

# **Celebrating the History of Grafton - 175th Anniversary Celebration Planned for September 17 & 18**

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(Grafton, IL – August 16, 2011) Flowing with the rise and fall of the waters of the mighty Mississippi River, the City of Grafton has endured for 175 years. Founded in 1836, Grafton will commemorate its 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on Saturday & Sunday, September 17 & 18, 2011 with the “175 Years on the River” celebration. A variety of events and activities will be scheduled throughout the town during both days of the festival.

There are moments in time that have defined the city of Grafton and shaped into the community that it is today, with a rich river heritage and spirit to persevere. In 1836, James Mason founded Grafton with the vision of a bustling river town packed with manufacturing companies and commerce. The ferry crossing the Illinois and

Mississippi rivers opened the doors of opportunity for river commerce and transporting goods between Illinois and Missouri. The limestone bluffs towering above the town became a vital resource for quarrying limestone, which was used in buildings throughout the town and structures such as the St. Louis Eads Bridge. The Boatworks, which still stands on the riverfront, became important for the construction of boats used all along the rivers, and it also played an important role in the construction of water vessels for World War I, World War II, Korean War and Vietnam War.

As the industry and commerce faded on the riverfront, the construction of the Great River Road in 1965 marked a new beginning for Grafton. Today, the Great River Road, also known as the Meeting of the Great Rivers National Scenic Byway, runs through town as a main thoroughfare for this thriving tourist town.

The “175 Years on the Rivers” celebration, held on Saturday & Sunday, September 17 & 18, 2011 will include a number of family-friendly activities. The festivities begin on Saturday with a re-enactment of the “Opening of the River Road” at 9 a.m. followed by a “Life on the Rivers” land parade at 9:30 a.m. and ball diamond dedication at 10:30 a. m. Following the dedication, residents and visitors will be encouraged to bring their ball gloves, pick teams and enjoy just playing ball for the afternoon.

At noon on Saturday, at Shafers Wharf, a memorial ceremony will be hosted by the Department of Veterans Affairs to honor POWs and MIAs. Following the ceremony, there will be a “Forget-Me-Not” wreath laying memorial service and patriotic boat parade beginning at 1 p.m.

Festivities on Saturday will continue with a Grafton School Alumni Reunion and School Tour at the Grafton Elementary School from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Docents from the Alton Little Theater will perform Living History Presentations at 2 p.m. and again at 4 p. m. Bingo will take place at St. Patrick’s Church Hall, located at 11 N. Edwards St., from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. All bingo proceeds will benefit the Grafton Needy Children’s Christmas Program. St. Patrick’s will also be the location of Gabbie’s Children Show from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. The day will come to a close with fireworks at 8 p.m. on the riverfront.

The festival continues on Sunday with an ecumenical service to be held at 9 a.m. at Shafers Wharf on the riverfront. A Car Show and Motorcycle Show will take place between the Marina and Piasa Winery beginning at 1 p.m. From 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., a Quarter Auction will be held at St. Patrick’s Church as a fundraiser for the Grafton Food Pantry. Please bring a nonperishable food item.

During both days of the festival, the main festival grounds will be located at Grove Memorial Park. Historic displays and walking tour maps will be available at this

site. The Free Traders of Piasa Territory will have a Rendezvous Camp and craftsmen east of the public boat ramp. A “Dog Fetch and Fish” interactive demonstration will take place both days on the riverfront at noon and again at 2:30 p.m. The Kid’s Corner and food booths will be located at St. Patrick’s Catholic Church. Merchandise vendors will be displaying their wares on W. Main St., between Edwards St. and Canal St.

The festival hours are Saturday from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m., and Sunday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Festival admission is free. Shuttle transportation to parking and event activities will run throughout the day. Shuttle fees are \$1 for a one way ride, \$5 for all day and \$15 for families.

For more details, go to [www.EnjoyGrafton.com](http://www.EnjoyGrafton.com) or call the Grafton Visitor Center at (618) 786-7000.