



Lewis & Clark Trail News
Bringing the Trail to Life
March 7, 2026



Haystack Rock, Oregon John Jengo Photo Credit

This photograph of Haystack Rock and the Needles along the Oregon coast is exquisite and soothing to ponder.

On Jan. 8, 1806, William Clark and a small detachment, including Sacagawea, walked about 15 miles to see a beached whale on today's Cannon Beach and gather blubber for the expedition's food supply. They would have passed by the ancient Haystack Rock and the Needles. However, the unusual geological features went unmentioned in journal entries about rocky shores, pounding surf, and dramatic headlands.

Local history says Haystack Rock was named by coastal residents in the late 19th or early 20th century because it resembles a traditional farm haystack. The three smaller basalt spires—the Needles—to the left of Haystack Rock were named for a purely playful visual reason. They look like needles jutting up from the ocean.

This photo, which was the overall winner in 2021, is one of the photographs included in John's book, *Scenes of Visionary Enhancement: The Geology of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, which will be published in April by Washington State University Press.

Virtual Reality Launch Event



Richard Hunt, Lee Graff

On February 27, Board Member Richard Welch, Past President Lou Ritten, and Executive Director Richard Hunt represented the Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance (LCTA) at the launch of [Lewis & Clark Virtual Reality 1.0](#) at Shenandoah University in Winchester, Virginia.

Hosted by the university's [Shenandoah Center for Immersive Learning](#) (SCIL), the event celebrated a dynamic partnership

between the Trail Alliance and Shenandoah faculty lead by Lee Graff, and students. LCTA leadership met with SCIL administrators, student creators, parents, and community members to mark the debut of the immersive educational experience. Hunt delivered remarks during the program, and SCIL faculty moderated a student panel reflecting on the fieldwork and production process behind the project.



The launch received media attention, with coverage in the [The Winchester Star](#).

In partnership with LCTA, Graff, three Shenandoah students, and a recent graduate traveled portions of the Trail over 12 days in the summer of 2024. The team conducted expert interviews, captured 360-degree video footage, and documented landscapes and interpretive sites along the route.

The result is SCIL's newest VR offering: an immersive educational module designed for classroom and public use. The experience is available free of charge through the Meta Horizon Store, allowing educators and learners worldwide to download the program and integrate it into their curriculum.



The initial VR release represents Phase I of a multi-year collaboration. A second field expedition is planned for this summer, with expanded attention to:

- Flora and fauna documented by the Corps of Discovery
- Biographical narratives of Expedition members
- Indigenous perspectives and cultural context

Students involved in the project described the journey as transformative. For some, the trip extended farther west than they had ever traveled, with highlights including the dramatic rock formations on the Missouri River at Gates of the Mountains in Montana.

The VR platform now makes those landscapes—and the complex human stories tied to them—accessible to anyone with a headset. As Hunt noted, immersive technology allows individuals who may lack the time, resources, or physical ability to travel the Trail to experience it in a deeply engaging way.

The app is available for download through the [Meta Horizon Store](#).

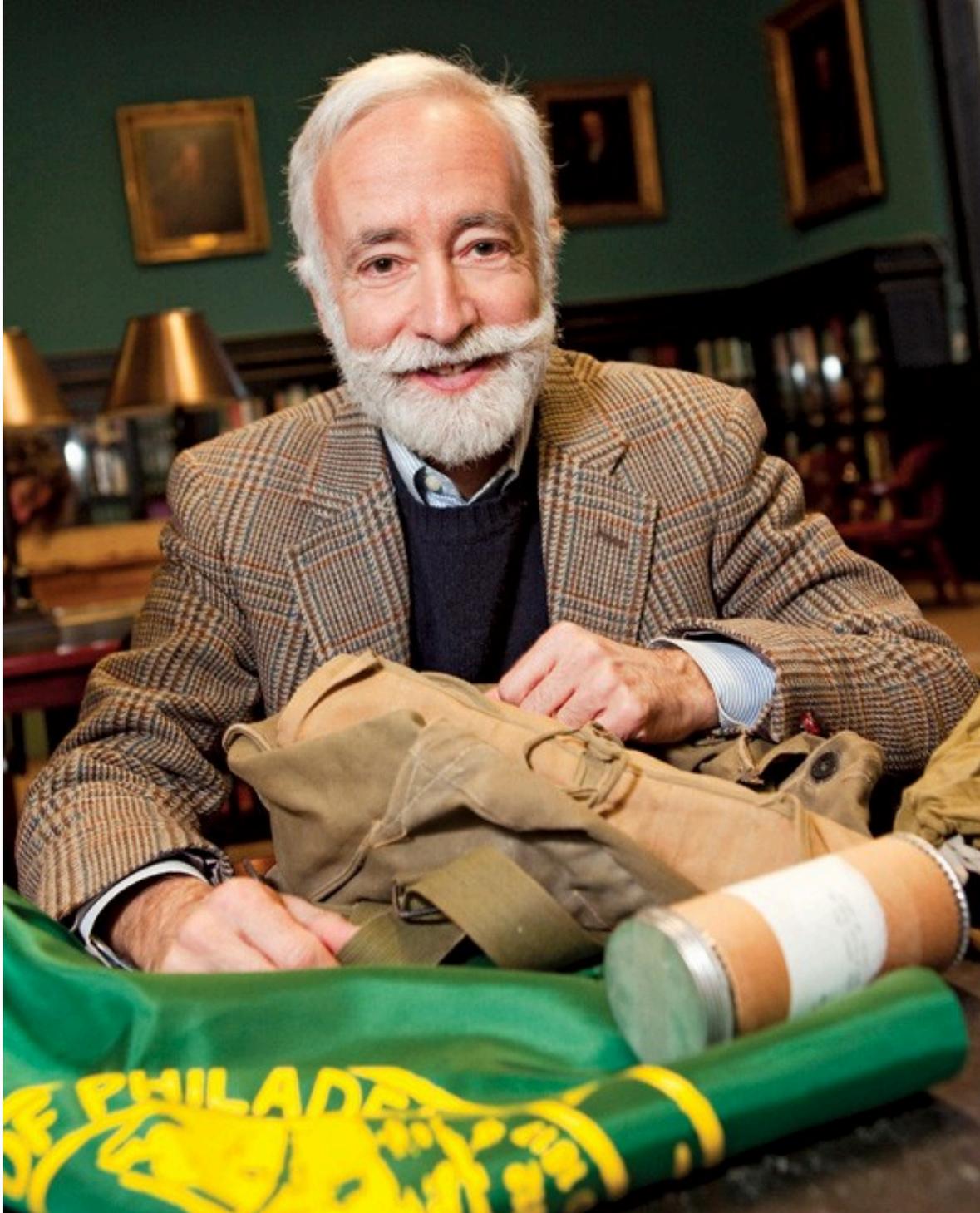
You can also view the [video trailer](#) showcasing the students' journey and field experience along the Trail.

Moulton Lecture Announced

2026 LCTA Annual Gathering

Great Falls, Montana

June 21 - 24



**ORDERING THE COSMOS
CHARLES WILSON PEALE AND THE PHILADELPHIA MUSEUM
by Robert McCracken Peck**

In 1790, Charles Wilson Peale announced to the citizens of Philadelphia that he was preparing to open a museum of "objects of natural history and things useful and curious" which he hoped might one day be recognized as a cultural and scientific repository for the nation. It was to represent the culmination of a long and distinguished career in art and science that made Peale one of the most remarkably versatile figures of his age.

Peale's Philadelphia Museum, to which Thomas Jefferson would later give many of the artifacts collected by Lewis and Clark during their pioneering trip across North America, began its focus on the flora and fauna of the Delaware Valley, but quickly

expanded to include other parts of the country and ultimately objects from around the world. It set standards for museums that are still applicable today.

[Robert McCracken Peck](#), senior fellow of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University, is a writer, naturalist, and historian who has traveled extensively in North and South America, Africa, Asia, and Europe.

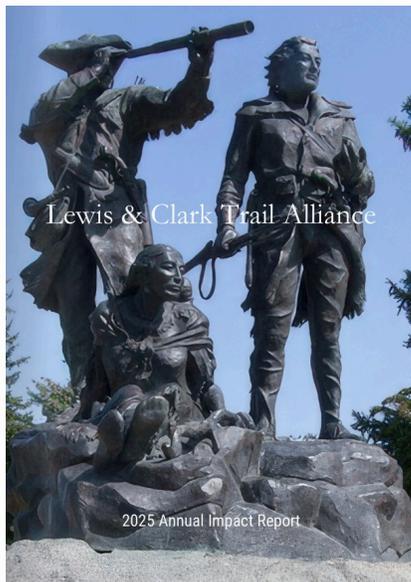
Mr. Peck is the author of *The Natural History of Edward Lear* (2016), *A Celebration of Birds: The Life and Art of Louis Agassiz Fuertes* (1982), *Headhunters and Hummingbirds: An Expedition into Ecuador* (1987), and *William Bartram's Travels* (1980), and co-author of *All In The Bones: A Biography of Benjamin Waterhouse Hawkins* (2008) and *A Glorious Enterprise: The Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia and the Making of American Science* (2012).

An active member of the Explorers Club (which has honored him with its Explorers Award and its "Medal for Integrity and Courage"), Mr. Peck has developed a special interest in the history of exploration, retracing the travel routes of a number of 18th- and 19th-century naturalists, including William Bartram, John James Audubon, Henry David Thoreau, Alexander Von Humboldt, John Burroughs, and John Muir.

Using images of Peale's remarkable collections of paintings and artifacts, Mr. Peck will discuss Peale's seminal contributions to American art and science and place his museum in its broader cultural, artistic and scientific context.

[Meeting](#) and [Hotel](#) Registration available now

Explore the updated [Meeting Guide](#)



2025 Impact Report

The Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance Impact Report is now available for download.

This year's report showcases the significant accomplishments and forward momentum achieved across the Trail in 2025. These outcomes were made possible through the commitment and collaboration of our members, partners, donors, and volunteers.

We encourage you to [read the report](#) and share it widely. By telling this story, you help elevate awareness, strengthen our collective impact, and advance the mission of the Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance.

John Colter: A Man? A Myth? Or a Legend?

Join us on Tuesday evening, March 10, for an engaging presentation by Duane Buchi titled "John Colter: A Man? A Myth? Or a Legend?"

The program will explore the remarkable—and often mysterious—life of John Colter, a member of the Corps of Discovery whose exploits helped shape the legend of the American West.

Colter is widely remembered as the first Anglo-American to encounter the geothermal wonders of what is now Yellowstone National Park and for his dramatic escape from the Blackfeet near the Three Forks of the Missouri.

Buchi will examine what we truly know about Colter's role with the Lewis and Clark Expedition, his later years as a fur trapper and mountain man, and the enduring myths that surround his short but extraordinary life.



The free program will take place at the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center in Great Falls, Montana (4201 Giant Springs Road). A reception begins at 6:30 p.m., followed by the program from 7 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. All are welcome.

LCTA Grants

The Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance annually provides grants to organizations that need assistance on projects that tell the story of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. For 2026, 17 organizations received a total of \$94,415 in grant funding.



Undaunted Pioneering

The Undaunted Reality Project, spearheaded by Shenandoah University's Center for Immersive Learning, received a \$10,000 grant to continue its effort with the Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance to bring the story of the Lewis and Clark Expedition to new audiences through the use of the cutting-edge technology of virtual reality.

Over the past two years, the Shenandoah Center and LCTA have worked closely together to pioneer innovations in telling the Lewis and Clark story through an immersive 3D experience delivered via a virtual reality headset. In the summer of 2024, teams of Shenandoah students and faculty retraced parts of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail and, through 3D modeling, video editing, sound design, and other advanced techniques, created an immersive virtual reality experience focused on the expedition.

The Undaunted Reality Project's goal is to inspire curiosity and lifelong learning across a diverse community by presenting the Lewis and Clark story in a dynamic, interactive medium that resonates with today's learners. The effort is designed to make the immersive Lewis and Clark experience accessible to middle school, high school and college students.

[More about Shenandoah and Virtual Reality](#)



A Successful Marketing Tool

J. Greg Smith Inc., a heritage tourism marketing company in Omaha, Neb., received a \$4,500 grant to produce tourism brochures that promote the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail. The brochures will be placed in welcome centers, Lewis and Clark Trail visitor centers, tourism agencies, state parks, and other strategic locations. Brochures are among the most effective marketing tools for the historic trail.

The brochures will cover the history of the Lewis and Clark Expedition and include journal entries for the specific region highlighted in each brochure, and will show visitors what they can see today along the historic trail.

[J. Greg Smith](#) and the [Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance](#) have a long-standing relationship in promoting the historic trail, including the creation of numerous brochures over the years. The funded brochures this year: Ohio River Valley regional brochure, Pennsylvania Lewis & Clark Auto Tour brochure, Kentucky Lewis & Clark Auto Tour brochure, Indiana Lewis & Clark Auto Tour brochure, Great Rivers regional brochure, and Missouri Lewis & Clark Auto Tour brochure.

The goal, of course, is to guide more visitors to Lewis and Clark sites, but the effort also results in economic benefits for communities along the trail. The Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance also benefits from increased membership among travelers.

Day by Day Radio Episodes



© 2023 by John W. Fisher.

John Fisher made these historical replicas following the *National Formulary* recipe

[March 7, 1805](#)

At [Fort Mandan](#), interpreter [Toussaint Charbonneau](#) returns from the [Knife River Villages](#) with a large assortment of North West Company trade goods. A child is given [Rush's Thunderbolts](#), a strong laxative, and work on the new canoes continues.

Listen to the full library of [Day by Day broadcasts](#)

Originally aired by [Yellowstone Public Radio](#) during the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial observance. These 627 radio episodes parallel the expedition dates starting May 14, 1804, and ending September 25, 1806. They are narrated by Hal Hansen, scripted by Whit Hansen and Ed Jacobson, and produced by Leni Holliman.

Of Interest

[Idaho Trails](#)
[Yellowstone Country MT](#)
[Indigenous Tourism](#)
[Columbia River Hike](#)

Grants

[Native Youth Media](#)
[Oregon Humanities](#)
[Pomeroy](#)
[LexArts \(KY\)](#)

Alliance

[Youth Patch Program](#)
[Virtual Reality](#)
[Join LCTA](#)
[Support LCTA](#)

Play Lewis & Clark Trivia



On this day of March 7, just a mere 2020 years ago, Meriwether Lewis was busy putting his ornithological observations on paper. He knew his mentor and president, Thomas Jefferson, was an avid birdwatcher who wanted to know about all-things birds in the West.

So, while at Fort Clatsop on this day, Lewis described four species of birds: seagull species, black cormorant, Arctic loon, and western grebe.

As a general category, these birds are considered _____ birds. The answer is a seven-letter word. (If you need a hint, check out the [March 7, 1906, entry](#) in our Discover Lewis & Clark website.

[Submit your answer](#)

The Trivia Game winner will be emailed a list of Lewis and Clark-related books to choose one from as the prize. The books are used but in excellent shape.

“Medicine Stone” (or “Medicine Hill”) was the answer to the last newsletter’s trivia question. While at Fort Mandan in the 1804-05 winter, William Clark was told by Big White (Shekeke) and Big Man that several Mandans left the Knife River Villages to visit the Medicine Stone that would inform “them of every thing which is to happen.”

Nine readers correctly answered the question. When more than one reader has the correct answer, a drawing is done. Lisa Thorsen was the winner.

Mark Your Calendar

Montana Historical Society

Library & Archives opens to the public on March 17.

Learn more about visiting the reference room and how to book your research appointments by visiting the [reference room page](#).



MONTANA
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Words of the Expedition

To boot

“We need to boot those scallywags right out of here.”

That’s a phrase we might hear today from a tavern owner who wants to toss out rowdy customers. But such use of today’s “to boot” has nothing to do with the “to boot” of Lewis and Clark’s time.

The “to boot” phrase originated a century before the expedition from the medieval English word “bote” that referred to a tenant’s right take resources from a lord’s land. There’s a whole legal family of “botes.” Examples: “Haybote” meant to take wood or thorny brush for repairing hedges or fences. “Housebote” was the right to take timber for repairing a house or outbuildings.

By the expedition’s time, the “to boot” phrase had evolved into a non-legal term meaning a bonus added on to a transaction. For instance, as the expedition prepared to go back over the Bitterroot Mountain on its way back to St. Louis, Meriwether Lewis made this journal entry on June 13, 1804, following a transaction with a Nez Perce native: “...exchanged his horse for one of ours which had not perfectly recovered from the operation of castration and received a small ax and a knife *to boot*...” In other words, Lewis felt like he received more than expected thanks to the native’s generous swap that included the ax and knife.

We still use “to boot” today as a trading expression to mean a bonus, something extra tossed in. But, beware, if you’re ever in a tavern and the owner snarls that he’s going “to boot” you, it’s time for you to walk your boots out of there.



A knife to boot

Share the Adventure!



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.

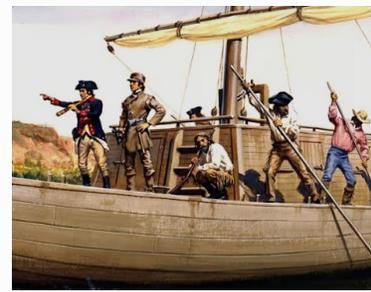
See all the events on the [LCTE Events Calendar](#)



[Eric Gass](#)
Pittsburgh
March 14



[25 Years](#)
Lolo, MT
March 14



[Departure Event](#)
Camp Dubois
May 9 -10

Where on the Trail?

Our newest fun feature invites you to guess the location along the Trail.

[Answer](#)

This aerial photo was taken by aviator and photographer Jim Wark, who began retracing the Lewis and Clark Trail by air in 1999. Many of his photos are featured in articles on our educational website, Discover Lewis & Clark.



[More about Jim and his photos.](#)

[Discover Lewis and Clark](#)

The Last Word

The Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance is currently engaged in a focused strategic exercise to define the Future State of the organization. This initiative is designed to ensure long-term sustainability, sharpen our impact, and position the Alliance for continued growth and relevance along the entire Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail. Three dedicated workgroups—Financial Viability, Programming, and Public Engagement—are meeting frequently to evaluate our current operating realities and identify the structural, financial, and programmatic adjustments needed to move confidently into the next phase of the Alliance’s development.

This is more than routine planning. It is an intentional effort to examine how we communicate our value, how we measure and expand our impact, and how we attract and retain members and supporters in a changing environment. The goal is clarity: understanding where we are today and defining a practical, achievable path forward.

A critical input into this work is the LCTA Future State Survey, which invites Trail News subscribers to share their perspectives on communications,

effectiveness, outreach methods, and overall organizational direction. Nearly 200 respondents have already provided thoughtful feedback, offering meaningful insight that will help guide decision-making.

If you have not yet participated, we encourage you to do so. The survey will close at the end of the day on Monday, March 9. Your voice is essential to this process. Please take a few minutes to contribute your perspective and help shape the future of the Alliance.

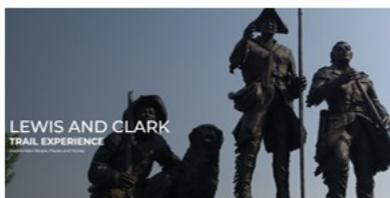
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Richard Hunt

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