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Lewis & Clark Trail News

Bringing the Trail to Life
September 5, 2026



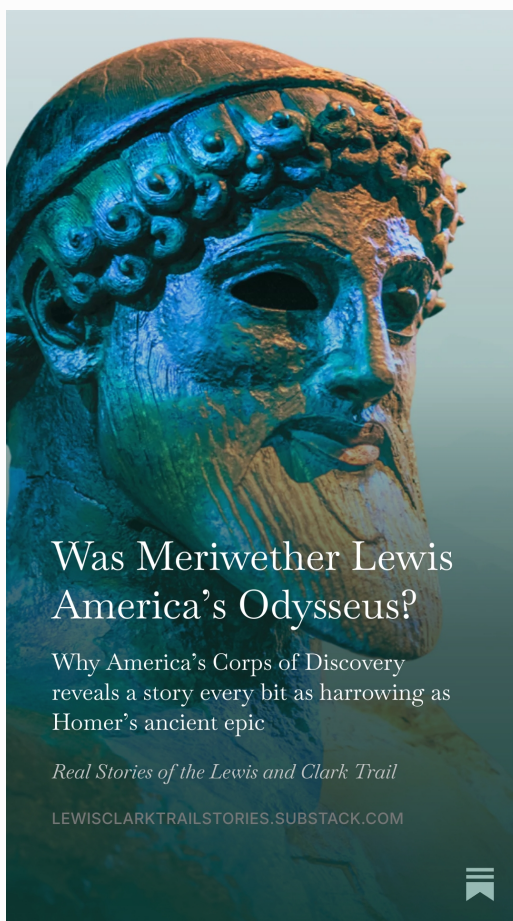
Jefferson River Sunrise

Photo courtesy of Thomas J. Elpel

New Lewis & Clark Substack Articles

Subscribe to receive future articles, and share your favorite stories with friends, family, and fellow Trail enthusiasts.

[Real Stories of the Lewis and Clark Trail](#)



Christopher Nolan's film, *The Odyssey*, has returned Homer's epic of danger, endurance, and homecoming to the spotlight. Interestingly enough, America has its own odyssey: the 1804–1806 journey of Lewis, Clark, and the Corps of Discovery through brutal winters, stormy rivers, hunger, grizzlies, mountains, and uncertain alliances.....

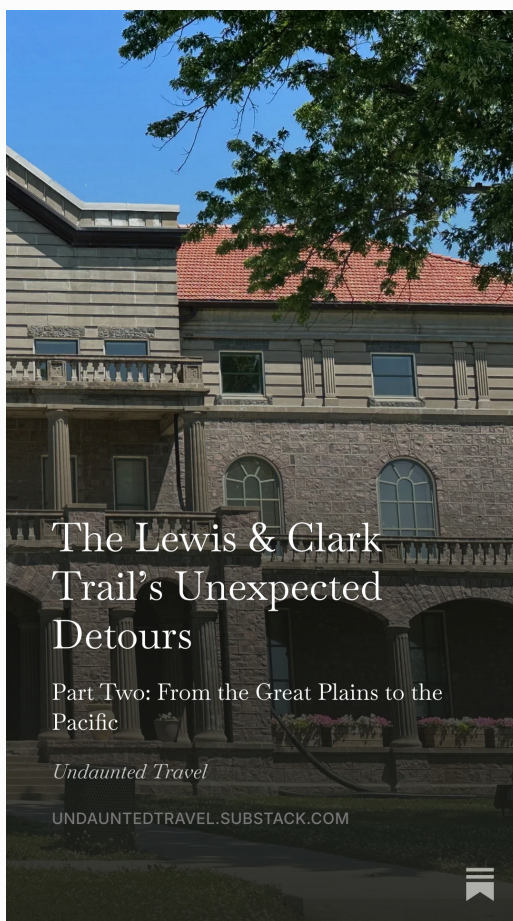
[Read the Article](#)



Before Meriwether Lewis had traveled even three miles from Pittsburgh on Aug. 31, 1803, a gathering at Brunot Island turned terrifying when an inexperienced guest handled Lewis' new air rifle. A simple demonstration went disastrously wrong, and the great western journey faced its first near-catastrophe.

[Read the Article](#)

[Undaunted Travel](#)



The Lewis & Clark Trail's Unexpected Detours

Part Two: From the Great Plains to the Pacific

Undaunted Travel

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Now we're headed into the heart of the West. Along the way, we'll encounter a museum housed in a remarkable former behavioral health hospital, an eighteenth-century French exploration site, a giant scrap-metal sculpture, one of Meriwether Lewis's personal artifacts, enormous fiberglass roadside figures, a 300-foot Jolly Green Giant, a full-scale Stonehenge, and a frying pan large enough to cook a serious batch of clam fritters.

The Trail is about to get weird—in the best possible way.

[Read the Article](#)

How Two National Historic Trails Got Their Groove Back

On the Lolo Corridor, volunteers are clearing more than downed trees. They are opening a path back into history.

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Undaunted Travel



There are places where history is something you read about. And then there are places where history is still there beneath your boots.

High in the Bitterroot Mountains, between [Weippe](#), Idaho, and [Travelers' Rest](#), Montana, the Lolo Corridor is one of those places. For centuries, it has been a travel route through the mountains—a landscape used by Indigenous peoples long before the Lewis and Clark Expedition crossed it in 1805 and 1806. It later became part of the story of the Nez Perce Flight of 1877.

[Read the article](#)

Your Next Job?

LCTA is recruiting a Trail Engagement Manager

What if your job was to travel the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail, meet the people and communities along the way, build partnerships, support volunteers, and help bring one of America's great stories to new audiences?

The Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance (LCTA) is looking for a relationship-driven professional to serve as our Trail Engagement Manager, a key field-based position responsible for strengthening engagement across the 4,900-mile, 16-state National Historic Trail.



You'll work with local communities, LCTA Chapters and Regions, Tribal nations, museums, nonprofits, tourism organizations, federal and state agencies, sponsors, and volunteers to turn relationships into action. You'll help identify opportunities, connect people and organizations, activate programs, and expand participation in the Lewis and Clark story.

We're looking for someone who is a connector, listener, relationship builder, and closer—someone who enjoys travel, meeting people, understanding communities, and turning good ideas into results.

A background in nonprofit organizations, history, heritage, conservation, parks, public engagement, partnerships, or related fields is highly desirable. More important is the ability to build trust, work independently, and make things happen.

Apply at [Idealist](#)

Read the full position description and learn more about LCTA's future direction on our website <https://lewisandclark.org/positions/>

Apply for a Trail Stewardship Grant

The Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance is pleased to announce that the 2026 Grant Program is now open for applications. Grants are available in amounts ranging from \$1,000 to \$10,000 and are intended to support stewardship, interpretation, education, preservation, and other projects that advance the understanding and appreciation of the Lewis and Clark National Historic trail.

[Apply here](#)



LCTA @ REI

The Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance is celebrating National Public Lands Day by bringing the Lewis and Clark Trail directly to outdoor enthusiasts at three REI stores across the country.

LCTA members will be on hand to share information about the Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail, opportunities to explore it, and the Alliance's work to preserve, interpret, and promote this remarkable national resource.



[Overland Park, Kansas](#) — September 13: Dan Sturdevant, Yvonne Kean, Richard Hunt

[Tualatin, Oregon](#) — September 19: Larry McClure

[Missoula, Montana](#) — September 26: Molly Stockdale

National Trails Day is a great opportunity to introduce new audiences to the stories, landscapes, communities, and experiences that make the Lewis & Clark Trail unique. From hiking and paddling to history, heritage, and cultural exploration, the Trail offers countless ways to get outside and connect with the American story.

If you're near one of these REI locations, stop by, say hello,

[National Public Lands Day](#)

Lolo Reconnected Update

The Lolo Reconnected Project continues to make significant progress on the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail, bringing partners and volunteers together to restore access and improve the trail experience across the historic Lolo Corridor.

In our latest effort, our partners at Lewis and Clark Trail Adventures cleared downfall trees from an additional 16 miles of trail, including the Wendover Ridge, Spirit Revival, and Sherman Peak sections. This work builds on the progress made earlier this year and demonstrates what is possible when local partners and volunteers take an active role in caring for the Trail.



In late September, a crew from Lewis and Clark Trail Adventures and the National Park Service will conduct a comprehensive assessment of the entire Lolo Corridor. The assessment will document current trail conditions, signage, and other access issues. This inventory will provide the foundation for planning and prioritizing 2027 restoration work.

Over the winter, LCTA will begin recruiting additional volunteer work teams for the 2027 season. Our goal is ambitious: clear all established segments of the historic trail, improve signage and access, and help ensure the Lolo Motorway is open as soon as feasible each season.

Funding will be critical to making this work possible, and LCTA has already begun applying for stewardship grants to support the 2027 program.

The Lolo Corridor is an extraordinary place where history, outdoor recreation, and stewardship come together. If you would like to learn more about Lolo Reconnected—or would be interested in joining a volunteer work team—contact director@lewisandclark.org.

Play Lewis & Clark Trivia



Photograph by Kris Townsend. The photo is published on the Sept. 5, 1805, web page in [Discover Lewis & Clark](#),

the educational website of the Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance.

(Hint: You might also find the trivia question answer on that web page.)

On Sept. 5, 1805, Lewis and Clark held a council with the Flathead Salish at Ross' Hole in Montana. What was a significant challenge in the meeting?

1. A stormy deluge of rain and lightning interrupted the council.
2. The natives didn't care about what the explorers said.
3. The council abruptly ended due to the sighting of a nearby buffalo herd.
4. There were five different languages spoken.

[Submit your answer](#)

The winner of this trivia question will be emailed a list of Lewis and Clark books to choose from as the prize.

The answer to the trivia question in the last Trail News was Patrick Gass. He was a soldier, carpenter, reluctant literary provocateur, and final living witness of the expedition.

Sixteen readers entered correct answers. When multiple correct answers are submitted, a drawing is done to determine the winner. The winner was Lonis Wendt.



Sounding Horn

© 2018 by Kristopher K. Townsend

Day by Day

Sounding the Trumpet

September 5, 1803

Today, the crews manage to move the [barge](#) down the Ohio without the aid of horses or oxen. [Lewis](#) stops for the night at an island opposite present Weirton, West Virginia. When the two canoes fail to arrive, the [sounding horn](#) is blown and they answer back.

Already stationed on the Mississippi, the expedition's future Sergeant of the Guard, [John Ordway](#), writes home.

In present South Dakota, trader [Pierre-Antoine Tabeau](#) describes treaties and personalities of three [Tribal Nations](#) that the expedition will encounter moving up the Missouri.

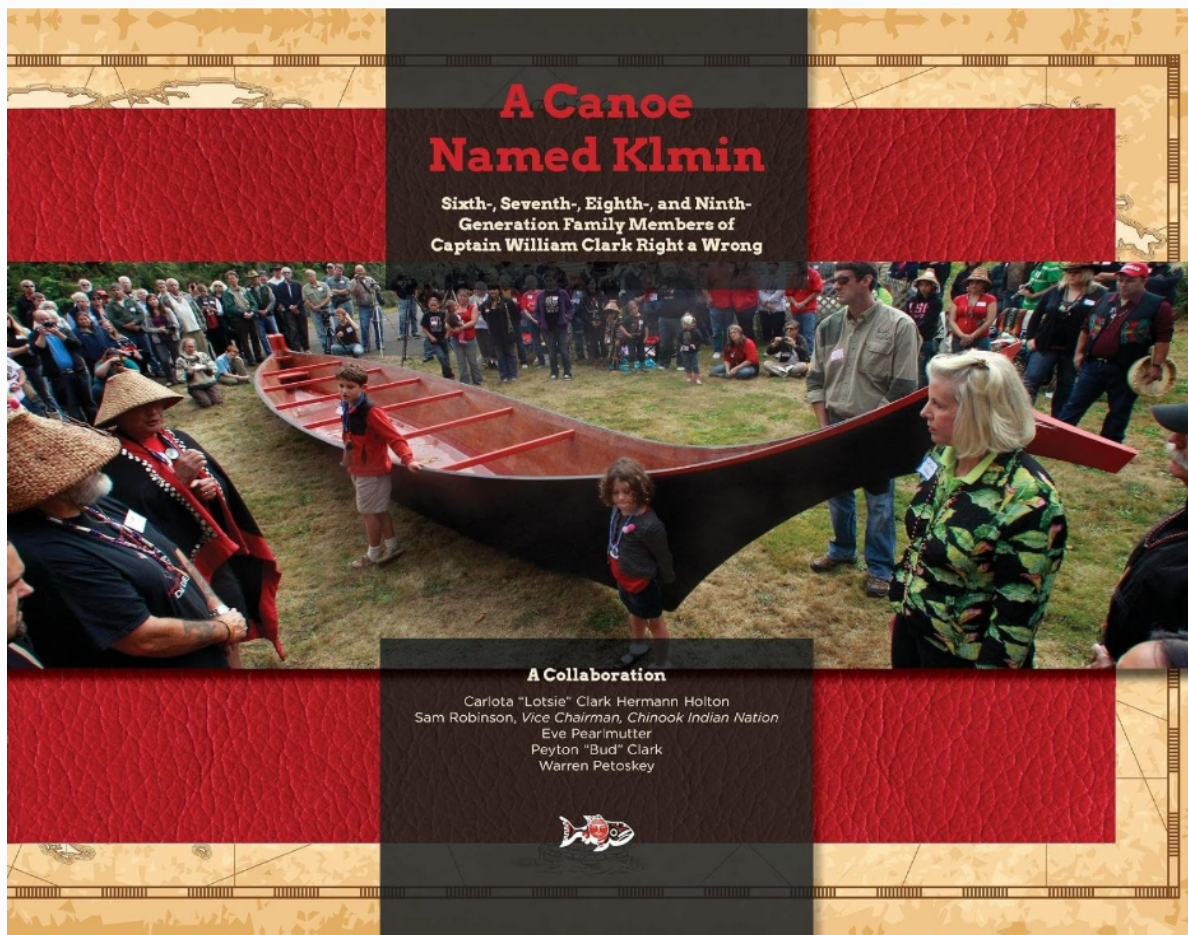
Track the progress of the Big Muddy Clean Sweep

Organized by Missouri River Relief, with support from a Bicentennial Trail Stewardship grant awarded by the Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance, the Big Muddy Clean Sweep is a series of trash cleanups between Kansas City and Columbia, Missouri.

Follow the crew as they move downstream, town by town, sandbar by sandbar, caring for nearly 200 miles of the Missouri River. [Check cleanup progress here.](#)



A Canoe Named Klmin



A Canoe, a Wrong, and a Remarkable Act of Reconciliation

More than 200 years ago, as the Lewis and Clark Expedition prepared to leave the Pacific Northwest after a difficult winter at the mouth of the Columbia River, the Corps of Discovery faced a problem: they were short one canoe.

Their solution was to take one from the Chinook people.

For the Chinook, canoes were far more than simple transportation. They were central to their culture, livelihood, and way of life. The theft was a serious insult—

one that remained part of the story of the expedition long after the Corps headed east.

More than two centuries later, descendants of William Clark sought to acknowledge that wrong. Carlota Clark Holton, a seventh-generation descendant of William Clark, worked with members of the Chinook Indian Nation to create a 36-foot replica canoe. The canoe was custom-built in Oregon and presented to the Chinook in an effort to restore a relationship damaged by an act committed more than 200 years earlier.

The canoe was cleansed, blessed, and given a name before being placed in the Columbia River—becoming, in the words of the late Chinook leader Ray Gardner, a *living member of the tribe*.

It is a remarkable story about the Lewis and Clark Expedition, but it is also about something much larger: acknowledging the complexity of the past, listening to Indigenous perspectives, and finding ways to build relationships in the present.

The Story Continues

The story of the canoe, the theft, and the effort to make amends is told in a book available through the Lewis and Clark Boathouse and Museum in St. Charles and a [video](#) hosted on their YouTube Channel. (Proceeds from book sales are shared between the museum and the Chinook Indian Nation).

[Purchase the book online](#)

There is also an opportunity to hear more about this remarkable story in person. Lotsie will give a presentation and participate in a book signing at [Hearth & Soul](#) in St. Louis on September 26 from 1–3 p.m.

The event is open to the public and will provide an opportunity to hear more about the story, participate in a conversation about the history, the canoe, and the effort to make amends.

BOOK SIGNING

HEARTH & SOUL
ST. LOUIS

Meet the Authors & Book Signing

A Canoe Named Klmin
with Authors Carlota "Lotsie" Clark Hermann Holton & Eve Pearlmutter

Join the Authors for a book signing & conversation about history, accountability, and the power of returning what was lost.

Light bites & libations provided

Cohosted by the Lewis & Clark Boat House & Museum

SATURDAY,
SEPTEMBER 26
1PM - 3PM

9640 CLAYTON ROAD

HEARTHANDSOUL.COM @SHOPHEARTHANDSOUL



Words of the Expedition

"Doated"



This six-letter word is one of those fun English words originating in about the 14th century. Today it has different meanings and spellings ("doated" and "doted"). One meaning for both spellings refers to being feeble-minded due to age or the loss of mental capacity. Another meaning describes someone smitten by another person.

But for the Lewis and Clark explorers, doated had yet one more meaning—it described rotten and decayed wood.

In his journal entry of April 14, 1806, Lewis—in his always interesting way of spelling some words—gave a delightful description of landscape covered with trees that "exhibit very romantic seenes" near the Cascades of the Columbia River.

Then he described a drowned forest along the Columbia River, apparently resulting from a landslide: "...we find the trunks of many large pine trees sanding erect as they grew at present in 30 feet water; they are much doated and none of them vegetating."

Read the [journal entries](#) from April 14, 1806, to get a good sense of Lewis's description of trees.

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



[American Nationalism](#)

Pittsburgh, PA
September 12



[River Cleanup](#)

Kansas City, KS
September 12



[Hasan Davis](#)

St. Louis, MO
September 16

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 the unexpected.

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

[Answer](#)



The Last Word

Take Your Kids to Work

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Hi there!

I've had a busy but wonderful summer — lots of book events and lots of emails from readers.

A few weeks ago, I received one from Bea Robinson, the granddaughter of John Ewers. Ewers, to me, remains one of the great scholars of the American West. (If you want to read his work, the place to start is *The Horse in Blackfoot Indian Culture*, which, thanks to the Smithsonian, is [online for free](#).)

In her email, Bea said that her mother — Jane, John's daughter — had been watching *Amanpour & Company* when an interview with me came on. The show's producers put up an image of John when I mentioned his work, and that made Jane and Bea very happy.

Bea and I ended up emailing a bit, and she told me that when John was very old, Jane took care of him. They read books out loud to each other, and the last one they ever read was Stephen Ambrose's *Undaunted Courage*.

Jane read John the last chapters while he was in the hospital. In fact, she read the book's final pages just moments before he passed. Bea was in the room, too. "It was a very fitting ending for his love of the West," she said.

It's also a terrific example of what makes books special. I love that every book starts out as a standalone object — a novel about X, a history of Y — and then becomes something more than that. Almost instantly, it stops belonging to the writer and starts belonging to the readers. It becomes part of the texture of their lives. *Undaunted Courage* isn't just a book about an expedition. It's an object and experience that Jane, Bea, and John shared during his final moments.

This summer, I've heard many stories like this, including ones from the family members of Donald Jackson and Paul Russell Cutright, two legendary Lewis and Clark scholars.

I've heard many of these stories in person. Last week, I was at the National Book Festival, where a young couple told me how they used Lewis and Clark to organize a trip celebrating their one-year anniversary. A middle-aged reader told me how, decades before, he'd followed the trail with two friends. Now they're all reading my book together and reliving their old adventures.

This year has been so meaningful to me. But the best part has been meeting readers and hearing stories like this — has been seeing my book become their book, a small part of their lives.

Bea also shared a picture with me of Jane as a child. This was when Ewers and his wife, Margaret, took their young family to the Browning Reservation so Ewers could interview Blackfoot people.

Bea gave me permission to share the photo, and she apologized that she did not know the name of the Blackfoot woman who is holding Jane.



I love that the Ewers family could go to work together. I've been able to do some of that this summer, too. Here's a picture of me and my son, Henry, at the Lewis and Clark Boat House and Museum in St. Charles, MO.

Henry spotted a new caption that cites my book, another way to see it belonging to other people.

Not pictured are my wife, Candice, and my daughter, Maisie, but they've logged a lot of miles and memories as well.

I'll be back in St. Charles this fall, and I've added some other tour dates on my website:

<https://craigfehrman.com/events/>.

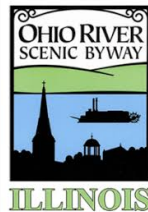
I'll be able to add a few more soon, including a big trip to Texas in the fall and a big trip to Virginia in the spring. Stay tuned, and thank you for being readers!

Best,
Craig

Craig Fehrman is the author of the bestseller "This Vast Enterprise"



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