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Point of Departure Celebration to mark 218 years since Lewis and Clark Expedition set out from Camp River Dubois

HARTFORD – The Lewis and Clark State Historic Site will celebrate the 218th anniversary of the start of the Lewis and Clark Expedition with the Point of Departure Celebration May 7 and 8.

Visitors will have an opportunity to interact with military demonstrations, historic artisans and more at this free event. Hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. both days.

Military reenactors will portray soldiers of the Lewis and Clark Expedition's Corps of Discovery. The War of 1812 American 2nd Regiment Artillery will discuss the war in which many Lewis and Clark Expedition members would serve, while demonstrating black powder muskets and artillery. Volunteers will interpret the "White Pirogue," a replica of the only boat to complete the entire round trip on the Missouri River with the Corps of Discovery.

The reconstructed settler's cabin will be busy with demonstrations offering a glimpse into frontier family life. Historic artisans will exhibit skills including candle making, leatherworking, cooking, woodworking, carpentry, basketmaking, gunsmithing, lace making, taxidermy, spinning and more. Visitors can chat with a frontier doctor displaying his collection of medical tools. Experts will discuss rocks, minerals and animals catalogued by explorers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark.

The Interpretive Center Theater will host scheduled talks throughout the weekend. Historian Jeffrey Edison will discuss the role of slavery in early Illinois and York's role in the Expedition. Barb Miner will discuss fiber arts and period clothing. The Treehouse Wildlife Center will provide opportunities to see animals like the ones Lewis and Clark observed. Hazel the Western Hognose Snake and various birds will be highlighted at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. May 8.

The term "Point of Departure" comes from Capt. Lewis himself. His journal from May 14, 1804, reads: "The mouth of the River Dubois is to be considered as the point of departure." As the Expedition pulled out of what is now Wood River Creek on that spring day, they began a journey that would forever change the face of the United States.

Point of Departure Weekend sponsors include Phillips 66, the Lewis and Clark Society of America, the Village of Hartford, and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

Lewis and Clark State Historic Site is located in Hartford. The Interpretive Center and reconstructed Camp River Dubois reveal the important role that Illinois played in the Corps of Discovery's preparations as they wintered from December 1803 to May 1804.

The site is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily during the summer. Lewis and Clark State Historic Site is administered by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and supported by the Lewis and Clark Society of America.

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