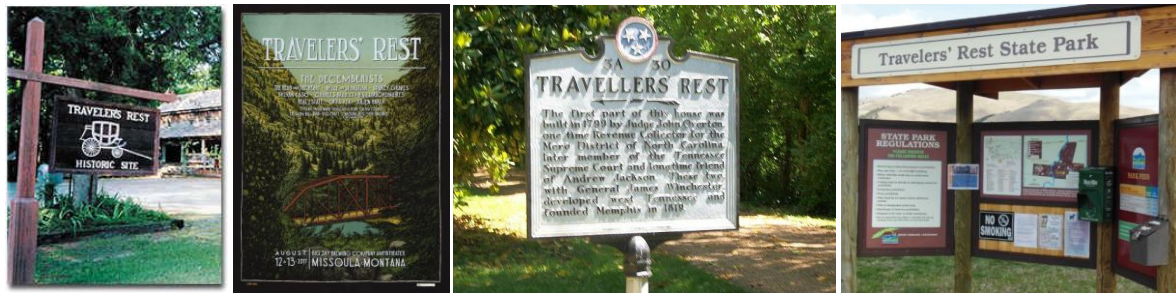


## The Name “Travellers Rest”

Submitted by Bruce Mihelish



Try to google the name “Travelers Rest” and see what you come up with. There are plenty of choices. Captain Lewis seemed to be less than creative when he chose this name. But wait, maybe this had more thought put into the name than we think? Today there are music festivals, parks, a lodge in Glacier National Park, golf resorts in Florida, towns and resorts in South Carolina, inns, motels, historic places and buildings in many states all over America. Ohio, Oregon, Tennessee, Mississippi, Minnesota, Georgia, West Virginia, and Kentucky all participate.

The name Travelers Rest near Missoula came from Meriwether Lewis. He wrote on Sept. 9<sup>th</sup>, 1805.... “we called this Creek Travellers rest, it is about 20 yards wide a fine bould clear runing stream. the land through which we passed is but indifferent a could white gravley soil.”

The late scholar Joe Mussulman said: “Led by their Shoshone guide, Toby, the Corps of Discovery walked along the Bitterroot River—they called it both “Clark’s and the Flathead River”—between snow-covered mountains, the Bitterroot to the west and the Sapphires to the east. In the afternoon of 9 September 1805, they turned westward at a creek they dubbed Travelers’ Rest, today known as Lolo Creek. They stopped at a gathering place that Indians had been using for that same purpose for thousands of years, on the tributary now known as Lolo Creek, about two miles above the Bitterroot River. The captains soon recognized it as a focal point in Western geography and intertribal politics.”

The Corps camped here a few days to rest and prepare before climbing through this difficult mountain gap in the Bitterroots. They had been tracking north along this gigantic wall of rock trying to find a break in it for almost 200 miles. Toby was familiar with this place as a young man. We should remember that Lewis named the creek first. The campsite name followed shortly thereafter and shows up prominently on several of Clark’s maps. This became a strategic point on the map, important for future travelers. We should also keep in mind that the Salish had named this place many centuries before: Tmsmłi (meaning No Salmon). This place had become the newfound trailhead to the Pacific Ocean and was reported as such to President Jefferson. Of course we know that better routes westward were determined by future explorers such as John Mullan a half century later.

Where did Lewis come up with his name? Mussulman explains that this place reminded Lewis of a place he already knew in South Carolina. It still exists today. The name "Travelers Rest" came from the fact that the town was situated at the base of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Travelers would stop and rest there before they began a difficult journey through a gap in the mountains. Travelers could often have to spend the winter there, waiting for the snow to clear. It has similar traits to this place in Montana. Lewis had traveled from Virginia to his family's plantation property to the northwest tip of South Carolina. He remembered. His journey had required passage through a gap in the mountains similar to what he faced on this Bitterroot crossing.