

***Booklist* review**

The Death of Meriwether Lewis: A Historic Crime Scene Investigation

By James E. Starrs and Kira Gale (River Junction Press LLC, April, 2009)
ISBN: 978-0-9649315-4-1 \$16.95 368 pages 6 x 9 42 photos 5 maps

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Conspiracy theorizing is the populist historiographical method this inspection of the demise of explorer Meriwether Lewis exemplifies. Occasioned by the bicentenary of Lewis' death, it is propelled by its authors' expectation that the federal government, which controls Lewis' burial site, will soon approve the exhumation that those convinced that Lewis was murdered have long been sought. Starrs noted a previous federal rejection of disinterment in his *A Voice for the Dead* (2005), an account of his investigations into historical homicides, including that of Jesse James. Pending the results of the unshoveling of Lewis, Starrs and Gale's readers can revel in the success achieved by conspiracy advocates reported—indeed, reprinted seemingly verbatim—here, the proceedings of a 1996 Tennessee inquest. Starrs and Gale's capacious, document-driven argument that Lewis was not a suicide isn't the most editorially polished of books, but should Lewis' bones make headlines, if and when they speak forensically from the grave, grassroots enthusiasm for it may take flight.
--Gilbert Taylor