



*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*  
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## **“Looking for Lincoln” wayside exhibit unveiled in Athens**

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

*Athens*– This is one instance where officials hope tourism falls by the wayside – the wayside exhibit, that is.

“Today we dedicate this new wayside exhibit for Athens, where Mr. Lincoln visited friends, studied with borrowed books, picked up mail, practiced his legal profession and celebrated an event that may have changed the direction of his political career. Here is where the Long Nine, Lincoln and his 8 very tall friends, celebrated the victory to bring the capitol of Illinois to Springfield. Today, we commemorate the special connection Lincoln had with your community. Your ancestors and his neighbors throughout central Illinois, helped to shape Abraham Lincoln in his development as a man, a lawyer, a politician and a friend. Athens, along with the remainder of central Illinois, unwittingly helped to prepare him for some of the greatest challenges ever faced by an American President.” said Hal Smith, Director of the Looking for Lincoln Heritage Coalition, during the dedication ceremony today.

In a second round of deliveries over the last month, the Looking for Lincoln Heritage Coalition recently provided an additional 30 new wayside exhibits in 25 central Illinois communities. 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 this one unique to Beardstown, marks the second wave this summer of new Abraham Lincoln storyboards for central Illinois designed to enhance the visitor experience. By next summer, we plan to deliver a total of 220 of these exhibits to 47 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, Fountain Green, Homer, LaHarpe, Lerna, Macomb, Mahomet, Mattoon, Middletown, Monticello, Mt. Pulaski, Normal, Oakland, Petersburg, Pittsfield, Rushville, Springfield, St. Joseph, Urbana 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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