

Visit Lewis and Clark State Historic Site May 11-12 for Point of Departure Commemoration

by Benjamin Pollard
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HARTFORD – The Lewis and Clark State Historic Site will commemorate the 220th anniversary of the start of the Lewis and Clark Expedition with the annual Point of Departure Commemoration on May 11 and 12.

Visitors can interact with military demonstrators, historic artisans, and hands-on displays at this free event, which takes place 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. both days.

Artisans will exhibit historic skills including candle making, leatherworking, tanning, gunsmithing, spinning, pottery, woodworking and more. The event offers an opportunity

for visitors to experience how things were made in the past and what life in the Illinois Country was like. Frontier medicine of the early 19th century will be explored with a display of medical instruments and common treatments.

Military reenactors will portray soldiers of the Lewis and Clark Expedition's Corps of Discovery. Interpreting the "White Pirogue" replica of the Expedition's boat, these reenactors will reveal the grueling task of navigating against the Missouri River. The War of 1812 American 2nd Regiment Artillery will discuss the war in which many Lewis and Clark Expedition members served while demonstrating black powder muskets and firing artillery. Ed Dulaney will share the British experience in the region and demonstrate what soldiering was like while on campaign.

Historian Jeffrey Edison, a museum educator with St. Louis County Parks, will share York's role in the Expedition as an enslaved servant to Captain William Clark. This often-overlooked member of the journey played an important role in its success. Other site staff and volunteers will discuss the Washer Woman at Camp River Dubois. As a camp follower, this unnamed woman supported the soldiers of the camp and helped to provide for herself and her family.

A special visitor to the festivities will be a reenactor of Thomas Jefferson, the third president of the United States. Jefferson completed the Louisiana Purchase and is considered the architect of the trans-continental mission.

Reenactor Kurt Smith of Colonial Williamsburg has studied the thousands of Jefferson journal entries, letters, and documents, and he uses his extensive knowledge to bring the president to life. Smith will share highlights of Jefferson's life with visitors in the interpretive center theater during programs at 10:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. He will interact with the audience and be available to meet and talk throughout the day. This is a great opportunity to ask a past president about his life and times.

Jefferson's special visit is sponsored by the Lewis and Clark Society of America. Point of Departure Weekend sponsors include Phillips 66, Lewis and Clark Society of America, the Village of Hartford, and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

The Lewis and Clark State Historic Site is at 1 Lewis and Clark Trail in Hartford in Madison County. The Interpretive Center and reconstructed Camp River Dubois reveal the important role Illinois played in the Corps of Discovery's preparations as they wintered from December 1803 to May 1804. The site is open daily during the summer from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The site is managed by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and supported by the Lewis and Clark Society of America.