



Meriwether Lewis to Thomas Jefferson, May 14, 1803

Philadelphia, May 14th 1803.

Dear Sir,

In your instructions to me you mention that the instruments for ascertaining by celestial observations the geography of the country through which I shall pass, have been already provided: I shall not therefore purchase any articles of that discription (*sic*) until I hear further from you on this subject. Will you be so good as to inform me what instruments have been provided? and where they are? it may be possible that some instrument has been omitted, which Mr. Patterson, Mr. Ellicott and those gentlemen to whom you have referred me in this place, may deem necessary for me, and if so the deficiency can be supplied (*sic*) in time.

Mr. Patterson and Mr. Ellicott both disapprove of the Theodolite as applicable to my purposes; they think it a delicate instrument, difficult of transportation, and one that would be very liable to get out of order; they also state that in it's application to any observations for obtaining the Longitude, it would be liable to many objections, and to much more *inaccuracy(sic) than* the Sextant. The instruments these gentlemen recommend, and which indeed they think indispensibly (*sic*) necessary, are, two Sextants, (one of which, must be constructed for the back observation,) an artificial Horizon or two; a good Arnald's watch or Chronometer, a Surveyor's Compass with a ball and socket and two pole chain, and a set of plotting instruments. By means of the Sextant fixed for the back observation and an artificial Horizon also constructed for the purpose, the meridian altitude of the Sun may always be taken, altho it should even exceed eighty degrees: for this valuable problem I am indebted to Mr. Patterson.....