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Annual Fort Massac Encampment is Oct. 16-17

Popular Festival at Fort Massac State Park Provides Sample of Colonial Times

METROPOLIS, IL - One of southern Illinois' most popular fall festivals – the annual Fort Massac Encampment – will be held at Fort Massac State Park in Metropolis on Oct. 16-17.

“The encampment at Fort Massac is a great opportunity for families and history buffs to step back in time and get a feel for what life might have been like on the Ohio River bluff in Colonial times,” said Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Director Marc Miller. “For music, food, period costumes, craft demonstrations and family fun, Fort Massac in mid October is a popular destination.”

The Fort Massac Encampment is hosted by the IDNR with support from the City of Metropolis, the Friends of Fort Massac, and local sponsors. The event provides visitors with a chance to experience what life was like at Fort Massac during the 18th and early 19th centuries. The site served as a military outpost along the Ohio River for personnel from France, Britain, and the early years of the United States from 1757 to 1814.

Event times are 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. on Sat., Oct. 16 and 10 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. on Sun., Oct. 17.

The encampment is famous for its mock military battles and tactical demonstrations performed by re-enactors on the Fort Massac grounds both Saturday and Sunday. Each day's activities close with a military retreat ceremony. More than 500 military re-enactors and other participants wearing period clothing recalling 18th and 19th century dress present the roles of explorers, traders, settlers and soldiers on the early Illinois frontier.

Musicians perform with period instruments, and activities include fife and drum corps, games, storytellers and puppet shows, along with period craft makers demonstrating blacksmithing, candle-making, weaving, and other skills. A children's area at the fort features hands-on activities for youth.

Admission to the encampment festival is free and parking is provided at the Old Fairgrounds adjacent to the park. Tram service will be provided and is accessible to visitors with disabilities. Fort Massac State Park is closed to public vehicle traffic during festival hours. The Fort Massac boat ramp area will be closed from Friday afternoon, Oct. 15 through the end of the festival on Sun., Oct. 17.

Historic Fort Massac was reconstructed and reopened to the public in 2003 to more accurately reflect the construction in 1802 of an American military outpost at the site. Fort Massac State Park opened as Illinois' first state park in 1908, and is located on the Ohio River at 1308 East Fifth Street in Metropolis. For more information about the encampment and the park, contact the site office at 618/524-4712.