose that had bitten him. This offense by the goose had insulted the honor of the boy, and thus the father believed the goose deserved its gruesome fate. Some of Lewis's adult behaviors easily could be interpreted as manifestations of these eighteenth-century Virginia societal attitudes toward child rearing. Lewis faced a court martial early in his career for an incident fueled by alcohol, though he later was “acquitted with honor.” In spite of being among the most eligible bachelors in the nation, by his own admission he was not able to find a suitable wife. His talent and ability as an explorer and naturalist, both solitary jobs, did not translate well into a talent for working with other people. He seemed poorly suited to a political life and may have been unhappy and felt isolated in his life as a governor. This unhappiness may have contributed to his inability to finish work on the expedition journals in spite of Jefferson's repeated urgings. His frustrations resulted in an ungracious lashing out at Patrick Gass when Gass published his journals prior to Lewis.

A man with a history of alcohol abuse likely would drink even more in a state of extreme unhappiness. His brain chemistry would have been altered so that when any of his frustration “triggers” were pulled, his response would have been the same, to have another drink. This addiction scenario is consistent with the historical record, and the probability that Lewis suffered from alcoholism is very high.

Opium use

Lewis took opium pills toward the end of his life for self-diagnosed malarial “fevers,” which would have been an appropriate treatment given the medical theory of the day. Opium was used in that time for pain relief, “fevers” and depression among other ailments. Lewis and Clark treated an apparently mentally ill Native American woman on the expedition's return to St. Louis with opium.

Opium is a milky substance obtained from the immature flower pod of the opium poppy, Papaver somniferum. Opium contains dozens of pharmacologically active substances (alkaloids), the most abundant being morphine and codeine. Morphine was identified and isolated from raw opium in 1803, but its spectacular efficacy in relieving pain did not come into general use until the 1830s. In addition to relieving pain, morphine causes intense euphoria and tranquility, as well as the less desirable side effects of a depressed drive to breathe and severe constipation. Opium products were included in over-the-counter tonics, elixirs, cough drops and medication to calm babies in the United States until 1914.

Although Lewis reported taking opium pills weighing one gram, it is highly doubtful that those pills actually contained a gram of opium, which would have been a potent dose. Lewis took three opium pills at night when suffering a fever and if they did not “operate” him, he took two more in the morning. With this dosing regimen, he was ingesting a significant quantity of morphine, codeine and other alkaloids active in the poppy.

Morphine from raw opium was readily absorbed from Lewis's intestine into his bloodstream, where it then flowed to his liver. The liver inactivated a good deal of
the opium before it entered his central nervous system and general circulation. Given the fact that opioids are among the most addictive drugs known to man, within a few weeks Lewis could have become sufficiently addicted to opium to experience symptoms of irritability and aggression if he had tried to discontinue the medication. Withdrawal would have produced an intense craving for more of the substance, nausea, cramps, a depressed mood, inability to sleep, increased sensitivity to pain and increased anxiety.

If we believe Lewis's own account that he was taking opium, and others' accounts of his heavy drinking following his return to civilization, there is an overwhelming case for Lewis's addiction to these substances and the profound effect that these addictions would have had on his personality and judgment. It would have produced behavior completely consistent with that reported in the historical record of his final days. Most amazing of all, this would have occurred with the blessing of the medical community of the day.

**Clinical Depression**

The modern medical view of depression is that it results from the inadequate or imperfect function of special chemicals in the brain called neurotransmitters, which allow us to move, think and have emotions. Effective modern-day treatments for depression include medications that improve the function of various neurotransmitters such as serotonin, norepinephrine and dopamine. Additionally, psychotherapy is considered a beneficial adjunctive therapy.

A familial factor often is present in clinical depression. The correct function or the deficient and imperfect function of neurotransmitters is largely genetic.

Thomas Jefferson and William Clark recorded observations of Lewis's personality that, when viewed from a modern medical perspective, strongly suggest depression. It is likely that Lewis had a constitutional/genetic tendency toward depression, which was beyond his conscious control. His underlying depression may have been aggravated by his personal circumstances upon his return from the expedition. As previously stated, he had a job he did not enjoy and had failed in various personal relationships and suffered the resulting isolation. The federal government slandered his name and refused to pay his invoices. He returned to society from an exploration for which he was immensely well suited and found a life in St. Louis for which he was poorly suited. This is a perfect and very likely scenario for developing clinical depression. The combination of clinical depression with the use of alcohol and opium would be overwhelming evidence for a case of depression that could lead to confusion, anxiety, hallucinations, anger, poor judgment and attempted suicide. It is possible that Lewis did not suffer from the factors indicated in this scenario, however depression combined with alcohol and drug abuse certainly could produce such results.

**Lewis's Last Night**

Captain Gilbert Russell wrote a letter to Colonel Jonathan Williams, the first superintendent of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, in 1811 describing Lewis's death:

Some time in the night he got his pistols which he loaded, after every body had retired in a separate Building and discharged one against his forehead without much effect—the ball not penetrating the skull but only making a furrow over it. He then discharged the other against his breast where the ball entered and passing downward through his body came out low down near his back bone. Lewis reportedly lingered for some hours. Dr. E.G. Chuinard asserted that if Lewis had shot himself in the breast, the two hours of activity reported afterward “is totally unbelievable!” Chuinard raised the interesting question: “This second shot would be expected to have killed Lewis instantly, or have disabled him ... What do the supporters of suicide think that this second shot would have done to the heart, lungs, aorta and/or intestines? Certainly Lewis would have been in dire shock and soon have bled to death; or perhaps paralyzed from spinal cord injury.”

We may interpret the nonspecific term “breast” as meaning somewhere on the chest. If Lewis held a pistol to his chest, with the muzzle aimed at a slightly downward angle as is suggested by the description of the resulting wound, the bullet probably entered his chest, passed through his lung, penetrated the thin muscular diaphragm, and wounded either his spleen or his liver, depending on whether the bullet entered his left or right chest. The lungs, spleen and liver all have remarkable blood supplies and, if wounded, can bleed to the point of causing death. As the bullet passed into Lewis's chest, it would have created a totally or partially collapsed lung from the introduction of atmospheric pressure into the thoracic cavity. The wound probably caused slow bleeding into his chest and abdominal cavities. This could have continued for two hours until the loss of blood volume and thus, blood pressure, ultimately would have caused his death. This scenario would not
cause the “instant death” that Dr. Chuinard believed would ensue. It is less likely, but still possible, that the bullet could have wounded the heart superficially, resulting in the sac that surrounds the heart slowly filling with blood (hemopericardium) and a resulting increase in pressure around the heart (pericardial tamponade), which ultimately would cause it to stop beating.

Mortally wounded victims can continue to speak and consciously move until the effects of their internal wounds result in excessive blood loss, loss of blood pressure, unconsciousness and ultimately death. This description is similar to the historical record, which describes Meriwether Lewis surviving for two hours after he was shot. Today, a surgeon likely could save someone with such a gunshot wound.

We now arrive at the end of this medical expedition into the unknown, perhaps with more questions than when we started.

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

Could Lewis have had recurrent malarial fevers?

Certainly. However, this would not have driven him to attempt suicide or resulted in a natural death. Based on his activity level at the time of his death, Lewis clearly did not have cerebral malaria.

Did Lewis have neurosyphilis? Perhaps, but it is not likely. This theory is an example of constructing a desired conclusion and then finding the data to support the theory. Medical evidence may suggest this as plausible, but the journal evidence used by supporters of this theory is threadbare at best.

Did Lewis have syphilis and poison himself with mercury? Perhaps, but it is not likely. He probably would have died sooner from other effects of mercury poisoning prior to exhibiting the neuropsychiatric behaviors associated with chronic mercury poisoning.

Was Lewis an opium addict? That is a more difficult question to answer. Opium was readily available and its spurious use was sanctioned by physicians of the day. It is certain that opium significantly affected his mental state.

Was Lewis constitutionally depressed and did he have personality traits that would predispose him to...
the chronic use of alcohol? At the end of his life he was depressed, discouraged and drinking heavily. That, combined with the problems that his opium use would have created, provides a compelling and overwhelmingly convincing scenario for suicide.

Could Lewis have shot himself in the manner recorded by history and survived for two hours? Absolutely.

Could Lewis have had neurosyphilis, poisoned himself with mercury, been addicted to opium and alcohol and genetically prone to clinical depression and still have been murdered? Absolutely.

Regardless of the diversity of opinion regarding Lewis's death and the uncertainty of what happened October 11, 1809, the accomplishments of Meriwether Lewis remain untarnished. He became a victim of the medical problems he faced during his life and very likely the unknowing victim of a medical system that was at best, inadequate, and at worst, incompetent.

In the absence of conclusive forensic evidence, people likely will proceed on speculating about the mysterious death of Meriwether Lewis.


NOTES


3 Ibid., p. 2822.

4 F. Cartwright and M. Biddiss, Diseases & History (Great Britain: Sutton Publishing Company, 2000), 2nd ed., p. 44.


6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.


11 Tramont, “Treponema pallidum (Syphilis),” pp. 2474-2482.

12 Moulton, Vol. 6, pp. 74, 77, n. 6, 240, 254 and 357.


Six video lectures presented by the author on various aspects of Lewis and Clark medicine, including the use, mechanism of action and side effects of mercury treatment are on The Discovering Lewis & Clark Web site at www.lewis-clark.org/content/content-channel.asp?ChannelID=281.


Ibid., p. 1442.

In the years following the Lewis and Clark Expedition, some medical therapies involved the inhalation of organic mercury fumes, which are more toxic to the brain than calomel or elemental mercury. Chronic exposure to mercury, and the resulting neurological symptoms suffered by nineteenth-century hatmakers, led to the saying, “mad as a hatter.” Hat manufacturers used mercury for its poisonous and toxic effects on microorganisms, which left untreated, caused hats to rot.

Examples of the effects alcohol had on members of the Corps of Discovery appear in Vol. 4, p. 219, Clark’s entry for May 29, 1805; and Vol. 4, p. 362, Lewis and Clark’s entries for July 4, 1805, the day they exhausted their supply.


Philip J. Flores, Ph.D., An oral presentation at the American Psychoanalytic Association meeting entitled, “Addiction as an Attachment Disorder-Implications for Group Therapy,” Atlanta, Georgia (June 2008).


Ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 385-386, Lewis to the Public.


Moulton, Vol. 7, p. 272, Lewis’s entry for May 19, 1806.


Ambrose, Undaunted Courage, p. 450

The invention of the hypodermic syringe in 1853 allowed morphine to be administered directly into the central circulation, thus avoiding the “first pass” effect that the liver has on orally administered opium/morphine. This is why opioids normally are administered to patients by intramuscular injection or intravenously.

Jackson, Vol. 2, p. 575, n. Jackson quoted Jefferson from a letter Jefferson wrote to Captain Gilbert Russell on April 18, 1810: “He [Lewis] was much afflicted & habitually so with hypocondria. This was probably increased by the habit into which he had fallen & the painful reflections that would necessarily produce in a mind like his.”; James J. Holmberg, “I Wish You to See & Know All: The Recently Discovered Letters of William Clark to Jonathan Clark,” We Proceeded On, Vol. 18, No. 4 (November 1992), p. 10.


Looking back in time, we often are able to identify the mistakes of our predecessors. When the Corps of Discovery returned from its epic journey, Congress bestowed upon each member a tract of land in the Louisiana Territory. Although a seemingly benevolent and well-deserved gift, it was impossible for any member of the corps to benefit from this land gratuity because very little of the Louisiana Purchase had been surveyed and none of the acreage had been platted on a map to differentiate private from public land.

On January 2, 1807, a congressional committee convened to assess the compensation for Meriwether Lewis and William Clark and “their brave companions for their late service in exploring the western waters . . .”1 Willis Alston, chairman of the committee, asked Secretary of War Henry Dearborn, for a roster of the men, which Lewis provided on January 15. Dearborn proposed double pay for each member of the Corps of Discovery, a grant of 320 acres to the 31 enlisted members, 1,000 acres to Lieutenant Clark, 1,500 acres to Captain Lewis, “and that each one should have permission to locate his grant on any lands that have been surveyed, and are now for sale.”2 Lewis was emphatic that no distinction of rank be made between he and Clark, preferring “an equal division of whatever quantity might be granted to them.”3

The House deliberated on the bill for several weeks and on February 20, a heated discussion followed:

The bill grants land warrants, which may be either located or received at the land offices in payment of debts due there, at the rate of two dollars an acre. The bill grants these persons 24,960 acres. A motion was made . . . to strike out so much as permits the receipt of these warrants at the land offices in payment of debts . . . It was contended that double pay was a liberal compensation, and that this grant was extravagant and beyond all former precedent. It was equivalent to taking more than $60,000 out of the Treasury, and might be perhaps three or four times that sum, as the grantees might go over all the Western country and locate their warrants on the best land, in 160 acre lots.4

The House of Representatives recommitted the bill eight days later and sent it to the Senate where it was revised and approved on March 3. Lewis and Clark each were granted 1,600 acres, the enlisted men were given 320 acres each, and the grants could be located only on the public lands west of the Mississippi. Double pay was authorized for all.5 The grant came in the form of a certificate known as a land warrant, which was an authorization to receive a quantity of public land at an unspecified location. The actual selection of a tract of land lay more than a decade in the future.

At the time of the reward, public land on the east side of the Mississippi sold for two dollars an acre, while on the west side of the river, public land essentially was worthless. This was because public land had not been sur-
veyed and until boundaries separated the public from the private land, the public land could not be sold. The first appointment of a U.S. surveyor in the Louisiana Territory occurred in July 1806, but the business of surveying the territory languished until 1816 due to insufficient manpower and Native American hostilities.\(^6\)

Corps of Discovery members who remained in or returned to St. Louis after the expedition could do nothing with their 320-acre warrants. In November 1808, Territorial Secretary Frederick Bates bought land warrants for about $300 each from seven members of the expedition: John Collins, George Drouillard, Patrick Gass, Hugh McNeal, John B. Thompson, Joseph Whitehouse and Alexander Willard. Bates ran an ad in the Missouri Gazette at the end of March 1809 to sell two warrants and in August, attorney William Carr exchanged a slave for one warrant and was delighted with the deal.\(^7\)

That same month, Lewis and Clark were forced to sell their land warrants. In March 1809, Clark paid for two shares in the Missouri Fur Company and Lewis advanced payments to take Mandan Chief Sheheke-shote home. Three months later, the secretary of war sent letters with refusals to pay Clark’s expenses related to the Indian agency and Lewis’s for Indian presents. That left Lewis and Clark in a fiscally tight and embarrassing situation and they turned to their land warrants to bridge this economic shortfall. Lewis decided to tender the warrants at the Land Office in New Orleans and that may have been the initial reason why he intended to travel there.\(^8\)

Lewis left St. Louis on September 4, 1809, and arrived at Fort Pickering terribly ill 11 days later. As Lewis recovered over the course of nearly two weeks, he switched plans and decided to travel on horseback to Washington. On September 17, Lewis wrote about the warrant in his account book: “Then enclosed my land warrant for 1600 acres to Bomby Robertson of New Orleans to be disposed of for two dollars per acre or more if it can be obtained and the money deposited in the branch bank of New Orleans or the City of Washington subject to my order or that of William D. Meriwether for the benefit of my arbitors.”\(^9\) (Strikethrough in original.)

Captain Gilbert Russell, the commander at Fort Pickering, sent Lewis’s warrant to Thomas Bolling Robertson, secretary of the Orleans Territory and a land commissioner. Lewis hoped that Robertson would be able to sell the warrant, but it was returned due to insufficient cash.\(^10\)

Lewis’s warrant remained with his mother for a dozen years. Members of the expedition who did not settle in the Louisiana Territory, but rather resided in adjacent territories in Alabama and Mississippi, were able to assign and redeem land for their warrants.\(^11\)

In 1821, the Lewis family hired a Richard Searcy as its agent to facilitate selling the warrant, but he ran into many obstacles. In 1826, Searcy explained the difficulty to the commissioner of the General Land Office:

I have heretofore informed you that I was the holder of the warrant to the late Governor M. Lewis for his western tour. This warrant was placed in my hand for the purpose of being sold . . . which I have been endeavoring to do for the last five years, but owing to the inconvenient size of the warrant and other causes I have yet been unable to make any disposition of it. Besides the refusal of the

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Commissioner of the General Land Office to issue certificates in smaller amounts which would have facilitated its sale the land officers here have been reluctant at having any thing to do with the claim ... the receiver of Public Monies at Little Rock refused to receive it at more than $1.25 an acre ... notwithstanding the letter of your predecessor ... directing it to be received at $2.00 an acre. From the above causes the representatives of Govr. Lewis have already suffered considerable loss by being so long kept out of the value of the warrant. The claim has repeatedly been offered for sale at from 10 to 20 percent discount and more. ... This warrant was granted to a meritorious officer for valuable services rendered to his country ... 12

Searcy received no satisfaction. The following year, the Lewis family pressed Congress to intervene and on April 28, 1828, the Committee on Public Lands reported a bill “For the relief of the legal representatives of Meriwether Lewis,” which asked that Congress allow Lewis’s legal representatives “the right of entering any of the public lands of the United States, subject to entry at private sale, to the amount of the residue of the warrant of sixteen hundred acres ... which has not heretofore been satisfied ...” Congress finally approved the bill on May 26, 1828. 13

Lewis eventually was reimbursed for his public service and his family enjoyed a fleeting glory. It is tragic that he never shared in the realization of 1,600 acres of the immense wilderness that he explored and set on the way to development.


Notes

2 Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 363.
7 Land Warrants, November 15, 1808, Record Deed Book B, pp. 152-157, City of St. Louis, Recorder of Deeds, City Hall, St. Louis, Missouri; Missouri Gazette, March 29, 1809, Vol. 1, Issue 43; William Carr to Charles Carr, August 25, 1809, William Carr Papers, Missouri History Museum, St. Louis, Missouri.
9 Thomas Maitland Marshall, The Life and Papers of Frederick Bates, 2 volumes (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society, 1926), Vol. 2, p. 86; Lewis’s will, September 11, 1809, MSS 9041, 9041-a, “Papers of the Lewis, Anderson and Marks Families,” manuscript, 1771-1908, Special Collections, University of Virginia, Alderman Library, Charlottesville, Va.; Meriwether Lewis Account book, September 17, 1809, Meriwether Lewis Collection, Missouri History Museum, St. Louis, Mo.
10 Thomas C. Danisi and John C. Jackson, Meriwether Lewis (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2009), pp. 278, 286 and 288-289; Gilbert Russell to Thomas Jefferson, January 4, 1810, document 33616-17, roll 45, Thomas Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress. No mention is made of Clark’s warrant and when Lewis’s trunks arrived in Washington, Clark portioned the contents to Jefferson, the War Department, Lewis’s family and himself. I can only speculate that Clark’s warrant was returned by an unknown means or it was among Lewis’s papers. In either case, Clark never raised any concern about it.
11 General Land Office to Scott Leavitt, House of Representatives, January 5, 1926, Grace Lewis Miller Collection, Box 8, Folder 15, Jefferson National Expansion Memorial Archives, National Park Service, St. Louis, Missouri.
12 Ibid., Richard Searcy to George Graham, Commissioner of the General Land Office, December 31, 1826, Arkansas Territory. In Danisi and Jackson’s biography of Meriwether Lewis, the name Searcy was mistaken for Geary. The Searcy document is nearly unreadable in the Grace Lewis Miller collection but a second letter, found in the Meriwether Lewis Collection at the Missouri History Museum, corroborates the spelling (Richard Searcy to Major Reuben Lewis, April 3, 1829, Box 1, Folder 14).
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November 2009 We Proceeded On — 29
When the Corps of Discovery staggered out of the Bitterroot Mountains onto the Weippe Prairie and the land of the Nez Perce, they encountered a hospitable tribe that never had been visited by European Americans. However, the Nez Perce were not overly surprised by the arrival of the strangers. Their spiritual leaders had predicted that major change soon would come, that the change would come from the East and that it would come in such a way that we would learn what would happen next.

This is a work of fiction, but it contains much truth. Some of that truth is hard for us to confront and admit. Lewis and Clark were the first agents of American expansion into the lands of the Nez Perce and many other tribes, but in most cases they dealt honorably, if naively, with the Indians they met. Those who came after them, especially the treaty-makers, were not nearly so honorable and the results were devastating for people who had occupied the land for more than 10,000 years.

This is a central message of the book, but because Isaac represents the fifth generation, the future that awaits holds promise for change.

Laughy is a native of the area and knows each ridge-line of the mountains and each bend of the Clearwater River. He is a wonderful storyteller, in person and now in this written tale. For those who love the saga of the Lewis and Clark Expedition and understand its many facets and consequences, especially those involving the Indians of the West, this book will ring true on every page. Laughy has given the Nez Perce and all readers of this book a priceless and compelling gift. All those who plan to attend the Foundation's 2010 annual meeting in Lewiston should consider this as required reading; others also will love this tale.

—Bob Gatten

William Clark: The Further Journey
James F. Scott
40 minutes / $19.95

After eight members of the Metro St. Louis Chapter's book club gathered to watch William Clark: The Further Journey, we gave a unanimous thumbs-up to James Scott's 40-minute documentary on the explorer's post-expedition life.

The film is a skillful blend of historical re-enactments, visits to historic sites (including a visit to Clark's monument at Bellefontaine Cemetery with Clark descendant Peyton "Bud" Clark) and a wide selection of art. For many, it will be the first opportunity to see three recent statues: Edward Hamilton's figure of York in Louisville, Kentucky; the late Carol Grende's depiction of Clark greeting Lewis as he arrives at the Falls of the Ohio; and Harry Weber's representation of the two captains' joyful return to the St. Louis riverfront in 1806.

Following that return, Clark made St. Louis his home for the remaining 32 years of his life and the base for his long career in public service. James Scott chose writer-historians William Foley, James Holmberg, Robert Moore, Jr. and others to talk about Clark's life, especially his roles as Indian agent, territorial governor and superintendent of Indian affairs.

In 1808, Clark traveled to a site near present-day Kansas City to establish a fort and a trading house intended to lessen the Osage Indians' dependence on vast hunting grounds. Through the years, he implemented government policies regarding land acquisitions and Indian removals, but he saw these policies as increasingly harsh and came to lament what he called "the deplorable situation of the Indians."

Foley calls Clark the best of Missouri's territorial governors and the
person who more than any other set the territory on the path to statehood. Still, Clark lost soundly in his bid to become Missouri's first elected governor. Many voters saw him as too sympathetic to Indians and too distant from the campaign. Although Clark demonstrated a gentleman's reluctance to seek office aggressively, he possessed qualities any politician would envy. Moore cites his genuine likability, a natural ease in "working the room" and a gift for building coalitions.

St. Louis tested Clark with a complex mix of races, classes and cultures. Clark was the man to visit upon arrival in St. Louis for trappers or traders returning from the Rocky Mountains and for visitors from the East such as George Catlin and Washington Irving, who sought an introduction to the West.

When the camera focuses on the new Clark Bridge, this beautiful structure spanning the Mississippi River is described not as a memorial to Clark, but rather as a metaphor for Clark, who linked two very different halves of the country, bringing the values of a Virginia gentleman to the frontier and working to shape a western territory into part of the nation.

William Clark: The Further Journey is an attractive, well-written film that can be enjoyed whether you are unfamiliar with Clark's career or have read several biographies.

—Ann Rogers

The Death of Meriwether Lewis: A Historic Crime Scene Investigation

Suicide or assassination? On the 200th anniversary of his death, this book calls for an exhumation of Lewis's remains and provides a comprehensive look at the evidence.

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- In 2009 Lewis family descendants submitted an application for exhumation to the National Park Service. They want a Christian reburial at the National Monument & Gravesite after exhumation. See their website, www.solvethemystery.org

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James E. Stairs is the author of a Voice for the Dead, and a distinguished fellow of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences. A professor emeritus of law and forensic science at George Washington University, Stairs organized the 1996 Coroner's Inquest. He has exhumed the remains of many historical figures, including Jesse James.

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Compilation of expedition weather data is strong addition to any L&C collection

If you are interested in information on the meteorological aspects of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, *Lewis & Clark: Weather and Climate Data from the Expedition Journals*, edited by Vernon Preston and published by the American Meteorological Society, is an excellent reference source. The book not only provides the expedition’s weather observations, which were the first such data collected in the western United States, but it also explains the significance of the information.

Preston is the National Weather Service warning coordination meteorologist in Pocatello, Idaho. This book includes a discussion of meteorology during the early nineteenth century and how it relates to the Corps of Discovery. Preston extensively researched the various editions of the journals and collected all weather and climate information, and then compiled the data by date. Data from the expedition’s weather diaries, which provide temperature, wind direction, state of the weather and river conditions, are combined with excerpts from the narrative journals to provide a detailed summary for each day of the expedition.

Part I of the book includes a summary of meteorological instrumentation and the recording of weather data in the 1800s, as well as an overview of the journals. Part II presents the weather diaries and narrative journal information, arranged by date. The book includes a Lewis and Clark trail pictorial, providing a present-day photographic journey with corresponding dates from the expedition’s travels for reference. Preston has made it easy to apply the weather and climate data to any expedition research topic through clear organization of the information.

As the definitive compilation of weather information related to the Corps of Discovery, this book is an excellent addition to any Lewis and Clark library or collection. Weather buffs and Lewis and Clark enthusiasts alike will enjoy experiencing the weather along with the Corps of Discovery.

—Fawn R. Waranauskas

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**“Meriwether Lewis, The Last Mile”**

*By Susie Cullinan*

Award-winning Lewis County artist Susie Cullinan painted “Meriwether Lewis, The Last Mile” to coincide with the 200th anniversary of Lewis’s death. A limited-edition print, signed by the artist and Lewis County Mayor Kenneth Tumbow, can be purchased from the artist for $25 plus $5 shipping.

A portion of the poster sales will benefit charities in Tennessee that are making people aware of Meriwether Lewis and his contribution to Lewis County and the United States.

Poster size: 24" x 18"

Prints can be ordered by contacting Susie Cullinan at:
SLC1087@hughes.net or (931) 796-1714.

November 2009 We Proceeded On — 33
At its 2010 annual meeting in Olive Branch, Mississippi, the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation will present its Meritorious Achievement Award to A.C. “Butch” Bouvier of Onawa, Iowa; its Distinguished Service Award to Bob Hastert of Omaha, Nebraska; and its Youth Achievement Award to Kelsey Roldness and Jennifer Turkington of Vancouver, Washington.

Bouvier’s initial involvement with the story and the trail of the Corps of Discovery was small. For the 1985 Lewis and Clark Festival at Lewis and Clark State Park in Onawa, he constructed a one-inch-to-one-foot scale model of the corps’ keelboat. From there, Bouvier designed a full-size replica keelboat and directed his own “corps of volunteers” in its construction. That was followed by construction of two replica pirogues. When the first keelboat wore out, Bouvier directed construction of a new one.

As a 25-year volunteer, Bouvier generously has shared his knowledge, expertise and love of the Corps of Discovery’s boats with thousands of trail scholars, teachers, school children and park visitors. He has worked closely with volunteers at the Lewis & Clark Exploratory Center in Charlottesville, Virginia, who are constructing a replica keelboat.

Scholarship and other significant contributions that provide people a greater appreciation for and awareness of the Lewis and Clark Expedition come in many forms. The Foundation recognizes Butch Bouvier with its Meritorious Achievement Award, for taking scholarship to a new level with a hammer, wood and canvas sails.

On July 21, 1804, the Corps of Discovery arrived at the mouth of “the Great River Platt.” In 2001, Bob and Ava Hastert joined the Foundation’s newest chapter, near that site, as charter members. Hastert suggested the chapter’s name, Mouth of the Platte, after researching the Corps of Discovery’s journey through the Omaha area. He served for many years on the chapter’s board of directors.

Hastert’s contributions to the Mouth of the Platte Chapter, the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, the story of the Corps of Discovery and the trail in Nebraska are numerous. He lobbied the Omaha City Council and coordinated efforts to name a new waterfront park in Omaha, “Lewis and Clark Landing.” As chairman of the chapter’s Signage Committee, he helped raise money and direct the placement of an interpretive marker at the new Lewis and Clark Landing Park. Hastert served as an advisor to the Nebraska Bicentennial Committee and helped access Challenge Cost Share grant funds for interpretive markers along the Iowa-Nebraska trail corridor. He served as the chapter’s program chair for many years and was responsible for scheduling engaging speakers for the chapter’s monthly dinner meetings.

For all this and more, the Foundation recognizes Bob Hastert for his years of distinguished service.

Two Pleasant Valley Middle School students from Vancouver,
Washington, began their own journey of discovery last fall when they chose to participate in the National History Day Project. Kelsey Roldness and Jennifer Turkington gathered research materials and worked with scholars and tribal leaders to develop a 10-minute DVD, Meriwether Lewis: Doctrine of Discovery.

The theme for the 2008-2009 National History Day Project was The Individual in History: Actions and Legacies. Eighth-grade students Roldness and Turkington chose Lewis as their “individual” and a documentary DVD as their method of presentation. Meriwether Lewis is not a simple, 10-minute biographical sketch. It is a thoughtful and historically accurate look at the Corps of Discovery’s arrival at the mouth of the Columbia River; Lewis’s role as the expedition’s co-captain; President Thomas Jefferson’s “doctrine of discovery” and Lewis’s contributions to it; and the Chinookan-speaking people’s view of this “discovery.” Roldness and Turkington’s achievements demonstrate their future abilities to serve as keepers of the story and stewards of the trail.

—Ken Jutzi
Awards Committee Chairman

Thom received Indiana authors award

Indiana native James Alexander Thom recently received the inaugural Eugene and Marilyn Glick Indiana Authors Award, which includes a $10,000 prize. This new award recognizes the contributions of Indiana authors to the literary landscape across the nation and is presented by the Indianapolis-Marion County Public Library Foundation. Thom, a native of Gosport, Indiana, has been writing historical fiction in Indiana since the 1970s.

Thom wrote Sign Talker, a fictional account of George Drouillard, the French-Shawnee hunter and scout who was an important figure on the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

—Indianapolis-Marion County Public Library Foundation

Meriwether Lewis
by Thomas C. Danisi & John C. Jackson
424 pp (Illustrations) / HC / $28.98

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.

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Well researched and insightful.
Foundation hosts 12th conference on national scenic and historic trails

The Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation hosted the Partnership for the National Trails System’s 12th conference on national scenic and historic trails July 12-15 in Missoula, Montana. The Partnership holds its biennial conference along a national scenic or historic trail. The Foundation partnered with the Nez Perce Trail Foundation and the Continental Divide Trail Alliance to host the conference near the convergence of the three trails. Nearly 250 people participated in the conference, a record attendance.

The Partnership is comprised of the organizations that support the nation’s national scenic and historic trails. It works closely with the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S.D.A. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Federal Highway Administration. The LCTHF is a member of the Partnership and publications editor Wendy Raney serves on the Partnership’s board of directors.

The 12th conference, Gearing up for the Decade for the National Trails: Outreach, Capacity and Protection, opened with a “Native American Food Fest,” hosted by partners of the Nez Perce National Historic Trail. Participants spent the first full day of the conference at Travelers’ Rest State Park where they explored the historic area, visited the park’s new museum, attended more than a half dozen presentations on trail issues and participated in a service project to thank our host community.

The next two days involved workshops on outreach, capacity and trail protection. On the final day, participants chose from three field trips: a raft trip on the Blackfoot River; hiking and exploration along the Lolo Trail; or a bus tour following the flight of the Nez Perce through the Bitterroot Valley.

In a move unprecedented by any trail organization, the Partnership worked with its federal agency partners to provide scholarships to 30 “trail apprentices” between the ages of 18 and 25. The Partnership developed a mentor program and worked with the scholarship participants throughout the conference (and will continue to do so into the future) to determine ways to make trails and our organizations relevant and exciting to today’s youth.

—Wendy Raney
Clockwise from top left:

- A Salish and Kootenai drum group played during the conference's opening barbecue and invited conference participants to join in a traditional circle dance.
- Volunteers learn the traditional way to develop a Salish encampment.
- Construction of a Salish tipi was a highlight for many conference participants.
- Prior to the conference, youth groups had removed material from an old construction road that crossed the historic Traveler's Rest campsite. Volunteers seeded the area with native grass, applied mulch and ran a drip irrigation line through the project area.
- Michelle Mitchell, administrator of the Florida National Scenic Trail for the U.S.D.A. Forest Service, celebrates completion of the service projects.
Lewis carried a pair of “gentleman’s” flintlock pistols on his final journey

By Michael F. Carrick

Two recently published books concerning the death of Meriwether Lewis feature images representing U.S. Model 1799 North & Cheney flintlock pistols on their covers and in the text, which suggests they are the type of weapon that fired the shot that killed Lewis.1 Several hundred such pistols were in stock at the Schuylkill Arsenal in Pennsylvania in 1803.2 It is likely that Lewis would have received this model when requisitioning “1 pr. Horseman’s Pistols” in preparation for the western expedition.3 These North & Cheney regulation military pistols are of a large caliber, and fire a .69” round ball, the same size used in standard infantry muskets of the period.4

I am certain, however, that Lewis did not have the North & Cheney pistols, nor any U.S. military horseman’s pistols with him when he died. The North & Cheney pistol was large and ungainly, not suitable for use as a gentleman’s traveling pistol. They were called “horseman’s” pistols because they were carried in large holsters straddling the pommel on the saddle.

On his last journey, Lewis likely carried a pair of “traveler’s pistols,” also known as “gentleman’s pistols” or “great-coat pistols,” among other names. Such pistols, which generally were sold in pairs, were bigger than pocket pistols and had large bores and barrel lengths of four to seven inches. Riders normally carried them loaded, for use in an emergency.

Lewis is exactly the sort of person who would have carried such a set of pistols, and these undoubtedly were the weapons that caused his death. It is very likely that Lewis bought the pistols in question from William Booth in Philadelphia. The entry for May 20, 1807, in Lewis’s personal account book reads, “Purchased one pair of pistols of Mr. Booth near the Merchants Coffeehouse, $87.”5 Booth was a gunmaker and firearms dealer at 88 Second Street in Philadelphia, near the Merchants Coffeehouse, from about 1798 to 1816. He produced very fine pistols, including a cased pair in the possession of Aaron Burr when he was arrested for treason.6

There is no way to know the exact caliber or size of Lewis’s pistols. Travelers who were alone on horseback included a powder flask, bullet mould, cleaning rod and accessories, oil bottle and extra flints. The examples in Figures 1 and 2 have long barrels. A traveling pistol would look similar to these, but would have a shorter barrel. Considering the high price of $87 Lewis paid in 1807, it is very likely that he purchased a complete cased set of pistols with all of the accessories.7 That is significantly more expensive than the $10 Lewis paid for a pair of pocket pistols in Philadelphia in 1803.8

James Neely, Lewis’s traveling companion at the time of his death, took Lewis’s pistols, a horse, a rifle, a dirk and several other items. Neely mentioned his possession of these items in a letter to Thomas Jefferson informing him of Lewis’s death.9 Vardis Fisher quotes a letter from Lewis’s executor, John Marks, to the explorer’s brother, Reuben Lewis, reporting that Marks had tried to recover Lewis’s property from Neely. Marks wrote that he failed to find Neely but did meet with his wife, who surrendered the horse and rifle. She told Marks that her husband “carries the dirk and pistols constantly with him.”10 There is no evidence to suggest they ever were returned to Lewis’s family.

I have no comment on the controversy surrounding Lewis’s death, but I do suggest that the best evidence to date concerning the pistols Lewis had in his possession at the time of his death indicates he had a cased pair of flintlock pistols made by William Booth of Philadelphia.

This photo of a French Model 1777 Cavalry pistol has been reversed. This model is similar to the U.S. Model 1799 North & Cheney flintlock pistol historians previously have suggested Lewis carried at the time of his death.

An example of a William Booth flintlock pistol is shown in Figure 1. This pistol has a nine-inch barrel and likely was originally sold as part of a cased set. Figure 2 provides an example of a cased set. These pistols were not made by Booth, but are typical of the cased sets of the era. A case generally

Foundation member Michael Carrick is editor of an antique firearms Q&A column in The Gun Report magazine. He is also on the “experts” panel of Man At Arms Gun Collector magazine. Carrick has “a few hundred” firearms in his personal collection, in-
cluding original period examples of all the types of weapons carried on the Lewis and Clark Expedition. His reference library comprises more than 3,000 books on firearms and edged weapons. He is an avid black-powder hunter, using only flintlock and wheellock rifles. He served as president of the Oregon Chapter from 2003-2007 and has written several articles for WPO. He retired in 2000 when he and his wife, Beverly, sold their business, which involved manufacturing and distributing crime scene investigative equipment.

NOTES
1 John D.W. Guice, ed., By His Own Hand? The Mysterious Death of Meriwether Lewis (Norman: Oklahoma University Press, 2006); James E. Starrs and Kira Gale, The Death of Meriwether Lewis (Omaha: River Junction Press, 2009). The photograph on the cover of By His Own Hand? has been reversed, thereby depicting a pistol with the lockwork on the left side. No such left-handed pistol exists. The pistol illustrated on the cover of The Death of Meriwether Lewis appears to be the same one shown on the Guice book, but is not reversed. Both photographs are of a French Model 1777 Cavalry pistol, not a North & Cheney. These pistol models are similar, but not identical.

Figure 1. This flintlock pistol made by William Booth of Philadelphia has a nine-inch barrel and likely was originally sold as part of a cased set. It is similar to the pistols Lewis carried with him at the time of his death.

Figure 2. A pair of cased flintlock pistols typical of the late eighteenth century to early nineteenth century era.

4 Much has been made of this large caliber by both murder and suicide theorists. James Starrs suggests Lewis would have been carrying these pistols at the time of his death because his “research into the federal archives also reveals that there is no record of Lewis having returned the horseman’s pistols requisitioned to him ...,” Starrs and Gale, p. 30. Starrs would not have found a record of Lewis having returned the rifles, the blunderbusses, the cannon or any other government property because Lewis auctioned off all government property when the expedition returned to St. Louis. Meriwether Lewis was noted for his honesty, and it seems very unlikely he would have “stolen” two pistols from the U.S. government.
5 William K. Brunot alerted me to this mention of pistols purchased by Lewis after the expedition. Personal Account Book, 1807 April 4-1809 Sept 27, Meriwether Lewis Collection, Box 1, Folder 8, Vol. 3, Missouri History Museum, St. Louis, Missouri.
6 In an unusual convergence of characters, the arresting officer was New Orleans Sheriff Blaise Cenas. Cenas is mentioned in the Lewis and Clark journals on August 30, 1803, as the man who accidentally shot a female bystander when Lewis handed him the airgun on Brunot’s Island. Gary E. Moulton, ed., The Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition, 13 volumes (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983-2001), Vol. 6, p. 46 and Vol. 2, p. 65. Aaron Burr figures in the murder conspiracy outlined by Kira Gale in The Death of Meriwether Lewis. Burr and Lewis both had William Booth pistols. Finally, the Burr pistols were given to Caesar Rodney of Delaware, brother of Colonel Thomas Rodney, who saw Lewis’s air rifle demonstration on September 8, 1803. Dwight L. Smith and Ray Swick, eds., A Journey through the West—Thomas Rodney’s 1803 Journal from Delaware to the Mississippi Territory (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1997), p. 56. I thank William K. Brunot for the above information. William is a direct descendant of Dr. Felix Brunot, friend of Lewis and owner of the island where the airgun accident occurred.
10 Fisher, Suicide or Murder?, p. 136.
Save the Dates:  July 29 - August 6, 2010

On the Trail in Nez Perce Country

42nd Annual Meeting  Lewiston, Idaho - Clarkston, Washington

Highlights include:
August 1: Vendors; Social and Overview of area and meeting.
August 2: Opening ceremonies; awards luncheon; field trip to Patit Creek (May 2, 1806) near Dayton, WA.
August 3: Field trip to "Canoc Camp" (Orofino, ID); "Long Camp" (Kamiah, ID); Weippe, ID and hike a portion of the Lolo Trail.
August 4: Nez Perce tribal activities and mini pow wow; closing banquet.
Featuring local historians, authors and tribal interpreters.

Watch for complete registration packet in February’s issue of We Proceeded On or the Foundation’s website, www.lewisandclark.org