

# The Point of Departure Weekend at Lewis & Clark Site Celebrates 215th Anniversary of Expedition

by Dan Brannan, Content Director  
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HARTFORD - The Lewis & Clark State Historic Site has another important date to celebrate the weekend of May 11-12 in Hartford.

The Point of Departure Weekend at Lewis & Clark State Historic Site celebrates the beginning of the Lewis & Clark Expedition on May 14, 1804. This year is the 215th Anniversary and fall on the weekend of May 11-12, 2019. The event is free and runs from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. both days.

“Our event provides numerous reenactors and historic artisans that demonstrate what life was like for soldiers and early Illinois settlers in 1804,” Lewis & Clark State Historic Site Interpretive Coordinator Ben Pollard said. “We will have soldiers representing the Lewis & Clark Expedition, as well as an American Artillery Unit from the War of 1812 and a colonial British Regiment of Foot. They will be demonstrating black powder muskets and artillery.”

Historic artisans will also be demonstrating their work in coopering, woodworking, spinning, basket making, leather working, lace making, and more, Pollard said. Visitors will even get a chance to try candle making with beeswax.

Other demonstrators will discuss the tools of the Lewis & Clark Expedition, medicine in the early 19th Century, and plants, animals, and minerals that the Expedition found along their travels.

Lewis & Clark wintered over in Illinois during the 1803-1804 winter. Their five months of preparation and training at Camp River Dubois played a major role in creating such a successful expedition. When it was finally time to depart on May 14, 1804, Meriwether Lewis wrote in his journal, “The mouth of the River Dubois is to be considered as the point of departure.”

On May 10, an Education Day will be held for area schools. Alton, Nashville, Collinsville are some of the schools already known that will participate with others already committed.

“The museum will show the breakdown of time when Lewis and Clark prepared for the expedition across Louisiana Territory,” Pollard said. “This the last place to buy supplies, pick a permanent roster for the corps discovery expedition. There will be re-enactors with about 30 stations that show the living history as soldiers like Lewis and Clark were living. Included will be weapons, one person shows how they started fires and more.”

Muskets and rifles of the time and be demonstrated and should be one of the more popular parts of the education program, Pollard said. Even examples of medicine and plants of the Lewis and Clark time will be available in the interpretative center lobby.

“I am incredibly excited our biggest event of the year commemorating the start of the Lewis and Clark Expedition with dozens of living actors to share what life was like back



then,” Pollard said. “This is the best opportunity people can get for a hands-on feel of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.”

The Lewis and Clark State Historic Site opened in 2003 and has a phenomenal response from visitors throughout the U.S. and beyond in its 16-year existence.

Lewis & Clark State Historic Site is run by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. The site is supported by the Lewis & Clark Society of America and Phillips 66.

Lewis and Clark set out on Camp River Dubois on May 14, 1804. Capt. Lewis wrote in his journal the mouth of the River Dubois is to be considered the point of departure for the expedition into the new Louisiana Territory.

“With the Louisiana Purchase, it more than doubled the U.S. land mass,” Pollard said. “This was largely unexplored and there were a large number of American Indian tribes, plants, and animals to see. Jefferson sent them with mapping, meeting American Indians and scientific goals. He wanted them to document plants and animals in the journals. There were well over 300 plants and animals documented on their trip. It was an exciting exploration and scientific journey and the beginning of mapping for the entire western half of the U.S.

"If Louis and Clark hadn't been successful, I don't know how quickly we would have added in the whole new section of the U.S."

# Mark Your Calendars!

Lewis & Clark  
State Historic Site  
**Departure Event**  
May 11 & 12, 2019



Celebrate the departure of the Corps of  
Discovery with reenactors, historic  
artists, and demonstrations.

For more information, contact the Lewis & Clark State Historic Site at (618) 251-5811  
or click on the link below:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/2803802556312748/>

