

Captain Clark's Report on Council Bluff

According to [*History of Nebraska by James C. Olson and Ron C. Naugle*](#), Clark's account of this first parley west of the Missouri between representatives of the U.S. and the native nations shows that he and Lewis were skilled diplomats. However, Clark was *not* a great speller:

"mad[e] up a Small preasent for those people in perpotion to their Consiquence. also a package with a meadile to accompany a Speech for the Grand Chief (which we intend to send to him) after Brackfast we Collected those Indians under an orning [awning] of our Main Sail, in presence or our Party paraded & Delivered a long Speech to them expressive of our journey the wirkes of our Government, Some advice to them and Directions how They were to Conduct themselves, (made one) the principal Chief for the nation (to whom) being absente we sent him the Speech flag Meadel & Some Cloathes. after hering what they had to say Delivered (two of) a medal of Second Grade to one for the Ottos & one for the Missourie (part of the nation) present and 4 medals of a third Grade to the inferior Chief for each tribe."

Yet for all the diplomacy, there was little meeting of the minds. Lewis and Clark were staking claim to the new territory for the United States and identifying sites for trading and defense posts. As Clark noted about the site of the first meeting:

"The Situation [wc: 25 Days from this to Santafee] of our last Camp Councill Bluff or Handssom Prarie, appears to be a verry proper place for a Tradeing establishment & fortification. The Soil of the Bluff well adapted for Brick, Great deel of timers abov in the two Points. many other advantages of a Small nature ... one Days march from the Ottoe Town, and one Day & a half from the great Pania [Pawnee] village, 2 days from the Mahar Towns, two 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ Days from the Loups Villiage, & Convenient to the Countrey thro: which Bands of the Soux hunt. perhaps no other Situation is as well Calculated for a Trading establishment. The air is pure and helthy So far as we can Judge."

The only fatality on the entire transcontinental expedition of Lewis and Clark was that of Sergeant Charles Floyd, who died near present-day South Sioux City, August 20, 1804, most likely of a ruptured appendix. The captains did what they could for him, but their standard remedies were of little help and may have

hastened his demise. Bleeding and purging were commonly used, if they were, it would have hastened the inevitable death of Floyd. The surgery that could have saved him wasn't invented yet. Clark noted in his diary:

"Serj. Floyd Died with a great deal of composure, before his death he Said to me, 'I am going away I want you to write me a letter.' We buried him on the top of the bluff 1/2 Mile below a Small river to which we Gave his name, he was buried with the Honors of War much lamented, a Seeder post with the (1) Name Sergt. C. Floyd died here 20th of august 1804 was fixed at the head of his grave."