



Springfield State Historic Sites Celebrate Black History Month With History Hikes, Walking Tours, And Lunch-And-Learn Programs

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SPRINGFIELD – State historic sites in Springfield will present a variety of engaging history hikes, walking tours and lunchtime programs to commemorate Black History Month.

Individuals and groups are encouraged to sign up in advance on Eventbrite for educational experiences that will explore important historic events and pathbreaking individuals.

Participants who register on Eventbrite and attend a program will receive a limited-production Black History Month “Everyone Belongs in History” vinyl sticker. A limited quantity of the stickers will also be available during February while supplies last at the Lincoln Tomb, Dana-Thomas House, Vachel Lindsay Home, Springfield Visitor Center, Lincoln Home National Historic Site, and the Illinois State Museum.

“The Department of Natural Resources is excited celebrate the achievements of Black Americans through these programs,” said IDNR Director Natalie Phelps Finnie. “We appreciate Visit Springfield, the Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area and the Springfield and Central Illinois African American History Museum for collaborating with IDNR.”

Thursday, Feb. 15: Lunch and Learn – The Underground Railroad in Springfield

Join team members from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources’ state historic sites and the Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area at the Lincoln-Herndon Law Office building, Sixth and Adams streets, for a lunchtime discussion about the Underground Railroad. The event begins at noon. [Register online](#).

Speakers will share recent research about legal hearings related to the Underground Railroad that were held in the Illinois Supreme Court in what is now known as the Old State Capitol. Also, new podcast resources and plans for future programming will be discussed. Guests are welcome to bring a lunch to enjoy during the discussion.

The Old State Capitol joined the National Park Service’s Network to Freedom in 2022 to promote awareness and education of historic sites with connections to the Underground Railroad.

Monday, Feb. 19: Lunch and Learn – The Campaign Speeches of Barack Obama

Barack Obama delivered two campaign speeches at the Old State Capitol in his historic run for the presidency, first on Feb. 10, 2007, to announce his candidacy and then on August 23, 2008, to announce Senator Joe Biden as his running mate.

Join IDNR staff members who worked behind the scenes during both of Barack Obama’s campaign speeches to discuss these historic events that took place on the lawn of the Old State Capitol. A lectern used during the second announcement will be on display.

The event begins at noon at the Lincoln-Herndon Law Office building. [Register online](#). Guests are welcome to bring a lunch to enjoy while discussing these historic campaign

announcements, and those who attended these historic events are welcome to share their memories. A marker to both of President Obama's campaign speeches is located on the southeast corner of the Old State Capitol lawn.

Saturday, Feb. 24: Black History Hikes

On Saturday, Feb. 24, Springfield State Historic Sites will partner with the Springfield and Central Illinois African American History Museum to offer a history hike in Oak Ridge Cemetery. The 90-minute hike will begin at 11 a.m. at the museum, 1440 Monument Ave. A second opportunity to hike the same route will be offered at 2:30 p.m.

This 90-minute walk through Oak Ridge Cemetery focuses on the history of Springfield's Black community, discussing great tragedies as well as stories of success in the face of severe adversity and prejudice. Water and hiking shoes recommended. Hot cocoa will be available to guests following the hike inside the Springfield and Central Illinois African American History Museum, where exhibits will be open for viewing. [Register online.](#)

"AAHM is honored to partner with state historic sites as we look to provide continual educational opportunities regarding Black History and the Springfield and Central Illinois African American History Museum," said Nalo Mitchell, executive director of the museum. "We know Black History is American History, and we want to honor and pay our respects to those who have sacrificed so much as we commemorate Black History Month."

Saturday, Feb 24: Race Riot Walking Tour

IDNR staff will offer a Downtown Race Riot Walking Tour, beginning and ending in the Visitor Center inside the Lincoln Herndon law Office (Sixth and Adams). Tours begin at 11:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. [Register online.](#)

Participants will walk downtown Springfield streets with a state historic sites team member and learn about a summer weekend in 1908 when violent mobs terrorized Springfield's African American citizens. We will share stories not only of hatred and devastation but of courage and resilience in the face of concerted attack. The 1.5-mile walking tour takes a little over one hour. Hot cocoa will be available to guests following the hike inside the visitor center.

Thursday, Feb. 29: Lunch and Learn – Langston Hughes

Join IDNR state historic sites team members at the Lincoln-Herndon Law Office building at Sixth and Adams streets for a lunchtime discussion about Langston Hughes. [Register online.](#)

The discussion will outline important yet little-known connections between Hughes and the Lindsay family. Using historic letters of the Vachel Lindsay Association and other primary sources, staff members have pieced together interesting details about the friendship between Hughes and Lindsay. Poems by Hughes will be read during the program. The program begins at noon. Guests are invited to bring their lunch to enjoy during the discussion.