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Lewis & Clark Trail News

Bringing the Trail to Life

May 31, 2025



Photo: NPS / © NEW Multimedia

From the Executive Director A Message of Hope and Purpose



This week's Newsletter masthead image, taken along the upper Missouri River, shows one of the canoes carrying part of the crew producing [Big Medicine: York Outdoors](#)—a powerful new film that retraces the path of York, the enslaved African American man who was an essential member of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

A collaboration of Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail and NEW Multimedia, *Big Medicine: York Outdoors* follows a group of Black adventurers on a transformative four-day river journey along the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument in Montana. This expedition retraces the path of the original Corps of Discovery while connecting York's legacy to the joy, healing, and empowerment that the great outdoors can provide.

This project began before the upheavals of recent months, and for a time, its future was uncertain. Like so many initiatives that aim to tell complex, honest

stories about our past, *Big Medicine* could have easily been delayed indefinitely—or lost entirely. But thanks to the persistence and shared belief in its importance, the film is now on track to premiere in June.

For those who have had the privilege to attend a presentation by Hasan Davis, who brings York's story to life with unmatched passion and insight, you already understand the deep emotional impact this story carries. For those who haven't, prepare to be moved, challenged, and inspired.

Some may question the value of projects like this—calling them wasteful or unnecessary. But they are wrong. These efforts embody the very best of what the National Park Service does: uncovering hidden histories, fostering empathy, and helping us all better understand the complex legacy of our nation.

Through projects like *Big Medicine*, we continue to build a more honest narrative - one that brings us closer to the promise of a better future

Richard Hunt

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2025 Moulton Lecturer Announced

Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance
[Annual Gathering](#)
Kansas City, Missouri

September 14 - 17



Dr. Stephen Aron, the Moulton Lecturer for the September 14-17 [LCTA Annual Gathering](#) in Kansas City, Mo., is a historian and author who believes history works best when it evokes emotion from people—smiles, crying, shaking fists or laughter—that makes them think and appreciate the past.

He will bring that commendable philosophy to his lecture about the place of

Lewis and Clark in what he calls “an alternative history of the American West,” in this case where peace and friendship prevailed over subsequent periods of violence in the American West.

Aron is the CEO and director of the popular and highly respected Autry Museum of the American West in Los Angeles, and professor of history, emeritus, at the University of California, Los Angeles. Among his many credentials, he is the author of four books about American West history. He was also a consultant and on-air expert commentator for “Kevin Costner’s West,” an intriguing eight-part series currently airing on the History Channel.

Drawing from his 2022 book, *Peace and Friendship: An Alternative History of the American West*, Aron's lecture will focus on the months the Corps of Discovery spent at Fort Clatsop from late 1805 to March 1806, and then on their post-expedition careers.

His talk will explain how peace, if not friendships, prevailed during the expedition’s winter near the Pacific coast and why struggles and efforts for amicable and inclusive relations between Americans and Native peoples within what is now the state of Missouri ultimately failed.



Watch
[Into the Unknown](#)

May 14, 1804 - On this day, Captains Meriwether Lewis and William Clark set off from Camp River Dubois, launching one of the most legendary expeditions in American history. Their mission? Explore the uncharted lands west of the Mississippi, find a route to the Pacific, and open a new chapter in the story of a young nation.

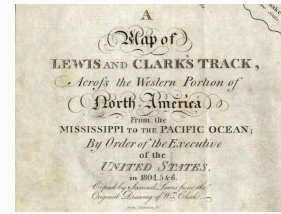
What began as a river launch became an epic journey through unknown territory—guided by courage, diplomacy, and discovery.



Watch
[Legacy of Halahtookit](#)

Allen Pinkham Sr. shares powerful insights into the story of Red Bear and the formation of tribal alliances during the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial. Among the lesser-known legacies of the Expedition is the story of Halahtookit—“Daytime Smoke”—possibly the son of William Clark and a Nez Perce woman following the Corps of Discovery’s 1806 stay with the tribe.

This video explores a complex story of kinship, cross-cultural relationships, and the enduring human



Watch
[The Story of "The Map"](#)

This map, along with the written account of the expedition, revolutionized American cartography of the Northwest by providing the first accurate depiction of the relationship between the sources of the Missouri and Columbia Rivers and the Rocky Mountains.

David Gary of the American Philosophical Society presents the original copper printing plate used for the Lewis and Clark Track Across North America map, which appeared in the 1814 edition of Biddle’s History.

The Blockbuster Film of the Summer

Be on the lookout for the premiere of *Big Medicine: York Outdoors*, a compelling new film that elevates the story of [York](#), the only Black member of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

Despite his significant contributions and perseverance during the grueling three-year journey, York's story has been overshadowed in history.

As Captain William Clark's lifelong servant, he faced the unyielding reality of enslavement while other expedition members were celebrated and rewarded for their achievements.



BIG MEDICINE
YORK OUTDOORS

Screening this summer across Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail
Additional screenings and event details coming soon!

JUNE 12 OMAHA, NE Union for Contemporary Art	SEPT 9 COLUMBIA, MO Ragtag Theater
JUNE 17 CLARKSVILLE, IN Jeffersonville High School Auditorium	OCT 14 GREAT FALLS, MT Lewis and Clark NHT Interpretive Center
JULY 13 SIOUX CITY, IA Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center	OCT 22 PORTLAND, OR Tomorrow Theater York Fest

Learn more at: nps.gov/lecl/york.htm

#YorkOutdoors

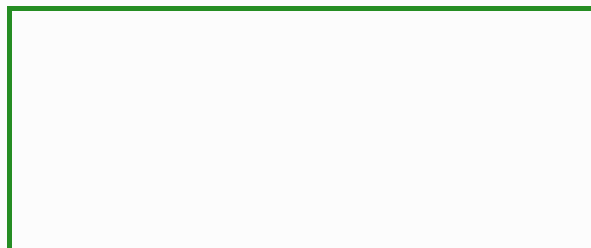
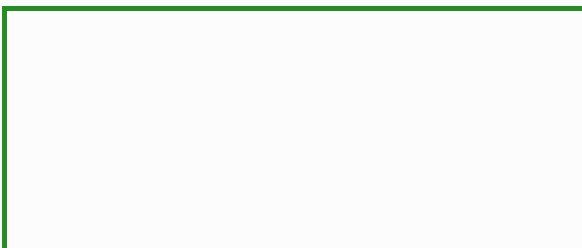
NEW MULTIMEDIA

In collaboration with Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail and NEW Multimedia, [Big Medicine: York Outdoors](#) follows a group of Black adventurers on a transformative four-day river journey along the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument in Montana. This expedition retraces the path of the original Corps of Discovery while connecting York's legacy to the joy, healing, and empowerment that the great outdoors can provide.

[Watch the Trailer](#)

LCTA Grant Awards in Action

The Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance's 2025 Stewardship Endowment Grants help 15 organizations focus on speakers, events, displays, brochures, and other creative projects that tell the expedition's story. Here is a look at two of the grants:





Wendover Ridge Trail Restoration

Lewis & Clark Trail Adventures in Montana received a \$7,500 grant to provide sawyers who will work with the U.S. Forest Service to remove hundreds of fallen trees from the [Wendover Ridge Trail](#), one of the places where the Lewis and Clark Expedition faced an extremely tough challenge.

On July 24, 2024, a storm blew down the trees, blocking access to this important hiking trail, one of the remaining wilderness settings unmarred by the adjacent presence of highways and other modern developments.

From Clark's Journal:

On [Sept. 15, 1805](#), along what today is called the Wendover Ridge Trail, the expedition's Lemi Shoshon guide, Toby, led the explorers "over Steep points rocky & buschey as usual," William Clark wrote in his journal. "Several horses Sliped and roled down Steep hills which hurt them verry much The one which Carried my desk & Small trunk Turned over & roled down a mountain for 40 yards & lodged against a tree, broke the Desk the horse escaped and appeared but little hurt Some others verry much hurt."



Oral and Language Histories

[Opera Theater Oregon](#) in Portland, Oregon, received a \$7,000 grant to conduct oral and language histories related to Sacajawea. The project evolved from Nu Nah-Hup: Sacajawea's Story, an ongoing popular opera portraying the Indigenous perspective of Sacajawea.

This grant award will help preserve the Agai-Dika language of Sacajawea and her people. It will also contribute to the opera, which features the Agai-Dika language, songs, and cultural lifeways. The opera, which draws upon the Lewis and Clark journals, covers episodes of the expedition.

The project will conduct audio and video interviews with Rose Ann Abrahamson, the opera's librettist and creative lead; Emma and Rozina George, whose ancestors include chief Cameahwait, Sacajawea's brother; and elders who are fluent Agai-Dika speakers and have knowledge of songs, oral histories and lifeways that extend back to Sacajawea's time.

Share the Adventure!

Every week, twenty new viewers subscribe to
The *Lewis and Clark Trail News*

Lewis & Clark Trail News

Bringing the Trail to Life

April 5, 2025

[Sign Up Link](#)

Help us expand the community by sharing the newsletter with your network. Simply provide this sign-up link to friends, family, and fellow Trail enthusiasts.



Update on Jean Baptiste's Final Journey

from Kris Townsend

The 1866 route that Jean Baptiste Charbonneau took from Auburn, California to Inskip Station has been a question bandied about in this travel newsletter. It's a question this researcher couldn't resist trying to answer. I've learned too much to share here, but I do wish to clarify his mode of travel.

The Pacific Stage Company could have taken his party to Virginia City via either Donner Pass or one of the Placerville crossings, but *there were no stage services to the new Owyhee mines in May 1866*. (Inskip Station where J.B. died served travelers headed to the Owyhee mines and Boise.) There were two stage companies using Inskip Station: John Mullan's *Chico and Idaho Stage Company* and Hal Beachey's *California and Idaho Stage and Fast Freight Company*. Due mainly to Paiute depredations the previous travel season, neither company would be able to start operating again until late summer 1866. In May, Beachey was fulfilling his mail contract via pony express.

In our storytelling, I recommend saying that J.B. was traveling along the freight roads from California to the Idaho mines, and that he died at a station that served both freighters and stages. There were far more freight wagons than stagecoaches during that era, and most of the freighters had shifted to a Donner Pass route soon after the Central Pacific Railroad reached Auburn and Colfax in May and September 1865, respectively. With his education, employment history, and skills he could have easily 'hooked up' with one of them near his home in Auburn. Otherwise, he and his two companions would have provided their own transportation.

Note: For the life and times of Jean Baptiste Charbonneau, see our 10-webpage series starting at "[Jean Baptiste in the Journals.](#)"



Owyhee River Canyon

[The Last Journey of Jean Baptiste Charbonneau](#) Trip Inspiration

[Captivating Trip Inspirations](#)

Curated by members of the Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance, these Trip Inspirations go beyond the well-known landmarks to reveal hidden gems along the Trail. Each journey includes links to rich historical backstories, nearby attractions, and an interactive map with driving directions.

Pittsburgh to Moundsville

Ohio River Views



Take a trip down the Ohio River just as Lewis and his crew did in September 1803. Instead of stopping a 'riffles' to drag the barge with horses and oxen, you can stop the car and enjoy some great historic...

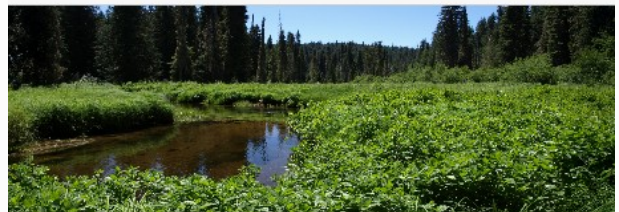
Stops: 7

Distance: 127 miles

[VIEW INSPIRATION](#)

Orofino-Weippe-Kamiah Loop

Triumph over the Mountains



"the pleasure I now felt in having triumphed over the rocky Mountains and decending once more to a level and fertile country where there was every rational hope of finding a comfortable subsistence for myself and party can be more...

Stops: 9

Distance: 112 miles

[VIEW INSPIRATION](#)



Celebrating the Legacy of Mark Weekley

After a remarkable career spanning 33 years with the National Park Service—and over a decade of dedicated leadership as Superintendent of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail—Mark Weekley is retiring.

Mark's work has left an enduring legacy across the Trail's more than 4,900 miles, stretching from Pittsburgh to the Pacific. Throughout his tenure, Mark has been a passionate advocate for the Trail's preservation, public understanding, and enjoyment. He has worked hand-in-hand with National Park Service staff, volunteers, local communities, and a vast network of partners—including the many American Indian Tribes and Nations whose histories and cultures are deeply connected to the Trail.

"My favorite part of this job has always been the people," Mark shares. "I am extremely proud of what we have accomplished together over the years, but most of all, I am grateful for the friendships and partnerships that have made the Trail stronger, more inclusive, and more accessible to all."

Under Mark's leadership, the Trail has seen innovative programs in education, interpretation, and heritage tourism take root. His vision helped cultivate collaboration across state lines, cultures, and generations—bringing the Lewis and Clark story to life for millions.

As he embarks on the next chapter, Mark says he plans to continue serving people and the country in new ways. "I truly believe Albert Einstein got it right when he said, 'Only a life lived for others is worth living.' I leave with a heart filled with gratitude and appreciation for all of you."

From all of us along the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail: thank you, Mark, for your leadership, your heart, and your unwavering dedication to this shared journey.

Step Into History at Lolo Hot Springs June 27–28

Experience a lively, family-friendly celebration commemorating the anniversary of Lewis and Clark's historic visit to Lolo Creek—where they made the first recorded discovery of a hot spring in the American West. As Captain Lewis noted, "It caused a

profuse sweat..."

Set at the scenic and storied Lolo Hot Springs Resort, this event honors both the legacy of the Corps of Discovery and the longstanding cultural significance of this place to Indigenous communities.

Experience the past through engaging interpretive programs, living history reenactments, guided walks, Native storytelling, and educational exhibits. Enjoy live music, local food, kids' activities, and of course, the chance to soak in the same mineral-rich waters once described by Lewis and Clark.



*"Come sweat where
history soaks in"*

Learn more at lolahotsprings.com

New Resource Available

Thanks to research contributors including Steve F. Russell, Kris Townsend, and others, a valuable cache of trail information is available at Trail Research.

This site serves as a clearinghouse of historic trail research that locates and describes historic travel routes such as the Lewis and Clark Trail, Mullan's Military Road, and the 1877 route of the Nez Perce among more.



Travel Magazine

Discover the adventure waiting for you along the Lewis and Clark Trail with our Lewis & Clark Travel Magazine!

Packed with invaluable travel advice and recommendations for exploring the rich history and stunning landscapes of specific regions along the trail, this magazine is your ultimate guide to an unforgettable journey.

Dive into the stories, uncover hidden gems, and embark on a journey like no other. Let the adventure begin!



Montana's Latest State Park - Judith River

There are few places in Montana that are as rich in history as the Judith Landing. Here the Missouri River meets the Judith River in a wide-open valley. After traversing miles of steep cliffs and badland formations, the Judith Landing's cottonwood galleries must have felt like an oasis to those following the river. For millennia, Native people, such as the Blackfeet, the Assiniboine, and many others, gathered here, using the landing as a seasonal camp. In [May 1805](#), Meriwether Lewis and William Clark also camped in this valley, with Clark naming the [Judith River](#) after his future wife.

In January of 2025, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks acquired the 109.43-acre Judith Landing property at the confluence of the Missouri and Judith Rivers in Central Montana. [Judith Landing State Park](#) is central to the broader Judith Landing Historic District, which offers substantial heritage values and outdoor recreation opportunities. Judith Landing State Park is located within the scenic Missouri River Breaks.

LCTE Events has a new look



4201 Giant Springs Road, Great Falls, MT, USA ([View on Map](#))

The story of Thomas Jefferson's Corps of Discovery is engrained in the history of our nation and essential to our understanding of the past. The story of Lucy Meriwether Lewis Marks—the mother of Meriwether Lewis—remains unknown, yet it offers critical insight into our understanding of the intrepid explorer. A woman... [more](#)

The [LCTE Events](#) page has a new layout thanks to our Webmaster, Kris Townsend. The new page is easier to navigate to find the events you want to attend this summer in your community or during your Trail Travels.

Upcoming Featured Events on the [LCTE Events Calendar](#)



[Prairie Villa Rendezvous](#)

June 12 - 13
Blue River, Wisconsin

The Great Lakes Region of the Lewis and Clark Trail Alliance will host a field trip June 12-13 to the Prairie Villa Rendezvous.

Come and explore the ways of the 1840's, browse the vendors tents and see what you may be missing. Our shops have something for everyone and something everyone needs.

Send an email to ljsixdogs@yahoo.com to learn about the field trip.



[Explore and Preserve the Lolo Trail](#)

June 20 - 22
Musselshell Meadow
Pierce, Idaho

The Idaho Chapter of the Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance invites you to camp along the historic Lolo Trail and help maintain its interpretive signs this summer. This self-supported trip (i.e. bring your own food and gear) blends trail preservation with immersive history, retracing Lewis and Clark's rugged journey across the Bitterroot Mountains.

Expect rough, dusty roads—high-clearance vehicles with durable tires are recommended. LCTA membership is not required to participate in these outings.



[Cheyenne Victory Days](#)

June 28 - 29
Busby, Montana

Cheyenne Victory Days commemorates the triumphs and sacrifices of the Greatest Generation.

Each year, the city comes alive with a vibrant celebration honoring the end of World War II and the valor of those who served.

Additionally, concerts featuring big band music from the era, historical reenactments, and educational exhibits provide opportunities for both reflection and celebration.



The Ultimate Outdoors Men

Guest essay from Laurie Rudd

From a young age, kids start to gravitate toward their “thing.” Sports, dance, arts, music perhaps.

Me? Not much of a team player, I found my “thing” inward. My skills weren’t something I could display, so I appeared talentless to the naked eye. I played make-believe, pretending to be anyone else, anywhere else. You’d find me outside, wandering through the river bottoms, pretending I was a survivor of the Teton Dam Flood. I’d go out in a windstorm and become a pioneer on the Oregon Trail, trying to keep my kids warm and fed. Walking up and down my long gravel driveway, I searched for nuggets of obsidian to pretend they were arrowheads. I craved adventure and constantly disappeared into my imagination to create it.

I had no idea that my love for wandering and make-believe would one day become a meaningful bridge to the past.

Years ago, I went fly fishing on the Clearwater River with my best friend, an avid fisherman. Well, my fishing guide, who sees the world as I do, told me I needed to ditch the waders. I needed to become one with the river. So, I committed, stumbling through the ice water, over rocks, desperately trying to concentrate on my rod and not the heartbeat I could feel pounding in my feet that felt like ice—painfully numb. I finally dragged myself onto the bank and tore off my wet shoes and socks, trying to breathe life back into my toes.

In the twenty minutes I was alone, my mind spun a full-blown survival saga—I saw myself stranded on the banks of the river, frostbitten and desperate, huddled in the Bitterroot Mountains beneath a thin buckskin blanket, struggling to build a fire in the rain. By the time my friend reappeared, I was completely immersed in the story, lost in a world of my own making.

I don't just visit historical sites, I become a part of wherever I am. Reading a story can open your eyes. Standing on the land can open your mind. But when you surrender to the moment—when you reenact, imagine, and fully absorb the history, it unlocks something deeper. Something emotional. Something real.

My imagined adventures laid the groundwork for a deeper passion—connecting with real stories, real places, and the real people who once wandered them.

The Lewis and Clark Trail isn't just roadside markers and old names. The Trail is an interactive portal back in time. From hikes to floats, you can walk or canoe in the footsteps of the expedition and connect with their spirit that still lingers on the water.

Lewis and Clark weren't just explorers; they were adventurers in the truest sense—lost in uncharted territory, surviving the elements, driven by curiosity. I see myself in that spirit. That's the energy I chase.

So, find the trail. Camp where they camped. Hike where they hiked. Canoe where they canoed. Live the trail. There is something to be said for embracing the great outdoors while paying tribute to the Ultimate Outdoors Men.



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Lewis and Clark Trail Experience

Download the APP

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