



Lewis & Clark Trail News

Bringing the Trail to Life

January 24, 2026



Fort Southwest Point

Tony Huhn's photograph—one of 14 winners in our photo contest for artwork for the LCTA 2026 calendar—does a fine job of transporting the viewer into the fascinating history of Fort Southwest Point, located about 35 miles from Knoxville, Tennessee.

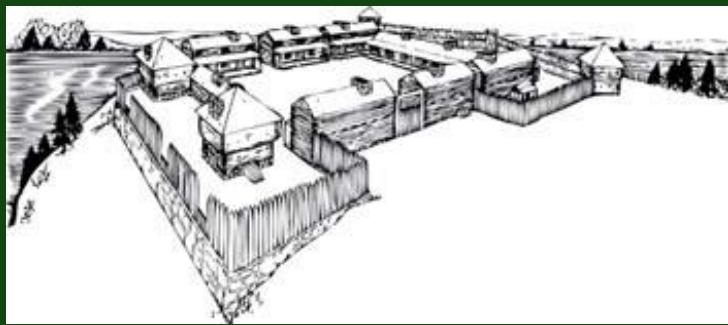
The fort figured prominently in the 1803 planning for the expedition by President Thomas Jefferson and Meriwether Lewis. It was there, they believed, where Lewis could recruit soldiers to join him on the westward journey. The four expedition members who came from the fort were Corporal Richard Warfington and Privates Hugh Hall, Thomas Howard, and John Potts.

The fort's construction began in March 1797 along the boundary separating the Cherokee Nation from the United States. In early May, Louis Philippe, the future king of France and a refugee from the French Revolution, visited the fort on his journey to explore the New World. The number of soldiers at the

fort increased as it was needed more and more as a stable influence on trade and peace in the region.

Today, the fort houses a museum containing artifacts excavated at the site. The fort focuses on living history. Staff members dress in period costumes and recreate past activities, including bagpipe serenades and cannon firings.

[Discover more about the fort's history](#)



2026 Annual Gathering Great Falls, Montana June 21 - 24



All the history, none of the hauling

Join us for the Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance Annual Gathering, where the adventure continues without the heavy lifting. We promise—no 1805-style portage required.

[Registration](#) is now open

Explore the [Meeting Guide](#)

Hotel Registration is now available

Neal J. Bedlan Selected as Superintendent of Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail



The National Park Service (NPS) has selected Neal J. Bedlan as the superintendent of Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail (LECL), headquartered in Omaha, NE. Bedland will assume his new role in February of 2026.

The trail stretches 4,900 miles across 16 states and follows the historic outbound and inbound routes of the Lewis and Clark Expedition of 1803-1806 from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to the Pacific Ocean.

"I am pleased to announce Neal Bedlan as the next superintendent of Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail," said NPS Acting Midwest Regional Director Stephanie Stephens.

"His leadership experience with the Lewis and Clark Trail and partnerships will serve the trail well. I look forward to his continued leadership in the Midwest Region."

Neal has a wide range of leadership experience in the public administration field. Before joining the NPS, he was supervisor for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) program for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. He began his NPS career over 17 years ago as the Outdoor Recreation Planner for the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail, later serving as the Senior Leader of Interpretation, Education, Visitor and Volunteer Services. Since 2022, he has been the LWCF Regional Program Manager.

Bedlan is a Nebraska native and a graduate of the University of Nebraska of Omaha, School of Public Administration. He earned his master's degree in public management and received a Bachelor of Science from the University of Nebraska at Kearney in political science.

"I'm excited to return to the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail," Bedlan said. "It's an honor to collaborate with the incredible trail partners, as well as the dedicated staff who make it all possible. The Lewis and Clark Trail is a national treasure—rich in history, culture, and natural beauty—and offers unparalleled opportunities for the public to explore and connect with our history."

Tony Turnbow Rescheduled

Due to forecasted winter weather, the Tony Turnbow author talk and book launch has been **rescheduled**.

The event will now take place on Saturday, January 31 at 2:00 p.m. (Central) at Lewis County Public Library & Archives.

We are very much looking forward to welcoming Tony L. Turnbow as he discusses his new book, Jefferson's Spy: The Secret Life of Meriwether Lewis, which explores Lewis's covert work for Thomas Jefferson and the enduring mystery surrounding his death on the Natchez Trace. Copies of the book will be available for purchase and personalization.

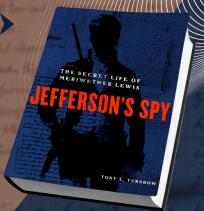
[Event Information](#)

LEWIS COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES

BOOK LAUNCH

The Secret Life of Meriwether Lewis: Jefferson's Spy (Vol. 1)
by Tony L. Turnbow

In Jefferson's Spy: The Secret Life of Meriwether Lewis, Tony L. Turnbow explores Lewis's relationship with his mentor, Thomas Jefferson, and the secret work he performed on Jefferson's behalf until his death on the Natchez Trace in Tennessee.



SATURDAY
January 24th, 2026
START TIME
02:00 PM Central

Join us for the launch of a fascinating new book by historian Tony L. Turnbow.

Southeast Region Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance  250 

www.lewisleibrary.com
15 Kyle Ave., Hohenwald, TN

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. We're profiling two grant recipients in this and upcoming newsletters.



Sioux City Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center

The [Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center](#) in Sioux City, Iowa, received a \$7,600 grant to help expand the center's new Wall of Unsung Heroes to emphasize more Native cultural art. The center plays an important role in Sioux City as the place where adults and schoolchildren can learn about local history and the significance of events such as the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

The Wall of Unsung Heroes was unveiled in September to highlight the contributions of members who were crucial to the Lewis and Clark Expedition's success but are less well-known today than Meriwether Lewis, William Clark, York, Sacagawea, and the dog Seaman.

The new Native cultural art component will expand the exhibit's space and further the center's goal of providing visitors with valuable information. The plan is to work

with a local artist, Henry Payer, who is a Ho Chunk (Winnebago tribe), to incorporate traditional designs that symbolically represent Native nations that resided in the region during the time of the expedition.

[Learn more about the Wall of Unsung Heroes](#)

Fort Atkinson State Historical Park

The [Fort Atkinson Foundation](#), a nonprofit organization that assists the 157-acre [Fort Atkinson State Historical Park](#) adjacent to the western Nebraska community of Fort Calhoun, received a \$1,500 grant to replace two faded roadside interpretive signs about local history and the Lewis and Clark Expedition. This reconstructed Fort Atkinson stands on the Council Bluff, a site recommended by William Clark for a military installation.



The need for new signage arose from a visitor survey last summer to identify ways to promote Fort Atkinson Historical Park, a popular part of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail and Nebraska Scenic Byway. The interpretive signs, located on a busy highway to Fort Calhoun, were identified as needing replacement. (Interpretive signage replacement is becoming increasingly necessary along the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail, as signs installed during the 2003-06 Lewis and Clark Expedition Bicentennial Celebration have significantly faded or been vandalized.)

On August 3, 1804, William Clark and Meriwether Lewis held council with the Otoes and Missourias on the plateau that became known as the Council Bluff. After the expedition's completion, Clark recommended to President Thomas Jefferson that the bluff was an ideal site for a fortification. The U.S. military followed the recommendation and, from 1819 to 1827, occupied the bluff and established Fort Atkinson. Subsequently, the bluff became an important landmark for travelers on the Missouri River. During the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial, Fort Atkinson hosted a signature event called The First Council. The event was attended by 60,000 people.

[Find out about the 1804 meeting at Council Bluff](#)

Trail Stewardship Grants: Strengthening the Legacy of the Lewis and Clark Expedition

The Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance continues its long-standing commitment to preserving and interpreting the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail through its Trail Stewardship Grant Program. Supported by assets established during the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial, the program provides annual funding for high-quality

projects tied to places along the Trail and to the people and activities of the Corps of Discovery Expedition.

The Bicentennial Trail Stewardship Committee has recently concluded the 2025 grant cycle and is refining the program to improve its effectiveness and reach. As part of this effort, the committee has updated and aligned all program documentation to create a clearer, more consistent, and more applicant-friendly process. These changes are designed to better align strong project proposals with available funding and to encourage an increase in both the number and quality of applications.

Approximately five percent of the endowed Trail Stewardship Fund assets are available for awards each year. To better address time-sensitive and urgent needs, the committee is adjusting the distribution cycle so that a portion of the available funds may be awarded between May and September. The traditional annual grant cycle deadline of October 1, 2026, will remain in place. The maximum award per project is \$10,000.

Eligible applicants include LCTA Regions and Chapters, as well as other nonprofit organizations with qualifying projects. The 2026 Bicentennial Trail Stewardship Committee includes Karen Goering, Shannon Kelly, Mel Berger, Dan Murray, and Lou Ritten.

Additional information and application materials are available at <https://lewisandclark.org/grants/> or by contacting the LCTA office.



Forts of Ohio Tour

Step into the contested frontier of the early American republic with a four-day, expert-led motor coach tour, May 15–18, that brings the post-Revolutionary War period and the Northwest Indian War vividly to life.

Designed for engaged history enthusiasts, this curated experience follows the campaigns, conflicts, and consequences that shaped the Old Northwest.



The Battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794 marked a turning point in the struggle for control of the Northwest Territory. Under the command of General Anthony Wayne, U.S. forces defeated a confederation of Native nations, effectively breaking organized resistance. The victory paved the way for the 1795 Treaty of Greenville, which brought the Northwest Indian War to a close, transferred most of present-day Ohio and portions of Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan to the United States, established



the Greenville Treaty Line, and accelerated American settlement across the Old Northwest, firmly securing U.S. authority in the region.

The tour cost is \$375, plus hotel accommodations, two meals on your own, and any Tuesday expenses. Registration and full payment are due by March 25, 2026. The tour is subject to cancellation if minimum participation

is not met. For additional information and registration details, contact [Lou Ritten](#).

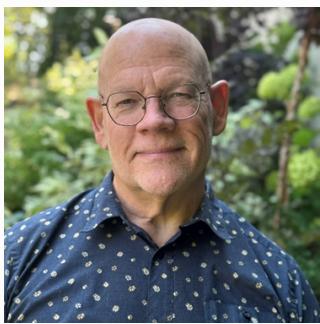


Winter Storytelling

For nearly two decades, Winter Storytelling at Travelers' Rest has been a seasonal celebration of the Seliš tradition of sharing stories during the cold winter months. Each Saturday from January 10 through March 8, gather at the Travelers' Rest State Park Visitor Center – and on Zoom – at 11 a.m. to hear stories from elders, authors, historians, and naturalists.

Admission to Winter Storytelling is \$5 per person; free for members of Travelers' Rest Connection.

Storytellers



[Kirby Lambert](#)



[Sophia Etier](#)

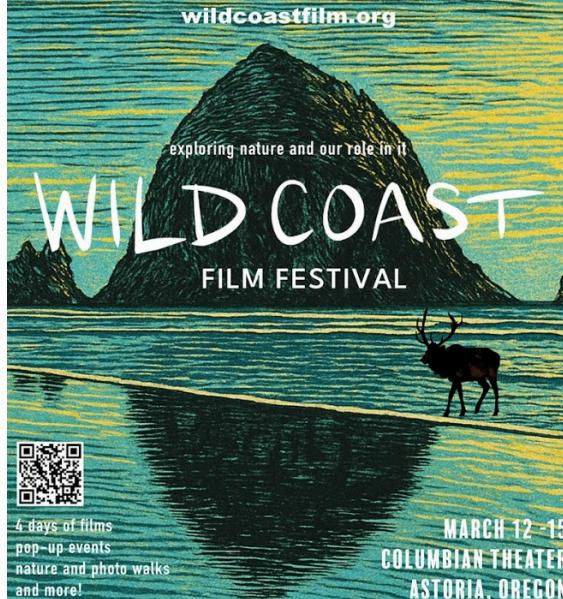


[Tim Ryan](#)

Wild Coast Film Festival

The 3rd annual Wild Coast Film Festival, exploring nature and our role in it, takes place March 12 - 15 at the [Columbian Theater](#) in Astoria, Oregon.

The festival features films by renowned regional and international storytellers and will host a special screening of [Big Medicine: York Outdoors](#).



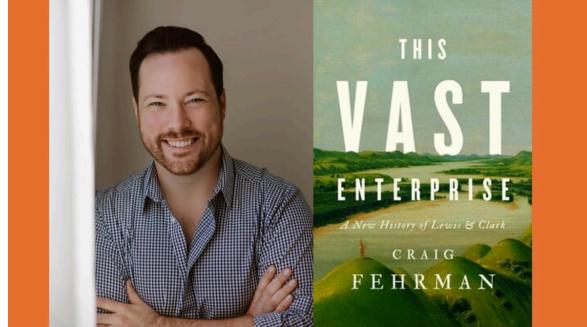
There are seven film blocks, each approximately two hours long as well as local pop-up events in Astoria. These informal gatherings are open to the public and feature special panel discussions. Attendees can eat, drink, and nerd-out on conservation topics.

Wildcoastfilm.org

Vast Enterprise

Zoomcast

Join the Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance on February 22 for a second online conversation with Craig Fehrman. After his first well-received event—on his groundbreaking forthcoming book, *This Vast Enterprise: A New History of Lewis and Clark* (Simon & Schuster, 2026)—Fehrman will share another round of insights, this time focused on Clark.



In specific, Fehrman will share two new documents: a forgotten memoir written by a Clark family friend and a notebook of Clark's. These documents allowed Fehrman to prove that Clark spent a year at college in Virginia. Forget the bad spelling—William was actually the better-educated of the two captains!

Fehrman will discuss what Clark studied and how it shaped him, first as a military officer and then as an explorer. As in Fehrman's first presentation, attendees can expect a behind-the-scenes look at his research process and a new perspective on Clark's personality and journals.

[Zoomcast Information](#)

Stephen Ambrose Tours
Lewis and Clark - Undaunted Courage



Follow the Corps of Discovery trail through Montana, Idaho, Washington and Oregon from Great Falls to the Pacific Ocean. Alisha Hamel, an LCTA Board member and Oregon Chapter President, leads the August 8 - 19 tour and welcomes Lewis and Clark enthusiasts and those who want to learn more on this trip of discovery. This event is offered through Stephen Ambrose Tours.

[For Information](#)

Day by Day Radio Episodes



[January 24 1806](#)

At [Fort Clatsop](#) near present Astoria, Oregon, several [Clatsop](#) visitors were impressed with [Drouillard](#)'s shooting skills. [Lewis](#) demonstrated his [air gun](#) and described how [Chinookan People](#) use the seashore lupine and [wapato](#) plants.

Superior Marksmanship and Weaponry

"The [[Clatsop](#)] Indians witnessed [Drewyer's](#) shooting some of those [Elk](#) which has given them a very exalted opinion of us as marksmen and the superior excellence of our rifles compared with their guns; this may probably be of service to us, as it will deter them from any acts of hostility if they have ever meditated any such."

—[Meriwether Lewis](#)

Astonishing Air Gun

"My Air-gun also astonishes them very much, they cannot comprehend it's shooting so often and without powder; and think that it is great medicine which comprehends every thing that is to them incomprehensible.—"

—Meriwether Lewis

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

[America 250](#)

[Voices of the River](#)

[Elizabeth Dole Lecture](#)

[Art of the Angle](#)

Grants

[Humanities Iowa](#)

[Oregon Public Programs](#)

[Knowledge for Freedom](#)

[Indiana Landmarks](#)

Alliance

[Youth Patch Program](#)

[Virtual Reality](#)

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We've Gone Platinum

The Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance has achieved Candid Platinum Seal of Transparency, the highest level of recognition offered by Candid (GuideStar).

This designation signals to donors, partners, and funders that LCTA meets the highest standards for openness, accountability, and organizational integrity. Platinum status requires detailed public reporting on programs, finances, governance, and measurable outcomes—demonstrating not just what we do, but the impact we achieve. For a nonprofit organization, this level of transparency builds trust, strengthens credibility, and enhances competitiveness for grants and philanthropic support.

Platinum
Transparency
2026

Candid.

Play Lewis & Clark Trivia

Here's a hot question that will warm up your thinking cap. The Lewis and Clark explorers spent the 1804-05 winter at Fort Mandan. On January 24, 1805, the men began cutting wood for cooking and warmth. Until then, what fuel source did they use for their fires?

[Submit your answer](#)

The answer to the last newsletter's trivia question: Moccasins. When Meriwether Lewis and three companions first met Cameahwait and the Shoshone, the custom

was for the Native Americans to remove their footwear during such a sit-down meeting.

Ten readers provided the correct answer—most even noted Lewis' unique spelling of "mockersons." When more than one reader submits the correct answer, a drawing is held to determine the winner. John Baker won the drawing.



We no longer provide a specific book to the award winner. Instead, we now email the winner a list of Lewis and Clark books so the person can choose one.

Words of the Expedition

For anyone who reads the million-word [journals](#) of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, it can sometimes feel like stepping into linguistic archaeology as well as an early elementary school classroom where students learn to spell based on how words sound. The kids hear the words correctly, but their spelling is atrocious.

Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, as well as the expedition's sergeants who kept journals, used simple workaday spellings based on how things sounded to the ear. This was before the spellings of American-style written words became standardized. The standardization began with the 1806 publication of Noah Webster's dictionary.

Take, for example, a phrase that Lewis wrote on March 23, 1806, to describe a grouse, which, by the way, he mistook for a pheasant. He said the bird resembled "that kind of dung-hill fowl which the hen-wives of our country call dommanicker."



Hen-wives? The word came straight forward from the 1500s to the expedition's time period. It is still around today, but is seldom, seldom, if ever, used today. It means: women who are in charge of fowls.

And...what in the name of Noah Webster is a "dommanicker?"

That's how Lewis' ear translated the spoken word into his spelling of a chicken breed known as "Dominique." With black-and-white plumage and a rose-colored comb, the Dominique is believed to be the oldest American chicken breed, created from birds brought by colonists from southern England. It was a well-known breed in America by 1750. Lewis would have been familiar with the breed, but obviously not with how to spell its name.

Share the Adventure!



Lewis & Clark Trail News
Bringing the Trail to Life



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](#)



[Free and Independent](#)

Southern Prairie and Riverbend Chapter Annual Meeting

Catch up with your Lewis and Clark friends and make new ones at the annual meeting of the Missouri-Kansas Riverbend Chapter and the Southern Prairie Region of the Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance. You'll enjoy the speaker...and, of course, the food!

Join trail enthusiasts and LCTA members on February 7, 11:30 a.m. at the fabulous Cascone's Restaurant, 3733 N. Oak Trafficway, Kansas City, Mo. The luncheon cost is \$30 a person. Contact Yvonne Kean - yjkean@gmail.com to register.

After the business portion of our gathering, LCTA Member Dennis Figg will deliver an informative presentation on a topic that has long intrigued him: the Osage Nation and the Lewis and Clark Expedition. The land of his small farm was in the Osage Territory when the Lewis and Clark explorers passed by while traveling the Missouri River.

In addition to his interest in the Osage, Dennis, a retired conservation biologist, has extensive knowledge of the plants and animals of the Great Plains, the Ozark Highlands, and the wetlands of the Missouri River Valley. Over the years, he has given hundreds of talks about wildlife diversity conservation to audiences across the nation. He has published both popular and technical articles in conservation journals and magazines and was a regular contributor to the Missouri Conservationist.



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

A New Way to Share the Trail

This spring, the Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance will launch two new Substack publications—one focused on heritage travel along the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail, and the other dedicated to historical stories rooted in the places, people, and perspectives of the Trail. These new channels are designed to deepen engagement, expand our reach, and provide consistent, high-quality content to those who care about history, place, and discovery.

For readers unfamiliar with it, Substack is a modern publishing platform that allows organizations and writers to deliver articles directly to subscribers by email and on the web. It combines the best aspects of a newsletter, a magazine, and a blog, while also making it easy for readers to follow, share, and support the work they value. Many cultural, historical, and educational organizations now use Substack to build informed, mission-aligned audiences beyond traditional websites and social media.

The LCTA Heritage Travel Substack will highlight destinations along the Trail—gateway communities, public lands, museums, landscapes, and experiences that invite exploration. Expect practical inspiration for cultural travelers, behind-the-scenes looks at Trail-related places, and stories that connect outdoor recreation with historical understanding.

The Historical Stories Substack will focus on interpretation and narrative: lesser-known episodes of the Corps of Discovery, Indigenous histories, changing meanings of place, and the continuing relevance of the Trail in American history. These essays will be thoughtful, accessible, and grounded in scholarship, while remaining engaging for a general audience.

Both Substacks will be free to read, and subscribing will cost nothing. The most important form of support is participation: signing up, reading, sharing posts with friends and colleagues, and helping us reach new audiences who may not yet know the Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance. Over time, readers will also have the option to become paid supporters, which directly helps offset the costs of research, writing, and digital infrastructure and allows us to sustain and expand this work.

These Substacks are an extension of LCTA's broader mission—to increase public awareness, relevance, and engagement with the Trail. We invite you to subscribe when they launch this spring and to help us carry the stories of the Trail forward, one reader at a time.

Richard Hunt

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