

# TOM LAIDLAW, LIVING HISTORY ACTOR

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## Biography

**Tom Laidlaw** holds a BS in Theatre Arts from Portland State University, where he acted in many productions. He was also lighting and sound designer for Sylvia's Class Act Dinner Theatre for more than two years, as well as acting in many productions of Vancouver's Blue Parrot Theatre. Lately, His love of history and many treks on the Oregon and other Historic Trails have led him to use his acting skills for Historical Interpretation. His programs have delighted and informed thousands.

**FOR** the last seven years Tom has been a volunteer blacksmith and interpreter at Fort Vancouver, WA, where he developed the character of William Cannon, first blacksmith, millwright, and **American** at the British fur trading post. The fort was HQ of the Columbia Department of the Hudson's Bay Company from 1825 to 1845. William Cannon's life was involved with so much of United States History that Tom can adapt a basic script to almost any area of the route of Westward Expansion from Cowpens to Champoeg. He also regularly portrays Peter Skene Ogden at Fort Vancouver during special occasions and giving tours. In Oregon City he portrays Dr. John McLoughlin in a one-act play "The Oregon Question" at the Museum of the Oregon Territory. Additional programs include Columbia River Exploration, Lewis and Clark, Oregon Missionaries, Mountain Man Stories and Tall Tales. Since these are all part of the Pacific Northwest story, they can be expanded, contracted, and combined in many programs

**HIS** research is excellent, involving not only library research, but re-tracing the footsteps of the characters he portrays and talks about. And that is a wide expanse, from King's Mountain South Carolina to Fort Mackinac, across the mountains to the mouth of the Columbia River, to Fort Vancouver, to Champoeg. His lively, authoritative presentations have been enjoyed by thousand of children and adults at many schools and civic and historical organizations, such as: Daughters of the American Revolution, Sons of the American Revolution, Fort Vancouver, Fort Stevens State Park, Champoeg State Park, Milo McIver State Park, Alton Collins Retreat Center, Ocean Park Retreat Center, Elderhostel West, Southern Oregon University Elderhostel.

**FOR** the last three years Tom has been instructor for Elderhostel's long distance tour "**A New Nation's Journey West**" ([tomlaidlaw.com/elderhostel](http://tomlaidlaw.com/elderhostel)). This is an 18 day bus trip from St. Charles, MO to Astoria, OR following Lewis and Clark. He does one complete trip each year and is step-on interpreter at the end of the trail from Skamakowa, WA to Astoria, OR for all twelve trips. He has been instructor on more than 40 Elderhostel programs with various NW History presentations.

**Tom** is a member of the Northwest Chapter of the **Oregon - California Trails Association (OCTA)**, and regularly participates in historical hikes, seminars, and trail - tours. As webmaster, he has developed not only the [NWCTA \(nwocta.com\)](http://nwocta.com) chapter website but the National [OCTA's Online Bookstore](#), where you can purchase books online to enhance your historical knowledge.

**He** is also a member of the Washington Chapter of the **Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation (LCTHF)**, where he serves as webmaster of [wa-lcthf.org](http://wa-lcthf.org). With other members he is often found at historical seminars or "on the ground", conducting personal research into the route of Lewis and Clark. He has traveled much of the Lewis and Clark Trail carrying his own 15 star, 15 stripe flag and flying it where the Corps of Discovery flew theirs.