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Jonesboro Dedicates Lincoln Douglas Debate Statues Mark 150th Anniversary

The community of Jonesboro, Illinois, today announced it is launching the 150th anniversary celebration of the Lincoln Douglas Debates in a time-honored manner, marking the milestone event with the dedication of new statues.

On the 4th of July, Jonesboro, best known as the site of the 3rd Lincoln Douglas Debate, will dedicate life-sized statues of Lincoln and Douglas, in what is now called Lincoln Memorial Park. The Jonesboro Debate Sesquicentennial Committee, through a grant from the Illinois Lincoln Bicentennial Commission, selected sculptor Tom Allen, of nearby Makanda, to prepare the statues, in part, because of his excellent rendition of Tecumseh at Glen O. Jones Lake. The dedication will take place at 10 AM with remarks from Hal Smith, Director of the Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area, Mary McCorvie, Forest Service Archeologist and Duane Hileman, co-chair of the Jonesboro Sesquicentennial Committee.

“Jonesboro makes a significant contribution to the Nation with the dedication of the Lincoln and Douglas statues, as they will serve to remind future generations of the courage of the self-taught lawyer from Illinois, who challenged one of the Nation’s great political leaders of the day, on the moral principal of equality for all men. The Illinois Lincoln Bicentennial Commission and the local Sesquicentennial committee are to be commended for their gift, at a time when the Congress has just established the Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area, and while the Country is preparing to celebrate the Lincoln Bicentennial next year,” according to Hal Smith, who will lead the new National Heritage Area named for President Lincoln.

“The statues will also serve as the centerpiece of your Lincoln Douglas Reunion Tour ’08 events set for September 12-14th, when Lincoln and Douglas, portrayed by actors, will return to Jonesboro, to reminisce about the Jonesboro debate and hold a present-day press conference to answer questions of the media and the public,” Smith added.

Activities begin on the 4th with a 7:30 breakfast being served for \$5.00 in the Masonic Hall just north of the Square. The Lincoln Douglas Information Center will be open until noon on the 4th and every Saturday, 10-2 through October. Free horse-drawn buggy rides to the park will be offered, or participants may prefer to “Walk Where Lincoln Walked” on footprints painted on the sidewalk the 1/3 mile walk to the park.

At 9 AM in the Lincoln Memorial Park, music will be provided by the bluegrass group “Poor Farm Road” from Southern Illinois and Kentucky. The National Forest Service will provide old-fashion games for children and authentic costumes from the Civil War era for photo opportunities.

A Civil War artillery piece (cannon) will be demonstrated by uniformed attendants with a 34-star U.S. Flag.

For more information about the Reunion Tour '08 events, visit:
www.lincolndouglasreunion.com , www.enjoyillinois.com or
www.lookingforlincoln.com.

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