

## History is Child's Play

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**HARTFORD** - More than 800 fourth graders will experience the greatest journey of exploration in American history during the sixth annual Education Day scheduled for Friday, May 13 at Lewis and Clark State Historic Site in Hartford, Illinois. The general public can enjoy the same experience during the annual Point of Departure event Saturday and Sunday, May 14 – 15.

From 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on May 13, students from Beckemeyer Elementary of Beckemeyer, Illinois; Germantown Elementary of Germantown, Illinois; Holy Cross Lutheran of Collinsville, Illinois; Pocahontas Grade School of Pocahontas, Illinois; Vandalia Elementary of Vandalia, Illinois; J.E. Hinchcliffe of O'Fallon, Illinois; and Jana Elementary of Florissant, Missouri will learn first hand about the Lewis and Clark Expedition by experiencing how the men prepared for their journey. Students will learn to fold a flag, feel animal hides, start a fire with flint and steel, make rope, and learn about one of the Expedition's boats. They will visit a woodworker and help to saw logs into planks. They will try their hand at spinning, sewing, blacksmithing, flax work, fiber dyeing, making brooms, and watching buckets being made. Kids can pet Seaman, the Expedition's dog; carry water in buckets with a yoke; march and drill military-style; and make a trade bead necklace or a candle to take home.

The ninth annual "Point of Departure" event will be held Saturday and Sunday, May 14 and 15. The event commemorates the May 14, 1804 beginning of the Lewis and Clark Expedition from a point near the current historic site. Outside activities for both days will be held from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the reconstructed Camp River Dubois with re-enactors portraying expedition members by performing marching drills, engaging in shooting demonstrations and doing manual labor. A visit to the Settler's Cabin will give you a glimpse of settler life in the American Bottoms. Visitors may see period artisans demonstrating candlemaking, cooking, blacksmithing, spinning, weaving, natural wool dyeing, coopering, woodworking, gunsmithing, broom making, basket making, woodworking, and carpentry. An 18<sup>th</sup> century doctor will set up his practice, and visitors may see a rocks and minerals display. The white pirogue (an Expedition boat) may also be seen. Jim Duncan and Ken Porter will have Lewis and Clark artifacts on display inside the Interpretive Center.

The St. Louis Zoo will feature activities with live animals on Saturday, May 14 at 1 p.m. in the Interpretive Center theater. The World Bird Sanctuary will offer live bird performances at 1 and 3 p.m. Sunday, May 15 in the Interpretive Center theater.

Several authors will sign books in the Interpretive Center both days. They include: John Dunphy of Alton, *Lewis and Clark's Illinois Volunteers* and *It Happened at River Bend*; Cindy Reinhardt of

Edwardsville, *Leclaire*; Cheryl Eichar-Jett of Edwardsville, *Alton – Images of America Series* and *Edwardsville – Images of America Series*; David Alan Badger of Havana, *Recipes from the Meeting of the Rivers Scenic Byway*; Tim Raymer of Hartford, *Lewis and Clark: of Departure*; and Bill Wilson of Greenville will have books on early Illinois pioneer forts he has written.

Event sponsors include: The Bank of Edwardsville, Conoco Phillips, Lewis & Clark Society of America, National Park Service, Recognition Services, the Village of Hartford, and the St. Louis Cardinals.

William Clark and his men arrived at what would become Camp River Dubois on December 12, 1803. The location was very close to the confluence of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers, the route chosen for the expedition, and most importantly, the location was in United States territory on the east side of the Mississippi River. Construction of Camp River Dubois began immediately and by Christmas Eve 1803, the men were able to sleep indoors. While Clark oversaw the day-to-day operation of the

Camp, Meriwether Lewis was busy with official duties. In the spring the camp became a beehive of activity as final preparations were made. On April 1, 1804 Captains Lewis and Clark formally mustered into service the soldiers and other men who would take part in the expedition.

Lewis' field notes read "The mouth of the River Dubois is to be considered as the point of *departure*." The Expedition left on a rainy Monday afternoon, May 14, 1804 from Camp River Dubois at 4 p.m.

Lewis and Clark State Historic Site, administered by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, is located along Illinois Route 3 about three miles north of I-270. The site features a reconstructed Camp River Dubois as well as a museum that chronicles the Expedition's five-month preparation time in Illinois. It is open for free public tours.

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