



Meriwether Lewis

Thomas C. Danisi, John C. Jackson

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October 11, 2009 marks the bicentennial of Meriwether Lewis's death. As the leader of the Lewis and Clark expedition, an epic exploration of uncharted territory west of the Mississippi, Lewis has been the subject of several biographies, yet much of the published information is unreliable. A number of myths surrounding his life and death persist.

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

Instead of focusing on the Lewis and Clark expedition, the authors concentrate on what Lewis was doing immediately before and after the journey through Western territory. They assess his role as a natural scientist and as governor of the Louisiana Territory. His lifelong mentor, Thomas Jefferson, thrust the latter role upon Lewis during a time of crisis. As Danisi and Jackson reveal, he would much rather have devoted this time compiling his notes and scientific findings into a vivid narrative of the expedition's adventures.

Finally, using medical documentation, the book reveals the actual cause of Lewis's untimely death. The authors address both the conspiracy theories regarding murder as the cause of Lewis's death and the longstanding belief that he committed suicide.

The Meriwether Lewis that emerges from this thoroughly researched biography is a man of honorable intentions who met severe challenges and handled difficult confrontations with patience and diplomacy. Both professional historians and armchair devotees of American history will want to add this important new work to their libraries.

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