



Lewis & Clark Trail News
Bringing the Trail to Life
March 21, 2026



Photo Credit John Montague

Dugout Canoes at Pompeys Pillar

John Montague's interesting photograph offers much more than a striking view of two dugout canoes. It tells a great story.

In the photo's background is a huge sandstone formation that we know today as Pompeys Pillar. It's located along the Yellowstone River about 30 miles east of Billings, Montana.

On the return trip to St. Louis, William Clark and about 11 enlisted men, as well as Sacagawea and her mate, Charbonneau, and their young son, Pompy, temporarily left the Corps of Discovery to explore the Yellowstone. The descent made these expedition members the first documented Americans to navigate the river. Their vehicles of transportation: two dugout canoes that the men fashioned from cottonwood trees.

On July 25, 1806, this mini-expedition reached what Clark described in his journal as “a remarkable rock...which I shall Call Pompey’s Tower” in honor of the toddler that had been nicknamed Pompey. In modern times, the name evolved into Pompeys Pillar. The site is now the [Pompeys Pillar National Monument](#).

Clark carved “Wm Clark July 25 1806” into the side of the sandstone formation. His inscription is the only remaining physical evidence anywhere of the passing of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

John’s photograph was a winner in our 2022 Photo Contest. Enter your Lewis and Clark photos in this year’s contest. Here are the [contest rules](#).

[Learn more about Pompey’s Pillar](#)

Substack is Here!

Real Stories from the Lewis and Clark Trail



The Lewis and Clark Trail Alliance has launched two new [Substack](#) publications exploring the continuing legacy of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail.

Real Stories from the Lewis and Clark Trail connects the original journals, maps, and material culture of the Expedition with modern scholarship and perspectives from along the Trail today. The publication

highlights how the Expedition’s story continues to influence today’s cultural landscape and how partners—including tribal nations, museums, state parks, and community organizations—are interpreting and living with this history.

The first post, “[From Quill to Stack: The Living Legacy of Lewis and Clark](#),” explores how the Expedition’s journals and voices still shape what we see—and what we question—along the Trail more than two centuries later.



Produced by the Lewis and Clark Trail Alliance, the publication shares the story of the Expedition through a modern lens to better understand American history, Indigenous nations, and today’s cultural landscape—while encouraging learning adventures along the Trail.

Readers are invited to [subscribe](#), share the publication, and send questions or stories from their own travels along the Trail.

Undaunted Travel



Alongside our new history publication, the Alliance is also launching a companion travel Substack: [Undaunted Travel](#). While *Real Stories* explores the people and history behind the expedition, [Undaunted Travel](#) invites readers onto the landscape itself. Each feature will highlight routes, communities, and experiences along the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail—helping travelers discover how the past connects to places they can visit today.

The first travel article, “*Blue Highways: The Lewis and Clark Trail from Columbia to Kansas City, Missouri*,” follows a quieter backroads journey across central Missouri, tracing the expedition’s route through river towns, historic landscapes, and overlooked sites that still echo with the story of the Corps of Discovery. Be sure to [subscribe](#) to enjoy this valuable resource.



1954 Official Missouri Highway Map

2026 Annual Gathering - Great Falls

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

Explore the updated [Meeting Guide](#)

Early Bird Rates End April 30

June 25 - 27 LCTA exclusive

Paddle the White Cliffs with a Missouri Breaks Expert

[Book the Trip](#)



Few places along the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail offer a more powerful connection to the expedition than Montana's spectacular Upper Missouri River. This summer, travelers have a rare opportunity to explore this remarkable landscape alongside veteran river guide and public lands expert Mark Albers.

Albers, a retired Bureau of Land Management land manager for the Missouri Breaks, has spent more than 50 years traveling this stretch of river. Raised in Fort Benton, Montana, he built a distinguished career in public lands stewardship, serving as BLM North Central Montana District Manager, Montana Director of American Rivers, and Missouri River Coordinator for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. His lifelong work in conservation, floodplain management, cottonwood regeneration, and native fisheries gives him a deep understanding of the river's ecological and cultural history.

Participants will paddle the gentle currents of the Wild and Scenic Upper Missouri through the breathtaking White Cliffs, where the Lewis and Clark Expedition passed in the spring of 1805. Inspired by Stephen Ambrose's *Undaunted Courage*, many modern travelers seek this same journey. Along the way, paddlers will camp at historic expedition campsites such as Eagle Creek and Slaughter River and explore landscapes that have changed little in more than two centuries.

This accessible canoe adventure is suitable for both beginners and experienced paddlers. Each day offers 3–5 hours on the water, along with opportunities to explore slot canyons, petroglyphs, teepee rings, and other cultural and natural features. Wildlife viewing, plant identification, and insights into the river's geology and public lands stewardship enrich the journey.

To learn more or register, visit [Lewis and Clark Trail Adventures](#). Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance members can receive a 10% discount on the \$995 trip by entering the code LCTA2026.

Extend Your Stay

Great Falls offers far more than can be experienced in four days. Attendees are encouraged to arrive early or stay longer to explore the region including

- 36th Annual Lewis and Clark Festival, June 19–20
- Three-day [White Cliffs canoe trip](#), June 25 - 27
- Tower Rock and Gates of the Mountains Boat Trip (on your own)
- Grand opening Montana Historical Society Museum (Helena), June 26–27
- Fort Benton Summer Celebration, June 26–27

Pre- and Post- Tours

Lolo Trail Volunteer Vacation

- June 17 - 20 (Musselshell Meadows)
- July 9 - 12 (Powell Junction)

Guided hike to Lewis and Clark Pass (Strenuous)

- Watch for additional details

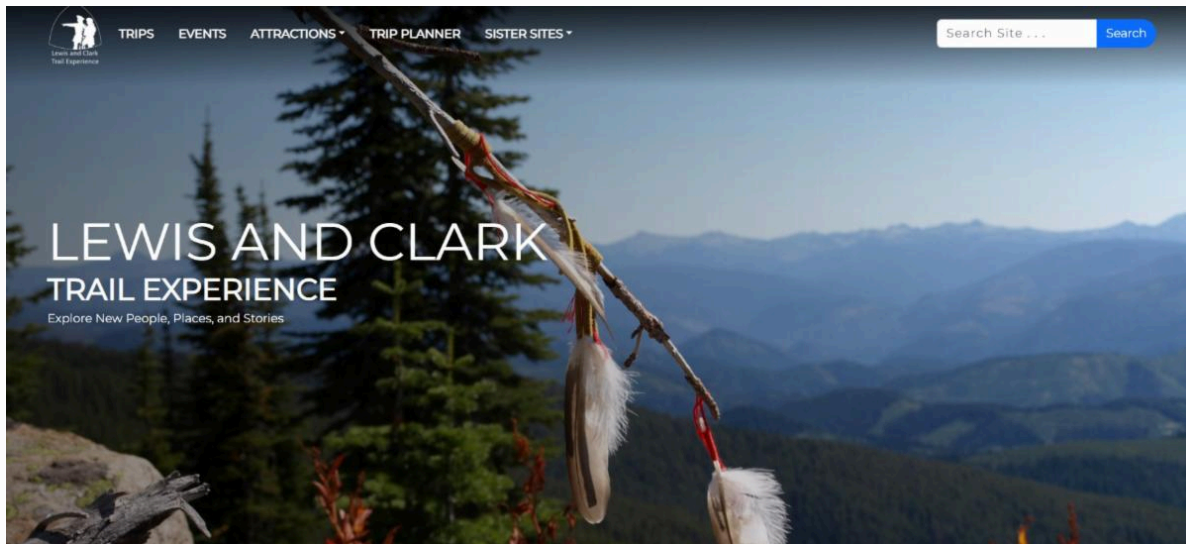
Additional Details

- Silent Auction: Contact [Georgia Kline](#)
- Exhibitor, Authors: Contact [Kelly Paladino](#)

Annual Gathering Sponsors



The Lewis & Clark Trail Experience—Better Than Ever



Planning a trip along the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail just got easier. The [Lewis & Clark Trail Experience](#) (LCTE) now features a powerful new comprehensive search tool, making it simpler than ever to discover the people, places, and experiences that bring the Trail to life.

Whether you're planning a major road trip, looking for a weekend adventure, or simply exploring what's nearby, the new search function helps you quickly find heritage travel opportunities and outdoor recreation across the entire Trail corridor.

With just a few keywords, visitors can now explore:

- Events and programs happening along the Trail

- Trip inspiration for historic sites, scenic drives, and cultural destinations
- Outdoor recreation opportunities including paddling, hiking, cycling, and wildlife viewing
- Museums, visitor centers, and historic places connected to the Lewis and Clark story
- Communities and attractions that help interpret the journey of the Corps of Discovery

A big thank you goes to our volunteer Webmaster and WordPress expert, Kris Townsend, whose dedication continues to elevate the Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance's digital presence.

Enhancements like this comprehensive search tool ensure that the Lewis and Clark Trail Experience continues to grow as a premier gateway for exploring the Trail.

Thank you, Kris, for helping bring the Trail to life online.

The improved search experience brings together content from across the Trail, allowing travelers to quickly discover the best things to see and do along the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail—from the Ohio River to the Pacific Coast.

As the Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance continues expanding the Lewis & Clark Trail Experience platform, tools like this new search feature make it easier for travelers, educators, and history enthusiasts to connect with the landscapes, stories, and communities that define the Trail.

Start exploring today and discover what awaits along the Trail.

Search the [Lewis & Clark Trail Experience](#) and plan your next adventure.

Learn about the Expedition in St. Joseph, Mo.



The Missouri-Kansas Riverbend Chapter and Southern Prairie Region of the Lewis and Clark Trail Alliance invite you to attend a free April 11 presentation about the Lewis and Clark Expedition's two visits to the area of today's St. Joseph, Mo.

Sarah Elder, manager of [Remington Nature Center](#) in historic St. Joseph, will give the 1:30 p.m. (Central Time) presentation at the [Albrecht-](#)

[Kemper Museum](#), 2818 Frederick Avenue. Sarah is a lively speaker with a passionate interest and educational background in history.

Just a teaser on one happening she might cover: On Sept. 12, 1806, the explorers, on their way to St. Louis, encountered Robert McClellan, who was taking a trading party upriver. He notified them that the general public's belief was that they were dead since no one had heard from the expedition since early April 1805. McClellan broke out wine for the officers and whiskey for the other soldiers, probably a most welcome gesture since the explorers had not

imbibed in spirits since the 120-gallon whiskey supply ran out sometime in the fall of 1804.

Sgt. John Ordway stated in his journal that McClellan gave them “as much whiskey as we all could drink.” Although not mentioned in the journals, the explorers probably had a fine ‘ol celebration—after all, to learn they were still alive, all with the added benefit of a bottomless supply of whiskey!

If you have questions about the April 11 event, please contact Kay Schaefer, tchrkay@gmail.com.

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.

The Importance of Kickapoos

The [Discovery Expedition of St. Charles, Mo.](#), received \$7,000 to assist with the development of an extensive exhibit at the Lewis & Clark Boat House and Museum to depict the historical significance of the region’s Kickapoo delegation that met with the Lewis and Clark Expedition near St. Charles.

The exhibit will focus on several topics: the role of Indigenous peoples in supporting the expedition in Missouri; a tribute to Native women whose sons were on the expedition; the economic forces driving the expedition; and the explorers’ armaments, including a replica of Meriwether Lewis’ [Girardoni](#) air rifle.



The exhibit will help to deepen the public’s appreciation of the role Natives, the complex trade networks, and art and culture, as documented by pictographs Missouri River cliffs. The exhibit will also show how commerce was a key driver of the expedition and how global trade, even in the early 1800s, was thoroughly woven into the American continent,

Learn about the [Kickapoos](#) and the expedition



Day by Day Radio Episodes

[March 21, 1805](#)

On the Missouri River shore about five miles north of [Fort Mandan](#), [Sgt. Gass](#) and two [enlisted men](#) guard the new [dugout canoes](#). [Clark](#) collects [echinacea](#) and [clinker](#) and conducts an experiment with the latter.

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

[MT Tourism Update](#)

[Alisha Hamel Interview](#)

[Excellence in Education](#)

[Columbia River Atlas](#)

Grants

[Kentucky History](#)

[Oregon Museums](#)

[Military History](#)

[Missouri Humanities](#)

Alliance

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Play Lewis & Clark Trivia



One of the best-known dates related to the Lewis and Clark expedition is March 23, 1806, when the explorers loaded up their canoes at Fort Clatsop, got in and, at 1 p.m., began paddling down the Netul River and then east up the Columbia River—toward home!

What did the explorers do in the days prior to departure? It's an act completely out of character and was done only because they had no choice: They stole something from the Clatsop tribe. What was it?

[Submit your answer](#)

The answer to the Trivia Game in our previous Trail News was “aquatic” birds, species of fowl whose lives depend on water or wetlands. On March 7, 1806, Meriwether Lewis was busy putting his ornithological observations on paper. [Take a look](#) at the aquatic birds he wrote about.

Eleven readers submitted the correct answer. When more than one reader has the correct answer, a drawing is done. Mark Stevens was the winner. He will receive a list of Lewis and Clark books to choose one from for his prize. All books are used, but they are in good shape.

Words of the Expedition



William Clark vs. Noah Webster

The chart above offers a brief look at how Clark spelled words compared to how the same words were spelled prior to the expedition, and then after Webster published a dictionary in 1806 that standardized spellings.

There were five journal-keepers on the expedition: Meriwether Lewis, William Clark, Sgt. Patrick Gass, Sgt. John Ordway, and Private Joseph Whitehouse (it's believed Sgt. Nathaniel Pryor kept a journal, but it has never been found). The sergeants and the private often copied information from each other or from the captains' entries. On some days, Clark copied Lewis' entries, and vice versa on other days.

As a result, a misspelling by one writer usually ended up in other journals. We have to remember: This was before the first dictionary, and most people spelled words as they were pronounced. To make matters more complicated, someone with a Kentucky accent pronounced words differently from a Virginian.

Howard R. Driggs Memorial Lecture

Dr. Brenden W. Rensink, Professor of History at Brigham Young University and Associate Director of the Charles Redd Center for Western Studies, delivers the [Howard R. Driggs](#) Memorial Lecture at [Southern Utah University](#), Cedar City, Utah at 12:30 p.m. on Tuesday March 24.



Dr. Rensink's talk will be - *Seeking the Wildest West: Histories of Wilderness Experiences and Challenges To Their Future*

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](#)



[Life and Times of Seaman](#)
Great Falls, MT
April 14



[Lost Monuments](#)
Astoria, OR
April 30



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

Volunteer Vacations on the Lolo Trail



The Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance (LCTA) Idaho Chapter, in collaboration with Travelers Rest Connection, The Trust for the Nez Perce Trail, Lewis and Clark Trail Adventures, Runner's Edge Missoula, Idaho Trails Association, and the United States Forest Service, is organizing two volunteer work parties along the historic Lolo Trail this summer.

These multi-day volunteer “vacation” experiences invite participants to contribute directly to the preservation and accessibility of one of the most significant segments of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail. Volunteers will assist with essential trail stewardship activities, including sign maintenance and corridor clearing, helping ensure safe and meaningful access for future visitors.

The first work session will take place at Musselshell Meadows from June 17–20. A second session is scheduled for the Powell area from July 9–12. Both locations lie along the rugged Lolo Trail corridor, a route historically used by the Nez Perce and later traversed by the Corps of Discovery in 1805 and 1806.

Participants will not only support hands-on conservation efforts but also experience the landscape in a uniquely immersive way, working alongside partner organizations and fellow trail stewards.

Those interested in participating in either session are encouraged to contact [Richard Hunt](#) for additional information and registration details.



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

Listening to the Trail Community

Over the past several months, the Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance has been engaged in an important effort to reflect on our future—how we grow, how we serve our members and partners, and how we



ensure the story of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail continues to reach new audiences.

As part of this process, we invited our community to participate in the Future State Survey. I want to extend sincere thanks to the 200+ members, former members, and supporters who took the time to share their perspectives. Your responses represent a valuable cross-section of our community and provide meaningful insight into how people see the role of the Alliance today—and where they hope it will go in the future.

The survey asked about membership, programs, communications, partnerships, and priorities for the organization moving forward. The feedback was thoughtful, candid, and constructive. Many respondents expressed deep commitment to the Trail and a desire to see the Alliance continue evolving to reach new audiences while strengthening connections with the dedicated community that has sustained this work for decades.

Transparency is important in a process like this. For that reason, we are publishing a **summary report of the survey** findings so that the entire Trail community can see the themes and trends that emerged from the responses. The report does not represent final decisions, but rather an important step in understanding the opportunities and challenges ahead.

Your input is already helping inform the discussions taking place within the Future State workgroups and leadership team. As we move forward, the goal is clear: to build an organization that is sustainable, relevant, and positioned to inspire greater public engagement with the history, landscapes, and stories of the Trail.

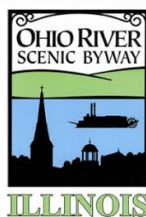
The Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance has always been a community effort. This survey reaffirmed how much people care about the mission and the future of the organization. Thank you again to everyone who contributed their voice to the conversation.

The journey forward continues—and it is one we take together.

Pat Traffas

LCTA National Vice President

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