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December 9, 2008

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## **“Looking for Lincoln” wayside exhibits unveiled in Bloomington**

### *Exhibits tell the Lincoln story in communities that are part of the new Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area*

*Bloomington*— This is one instance where officials hope tourism falls by the wayside – the wayside exhibit--that is.

“Today we dedicate two new wayside exhibits for Bloomington, where Mr. Lincoln enjoyed valued and treasured friendships, pursued his passion for politics, and practiced his legal profession. These friendships, along with numerous local events helped set the course and direction of his life and political career. This, the home site of Judge Davis and this magnificent home and treasure he left for future generations, help us to commemorate the special connection Lincoln had with McLean County. Your ancestors and Lincoln’s neighbors throughout central Illinois helped to shape Abraham Lincoln in his development as a man, a lawyer, a politician and a friend,” said Hal Smith, Director of the Looking for Lincoln Heritage Coalition during dedication ceremonies today.

“Some of Lincoln’s closest friends, Judge David Davis and Jesse Fell, called Bloomington-Normal home. They supported him politically and perhaps, unwittingly, helped to prepare him for some of the greatest challenges ever faced by an American President. Judge Davis was a trusted friend of both Abraham and Robert Lincoln, whom Davis supported like a surrogate father after the President’s assassination. These are stories visitors will enjoy when they visit this wonderful place” Smith added.

Over the last several months, the Looking for Lincoln Heritage Coalition has provided an additional 46 new wayside exhibits in 25 central Illinois communities. These 2 exhibits will join 10 others scheduled for Bloomington-Normal by next June, for a total of 12 new exhibits, creating a very inviting walking and driving tour through the community. The exhibits are a series of beautifully designed storyboards, complete with pictures, images and historical text that tell unique stories about Abraham Lincoln and his connection to the Illinois communities in the newly designated Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area. They are termed “wayside”

exhibits because they will be placed along streets and sidewalks to make them more accessible to visitors.

“The latest delivery of these wayside exhibits, including these unique to Bloomington, are part of the second wave this year of new Looking for Lincoln storyboards for central Illinois designed to enhance the visitor experience. By next summer, we plan to deliver a total of 210 of these exhibits to 50 communities to help them more vividly tell their own unique Lincoln story,” according to Smith.

Other communities receiving wayside exhibits recently, included: Bloomington, Carthage, Charleston, Clinton, Danville, Decatur, Elkhart, Fountain Green, Homer, Jacksonville, LaHarpe, Lerna, Macomb, Mahomet, Mattoon, Middletown, Monticello, Mt. Pulaski, Normal, Oakland, Petersburg, Pittsfield, Quincy, Rushville, Springfield, St. Joseph, Urbana, Vandalia and the Village of DeWitt.

The Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area, designated this year by Congress, is the only heritage area in America named for a U.S. President. It was designated to preserve, enhance and promote visitor experiences in the 42 counties in central Illinois where Lincoln lived for nearly 30 years. The Looking for Lincoln Heritage Coalition, which will manage the heritage area, is a consortium of Lincoln-related communities and sites whose purpose is to tell the stories about Lincoln that are unique to each site. The goal is to interpret and protect those sites while creating satisfying visitor experiences.

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