

Lincoln Newsletter

A publication of the Old Lincoln Courtroom & Museum Commission
Beardstown, Illinois
Third Quarter 2009

Wayside exhibits dedicated

July 20, 2009 marked a culmination and a beginning. Like passing through school when the process of basic learning skills is completed, commencement toward a new chapter begins.

The same is true with the immense process of evolving the wayside exhibits, now standing in Beardstown, from the incubator to center stage.

Stop by the Old Lincoln Courtroom and pick up a map that will lead you on an historical journey of the seven sites where the wayside exhibits relate the story of Abraham Lincoln in Beardstown and Cass County. Read about Lincoln and the Blackhawk War, Lincoln as a lawyer and as a Candidate for the Congress and the U.S. Senate. Find out where he ate and slept, and read about the famous photo of Lincoln wearing the white suit.

“The Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area is richer with the addition of these wonderful stories of Lincoln’s many and early visits to Beardstown, his interest in improving the river, his military experience in the Blackhawk War, his legal work here in the Almanac Trial that was recorded with a famous photograph and finally, the stories of Lincoln the candidate and friend of the people of Beardstown.

“Preserving this history and finding compelling ways to present it to interested visitors, is the task of a National Heritage Area like ours. We are grateful to the people of Beardstown for bringing this history to light and for offering it to an interested public as they travel to learn of Lincoln’s travel throughout central Illinois,” said Hal Smith, director of the Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area, at the dedication in Beardstown.

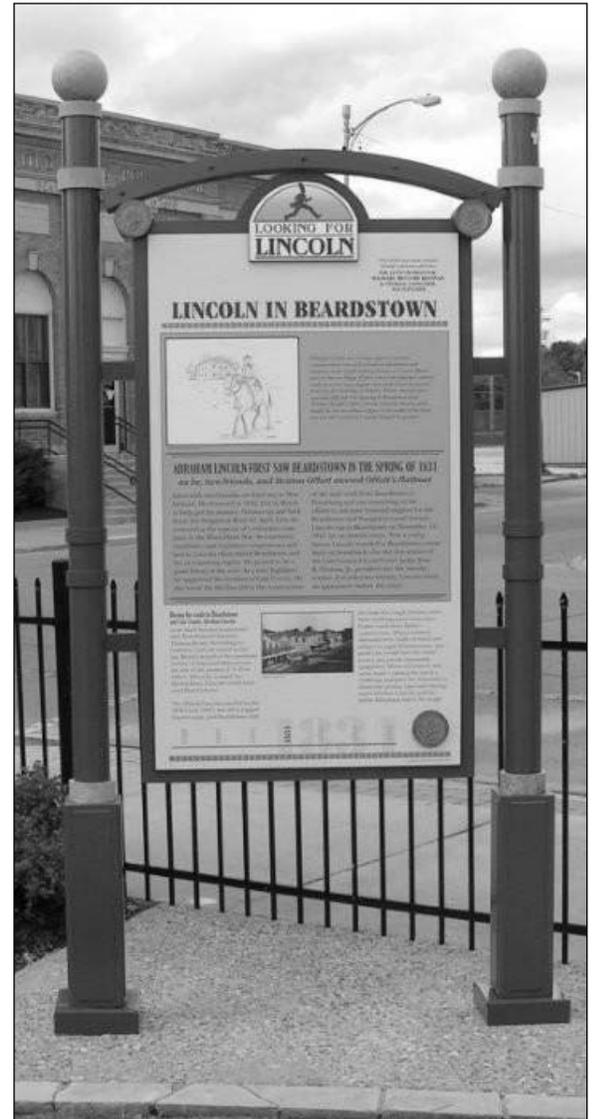
“Beardstown joins 50 communities that comprise the Looking for Lincoln

Story Trail, offering the public 210 wayside exhibits that describe Lincoln’s unique connection to their communities. These exhibits are being installed this summer and will be marketed to the public by the Looking for Lincoln Heritage Coalition, named by Congress last year to manage the Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area,” Smith added.

Smith also said: “The Story Trail is one way we can reach out to visitors across the globe to invite them to come to Central Illinois to learn more about the man who would become the most admired president in American history. In this Bicentennial year, we are seeing large numbers of visitors to Lincoln sites and we hope these wayside exhibits will encourage them to visit Beardstown and the many other communities in Western Illinois, where Lincoln lived, raised a family and ran for the highest office in the land where he changed the course of American history.”

Each story board has a rubbing medallion unique to the exhibit. Visitors can collect a rubbing from each site as a reminder of the stories of Abraham Lincoln and of Beardstown.

The Old Lincoln Courtroom & Museum Commission invites everyone to visit our historic community and bring your friends to “Look for Lincoln.”



This “Lincoln in Beardstown” wayside exhibit, which stands at the corner of Main and State streets, was the site of the July 20 dedication ceremony. Visitors then visited the other six wayside exhibits, returning to the courthouse for an informal reception. In addition to the historical stories, each wayside features a medallion located in the lower right corner. Visitors collect a rubbing from each medallion in Beardstown and throughout Central Illinois as they travel the Story Trail.

Trivia Night promises a fun time for all

A unique experience is in store for those who participate in the Old Lincoln Courtroom & Museum Commission's Sept. 19 Trivia Night.

Quiz masters William Reynolds and Leigh Morris promise to stage a trivia event unlike any other you may have attended.

While the event will feature the standard 10 categories, each question and answer will be about someone, something or someplace in Illinois.

Paula Woods has taken additional steps to make certain this will be a most enjoyable night.

The event will be held at the Beardstown Elks. Participants may purchase food at a nominal charge. The meal will include coffee and iced tea. Cocktails, wine and beer will be available at extra cost.

The fee to participate in the trivia event is the standard \$10 per person. Teams may have up to 10 players.

Make your reservations today by calling Woods at 1-217-323-4514 or by e-mail (pmw41@casscomm.com).

Commissioners

George Bell, Chairman
217-323-2056

Suzanne McClure, Secretary
217-323-3442

Ann Chelette, Treasurer
217-323-2559

Arlene Bley
217-323-2323

Leigh Morris
217-371-3148

Tina Rohn
217-323-1173

Paula Woods
217-323-4514

The Old Lincoln Courtroom &
Museum Commission
1 Pine Lane, Beardstown IL 62618
www.lincolninbeardstown.org

Hats off to the wayside exhibit team

The total number of hours spent in meetings, gathering information, writing stories, searching for images, editing, e-mailing, snail mailing, driving, fund raising, waiting, rewriting, re-editing and hoping another shoe wouldn't drop are impossible to count and would astound even the busiest person.

Because of the dedication of many people, the process is now complete.

The "t"s would not have been crossed, the "i"s would not have been dotted, and the process would not have been such a huge success without the countless hours of:

Suzanne McClure – who took leadership of the project from the very start, making certain the wayside exhibits moved from a concept to a reality. It would be impossible to list all of her contributions, so we'll just put it this way: we couldn't have done it without her.

Mayor Bob Walters and the city of Beardstown – whose support for the project was 100 percent.

Leigh Morris – for the stories that bring Abraham Lincoln to life for everyone's enjoyment.

Susan and Dave Parish – whose leg work supplied many of the images for the exhibits.

Paula Woods – whose editing, research checks and hand-holding were invaluable.

George Bell – who helped to secure funds for the exhibits.

William Barnhart – whose original artwork can be seen on most of the exhibits.

Bob Burget, Building and Grounds chairman of the Beardstown City Council – whose countless hours spent leading the installation efforts, driving to Quincy and St. Louis to pick up exhibits, and photographing the entire process were inestimable.

Public Works Chairman Todd Harmeyer and his staff and Sloan Concrete – whose installation efforts provided the final piece to the process.

Allen Beard – whose special signage completed Site 6, so that all of the donors could be listed.



Brian DeLoche – whose photo depicts the rations seen on Site 7.

Ann Chelette, Ross and Connie Foley – whose help with receptions to host our donors and guests was invaluable.

Rev. Robert Schoolcraft – who provided an invocation and benediction for the Lincoln the Lawyer dedication last year.

Rev. Mike Courson – who provided an invocation and benediction for the July 2 dedication for the final six exhibits.

The people of Beardstown and the surrounding area – without whose funding, the project would never have been accomplished.

Museum Hours

10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Monday through Saturday

Visit the Gift Shop.
Many new and sale items.

Event Calendar

September 19: Trivia Night,
Beardstown Elks Lodge 1007

For further information and to make reservations for events, please contact Paula Woods at 1-217-323-4514 or pmw41@casscomm.com.

Naturally, your first priority will be our events. However, the place to get the information on the rest of the bicentennial celebration events is at the official Lincoln Bicentennial Web site:

www.lincolnbicentennial.gov

Check it out today.

Friends toast wayside exhibit dedication



Friends of the Old Lincoln Courtroom & Museum

Yes, I wish to become a Friend as follows:

- Mr. Lincoln's Friend: Annual Gift \$25.00
- Mr. Lincoln's Bar: Annual Gift \$50.00
- Mr. Lincoln's Barristers: Annual Gift \$100.00
- Mr. Lincoln's Judges Chambers: Annual Gift \$500.00

I would prefer to become a lifetime member of Mr. Lincoln's Supreme Court.
My pledge is in the amount of \$_____.

Method of Contribution

My Annual Gift is enclosed: Amount: \$_____

I'd like to make my annual gift in two equal installments.

[Mr. Lincoln's Barristers; Mr. Lincoln's Judges Chambers;
Mr. Lincoln's Supreme Court only]

Installments will be due March 1 and September 1

I'd like to make my annual gift in four equal quarterly installments.

[Mr. Lincoln's Supreme Court only]

Installments will be due March 1, June 1, September 1, and December 1

Name: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Please forward your payment to:

Friends of the Old Lincoln Courtroom and Museum
1 Pine Lane
Beardstown, IL 62618

Check here if this is a renewal of your membership _____

A reception for all Friends of the Courtroom followed the July 20 dedication of Wayside Exhibits.

Friends dropped by during the evening for a light supper, a presentation to Bill Barnhart and great conversation.

The reception was the first of several activities planned throughout the coming months to celebrate our Friends of the Courtroom.

You may wonder why you should become a member of the Friends of the Courtroom.

Well, we could tell you that you will be recognized in a number of ways, including having your name emblazoned on our honor wall. And, of course, there all all of those great events we have planned.

But the best reason of all is the satisfaction in knowing you are helping history come alive in Beardstown.

We invite individuals, families, and businesses to join Friends of the Courtroom using the form on this page.

Secrets to be found in courthouse

In Springfield, the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum has the “Ghosts of the Library.”

In Beardstown, the historic courthouse just might have a few ghosts of its own. It is known for certain that there is a secret stairway. And there are secret closets loaded with memories and maybe a ghost or two of the past.

August 9 was a work day for The Old Lincoln Courtroom & Museum Commission. A total of 14 people came to help paint, assemble, rearrange and get dirty.

Strong backs were needed, innovative display ideas were necessary, laughter was heard and much was accomplished. Work was done in the bathroom, the gift shop and even in the secret stairway.

Stop by the Old Lincoln Courtroom Gift Shop to see our new displays and spend some time shopping while there. Come visit our bathroom!!! It is unlikely you have ever had an invitation like this before. Well, we're mighty proud of the bathroom, which has an entirely new look!

Express your thanks to our crack team of workers for helping to make our historic site a pleasant place to visit. The team includes George Bell, Ross and Connie Foley, Kevin, Chris and Kirk Massie, Ellie Meyer, Peggy Meyer, Amy Moore, Dale Robertson, John and Melanie Schroll, Paula Woods and Suzanne McClure.

Want to join the team? Call 323-3442 to sign on.

Become a volunteer

The commission is continually looking for people who are willing to give their time to assist with various projects.

At this time, there is a particular need for volunteers to conduct tours and to attend to the building during the tourist season.

Visitors from around the country and the world travel to Beardstown. Our volunteers not only provide information about our site and community, but they also learn from those who visit.

Please consider lending a few hours of time each month – or each week – to help staff the site and work on projects. It's an easy job – and a rewarding one!

Keep in mind that the younger generation is encouraged to staff the site. Often, high school students have community service hours that need to be filled for various courses. What better place to begin? If there are young history buffs – or non-history buffs – who are interested in volunteering, please call 323-3442 and ask for Suzanne McClure.

Thanks for considering The Old Lincoln Courtroom & Museum for your community service project.

A new team

Sometimes when a plea is made, either no ears hear or the ones that do ignore the plea.

Fortunately, in most cases The Old Lincoln Courtroom & Museum Commission doesn't have that problem. Because people listen and respond, a new committee is working to preserve history for Beardstown's most famous site.

Connie Foley, Dottie Gholson, Alice Gramann, Eleanor Meyer and Melanie Schroll have stepped up to the task of organizing and improving displays.

This hard-working group of ladies, along with Angela Goebel-Bain, assistant curator of Decorative Arts with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources at the Illinois State Museum in Springfield, has begun the process of dating and preserving the vintage garments donated or on loan to the museum (*see photo below*). This is just one of many projects that will be done over the months ahead.

Of course, they are happy to have more help, if anyone is interested in lending an hour or two.



Paula's bio challenges

Suzie & Leigh

Not to be outdone by Suzie and Leigh, Paula Woods must say that she was born in Schmidt Memorial Hospital, which no longer exists.

A native of Beardstown, she attended grade school at Central, junior high at Lincoln and graduated from high school at "old" BHS in 1959, both of which are now gone.

After high school graduation, she attended Illinois Wesleyan University in Bloomington, from which she graduated in 1963, with a major in English. She earned a master of arts from the University of Illinois in 1965 and doctorate from University of North Texas in 1979, all degrees in English.

Her specialities are nondramatic English literature of the 16th and 17th centuries, especially the works of John Milton and women writers of that era, rhetoric and 20th and 21st century mystery fiction.

Her 40-year career as an English teacher included teaching fellowships at University of Illinois and University of North Texas, as well as full-time positions at Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas; Indiana State University in Terre Haute, Ind.; St. Mary of the Woods College near Terre Haute, and Baylor University in Waco, Texas.

After retiring from Baylor University, she returned to Beardstown, settling in the house in which she grew up. A member of Trinity Episcopal Church in Jacksonville, she belongs to the church choir and is a member of the Jacksonville Symphony Chorale.

Her interests include gardening (especially native plants), cooking, music, reading (still the English prof), and things "Beardstown."

When she stated her intention to retire to Beardstown, Arline Bley said, "If you stand still long enough, we'll put you on a committee." Arline was right.

Beardstown doomed effort to retain county seat

As recounted in our last issue, Beardstown finally lost its bid to be the county seat in June 1875.

However, unanswered was the question as to why the seat of government went back to Virginia.

Though Beardstown was the county's largest and most prosperous city, it was certainly not the most popular.

Because of its size and prosperity, Beardstown politicians, business leaders and citizen often thought they could get their own way. That attitude often rubbed folks elsewhere in the county the wrong way. Thus, when it came time to cast votes on the county seat question, many voters were inclined to vote against Beardstown.

Equally important was location.

Yes, Beardstown was strategically located on the Illinois River. Two railroads served the community. Most roads were decent if not spectacular.

On the other hand, Beardstown was situated at the western edge of the county. There was direct rail service from Arentzville, Virginia, Philadelphia and Ashland, but it was still a long trek for those in the eastern half of the county.

Chandlerville residents and those living in the northeast corner of the county found travel to Beardstown far more difficult and time consuming.

Moving the county seat to Virginia would put the seat of government close to the geographical center of the county. Only residents of Arentzville and the surrounding area would find Virginia a significant disadvantage as compared to Beardstown.

Then there was the question of the courthouse. The edifice in Beardstown, which had been built in 1844, was too small to meet the growing needs of county government.

If Beardstown was to retain the county seat, most likely all county residents would be taxed to pay the cost of building larger quarters for county government. That was not a pleasing prospect.

Jacob Dunaway, Samuel Petefish,

Ignatius Skiles, Charles Crandall and other leading Virginians decided to tilt things in Virginia's favor by building a new courthouse on the city's east square – officially known as Washington Fountain Square.

Since these men did not have any authority to build a county courthouse, they officially referred to their building as the new city hall. They also made it clear it would be donated to the county when the seat of government was returned to Virginia.

The Peoria construction firm of Jobst & Pierce erected the two-story brick courthouse in 1872, though it would not be fully equipped until the county seat question was settled.

All of these factors combined to work against Beardstown's effort to keep the county seat.

While the loss of the county seat dealt a blow to Beardstown's pride, it likely proved to be a godsend to the Beardstown courthouse.

Had the county seat remained in Beardstown, the courthouse's future would have been in doubt. Perhaps there would have been additions and modifications that would have altered it beyond recognition. It might have even been razed at some point or converted to a use that would have necessitated the gutting of the interior.

Instead, the building was transferred to the city, which converted it into the city hall. That decision – plus the historic nature of the second floor courtroom – assured the building's survival.

Fate smiled on Beardstown, the county and those who appreciate the importance of history.

Make your reservations

for the Sept. 19

Trivia Night

Call 1-217-323-4514



A wayside exhibit sampler

Old Lincoln Courtroom & Museum Commission
Suzanne McClure, Secretary
1 Pine Lane
Beardstown IL 62618