

Letter from Thomas Jefferson to Meriwether Lewis, July 6, 1803

*Washington, U.S. of America
July 6, 1803*

Dear Sir:

In the journey which you are about to undertake for the discovery of the course and source of the Missouri, and of the most convenient water communication from thence to the Pacific ocean, your party being small, it is to be expected that you will encounter considerable dangers from the Indian inhabitants. Should you escape those dangers and reach the Pacific ocean, you may find it imprudent to hazard a return the same way, and be forced to seek a passage round by sea, in such vessels as you may find on the Western coast but you will be without money, without clothes, and other necessaries; as sufficient supply cannot be carried with you from hence, your resource in that case can only be in the credit of the U.S. for which purpose I hereby authorize you to draw on the Secretaries of State, of the Treasury, of War and Navy of the U.S. according as you may find your draughts will be most negotiable, for the purpose of obtaining money or necessaries for yourself and

your men and I solemnly pledge the faith of the United States that these draughts shall be paid punctually at the date they are made payable.

I also ask of the Consuls, agents, merchants and citizens of any nation with which we have intercourse or amity to furnish you with those supplies which your necessities may call for assuring them of honorable and prompt retribution, and our own Consuls in foreign parts where you happen to be, are hereby instructed and required to be aiding and assisting to you in whatsoever may be necessary for procuring your return back to the United States. And to give more entire satisfaction and confidence to those who may be disposed to aid you I Thomas Jefferson, President of the United States of America, have written this letter of general credit for you with my own hand and signed it with my name.

*Th Jefferson
To Capt Meriwether Lewis*

Source: Jefferson Letter. Montana Historical Society Archives. Excerpted in *Not In Precious Metals Alone: A Manuscript History of Montana* (Helena, 1976): 4.