



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 20, 2008

Contact: Hal Smith 217-553-4443
or Nicky Stratton 217-622-4260

More “Looking for Lincoln” wayside exhibits coming to a central Illinois community near you

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

SPRINGFIELD – This is one instance where officials hope tourism falls by the wayside – the wayside exhibits, that is.

In a second round of deliveries over the last month, the Looking for Lincoln Heritage Coalition will provide an additional 30 new wayside exhibits in 25 central Illinois communities the week of August 25. 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 marks the second wave this summer of new Abraham Lincoln storyboards for central Illinois 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,” said Hal Smith, director of the Looking for Lincoln Heritage Coalition.

The communities receiving wayside exhibits the week of August 25, include: 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.

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Some communities will use the wayside exhibits to mark specific locations where events occurred. An additional round of exhibits is scheduled to be delivered in June 2009 that will focus on multiple installations in communities that are creating walking or driving tours. Visitors can stop to read and learn more about the significance of particular locations and their connections to Lincoln. The wayside exhibits and their stories will enhance the visitor experience for those celebrating the 2009 Lincoln Bicentennial.

Partial funding for the wayside exhibit project came from a Housing and Urban Development Grant obtained by U.S. Senator Richard Durbin. Additional funding was provided by each community.

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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