



Lewis & Clark Trail News
Bringing the Trail to Life
July 25, 2026



Musselshell Meadows

Photo Credit Susan Hunt

Lolo Reconnected Pilot Season Launches with Strong Results

The inaugural season of Lolo Reconnected has demonstrated the power of collaborative stewardship in restoring one of America's most significant historic landscapes. Through two successful volunteer work parties, the initiative reopened historic trail sections, strengthened partnerships, and laid the foundation for a long-term stewardship program along the Lolo Corridor.

The first volunteer work party, held near Musselshell Meadows, brought together 18 volunteers who reopened six miles of trail by clearing downed trees and vegetation while repairing trail signs and establishing procedures for future stewardship projects. A second event at Twelve Mile Saddle attracted 22 volunteers, who cleared another five miles of heavily obstructed trail, improved access roads, repaired signage, and refined camp operations and work planning.



Volunteers traveled from seven states—Washington, Idaho, Montana, California, Wyoming, Missouri, and Texas—highlighting the national appeal of preserving the historic Lolo Corridor. In addition to trail work, participants enjoyed evening interpretive programs led by Tribal Elders, historians, and land managers, learning about Indigenous history, the Lewis and Clark Expedition, the Nez Perce Flight of 1877, and the continuing stewardship of public lands.

Lolo Reconnected also expanded partnerships among the Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance, Travelers' Rest Connection, Idaho Trails Association, Trust for the Nez Perce Trail, the U.S. Forest Service, and Lewis and Clark Trail Adventures. Perhaps most encouraging, several participants stepped forward to become future volunteer leaders, ensuring the initiative will continue to grow.

Planning is already underway for a Cultural Heritage Gathering at Travelers' Rest this September and an expanded 2027 season featuring additional volunteer work parties, enhanced recreation opportunities, and broader public engagement. The long-term vision is to establish the Lolo Corridor as one of America's premier destinations for heritage recreation and volunteer stewardship.

The Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance extends its sincere thanks to onX Maps, Athletic Brewing, Yamaha, and Lewis and Clark Trail Adventures for their generous support of the 2026 pilot season, and to the dozens of volunteers whose dedication is helping reconnect people with this extraordinary historic landscape.

[View the photo album](#)

**Darby, Montana, Commemorates Lewis and Clark's Journey
Through the Bitterroot Valley**

While communities across the nation celebrated America's 250th birthday over the Fourth of July weekend, residents of Darby, Montana, gathered to commemorate another milestone—the passage of the Lewis and Clark Expedition through the Bitterroot Valley 220 years ago.

New Map Brings Clark's Route Into Focus

One of the highlights of this year's celebration was the unveiling of a new map by local author and researcher Ted Hall. Hall, who has written two books on the Lewis and Clark Expedition, has spent years studying William Clark's original maps and journals to more precisely identify the expedition's route through the Bitterroot Valley.



Hall explained that Clark's maps can be challenging to interpret because of differences in scale and perspective. Even so, he praised Clark's remarkable cartographic work as an almost "perfect inventory" of the region's trails, streams, and waterways.

By combining Clark's original mapping with modern GPS technology, researchers have produced a highly accurate representation of the expedition's route through Ravalli County. The new metal display includes a QR code linking visitors to an interactive online map where users can zoom in and follow the Corps' journey across the landscape.



A Descendant Shares Sacagawea's Story

The event concluded with a presentation by Rozina George, a Lemhi Shoshone educator and descendant of Sacagawea, who offered attendees an Indigenous perspective on the expedition.

George focused on the remarkable story of Jean Baptiste Charbonneau, the infant son of Sacagawea and Toussaint Charbonneau. Born just weeks before the expedition departed Fort Mandan in 1805, Jean Baptiste traveled more than 5,000 miles across North America in a traditional cradleboard as his mother played a vital role in the expedition's success.

Sacagawea's knowledge of the landscape, her ability to communicate across multiple languages and cultures, and her connections with the Shoshone people proved invaluable as the Corps crossed the Rocky Mountains.

To help illustrate that story, George's daughter, Zahnive George Bettles, demonstrated a traditional Shoshone cradleboard by placing her young son inside the handcrafted carrier, giving attendees a tangible connection to one of the expedition's youngest—and most famous—travelers.



69th Annual Missouri Conference on History



Call for Papers Open Now Proposals Due November 6

You're invited to submit paper, panel, and poster proposals in all fields of history, including public history and historic preservation, to the 2027 Missouri Conference on History. The conference is particularly interested in proposals for complete sessions, including panelists, chair, and commentator. All proposals should be submitted no later than November 6, 2026.

The 69th annual Missouri Conference on History, hosted by University of Missouri-St. Louis, and sponsored by the State Historical Society of Missouri, will be held March 10-12, 2027, at the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis.

[Learn More](#)

Art Donated to Lewis County, Kentucky Courthouse



Visitors to the Lewis County Courthouse in Vanceburg, Kentucky, will now find a fitting tribute to the county's namesake, Captain Meriwether Lewis.

The project began when Lewis County Prosecuting Attorney Ben Harrison contacted the Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance, noting that although the county bears Meriwether Lewis's name, the courthouse contained no artwork or interpretation recognizing his legacy. In response, LCTA Executive Director Richard Hunt reached out to noted artist and Alliance member Steve Ludeman to explore how the organization might help.

Ludeman generously donated a print of his acclaimed watercolor, *The Handshake*, which depicts the historic meeting between Meriwether Lewis and William Clark at the Falls of the Ohio in November 1803. The painting commemorates the moment the two leaders reunited and joined forces to begin the expedition that would forever change the nation's understanding of the American West. The Alliance completed the gift by providing custom framing and a commemorative plaque.



Unveiling by Lewis County Attorney Benjamin Harrison and Lewis County Judge/Executive George Sparks

The artwork was formally installed and dedicated at the Lewis County Courthouse on July 13th. In a letter accompanying the gift, Ludeman wrote:

"On behalf of the Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance, I am honored to present this historic art as a gift to you. My watercolor art, titled *The Handshake*, depicts Captain Meriwether Lewis greeting William Clark at the Falls of the Ohio River in November, 1803. This was the beginning of the partnership to lead the epic Lewis and Clark Expedition across the continent. It was also a reunion for these two friends." He continued, "Since your County was named after Captain Lewis, it is important for you to have and enjoy this art."

The new display ensures that residents and visitors alike are reminded of the county's namesake and the enduring legacy of one of America's most significant partnerships. Through the generosity of Steve Ludeman and the collaboration of the Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance and Lewis County officials, an important piece of history now has a permanent place in the courthouse.

Future State Report Available for Reading

The Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance has completed its comprehensive Future State planning process, establishing a strategic roadmap to strengthen the organization and expand public engagement across the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail.

Developed with input from members, partners, volunteers, and organizational leaders, the plan outlines eight key initiatives, including enhanced support for local chapters and programming, modernization of membership and technology systems, expanded educational and digital resources, new national programming opportunities, growth of the Digital Sherman Library, stronger partnerships with affiliated organizations, and diversified revenue strategies.

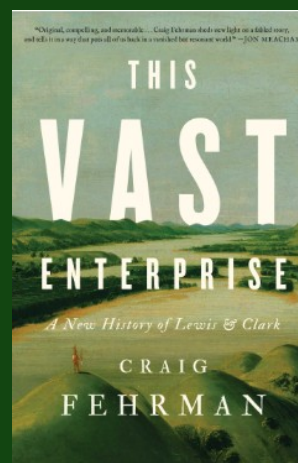
The complete Future State report, including detailed recommendations, implementation priorities, and measures of success, is available through the link below.

[Future State Report](#)
[Engagement Survey Analysis Report](#)

This Vast Enterprise

Watch the Video Interviews on
[William Clark](#)
[John Ordway](#)

[Bookshop.org](#)



Meet Craig Fehrman at one of these Book Festival Events

August 22 / Washington, DC: Library of Congress National Book Festival. **Free** — [register here](#).

August 25 / Westfield, IN: Westfield Washington Public Library. **Free** — [details here](#).

September 1 / Bloomington, IN: Morgenstern Books. **Free** — [details here](#).

September 25-27 / Harbor Springs, MI: Harbor Springs Festival of the Book. [Registration here](#).

October 3 / Norfolk, CT: Haystack Book Festival. **Free** — [register here](#).

October 20 / Milwaukee, WI: Milwaukee Public Library. **Free** — [register here](#).

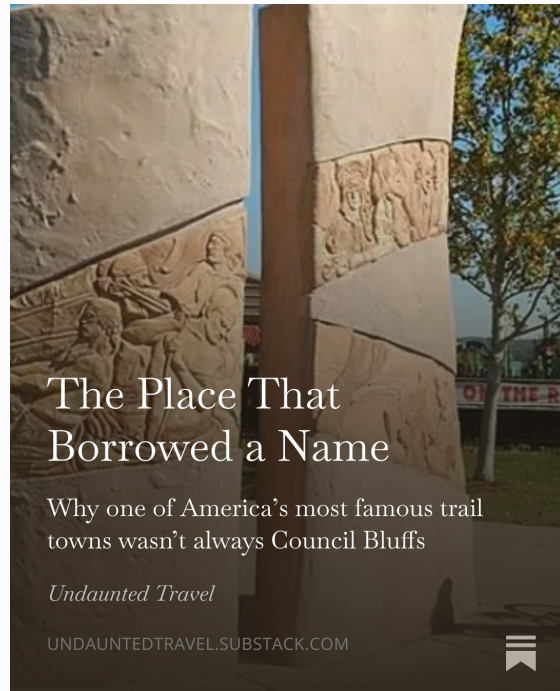
New Lewis & Clark Substack Articles

If you haven't already, we encourage you to explore [Real Stories of the Lewis and Clark Trail](#) and [Undaunted Travel](#), subscribe to receive future articles, and share your favorite stories with friends, family, and fellow Trail enthusiasts. Every new reader helps expand awareness and appreciation of the Lewis and Clark story.



Two centuries before Apollo 11's guidance computers tracked a lunar module to the Sea of Tranquility, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark and their crew were doing something far less glamorous, and often not as tranquil as they would have preferred...

[Read the Article](#)



You pull into a town whose name you've read hundreds of times in history books. You expect to find exactly what you've imagined. Then, after spending a day exploring, you realize the real story is far more fascinating than the one you thought you knew...

[Read the Article](#)

Independence Days on the Edge of Empire

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Real Stories of the Lewis and Clark Trail



As America250 celebrations continue this July, it's worth looking back at how Independence Day looked in a Jefferson era—sending an exploratory party into the new Louisiana Territory...

[Read the article](#)

The Monument Trail Waiting to Be Discovered

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Undaunted Travel



History is full of famous routes. Route 66, the Oregon Trail, and the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail all inspire travelers to explore America's past. Yet hidden among them is another remarkable journey that few people know exists...

[Read the article](#)



Broadwater County Canoe Trail

The new Missouri River Paddlers Trail 43 was dedicated on July 18, at the Lower Toston Dam Recreation Area, immediately below Toston Dam in Broadwater County, Montana. [Watch this video](#) that highlights the new cultural tourism recreational site.

In Search of Lewis's Plant Press



Michael Haynes, Lewis on Weippe Prairie

Presentation by John W. Fisher, Fall of 2025

John Fisher has spent over 25 years collecting, constructing, and presenting some of the most amazing components of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

In this video from the 2026 LCTA Annual Gathering in Great Falls, John presents on his search to identify and construct an accurate plant press and portfolios that represent the time of the Corps of Discovery. John also presents digging

tools, rare books, and other fascinating artifacts from his collection.

[Watch the video today.](#)

Play Lewis & Clark Trivia

In September 1805, the Lewis and Clark Expedition crossed the mountains via the Lolo Trail. It was a rugged journey fraught with cold weather, snow, lack of food, and dangerously steep slopes. The Lolo Trail is still in existence today (see articles in this newsletter).

The trivia question: Which mountain range does the Lolo Trail cross?

[Submit your answer](#)



The winner of this trivia game will be emailed a list of Lewis and Clark books to choose one as the contest prize. The answer and name of the winner will be published in the next *Trail News* issue. The books on the list, by the way, are used ones, but they are in excellent shape.

The answer to the trivia question in the last issue was “cutthroat trout.” Expedition member Silas Goodrich caught a half-dozen cutthroat in the Missouri River near today’s Great Falls, Montana. This type of trout was a species new to science. In 1836, a naturalist gave the cutthroat species a scientific name that honored William Clark.

Thirteen readers submitted correct responses. When more than one person responds with the correct answer, a drawing is done to choose the winner. In this case, the winner of the drawing was Norman Anderson. And...considering the importance of how the Clark name is associated with this species that today is popular among anglers, this seems very fitting: We’re also sending the book list to a long-time Lewis and Clark enthusiast who submitted the correct answer: Peyton “Bud” Clark, a descendant of William Clark.

Aerial photo by [Jim Wark](#), published in [Discover Lewis & Clark](#), the educational website of the Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance.

2026 Photo Contest

The Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance 2026 Photo Contest is now open to submit your fantastic photos for judging and winners to be included in our annual calendar.

In 2024 Michelle Schwartz won with this *Headwaters of the Missouri* landscape. Entries will be accepted through August 1, 2026.



[Enter the Contest](#)



The Three Forks, 1868
Panoramic lithograph by [Alfred E. Mathews](#) (1831–1874)

Day by Day Radio Episodes

Early in the day, [Clark](#) reaches the [headwaters of the Missouri](#)—also called the three forks. He leaves a note for [Lewis](#), who is several miles behind with the [dugouts](#). Lewis describes the speed of [pronghorns](#), and Clark explores what the captains would soon name the [Jefferson River](#).

[July 25, 1805](#)

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.

Words of the Expedition

"Milk"



Nope, your first thoughts are wrong. This “milk” has nothing to do with what you pour on your morning cereal.

This “milk” refers to what Native Americans called whiskey. The term was established prior to the Lewis and Clark Expedition by Frenchmen who traded with natives.

On August 31, 1804, Meriwether Lewis and others recorded in their journals a council with a Bois Brulé band of the Lakota Sioux along the Missouri River. The council occurred on Calumet Bluff, a landmark named by the explorers and which today is part of the Lewis & Clark State Recreation Area near Homer, Neb.

Lewis and William Clark made their typical diplomatic presentations to introduce the natives to the United States and their new Great Father (Thomas Jefferson). Afterward came the distribution of medals, certificates, clothing, and small trade goods to the natives.

The natives repeatedly requested “milk.” One stated, “...my father as you gave us a fine flag we wish you would give a little powder and a little of our Great fathers milk with the flag.”

The explorers general policy was to avoid giving alcohol during formal diplomacy, but afterward they sometimes offered small amounts to chiefs, interpreters or visiting delegations. In this case, they offered “milk” when the band’s chiefs later crossed the river to the expedition’s camp.

The explorers’ journal entries for August 31 are interesting. They recorded the interpretation of what the natives said. [Read...](#) And listen to a short radio broadcast on the [Discover Lewis & Clark website](#) that summarizes the council.

Teacher Workshop

The Lewis and Clark Fort Clatsop Teacher Workshop is designed for educators seeking creative ways to bring history to life for their students.



Hosted at historic Fort Clatsop, one of the most significant sites associated with the Lewis and Clark Expedition, this in-person professional development opportunity provides practical teaching tools, historical resources, and collaborative learning experiences that can be immediately applied in the classroom.

Participants will earn five professional development credit hours and enjoy a complimentary lunch while exploring innovative approaches to teaching American history, Indigenous history, geography, exploration, and cultural heritage.

Whether you teach elementary, middle school, high school, or informal education programs, this workshop will provide valuable resources and strategies to help students connect with the story of the Corps of Discovery and the people, places, and cultures that shaped the American West.

October 24 at 9 a.m. Fort Clatsop Visitor Center, Astoria, Oregon

[Registration](#)

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



[Living History](#)
Fort Atkinson, NE
August 1 - 2



[Return of the Red Rock](#)
Independence, MO
August 19



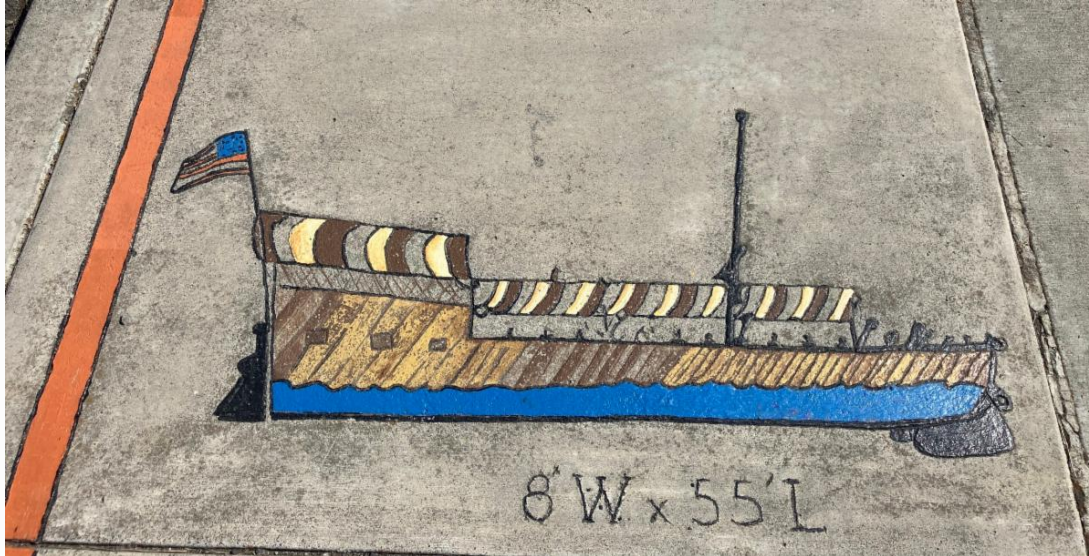
[LCTA Great Lakes](#)
Minneapolis, MN
August 11 - 13

Where on the Trail?

The Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail is filled with fascinating museums, breathtaking landscapes, and historic sites—but it also features public art

This issue's "Where on the Trail?" spotlights one of these unexpected gems. Can you identify where this photo was taken?

[Answer](#)



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.

The Last Word

Everyone's Journey

If you searched my educational background online, you'd discover that I earned a degree in history. Anyone who knows me also knows I'm not a historian. I'm certainly not gifted at remembering names, dates, and detailed facts. But what has always fascinated me is something different. I love asking *why*.

Why are we the people we are today? What choices, discoveries, and events shaped the world we inherited? History, to me, isn't just about understanding the past. It's also about understanding ourselves. Maybe that's also why I've always thought time travel would be the ultimate superpower.

Years ago, while volunteering on an Oregon Trail mapping project at Emigrant Springs in the Blue Mountains of eastern Oregon, I experienced one of those moments that changes your perspective. As our crew gathered around an evening campfire, another sound filled the air—the steady stream of traffic on Interstate 84, today's transportation corridor that follows the path of the original Oregon Trail.

It struck me that our audience wasn't around the campfire. It was the thousands of people driving past, unaware that one of America's greatest stories lay just beyond the highway. I found myself wondering, *What if they knew?* What if they stopped, walked a short trail, and discovered something that changed how they viewed the country—or themselves?

That question has shaped much of my work ever since. We all have different amounts of time, different abilities, and different seasons of life. That's part of

every journey. What never changes is the difference one person can make by sharing a story, preserving a place, extending a hand, or inspiring another traveler.

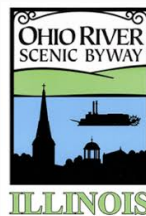
That evening, I realized our mission wasn't simply to preserve history. It was to invite people to discover it.

Perhaps it's time to dive a little deeper into your own journey with the Lewis and Clark story. Or perhaps it's time to realize that your experience, your stories, and your encouragement are needed now as much as ever.

Perhaps this is your campfire moment.

Richard Hunt

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