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“Looking for Lincoln” wayside exhibit unveiled at Mt. Pulaski Courthouse

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

Mt. Pulaski— 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 Mt. Pulaski, where Mr. Lincoln enjoyed valued and treasured friendships, pursued his passion for politics, and practiced his legal profession. This courthouse is one of only three courthouses that remain where Lincoln actually argued cases. The Mt. Pulaski Courthouse, this magnificent national treasure, has most generously been preserved for future generations by this community and the State of Illinois for 170 years. Your Logan County ancestors, a county Lincoln, himself, created in the Illinois legislature, 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 close friends, including the Lushbaugh’s and the Capps, called Mt. Pulaski home. They supported Lincoln politically and along with others from central Illinois, unwittingly, helped to prepare him for some of the greatest challenges ever faced by an American President. Judge Davis, a trusted friend of Abraham Lincoln and frequent visitor to Mt. Pulaski for circuit business, once wrote to complain to his wife about the dreadful conditions of the Mt. Pulaski House Hotel. Lincoln never complained but often enjoyed staying with friends to ease the difficulties of circuit travel in the 1800’s. Future visitors will enjoy learning from stories like these for years to come, when they visit this beautiful courthouse.” said Smith who was joined at the dedication by the Looking for Lincoln Board chairman and Mt. Pulaski resident, Tom Martin.

Over the last several months, the Looking for Lincoln Heritage Coalition has provided an additional 46 new wayside exhibits in 25 central Illinois communities. The new 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 central Illinois communities in the newly designated Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area. They are termed “wayside” exhibits because they are placed along streets and sidewalks to make them more accessible to visitors.

“The Mt. Pulaski wayside exhibits are part of this new series of Looking for Lincoln storyboards for central Illinois, designed to enhance the visitor experience. By this summer, the Heritage Area plans 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: 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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