



# • TAMÁSTLIKT •

CULTURAL INSTITUTE

72789 Highway 331, Pendleton, OR 97801 USA

## BRIEFLY

**What:** Discussion of book collecting with story telling relevant to the Lewis & Clark expedition and the current exhibit, *Literature of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*.

**Who:** Appearance by Roger Wendlick, longtime collector of most of the items in the exhibit and expert on collecting Lewis and Clark books and other memorabilia.

Refreshments to be served.

**Where:** Tamástslikt Cultural Institute, just off I-84 at Exit 216 five miles east of Pendleton.

**When:** 2 p.m., Sat., April 22

**Why:** The United States has been commemorating the 200th anniversary of the Lewis and Clark Expedition since 2003. The expedition finished in St. Louis in September, 1806, but passed through our area in the spring of that year.





**Roger Wendlick in period dress as Lewis and Clark Expedition member George Drouillard.  
Photo credit: Dima Korsikov**

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## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

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Like many addicts, Roger Wendlick had found it impossible to kick his addiction. After 20 years it took the advice of a friend and the realization that he couldn't continue his habit—simply because the money had run out—to finally send him seeking help.

Fortunately, Wendlick's choice of obsession hadn't ravaged his body, as do so many chemical addictions, although it had affected his mind.

Wendlick was addicted to books, specifically books on the Lewis & Clark expedition. In fact, the heavy construction supervisor had acquired the largest collection in the world by the time he had also acquired nearly \$150,000 in debt by buying every book, newspaper and pamphlet ever published on the famous historical trip across Western America.

Wendlick took his friend's advice and approached, who else, Lewis & Clark College, with whom he negotiated a deal, half donation, half paid, for his hard sought collection. On Sat., April 22, Wendlick will discuss his habit, his books, his excitement with the knowledge in those books and more in a 2 p.m. appearance at Tamástslíkt Cultural Institute. Most of the items in the current exhibit at Tamástslíkt, the "Literature of Lewis and Clark"—an exhibit produced by Lewis and Clark College—were once Wendlick's.

Wendlick's walk and talk through the exhibit will bring the books and their stories alive, he says.

“I’ll be talking about crazy times and fun times collecting and about the books and their significance to the Expedition,” said Wendlick recently. An entertainer who traveled the country with a guitar and songbook in the 1970’s, Wendlick promised that his presentation would be loose and fun, full of story telling. He won’t play the guitar. In his career in heavy construction the now retired book collector lost a chunk of his left index finger, a definite hindrance for a guitar player.

Wendlick is even writing a book about his collecting experiences, “Shotgun on My Chest”. The title comes from his sudden realization in 1986 that he had already acquired \$37,000 in Lewis and Clark literature and made himself and his home a potential target for thieves. For the next 12 years, until 1998, he says he slept every night with a loaded 12 gauge shotgun in his bed.

And the collection just got richer. As an example he describes his acquisition of the 1814 two-volume Biddle edition of the Lewis and Clark journals, which Wendlick purchased in 1992 for \$12,000. In 1998, when his donation/sale to the college occurred, the Biddle edition was valued at \$50,000. Today, he says it’s worth \$150,000.

Not satisfied to just collect Lewis and Clark, Wendlick also interprets George Drouillard. Like many aficionados of the expedition, he has stepped beyond reading and fills the shoes—moccasins—of a real member of the Expedition, replete in buckskins, beads and a badger skin hat. Douillard was a sign interpreter and primo hunter for the expedition.

The collecting habit began in 1980. According to Wendlick, he was thinking of it as an investment from the beginning, although he is passionate about books.

“I knew that the bicentennial was coming in 25 years and that the closer we got the more valuable Lewis and Clark items would become,” Wendlick said. “Then in 1996 Stephen Ambrose published his book “Undaunted Courage” to really spark interest in the expedition, followed in 1998 by Ken Burns’ PBS special. Some of my books doubled in value the year Ambrose published his book. He created a bull market for Lewis and Clark stuff.”

But by 1998 Wendlick was also deep in debt and highly stressed by his inability to stop buying everything Lewis and Clark. “I don’t know...I think I had about a thousand items by then,” he said. So he approached Lewis and Clark College and worked out the donation and sale of his entire collection to the school.

Now he says he is retired and truly living the American dream, relaxed and writing his book on his experience.

“It was fun and I’m honored to have collected and have made these materials available to students and scholars.”

Does he have tips for a would-be collector? He notes that when he began there was no internet. He just went to book collector shows, haunted estate sales and the shelves of book stores such as Powell's Books in Portland and received catalogs and phone calls from rare book sellers who knew of his passion.

"Today, most people are just sitting at home and buying on the internet from websites such as ABE.com," he noted. "But I think it's more fun out beating the bushes for books. It's like a treasure hunt and I truly enjoyed the personal contact with the bookstore owners and exchanging stories. I miss that."

Does he still collect? "I have no regrets about giving up the collection but if I run across something I've never owned or heard of, I'll buy it." Wendlick said his copy of a 1795 Aaron Arrowsmith map of North America with additions to 1802, another copy of which was carried by the expedition, is on loan to the Missouri Historical Society for use in its huge Lewis and Clark exhibit. The exhibit was recently at the Oregon Historical Society's museum and is now headed to the Smithsonian. When it closes there, the thousands of items will be returned to their collector owners or other museums. Wendlick will get his map back.

"Selling my collection has definitely not made me wealthy, although it got me out of debt," said Wendlick. "But," says Wendlick, who has spent many hours at the Lewis and Clark College reading books formerly his and who says he is only one of five people with an open admission to the college's rare book room, "I became rich in knowledge and through the opportunity to share this with so many people."

Tamástslikt Cultural Institute is located at Wildhorse Resort & Casino, 10 minutes east of Pendleton. From Interstate 84 take exit 216 and follow the signs five minutes to Wildhorse Resort and the Institute. Coming from the north, take the Mission exit from Highway 11 just northeast of Pendleton and follow the signs for about ten minutes to the Wildhorse Resort and the Institute. Tamástslikt is open 7 days a week from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. In addition to exhibits telling the story of the three Tribes' history and culture, there is also a Museum Store and the Kinship Café.

For more information: 541-966-9748 or [www.tamastlikt.com](http://www.tamastlikt.com). Direct dial the museum store at tollfree 1-866-282-2022. Tamástslikt is owned and operated by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation

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