



Village Of Prairie Du Rocher Celebrates Rare Milestone

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PRAIRIE DU ROCHER, IL – Officials with the Prairie du Rocher Chamber of Commerce and Community Foundation are excited to announce plans for their 300th birthday celebration.

It is a two-day gathering that will take place July 9th and 10th at the Historic Brickey Lot on Market Street. This event kicks off on Saturday at 1:00 PM and the second day of action picks up again on Sunday at noon.

The birthday celebration is open to all ages and will have a children's area, a quilt show, 50/50 raffles, vendor and craft fair, a phantom funeral reenactment, and much more. Live music begins Saturday with music from Creole Stomp from 2-3:30, Mandy Heinemann from 4-5:30 PM, and Backwoods from 6-8 PM. The headliner on Saturday is the legendary classic rock band Head East, which will take the stage at 8:30 PM. Following their performance, the band will sign autographs. More live entertainment is

set for Sunday, with Dennis Stroughmatt et L'Esprit Creole playing from 12:30-2 PM. Afterward the classic rock band the Saloonatics will take the stage from 2:30-4:30 PM. Be sure to stick around to hear Dixie Express take the stage at 5:00 PM. After Dixie Express, community leaders will dedicate a time capsule. For more information on Prairie du Rocher's 300th Birthday Celebration, visit www.pdr300.com.

Prairie du Rocher History

Nestled in the American Bottoms of the Mississippi River, the village of Prairie du Rocher began to take shape 300 years ago in 1722 and was once known to be the western boundary of the United States. As the French began construction of Fort De Chartres in 1720, they built it close to the Mississippi River for military protection purposes. Two years later in 1722, the village of Prairie du Rocher (translated as "Prairie by the Rock") was officially founded and comprised mainly of French-Canadian citizens. With the Mississippi River on one side of the village and the rich limestone bluffs on the other, Prairie du Rocher along with its sister city, Saint Genevieve (which came into existence in 1740, from the migration of residents of Prairie du Rocher further west across the river) together became the center of trade and government in the area during the French Colonial period. To this day, Prairie du Rocher remains one of the oldest original French villages in America still in existence.

The long history of Prairie du Rocher is something the residents take very seriously, and are very proud of, with the French Colonial District that it is a part of, being placed on the National Register of Historic Places many years ago. In many ways, it's difficult to understand the significance of a village surviving for 300 years, without some other historic markers to put it into perspective. To truly understand, one must consider the fact that the United States itself was not founded until over 50 years later than Prairie du Rocher's beginning (a lifetime measurement for that timeframe), and the state of Illinois itself did not exist until 1818, almost 100 years after the village was settled and prospering within its borders. Very few communities in the United States have reached the age of 300 continuous years, regardless of their size. This fact emphasizes that this milestone is quite an accomplishment for a tiny little French village and a fact that makes this unique little place extremely important in its historical significance.

This fact has not been lost on leaders and policymakers, and efforts are currently in place to recognize the National significance of Prairie du Rocher and the French Colonial Historic District by elevating the area to National Park status. It is hoped that this goal will be achieved during the Tri-Centennial year of 2022- marking the achievement as something that will never be forgotten, and always be cherished by the area.

The legacy of Prairie du Rocher's first 300 years will be celebrated throughout 2022 with an assortment of activities being planned throughout the year. Events ranging from Gala Balls to celebrity musical guests and celebrations of all kinds are being prepared, along with a vast array of memorabilia that will be available for purchase commemorating the Tri-Centennial event throughout the year.

Prairie du Rocher is very proud to share its story with the world and looks forward to continuing its journey into its next 300 years.