



Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity

Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor / Jack Lavin, Director

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ILLINOIS PAYS HOMAGE TO LEWIS AND CLARK

Commemoration marks 200th anniversary of famed three-year exploration that began in Southwest Illinois

CHICAGO - Governor Rod R. Blagojevich acknowledged the significance of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Commemoration that begins today in Southwest Illinois. "Illinois is rich in heritage and history, and we are proud to celebrate the 200th anniversary of Lewis and Clark and their famed expedition that began right here in Illinois."

Lewis and Clark's Corps of Discovery expedition of 1803-1806 is among the most significant explorations of unknown territory in the history of the United States. To commemorate this auspicious occasion, Illinois will play host to a variety of events and activities in the southwest region of the state.

The Lewis and Clark National Signature Event will be held this week, May 13-16, in Hartford. Illinois is the proud host of the event, *Expedition Departure: Camp River*

DuBois, one of fifteen (15) Signature Events awarded by the National Bicentennial Council that will be celebrated throughout the country during 2003-2006.

In conjunction with the National Signature Event, the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Festival will also be held May 13-16 in Hartford. The four-day public festival will feature educational programming, heritage displays and period entertainment, complete with tours of the adjacent Lewis and Clark Visitor Center and Camp River DuBois replica. An estimated 30,000 visitors per day will experience the festival.

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Tourism (DCEO/IBOT) has supported the commemoration through nearly \$1.3 million in grants. Projects include support for the architectural design and construction of the Hartford Observation Tower; funding for bicentennial and signature event activities; funding of the Lewis and Clark Commission and more. DCEO/IBOT has also promoted the events and the state's Lewis and Clark sites through a variety of marketing efforts including a two-page feature article in the *Illinois Travel Guide*, a feature article in the summer edition of the award-winning seasonal travel magazine, *Illinois NOW!*, and an advertorial in *Midwest Living* magazine.

DCEO/IBOT also supported the creation of a mobile interpretive center to commemorate Lewis and Clark's time in Illinois. The center, a recreational vehicle specially outfitted as a traveling exhibit, has traveled Illinois and surrounding states, stopping at museums, schools, fairgrounds and other special event sites, and has returned to Hartford for the signature event. The mobile center's theme, "Confluence of Cultures," focuses on the multicultural aspect of the Lewis and Clark experience. Emphasis is also on Illinois history with exhibits, artifacts, audio-visual presentations, and many other fascinating displays.

"With 21 known sites within the southern part of the state, Illinois is the place to discover Lewis and Clark," said Jan Kostner, deputy director of DCEO/IBOT. "We are honored

to play such an important part of this national commemoration, and look forward to hosting visitors to our many sites for years to come.”

Background: Lewis & Clark in Illinois

On November 11, 1803, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark took the first steps toward their famed expedition when they crossed the Ohio River from Kentucky into the territory that is now part of Illinois. They came with President Thomas Jefferson’s vision of a transcontinental water route to the Pacific Ocean, as well as with federal dollars and credit for obtaining supplies, soldiers and political favors that would help them through their journey.

Illinois is considered the launching pad for the journey. In his detailed journal, Lewis recorded that Camp River DuBois, near present-day Hartford, was “to be considered the point of departure” for the journey west.

The expedition lasted nearly 2.5 years, forging a trail through 11 future states. The journey was one of the most documented adventures in history, and its legacy was to open the American West to trade and settlement, leading to America's growth as a nation.

The trip could not have succeeded without the extensive preparation the men made while in Illinois. In all, they spent 181 days here, making it the second longest amount of time they spent anywhere in their travels. It was in Illinois where Lewis and Clark acquired supplies and information, and recruited and trained about three dozen men, known as the Corps of Discovery team.

Commemorating Illinois’ role in the expedition is the new 14,000-square-foot Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center in Hartford, located at National Heritage Trail Site #1. Situated on 60 acres with access to regional bike trails, the center documents the time the corps spent in Illinois preparing for its journey. The highlight of the museum is an exact-scale,

55-foot replica of the wooden keelboat used on the journey. It is displayed with full mast and sail, and includes cutaway sections that show how the boat's interior space was used.

A reconstructed site of Camp River DuBois opened in December, and features five log cabins representing one of three fortresses the men built during the expedition. Complete with costumed interpreters and period activities, the site allows visitors to experience military life as it was during the winter of 1803-1804, when Lewis and Clark prepared their team.

For more information about Lewis and Clark sites throughout Illinois, call 800-2CONNECT or visit **www.enjoyillinois.com** or contact the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Commission at 800-224-2970 or **www.lewisandclarkillinois.org**.

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