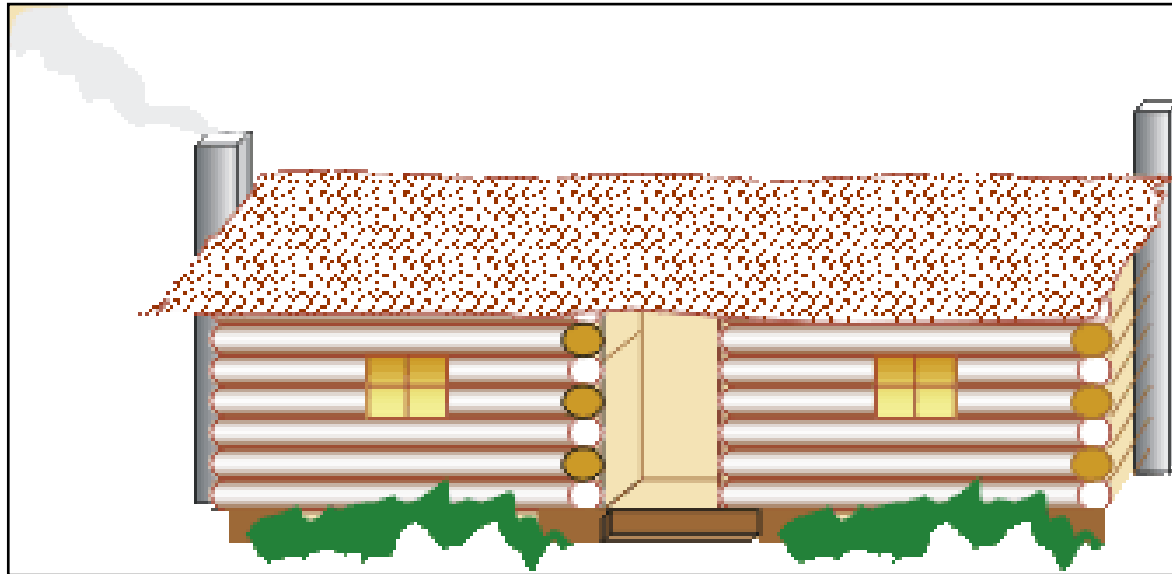


LEWIS & CLARK IN COLUMBIA RIVER COUNTRY

EXHIBIT 1: GRINDER'S STAND



Grinder's stand may have looked something like this—two rather small rooms with a breezeway between. Sometimes a small kitchen or store room was attached to the back. This design was typical for that time and location. The chimneys would have been made of field stones.

LEWIS & CLARK IN COLUMBIA RIVER COUNTRY

EXHIBIT 2: SCHEMATIC DRAWING OF THE ROOM WHERE LEWIS DIED

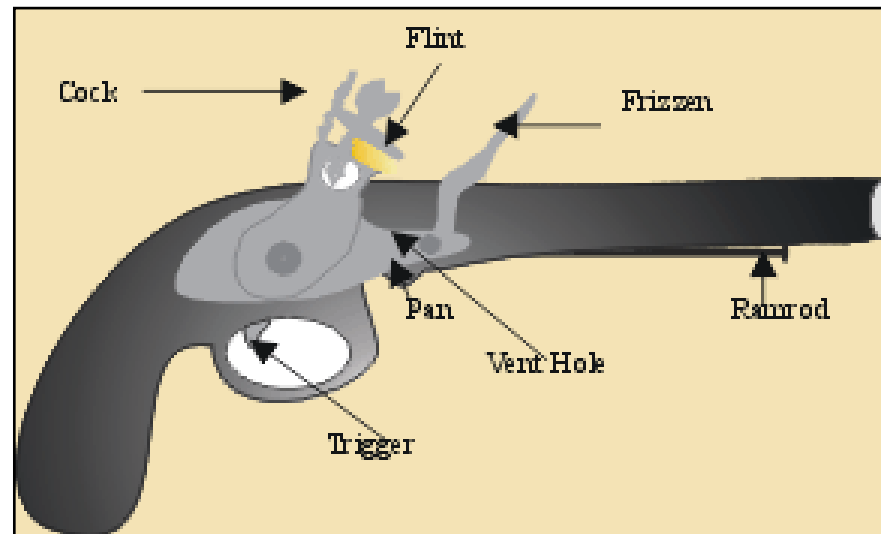


The house itself is long gone and little is known about its furnishings. Reports indicate there was a bed in the room but Lewis said he preferred to sleep on his buffalo and bear robes on the floor. He also brought his saddle and travel trunks inside the room. When the servants found him, he was still alive and lying on the bed.

This excerpt was provided courtesy of the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial/National Park Service website (March 22, 2006).

LEWIS & CLARK IN COLUMBIA RIVER COUNTRY

EXHIBIT 3: FIREARM DIAGRAM



Governor Lewis owned at least two hand guns, possibly 1799 North and Cheney flintlock pistols similar to the one in the drawing. To fire it, black powder was poured into the barrel and tamped tightly with a removeable ramrod. Then a lead ball was placed in the barrel and a bit of powder was placed on the pan. When the trigger was pulled, a moveable arm with a piece of flint clamped in it (called the cock) struck a metal piece on the barrel (the frizzen) causing a spark to ignite the powder in the pan. The fire was then drawn through the vent hole where it ignited the powder in the barrel and fired the shot. Since only one ball could be fired at a time, suicide theorists say Lewis loaded both guns and fired them one at a time.

LEWIS & CLARK IN COLUMBIA RIVER COUNTRY

EXHIBIT 4: KEY LOCATIONS



Key Locations
in the Last Journey of
Meriwether Lewis

1. St. Louis - The location of Lewis' office. He left from this location on September 4, 1809.
2. Chickasaw Indian Agency - The place where Indian Agent James Neelly was based.
3. Natchez, Mississippi - The starting point of the Natchez Trace.
4. the Natchez Trace - The dashed line represents the trace which spanned from Natchez to Nashville.
5. Ft. Pickering - Where Lewis stopped on his journey.
6. Grinder's Stand - The place where Lewis met his death, about 70 miles south of Nashville.
7. Nashville, Tennessee - Neelly was headed for this city when Lewis met up with him.
8. Washington D.C. - Lewis' intended final destination.
9. Upper Louisiana Territory - Meriwether Lewis was appointed governor of the upper Louisiana Territory, a region that spanned several hundred miles.

LEWIS & CLARK IN COLUMBIA RIVER COUNTRY



THEORIES AND INTERPRETATIONS OF MERIWETHER LEWIS' DEATH

SUICIDE

Those who believe Meriwether Lewis took his own life have differing theories about why he did it as follows: (1) He was subject to periodic spells of depression and overwhelmed by personal problems after the expedition. (2) He had a debilitating physical disease that caused

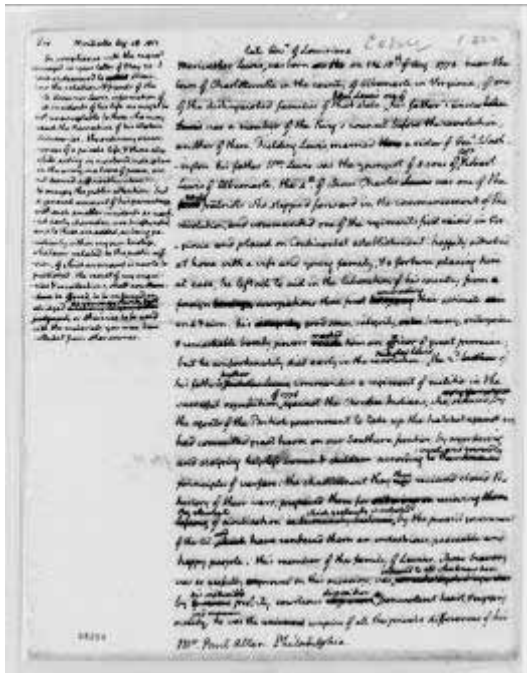
death as a suicide in letters and statements written after Lewis' death.

Neely and Russell based their conclusions on personal observations of Lewis' strange behavior shortly before his death, while Wilson accepted Mrs. Grinder's story two years after the event.

In addition, three men who were probably closest to Lewis—Thomas Jefferson, William Clark, and Mahlon Dickerson immediately assumed that Lewis had taken his own life when they heard the news. In a letter to his brother Jonathan, William Clark wrote, "I fear O! I fear the weight of his mind has overcome him." Dickerson lamented Lewis' death in his diary and did not question that his death was by suicide.

Jefferson wrote a short biography of Lewis in which he wrote, "While he lived with me in Washington, I observed at times sensible depressions of mind . . . During his western expedition the constant exertion which that required of all the faculties of body & mind, suspended these distressing affections; but after his establishment in St. Louis in sedentary occupations they returned upon him with redoubled vigor, and began seriously to alarm his friends. He was in a paroxym of one of these when his affairs rendered it necessary for him to go to Washington."

Much later in time, several other prominent writers and scholars took firm stands that Lewis' death was suicide due



The image above is of a letter written to Thomas Jefferson to Paul Allen on August 18, 1813. This letter contains a short biography of Meriwether Lewis.

Courtesy of the Library of Congress, the Thomas Jefferson Papers.

both his mind and body to deteriorate.

(1) Overwhelmed by personal problems

Major Neely, Major Russell, and Alexander Wilson all reported Lewis'

to depression and personal problems. Two such authors are Paul Russell Cutright and Donald Jackson.

(2) Overcome by a physical disease affecting mind and body

Two disease theories have recently been proposed that attribute Lewis' strange behavior and eventual self-destruction to debilitating diseases.

Paresis Theory: Reimert T. Ravenholt, a physician and epidemiologist, believes Lewis was suffering from paresis which is defined medically as, "a disorder characterized primarily by impaired mental function, caused by damage to the brain from untreated syphilis." Ravenholt thinks Lewis probably contracted syphilis, a venereal disease, while on the western expedition. He sees a distinct similarity between Lewis' behavior shortly before he died and clinical studies of persons afflicted with paresis. Ravenholt also believes that Lewis realized what was happening to him, and rather than cast a shadow upon those who loved and respected him, he ended his life.

Malaria Theory: A long-time Lewis and Clark scholar, Thomas C. Danisi has also proposed a disease theory, but he believes the disease afflicting Lewis was malaria. Most people who lived in the Mississippi River Valley in the early nineteenth century contracted malaria, which was spread by mosquitoes. Malaria was a recurring disease which once caught could reappear periodically. Some people were affected more strongly by malaria symptoms than others.

Danisi cites historical accounts and clinical studies of malaria patients whose behavior resembled that of Lewis. In severe cases of malaria, unbearable pain periodically afflicts certain parts of the patient's body. To get relief, patients have been known to inflict harm on the parts of their bodies that are causing

pain. In other words, they try to "kill" the pain and in the process they sometimes kill themselves.

MURDER

The belief that Meriwether Lewis was murdered is not just a recent phenomenon. Rumors about murder were circulating as soon as Lewis' death was made known. It is easy to see why people could reach such a conclusion- the violent death of a prominent young man on a wilderness road where robbers were not uncommon--no eyewitnesses, etc.

Just as the suicide theorists offer differing motives for Lewis' death, so do the murder theorists. Motives that have been put forth are: (1) murder by a jealous husband (2) murder for greed, i.e. robbery, and (3) political assassination.

(1) Murder by a jealous husband

The problem for amateur detectives today is to separate fact from folklore. Many widely-circulated versions of Lewis' death at the time it happened cannot be backed up by documentation. One of these is the story that Mr. Grinder killed Lewis when he came home and found Lewis and Mrs. Grinder together. Grinder was tried for murder, the story goes, but was acquitted because everyone was afraid of him. No documents of the alleged trial have ever been discovered, however.

(2) Murder motivated by robbery

For most proponents of the murder theory, the most plausible explanation, given the time and place, is that unknown "bandits" killed Governor Lewis while robbing him. The Natchez Trace was a long and lonely stretch of road-a path, really, through deep woods. It was a fact that robberies and murders took place along the Trace from time to time.

For others, however, the robbery theory hits closer to home. Just about everyone

who was in Lewis' vicinity on the night he died has been accused of robbing and murdering him at one time or another. These include Mr. and Mrs. Grinder, John Pernier (Lewis' servant), Major Neelly, a local renegade named Runion, and even the Indian chiefs who reportedly had been traveling with Lewis and Neelly. A lot of these accusations were, and still are, part of the regional folklore. In 1893, a distinguished scholar, Dr. Elliott Coues (pronounced "cows"), took up the cause for murder motivated by robbery. Coues was a physician, ornithologist, and historian who edited a three-volume edition of the expedition journals in 1893. Coues' murder theory appears in a short article in volume I of the journals entitled "A Memoir to Meriwether Lewis"

A much later robbery theory, Suicide or Murder? The Strange Death of Governor Meriwether Lewis, was written by journalist and historian Vardis Fisher in 1962. Although Fisher frames his title as a question, he comes down firmly on the side of murder. Fisher suggested several possible scenarios to support the murder theory. For example, he cited a widely circulated rumor that Lewis had discovered a gold mine out west. Upon his return Lewis allegedly told friends about the mine and that he had drawn a map of its location.

Fisher admitted the story was probably just another "lost gold mine" tale, but that was not important. What mattered was that some people believed it was true. Fisher wrote, "If the story had gone abroad that on his journey to the ocean he [Lewis] had found a mine, and had made a map of its situation, this could well have been in the consciousness of his servant, of Neelly, and possibly of the Indian chiefs [Chickasaw chiefs were said to be traveling with the party] not to speak of all the bandits on the Trace and in the wilderness who knew that the Governor was coming."



This monument was erected in honor of Meriwether Lewis on the Natchez Trace Parkway. Courtesy National Park Service.

(3) Murder by Assassination

Theory of David Leon Chandler: For a while it seemed as if every possible motive for murder had been considered, but that changed in 1994 when a book was published entitled *The Jefferson Conspiracies: A President's Role in the Assassination of Meriwether Lewis*. The author, David Leon Chandler, contended that Lewis was the victim of an assassination conspiracy set in motion by none other than his erstwhile friend and mentor, Thomas Jefferson.

But why would Jefferson want Lewis dead? According to Chandler, Lewis discovered certain secrets about General James Wilkinson, his predecessor as Governor of Upper Louisiana. If revealed, these secrets would destroy not only the reputation of Gen. Wilkerson, but of Jefferson as well. Chandler believed the real reason for Lewis' trip to Washington was to "blow the whistle." The only way to kill the scandal was to kill Lewis before he could talk. Those who supposedly were helping Lewis in his final days (Major Neelly, Major Russell, etc.) were also part of the conspiracy.

This excerpt was provided courtesy of the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial/National Park Service website (March 22, 2006).

LEWIS & CLARK IN COLUMBIA RIVER COUNTRY



James E. Starrs: Can The Truth Ever Be Known?

Two centuries after the death of Governor Lewis, the interest in what happened to him that night on the Natchez Trace has ebbed at times, but never died out completely. But with all the conflicting testimonies, the passage of time, and the lack of documentation, can the truth ever be known? Forensic scientist James E. Starrs of George Washington University thinks so-if the National Park Service will allow him to exhume Lewis' remains.

Starrs leans toward the assassination theory, maintaining that the description of Lewis' wounds do not suggest suicide. "It is implausible that someone as deftly experienced with firearms as Meriwether Lewis would have failed twice to kill himself with such a deadly and destructive weapon," he says. (Lewis was killed by lead balls fired from two flintlock pistols.)

As the first step in getting permission for an exhumation Starrs filed an affidavit to convene a coroner's jury in the Tennessee county where Lewis was killed. The jury met on June 3, 1996 in Hohenwald, Tennessee to hear testimony from historians, forensic scientists, and experts on subjects from firearms to handwriting analysis.

After the inquest was held, participants (nearly all of whom believed Lewis was murdered), recommended that Lewis' remains be exhumed on the premise that recently-developed forensic techniques may be able to solve the mystery. The decision to exhume or not lies with National Park Service officials who now administer the section of the Natchez

Trace where Lewis' gravesite is located. The Park Service maintained that the witnesses who appeared at the inquest presented a one-sided view of Lewis' death. Few witnesses appeared who believed Lewis committed suicide or who could argue strongly that physical remains of Lewis surviving after two hundred years would do little to prove either the suicide or murder theories.

The Park Service maintained that the sanctity of Lewis' burial site was more important than the small amount of information likely to be gained from examining a body that had not been buried in a coffin and had been deteriorating for nearly two hundred years. Robert C. Haraden, former superintendent of the Natchez Trace Parkway & Meriwether Lewis National Monument writes:

". . . There are people who believe that Lewis committed suicide and others who believe he was murdered. Both groups are well intentioned. However, the mystery, the fascination, and the lore of Lewis and Clark and their heroic expedition is that we do not know every detail about them. Nor do we need to know-that's what keeps the story alive. . . There is a high potential for damage to the monument and gravesite [from exhumation] and only a forlorn hope that anything positive can be learned after 190 years. . . Let's not dwell on Meriwether Lewis' death. Instead, let us celebrate his life and great accomplishments and let the mystery remain."

Exhume the Remains of Meriwether Lewis? Park Service Denies Explorer's Exhumation

Reuters News Service - Atlanta

The body of explorer Meriwether Lewis will remain in its grave, the National Park Service said Monday. The Park Service rejected the request of a forensic scientist, James Starrs, to dig up the remains of the nineteenth explorer to try to prove a theory that Lewis was assassinated. The agency said it had a duty to protect burial sites.

"The proposed excavation and exhumation is inconsistent with National Park Service management policies, which prohibit the disturbance of burials in national park lands unless threatened with destruction," Jerry Belson, director of the National Park Service's southeast region, wrote to Starrs.

"In our opinion national parks throughout the country entrusted with the stewardship of burial sites could be affected if this project were allowed . . ." Starrs' exhumation request had the backing of more than 160 of Lewis' descendents who disagree with history books that claim the explorer committed suicide in 1809. Starrs, a professor at George Washington University, said he thought Lewis was the first assassination victim in U. S. history.



The photographs on this page are images of the marker placed above the spot of Meriwether Lewis' grave.



This information only scratches the surface of the massive amount of material written about Meriwether Lewis' mysterious death. Magazines and newspapers of that day carried stories about the tragedy, of course, and references to Lewis' tragic end often appeared in letters among those who knew him. In the 1930s, extensive interviews were conducted with elderly people around the area in Tennessee where Lewis died. Many of them remember hearing their elders talk about it when they were children. As you do your research, look for other leads to follow in this most enduring of American mysteries.

This excerpt was provided courtesy of the [Jefferson National Expansion Memorial/National Park Service website](#) (March 22, 2006).

LEWIS & CLARK IN COLUMBIA RIVER COUNTRY



STUDENT READING: THE MYSTERIOUS DEATH OF MERIWETHER LEWIS

Time has not diminished the public's interest in the mysterious death of Governor Lewis. Two hundred years later, it still has the power to inspire heated debates among historians, forensic scientists, and even the general public.

Meriwether Lewis was only thirty-two years old when he returned from his great western adventure. The first days and weeks back "home" must have been exhilarating. The triumphant explorers were national heroes. Being a national hero in 1806 was probably a lot different from today—no high-speed communication systems to quickly spread the news, no motorcades or ticker tape parades down the main streets of America. But there were plenty of celebrations, mostly receptions and dinner parties at the homes of St. Louis' leading citizens—at least for the captains. Crew members undoubtedly had their own ways of celebrating.



This painting by Roger Cooke shows Thomas Jefferson giving instructions for the expedition to Meriwether Lewis. Washington State Historical Society Collection.

A little later, when Lewis and Clark

traveled east to report to President Jefferson, they were "wined and dined" and treated like heroes wherever they went. To officially reward their accomplishments, both men were appointed to high offices. In February, 1807, Lewis was named Governor of the Upper Louisiana Territory, and Clark was appointed Brigadier General of the Militia and Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the same region. Frederick Bates, a Washington official, was appointed secretary of the Upper Louisiana Territory to serve under Governor Lewis.

In the spring of 1807, Clark and Bates left for St. Louis to take up their new duties, but Lewis had business in Philadelphia before heading west. He arrived in that city around the first of April, 1807. His first concern was publication of the journals he and Clark kept during their Voyage of Discovery, so he busied himself finding a publisher and contacting artists to illustrate them. The actual journals and field notes were still in St. Louis and it was Lewis' responsibility to get them ready for publication as soon as possible after he returned to St. Louis.

Lewis was warmly received by the Philadelphia elite. He renewed an old friendship with a prominent Philadelphian, Mahlon Dickerson. Judging from a letter he later wrote to Dickerson, Lewis enjoyed the social scene very much during his stay in Philadelphia. Lewis' letter also indicates that he became attracted to a young lady there, and may have proposed marriage to her.

After almost four months in Philadelphia, Lewis returned to Virginia, still unmarried. He visited President Jefferson, his mother (Lucy Lewis Marks), and other friends, but there is little information about how he

occupied his time otherwise. Some scholars say he attended the treason trial of Aaron Burr in Richmond, Virginia at Jefferson's request, but there is no documentation to prove this. Finally, in February 1807, he set out for St. Louis accompanied by his brother, Reuben. They arrived on March 8, 1807, one year and eight days after Lewis was appointed Governor of Upper Louisiana. During this time, Secretary Bates had been in charge of the office in St. Louis.

Lewis' long absence from his new post has never been fully explained or understood. Thomas Jefferson's letters to him during this time show a growing anxiety—even impatience with his delays. In a letter to Lewis on July 17, 1807, Jefferson's first sentence was, "Since I parted with you from Albemarle in Sep. last [1806] I have never had a line from you nor I believe has the Secretary of War with which you have much connection through the Indian department."¹ Jefferson's closing sentence was about the journals. He wrote, "We have no tidings yet of the forwardness of your printer. I hope the first part will not be delayed much longer."²

Back in St. Louis, Lewis took up his official duties as Governor of Upper Louisiana. The position was a great honor, of course, but probably not a wise career choice for a young, hardy outdoorsman. It certainly didn't help matters that Secretary Bates was jealous of Lewis and never lost an opportunity to undermine him whenever and however he could. In spite of this distraction, Lewis apparently tackled the governor's job with determination. It was an uphill battle, however.

¹ Jackson, Donald, ed. *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition with Related Documents 1783-1854*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1962, p. 445.

² Jackson, pp. 467-68. (Same as footnote 1)

References to Lewis in the letters of Jefferson and other friends suggest Lewis was having a difficult time adjusting. He seems to have developed a drinking problem, usually referred to discreetly as "his habit" or "indisposition." Another matter of concern among Lewis' friends was his tendency toward "melancholia," or depression as it is commonly referred to today.

The last straw came when James Madison became president in 1809 and replaced Jefferson's cabinet members with those of his own. Right from the start, the new Secretary of War, William Eustis, refused to pay Lewis' vouchers for legitimate expenses. Lewis had used his own money for certain expenses, and Eustis' refusal to reimburse him put him in a precarious financial situation.

In the fall of 1809, Lewis decided he had to go back to Washington to work out his problems with the War Department and to attend to the long-neglected publication of the journals. Taking the journals and the unpaid vouchers with him, he left St.



Roger Cooke's painting "Meriwether Lewis, Field Botanist" shows Lewis examining a plant with white flowers, probably a cow parsnip. Such work was also documented in his journals. Washington State Historical Society Collection.

Lewis by keelboat on September 4, 1809. His plan was to travel down the Mississippi to New Orleans, and then take a sea-going vessel up the east coast to Washington D. C. However, by the time Lewis reached Fort Pickering (near Memphis, Tennessee), he was quite ill and acting irrationally. Crew members of the boat on which he was traveling reported that he had twice attempted to kill himself.

The commander at Fort Pickering, Captain Gilbert Russell, was so alarmed at Lewis' condition (which Russell attributed in part to Lewis' "indisposition") that he refused to let Lewis leave until his health improved. During this time, Lewis changed his plans. He decided to strike out across country from Fort Pickering, intersect the Natchez Trace (a wilderness road that stretched 450 miles from Natchez, Mississippi to Nashville, Tennessee), then continue on well-traveled roads to Washington.

While Lewis was still recovering at Fort Pickering, Major James Neelly, agent to the Chickasaw Nation, arrived at the fort. Neelly was on his way to Nashville and he agreed to travel with Lewis, whose health had substantially improved. The party that left Fort Pickering consisted of Governor Lewis, Major Neelly, and two servants. One of them, John Pernier, was Lewis' personal servant who had been with him for a long time. The other, an unnamed black man, was traveling with Major Neelly. Some sources say the group also included some Chickasaw Indian chiefs

traveling back to their villages.

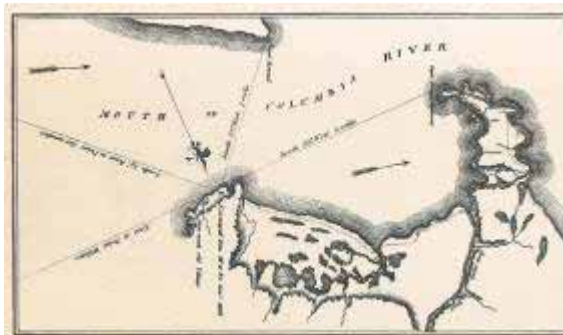
The overland trip was grueling and Neelly reported that after a few days on the trail, Lewis' health began to deteriorate once again. They rested a couple of days at the Chickasaw Indian agency, and then pushed on toward Nashville. On the morning of October 10, Major Neelly stayed behind to look for some horses that had strayed while Lewis and the two servants went ahead. That evening Lewis' party arrived at a roadside inn to spend the night and wait for Major Neelly. The inn, called Grinder's Stand, was about seventy miles southeast of Nashville. It was actually a crude log house built

beside the road where travelers could get food and lodging.

Early the next morning (October 11) Governor Lewis died in his room from two gunshot wounds. Major Neelly arrived at the inn later on the same day, but Lewis was already dead. Several days later, Neelly wrote a letter to Thomas Jefferson telling him

what had happened-or at least what Mrs. Grinder and the servants told him had happened.

The little that is known about the events of that night comes mainly from Neelly's letter and two or three other documents, none of which tell exactly the same story. These documents are presented exactly as they were written. The spelling and punctuation of the original documents has been retained.



This detailed map of the mouth and north shore of the Columbia River was originally drawn by William Clark in 1805.
Washington State Historical Society Collections.

This excerpt was provided courtesy of the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial/National Park Service website (March 21, 2006).