

A scenic sunset over a river with silhouetted trees in the foreground. The sky is a mix of orange, red, and yellow, with the sun low on the horizon. The river reflects the colors of the sky. In the foreground, there are dark silhouettes of trees and bushes.

Great River Road Visitor Center

# Interpretive Master Plan

Freedom Park  
Prescott, Wisconsin

April, 2005

*Prepared for Cedar Corporation by:*

**Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters**

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Ron Zimmerman and Jim Buchholz





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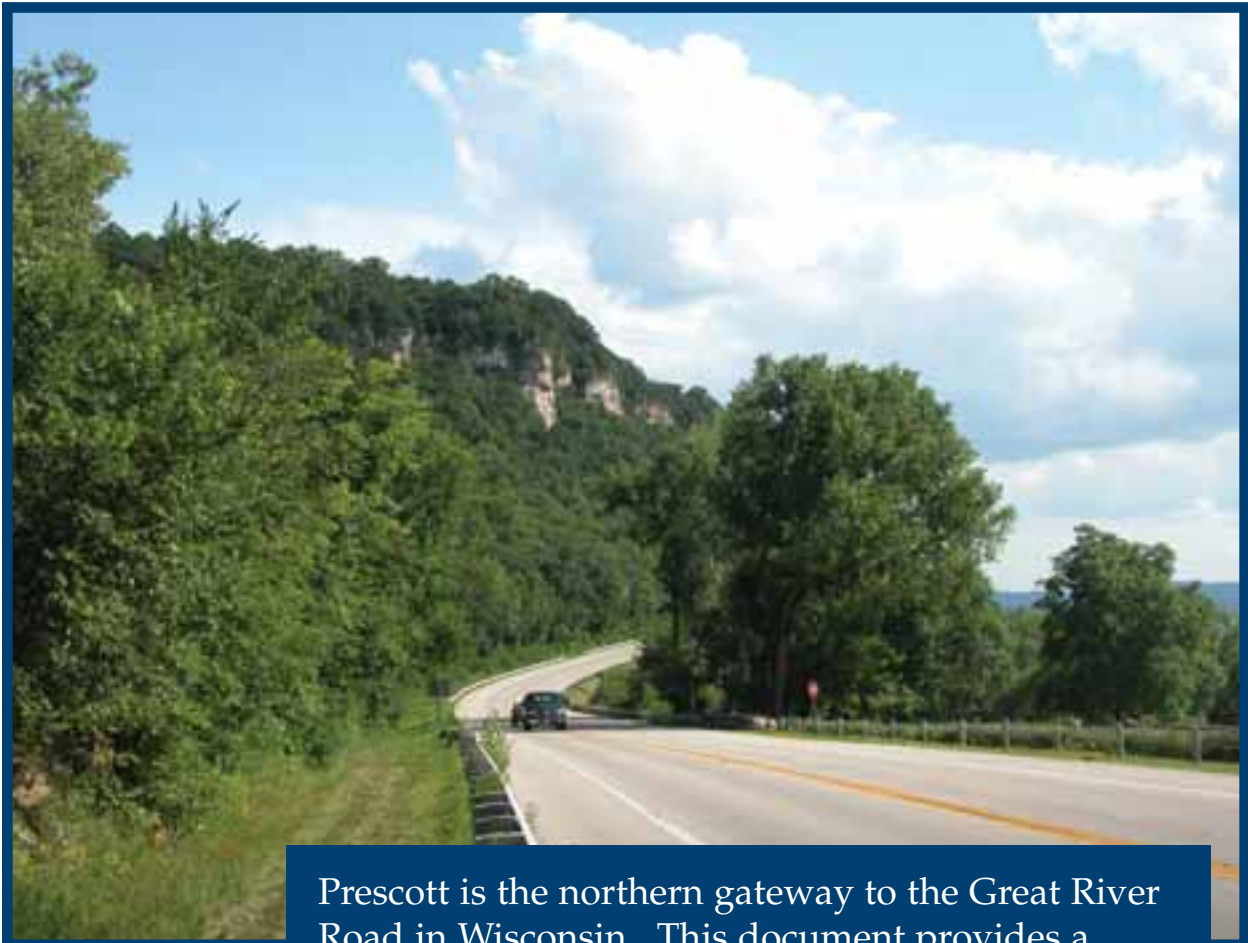






## Chapter 1:

# Introduction



Prescott is the northern gateway to the Great River Road in Wisconsin. This document provides a framework for guiding the development of a Great River Road Visitor Center in Prescott.

## Interpreting The Great River

Traversing ten states, the Great River Road is the nation's longest scenic byway, paralleling the Mississippi from its headwaters in Minnesota to its delta in Louisiana. The byway crosses from Minnesota to Wisconsin at Prescott, a city built where the St. Croix River flows into the Mississippi.

Prescott has always been an important place for people. Native American tribes gathered here to live and celebrate at the mixing of the two rivers. Huge rafts of logs and boards from the northern forests of Wisconsin flowed into the Mississippi at this site. The early town bustled with the energy and excitement of steamboats carrying goods and people.



*Prescott is the northern gateway to the Great River Road in Wisconsin.*

Today, Prescott is the northern gateway of the Great River Road in Wisconsin. As travelers drive down the Mississippi River, Prescott is the first town they will experience in the state. This provides Prescott with a unique opportunity to introduce travelers to the many stories of the Mississippi and St. Croix Rivers, and encourage them to visit other sites along the Great River Road.

In 2001, recognizing their unique potential, the City of Prescott applied for a National Scenic Byways Discretionary Grant to develop a "Great River Road Scenic Byway Learning Center." Over the course of three years, the city was awarded \$1.4 million for the planning, development, and construction of a center. Freedom Park, with its panoramic views of the confluence of the Mississippi and St. Croix Rivers, was chosen as the building site.

In the summer of 2004, Cedar Corporation, the architects hired to design and construct the building, contracted with Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters to develop a Conceptual Interpretive Master Plan that would guide the interpretive efforts of the project.

According to the Scope of Work, the consulting team would:

1. **Inventory the site:** Research and inventory the interpretive elements of the site as they relate to the history of Prescott and the Mississippi Corridor. This includes investigating other corridor interpretive entities.



2. **Analyze target audiences:** Gather quantitative and qualitative data about the audience from existing sources and through interview techniques. This includes meeting with Prescott citizens.
3. **Develop a comprehensive list of themes, messages, and interpretive concepts:** Create a framework of themes and concepts that tell a cohesive story of Prescott and its relationship to the greater river corridor and the National Scenic Byway. This includes conceptualizing interpretive media inside and outside the learning center.

The complete Scope of Work is included in Appendix 1. The product of the inventory and analysis steps is this document.

## Purpose of this Document

This document provides a conceptual framework to guide the development of a Great River Road Visitor Center at Freedom Park in Prescott, Wisconsin. This plan is dynamic. As a working document, it is subject to revision and adjustments as variables change and as the process is refined and prioritized.

The conceptual plan had three primary purposes:

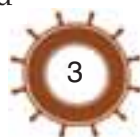
1. It provides a record of the rationale and parameters that guide the development of the Great River Road Learning Center. It examines the municipal and state mission and



*Sunset over the Mississippi River from Freedom Park.*

goals for this project, examines the public needs, and identifies the resources to be interpreted.

2. It allows concerned people an opportunity to review and comment on the learning center development process before any construction begins. It is therefore a communication tool.
3. It will guide future decision makers by documenting the vision of the original planning team and will provide resources to help future staff achieve the mission and goals of the facility.







## Chapter 2:

# The Planning Process



Planning is the process of consensus development, of achieving a shared perspective by all stakeholders of why this facility is needed, who it will serve, and what significant stories it will tell.



## The Planning Triangle

Planning is the process of consensus development, of achieving a shared perspective by all stakeholders of why this facility is needed, who it will serve, and what significant stories it will tell. Answering these three basic questions, “why, who, and what,” is the foundation for developing a vision. The final building

design must meet agency needs to ensure achievement of the mission. It must meet customer needs by offering programs and facilities that will appeal to the targeted audiences. It must consider site resources to ensure a harmonious design and optimal use of interpretive opportunities.

*“A building structure is just one of the tools used in implementing a program.”*

—Ron Yeo, Architect



*In this **planning model**, the visitor, agency, and site are interrelated and considered simultaneously. Some sites are mission driven (agency program centers), some are customer driven (a community park or nature center), and others are site driven (a unique cultural or natural site).*

## Developing a Center

### Determine the facility mission and goals

Driving Questions: Why is this institution creating an interpretive center? How will it help to serve its mission? What specific goals will building this center help to achieve?

*Mission and goals for the Great River Road Visitor Center are analyzed in this chapter, pages 14-15.*

### Assess the visitor

Driving Questions: Who are the target markets? What are they seeking?

*Audience for the visitor center has been assessed in this chapter, pages 16-25.*

### Analyze the resource

Driving Questions: What is significant about this site? What is the *Genius Loci* (its spirit of place)? What stories will illuminate its attributes?

*The resources have been assessed generally in this chapter, pages 26-28, and in more detail in Chapter 3: Themes & Messages.*

### Develop themes and messages

Themes and messages are the significant concepts that are to be communicated through all aspects of the interpretive facility. They are based on the significance of the resources, the mission and goals of the agency, and the interests of the visitor. They are a distillation of the visioning processes. They guide development and design.

*Themes and messages have been developed in Chapter 3: Themes & Messages.*

### Approve vision

A vision report is prepared for the approval of stakeholders and decision-makers. This approval provides the consensus needed to proceed to design. The report includes a comprehensive examination of the why, who, and what and delineates the themes and messages to be communicated.

*A "Concepts Document" was presented to the City of Prescott Parks Committee and the Wisconsin DOT in October, 2004. The vision was approved.*

### Concept phase

Developing the concept is a natural outcome of evaluating the why, who, and what. It is a wholistic and creative process. It synchronizes:

- Themes and messages.
- Visitor experience and flow through a facility.
- Media and programs that tell the story and engage the visitor.
- Landscape design.
- The building design.

Developing the concept involves interpreters (storytellers), planning consultants, architects, landscape architects, and exhibit designers - the design team. The team prepares alternative design solutions for the decision-makers.

*Chapters 1-3 of this document represent the concept phase. Several meetings have taken place between Cedar Corporation and Schmeeckle Reserve Interpreters to determine building, site, and media alternatives.*



### Develop media and programs

The media and programs are the tools that best involve the visitor in experiencing and comprehending the story. The building serves the media and programs, not vice-versa. Therefore, it is essential to develop media concepts before designing the building. "Black boxes," blank spaces assigned to exhibits or program space, are typical for museum designs but not appropriate for interpretive centers. Architecture must serve the interpretive messages and encourage a physical and experiential flow for visitors as they move from interior to exterior spaces.

The planner must have a broad knowledge of the possibilities and limitations of media. Various interpretive tools are prescribed to link the visitor to the resource. The interpretive media must engage the whole person including different ways of sensing and differing learning styles. Planners distill purposes and objectives from the who, what, and why and then brainstorm, describe, and sketch each prescription.

*Chapter 4: Building and Site Concepts details the most effective design and renovations for enhancing the interpretive message.*

*Chapter 5: Interpretive Media describes the indoor visitor center exhibits and outdoor interpretive panels that can effectively connect people with the stories of the site.*



### Conduct design analysis

The full design team gathers to define the design problems, explore and evaluate alternative solutions, and document and give a rationale for the preferred alternative.

Often this meeting takes the form of a charrette. A charrette is an intensive brainstorming session in which the design team is gathered to apply form to the vision. In a creative interchange, the team explores the spatial dimensions that address the multi-faceted needs of this facility. Typically, bubble diagrams are created to explore relationships between functional spaces. Footprints for trails, parking lots, and structures are sketched onto maps and aerial photographs. In this session, the dimensions of design are considered.

*Chapter 4: Building and Site Concepts describes initial parameters for the building and site design, and the preferred alternatives as discussed between Cedar Corporation and Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters.*

### Approve concept

The results of the design analysis, including media concepts, are prepared for presentation to decision-makers and stakeholders. This report and presentation includes maps, models, drawings, and simulations to clearly represent the development in the landscape. Rough cost estimates are provided to aid the decision-making process.

*This document is a comprehensive report of the concepts for the Great River Road Learning Center in Prescott. Once approved, the Design-Build phase will begin.*

### Design-build phase

The final design phase provides the drawings and details necessary to initiate construction. Architectural, engineering, and landscape architectural construction drawings and specifications are prepared. Final cost estimates are set. This phase requires that the project director maintain close communications between all members of the design team and the decision-makers.

*Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters will design several interpretive panels, and assist Cedar Corporation in selecting a reputable exhibit firm capable of fabricating and installing exhibits in a timely and professional manner.*



## Mission and Goals

A mission provides a clear purpose that guides the development of interpretive programs, media, and facilities. It provides direction in the early stages of planning, and sets parameters for what should or should not be done. Setting clearly defined mission and goals is essential for developing effective interpretation on the Great River Road.

### FHWA National Scenic Byways grant program

From 2001-2003, the National Scenic Byways Discretionary Grants program awarded \$1.4 million for the development of a "Great River Road Scenic Byway Learning Center" in Prescott. The grants were distributed in 3 phases:

- **Phase 1:** Site improvements and final design for center (\$368,440)
- **Phase 2:** Construction of the learning center (\$700,800)
- **Phase 3:** Center interior improvements (\$343,440)

The total cost of the project is just over \$1.75 million (\$1,765,850). The grants cover 80% of the total cost of the project. The City of Prescott is responsible for the extra 20%, or about \$350,000.

The City of Prescott is also responsible for staffing the center and the ongoing maintenance of the center grounds and building (Resolution 08-01, February 12, 2001).

The grant proposals establish several goals and guidelines for the Freedom Park

project.

*The Freedom Park/Great River Road Learning Center project consists of the construction of an educational facility, including both a building and grounds amenities that will serve to provide the traveler with information and programs about the Great River Road Scenic Byway and the Mississippi River.*

*The redevelopment of Freedom Park as a Learning Center will fill a critical void in the interpretation of the Great River Road and the Mississippi River in Wisconsin.*

### A "Visitor Center"

**Visitor centers** are facilities that prepare travelers physically, mentally, and spiritually to experience a special place.

- They welcome travelers and provide for their physical comforts and needs.
- They orient and inform.
- They inspire and instill reverence and awe for the features and events of that special place.

When planning an interpretive facility, terminology can often be confusing. According to the parameters set forth in the grant proposals, the Freedom Park building better fits the definition of a "visitor center" than a "learning center". The center will not only provide educational opportunities for travelers, but also provide orientation, information, and amenities for physical comforts and needs, as well as being a gateway to the Great River Road.

## Defining the Scope

The National Scenic Byway grant proposal states that the five themes of Environment, Transportation, People, Occupations, and Architecture will be presented in the visitor center.

*The five basic themes would be expanded to include [scenic], historical, cultural, scientific, and archeological elements of the entire length of the Great River Road Scenic Byway and the Mississippi River from source to mouth with special emphasis on the Wisconsin segment.*

Interpretation is most effective when it deals with objects, places, or events that can be seen or are in close proximity to a visitor's location. Interpretation about Louisiana, for example, has little meaning to most visitors in Prescott, Wisconsin. The Freedom Park Visitor Center should not interpret the entire Great River Road in detail; instead, interpretation should focus on regional topics that represent the greater Mississippi corridor. By connecting visitors with barges, eagles, limestone cliffs, trains, bridges, and other topics they can directly experience in Freedom Park, they will also be connected to the broader stories of the entire Great River Road.

## Community Use

Through interviews and discussions with Prescott residents and city leaders, the community has unwritten goals that are compatible with those stated in the grant proposals. Freedom Park has always been a popular community park for Prescott residents. Improvements to the grounds

and the development of the building should enhance the site for travelers and residents alike. Access to improved trails, viewing platforms, restrooms, and shelters should be available to residents even when the visitor center is closed.

## Mission and Goals of the Visitor Center

Bringing together the National Scenic Byway grant proposals and community insight has provided a basis for the following mission and goals.

### Mission:

The Freedom Park Visitor Center will interpret the Great River Road through stories of Prescott and the surrounding region, provide for traveler's physical and informational needs, and enhance the Freedom Park site for the community.

### Goals:

- Welcome travelers on the Great River Road and provide for their physical comforts and needs (restrooms, water fountain, furniture)
- Provide orientation and information for travelers (maps, brochures, guides).
- Serve as a portal to the panoramic vistas of Freedom Park.
- Invite and encourage travelers to visit other nearby natural and cultural areas.
- Provide space for community meetings and events (small meeting room, kitchenette).



## Audience

### Primary Audiences

Prescott has always responded to the needs of tourists. Before Freedom Park was renamed, it was known simply as Tourist Park, serving visitors with a campground, restroom, shelters, and a spectacular overlook of the Mississippi and St. Croix Rivers. The Welcome and Heritage Center in downtown Prescott provides travelers with information about local and regional events, attractions, and accommodations. Housed in a 1885 brick bank, the center interprets the unique history of the community.

Freedom Park is also an important part of the community. Neighborhood children use the playground. Couples stroll along the paths. Families have picnics and play games. Many celebrations, family reunions, and other events take place at the park.

Both community members and visitors on the Great River Road will benefit from the Freedom Park Visitor Center and associated park renovations.

The Freedom Park Visitor Center will serve two primary audiences:

- Tourists on the Great River Road
- Prescott residents



*Visitors and residents wave to spectators on shore during the Grand Excursion, July 2, 2004.*

### Tourists on the Great River Road

The Great River Road attracts a diversity of audiences that have different motivations for driving the road and different needs for accommodations.

The **Wisconsin Department of Tourism** conducted a four-season survey of travelers on the Great River Road (*Four Season Mississippi River Scenic Byway Survey, January 2004*). The results provide a glimpse of the tourist audience that will be using the visitor center.

Over 1,150 people were surveyed at locations throughout the byway from December, 2002 to November, 2003.

- **92.6% do not reside on Mississippi River corridor.** Interpretation should not assume that local communities, sites, and river terminology will be readily understood by tourists.
- **Recreational users have visited the corridor 5.4 times during the past 12 months.** Repeat visitation is common on the byway. Changing and seasonal interpretation would enhance the experience.
- **In summer and fall, over half (55% and 53%) spent at least 1 night in the area. In winter and spring, less than half (37% and 33%) were overnight recreational users.** Accommodations for both day trips and longer vacations should be provided.



*Sightseeing and nature viewing are some of the top activities on the Great River Road.*

- **Travel parties consist of 2-3 people, and only 17% have children under 13 years of age.** Most users of the byway are 40 years and older (67%).
- **Top 7 reasons for choosing the area**
  - **Shopping: 36%**
  - **Sightseeing: 18%**
  - **Visiting friends: 15%**
  - **Attending events: 14%**
  - **Relaxing: 13.5%**
  - **Dining at restaurants: 13%**
  - **Wildlife/nature viewing: 10%**

A high percentage of tourists chose the Great River Road for sightseeing, relaxing, and wildlife/nature viewing, ideal activities at Freedom Park. Shopping and dining at the top of the list could increase profits for Prescott businesses.

- **Visitors were asked if they were aware that the Great River Road was designated as a National Scenic Byway.**

- **Unaware: 36%**
- **Aware: 64%**

Even though many tourists drive the Great River Road, nearly 1/3 were unaware that it is a National Scenic Byway. Only 4% chose this area because it was a designated byway. Interpretation should reinforce the byway status of the road, possibly through repetition of elements like the pilot's wheel logo.

- **Top 5 attributes of the Great River Road (1=poor to 10=excellent)**
  - **Overall scenic views: 9.25**
  - **Views of the Mississippi: 9.09**
  - **Access to the Mississippi: 9.04**
  - **Good visiting experience: 9.02**
  - **Access to scenic overlooks: 8.83**

The Freedom Park Visitor Center will continue to enhance the scenic views of the Mississippi that tourists currently rate as excellent.

- **Visitor expenditures**
  - **Daytripper visitors spent an average of \$63.10 per person each day of the trip.**
  - **Overnight visitors spent an average of \$91.27 per person each day of the trip.**
  - **Tourists generate 67% of these expenditures, while residents generate 33%.**

Prescott businesses could benefit by having more tourists stopping at the visitor center and being guided to shops and restaurants in town.



*The top attributes of the Great River Road were its overall scenic views and views of the river.*

The **Minnesota Department of Transportation** also conducted traveler surveys on the Great River Road (*Great River Road Development Study, January 2000*). The results confirm aspects of the Wisconsin study and shed light on other tourist characteristics. The surveys were conducted in late summer and early fall.

The total number of tourists that returned viable questionnaires was 555.

- **84.4% described their Great River Road visit as purely a pleasure trip.** Most travelers are using the Great River Road for pleasure rather than business.
- **The median trip length was 3 days.** Many travelers are spending at least 1 night along the Great River Road.
- **Nearly half (46.2%) had previously traveled to the area. The remaining 53.8% were first-time visitors.** Orientation for first-time visitors is important, as is providing variety for repeat visitors.

- **Top 5 recreational activities actually participated in.**

- **Pleasure driving: 68%**
- **Hiking/walking: 42%**
- **Scenic overlooks: 40%**
- **Shopping/antiquing: 38%**
- **Visiting friends/family: 38%**

These results are very similar to the Wisconsin findings. Freedom Park is an ideal site for hiking and scenic overlooks. Prescott businesses will benefit from shopping.

- **Visitor attitudes**

- **Viewing wildlife in a natural setting is an important experience for 75% of tourists.**
- **Interpretive signs provide a useful tool for learning about an area's cultural and natural history.**

The attitude survey demonstrates how the Freedom Park site and interpretation will enhance experiences for travelers.

- **Visitor expenditures**

- **Visitors spent an average of \$72.50 per adult each day of the trip.**
- **The top expenditures were shopping, lodging, and food**

In addition to local restaurants, motels, and stores, a small gift shop with Great River Road souvenirs, and cultural/ natural history merchandise in the visitor center could also generate some funding.

- **Great River Road sign**

- **Only 25% of tourists could correctly identify the Great River Road sign.**

Similar to the Wisconsin study, there is a general lack of knowledge about the Great River Road among tourists. Interpretation should enhance this image.



*In the Minnesota study, visitors valued interpretive signage for learning more about the area. However, only a quarter of travelers could correctly identify the Great River Road logo.*

### Types of Tourists

Understanding the diversity of motivations, transportation modes, and trip structures help us plan a satisfactory experience for the majority of visitors. The following sections are adapted from the Minnesota DOT study (*Great River Road Development Study, January 2000*).



*The Star Cafe in Stockholm caters to tourists seeking unique dining and shopping.*

### Motivations

Tourists travel the Great River Road and visit Prescott for a variety of reasons. The following categories are divided by primary motivations for coming to an area. A single tourist group may fit into several of these categories.

- **Explorers:** Tourists that want to discover and be intellectually enriched by their experience.
  - **Spectators:** Tourists that come to be entertained, often as an accessory to a major event. People drawn to the Grand Excursion, for example, also use the restaurants, theaters, and parks in a town.
  - **Pilgrims:** Tourists that seek experiences to change their perception of life or inspire awe (military buffs, Great River Road historians).
  - **Shoppers:** Tourists that come to acquire goods and services (antiques, souvenirs, Amish goods)
- **Guests:** Tourists that drive the road to visit family and friends.
  - **Loungers:** Tourists that come for rest and relaxation. They are traveling the road to unwind and be pampered (Bed and Breakfasts, hotels, cabins, campgrounds)
  - **Active Outdoor Recreationists:** Tourists that physically engage the environment, usually with specialized equipment (golfing, canoeing, fishing, biking, hiking).



*Rieck's Lake Park in Alma is a natural draw for Explorer tourists.*

The Great River Road has historically marketed to the *Explorers*. The interpretation at the Freedom Park Visitor Center will connect visitors intellectually and emotionally to the resources of Prescott and the Mississippi and St. Croix Rivers. The dramatic view from the bluff may also be a draw to *Pilgrims*.

Although not directly related, the visitor center must also guide tourists with different motivations to other services nearby. *Active Outdoor Recreationists* can find fishing/boating opportunities at the Prescott marina and hiking/biking activities at nearby parks. *Shoppers* and *Spectators* can be led to unique stores and restaurants in downtown Prescott.

Residents should feel comfortable bringing *Guests* to the park and visitor center. The facility can be a source of pride for the community.

### Transportation Mode

The way a tourist travels on the Great River Road affects the pace and flexibility of travel. To enhance the experience for all travelers, the visitor center and related developments must accommodate all transportation modes.

- **Automobiles (cars, trucks, SUVs):** Automobiles make up the majority of traffic on the Great River Road. Handicap parking stalls should be included near the entrance walkway.
- **Motorcycles:** A large number of motorcyclists travel the undulating road in the Prescott area.
- **Recreational Vehicles:** Tourists traveling from one campground to

*Automobiles are the dominant form of traffic on the Great River Road.*



another will often take the scenic Great River Road instead of other highways. Some parking stalls should be enlarged to accommodate the size of the vehicles.

- **Buses:** Tour buses that highlight the history of the Mississippi River, fall colors, shopping, and other themed experiences are becoming more common on the Great River Road. As part of educational programs, school buses will also be dropping students off at the site. The parking lot needs to be large enough for buses to drop off people and turn around.
- **Bicycles:** Residents and people biking the Great River Road will need a place to lock their bikes.

### Trip Structure

Whether tourists are part of organized groups or out on their own, the Freedom Park Visitor Center should cater to differently structured trips.

- **Group-structured Travel:** A tour organizer determines when, where, and what will be experienced.
- **Self-structured Travel:** The tourist decides on an itinerary and whether to follow it or not.
- **Unstructured Travel:** People spontaneously travel to a place and are open to any attractions or activities.
- **Semi-structured Travel:** Often business people combine a structured element of the trip (conference or meeting) with unstructured pleasure time.

Marketing to tour operators and providing sufficient space for parking and restrooms is important to serving *group-structured travel*.

For *self-structured* and *semi-structured travelers*, advertising on the Internet, to tourism agencies, and in regional magazines and newspapers is important.

An eye-catching entrance sign to Freedom Park on the Great River Road is essential to attracting *unstructured travelers*, and also serves all travelers. The sign should reflect the essence of the site and be an invitation to explore the unique area.



*Tourists structure their trips individually or as part of an organized group, like these scenic byway professionals at Tijeras Pueblo in New Mexico. Visitor centers should cater to different trip structures.*

### Prescott Residents

The population of Prescott is approximately 3,800 people. The number of people continues to grow each year. By 2020, the population is expected to reach 4,834 (Wisconsin Department of Commerce).

The total working force of Prescott is 2,848 people. About 23.2% of this force are employed in educational, health and social services. Another 20.4% work in manufacturing. Retail trade employs 13.5%. The average travel time to work is 23.9 minutes, meaning that most people are employed out of the city.

Several interviews were conducted with residents of Prescott (July-August, 2004) to determine attitudes and feelings toward the Freedom Park project and how it would impact the community. The following concerns and suggestions were identified by a number of residents.

- **Freedom Park needs to remain a community park.** Prescott residents do not mind sharing the park with tourists, but developments should be made to enhance the park for the community. Many residents referred to the old shelters as gathering places for reunions, celebrations, and other events. New shelters should be constructed. Grassy areas and the playground should be maintained for low impact games and sports. Restrooms, trails, and overlooks should be available to community members even when the visitor center is closed.
- **Many residents are worried about the tax-burden that the visitor center would place on the community.** The city is responsible for staffing and maintaining the visitor center. It must be designed to minimize the cost to the city. The building should be constructed with high-quality materials that require little maintenance. Exhibits should be made durable and low-tech. “Green” systems should be considered to lower energy costs. The building layout should allow for a single staff person to keep the facility open. Exterior exhibits should be maximized so they are available all daylight hours.



*In addition to serving the needs of tourists, Freedom Park must remain a community park.*



*Visitor centers can be designed to gracefully harmonize with a site, like this open air center in Scotland.*

- **Residents do not want the building to detract from the Freedom Park site.** Freedom Park is a small area, and a building constructed without much thought could dominate the site. The building should be constructed of indigenous materials like limestone and wood to blend with the natural landscape. It should also have a low profile so it doesn't compete with the spectacular view. Residents and tourists alike come to the park for the scenic vista, so the building and developments must respect and enhance the view. Large windows in the visitor center can showcase the vista. Decks with spotting scopes will be a natural draw.
- **Residents with homes neighboring the park are concerned about noise and aesthetics.** Neighbors to the Freedom Park project worry that vehicle noises, especially buses, could detract from the quiet

neighborhood atmosphere. They also do not want to see a deteriorating building and grounds. Vehicle and people traffic and facility developments should be consciously screened from neighboring houses as much as possible. Parking lots and driveways should be planned to minimize traffic on neighborhood streets. A well planned building and natural landscaping should enhance the aesthetics of the area with little maintenance.

- **The park should be enhanced for wildlife.** Many Prescott residents are avid bird and wildlife watchers. A wildlife garden with running water, plantings, and feeders would attract a diversity of species and provide educational opportunities.



- **The view at Freedom Park should be enhanced and maintained.** Several residents remembered the bluff at Freedom Park before the trees grew high on the slope, providing a spectacular vista up and down the river. Many suggested that trees should be cut to restore this view. With the acquisition of

the railroad land on the bluff and the sewage treatment land to the north, the city should have authority to cut trees and open the view. The offending trees are almost all fast-growing and and weedy species.



*The greatest strength of the Freedom Park site is the scenic view of the Mississippi and St. Croix Rivers. This view must be enhanced and maintained through landscape management and visitor center design.*



## Site Resources

### The Mississippi River

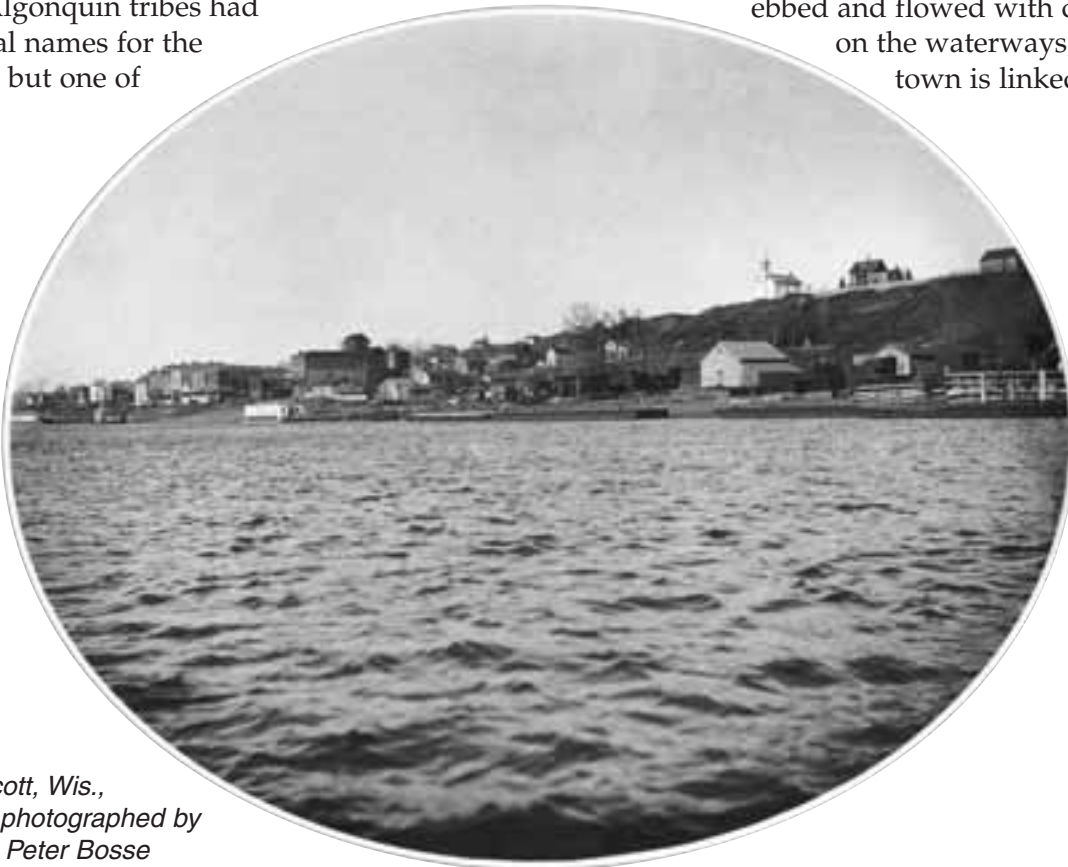
The Mississippi River flows through the heart of the continent. It unites the country geographically, links the south and north, and divides the east from the west. It has been a cultural thoroughfare for thousands of years, flowing from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico. It carries goods, inspires romantics, poems, music, and literature. Mythology and legends have arisen from its history. The Great River is a metaphor for life and a symbol of what is American.

The Algonquin tribes had several names for the River, but one of

the tribes, the Anishinabe (Chippewa, Ojibwa) and their close relatives in the north, referred to it as "Misisipi." "Misi" means "big" or "great" and "Sipi" means simply "river." Since Marquette and Joliet entered the river in the north, their guides spoke an Algonquin dialect, the river was introduced to the Europeans as Mississippi, "The Great River," and the name has endured.

### Prescott: A River Town

Prescott is a product of the river. It was born of the river and its fortunes have ebbed and flowed with changes on the waterways. The town is linked both



*"Prescott, Wis., 1885" photographed by Henry Peter Bosse*

physically and spiritually to the water. Like all river towns, the people of Prescott have relied on the Mississippi for transportation, goods, and work. It is the unique individual ways that Prescott has related to the Upper Mississippi that is inherently interesting to travelers. It is an old Upper Mississippi River Town steeped in river traditions. In the late 1930s, Prescott had the highest percentage of men working on the Mississippi—more than any other river town in the 2,300 miles. Rivermen remember when there were at least 9 river pilots heralding from Prescott.

Freedom Park is a superb location for a Great River Road visitor center because of its view of the rivers. The convergence of the Mississippi and the St. Croix can be seen dramatically from the elevated park site. The muddy flow of the Mississippi mixes slowly with the clearer waters of the St. Croix. A distinct line of demarcation can be seen from the park site. River traffic can be monitored from the ridge, just as it has been for centuries. Barges can be observed, and dayboards, buoys, lights, and wingdams are clearly visible from the park. Prescott Island serves as a reference point where barges, steamboats, and lumber rafts have been photographed for 150 years.

The park is named for a rehabilitated bald eagle that was symbolically released here after it participated in ceremonies in Washington D.C. to welcome home the Iran Hostages during the Carter administration. Wild eagles can be watched from this river bluff throughout the year. In winter, dozens can be heard and seen perched on Prescott Island or soaring over the open water below the park. A heron rookery is

visible across the river from the park in the large bottomland forest on the Minnesota side. Diving ducks and geese frequent the Prescott marina in winter. Songbirds are abundant in the park, and migrating birds, like warblers, move in waves along the ridge in spring and fall.

The park offers a scenic vista of the classic Upper Mississippi River where limestone cliffs loom over rivers that flow in broad, running lakes, tangled sloughs, and wooded side channels. Fed by the Minnesota and St. Croix Rivers, the Mississippi here is just gaining strength and is bolstered downstream by the confluence of the Chippewa and the Wisconsin Rivers. The site offers a beautiful scenic view typical of the Upper River.

### America's Byways: Treasured Roads

The National Scenic Byways (NSB) Program was initiated by the Federal



Highway Administration in 1991 to create a distinctive collection of American roads, their stories and treasured places.

The mission of the NSB Program is to provide resources to the byway community in creating a unique travel experience and enhanced local quality of life through efforts to preserve, protect, interpret, and promote the intrinsic qualities of designated byways.

Under this program, the U.S. Secretary of Transportation recognizes certain roads as National Scenic Byways or All-American

Roads based on their archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic qualities. There are currently 96 designated byways in 39 states.

The NSB Program is a voluntary, grassroots program that recognizes and supports outstanding roads, and provides resources to help manage the intrinsic qualities within the broader Byway corridor. America's Byways is a unique collection of roads that tell the natural and cultural stories of the country. They are roads to the heart and soul of America.

### The Great River Road

The Great River Road is the nation's longest scenic byway at nearly 3,000 miles. It traverses ten states. It was designated a National Scenic Byway on June 13, 2002.

When it was initiated in the 1930s, the objective was to develop a Mississippi River highway with roads that preserved the unique qualities of the Mississippi River Valley. Originally, it was to resemble the Blue Ridge Parkway or the Natchez Trace Parkway, where roads were constructed specifically as a scenic byway. However, it was quickly determined that existing roads would have to be used.

In 1938, U.S. Secretary of Interior, Harold Ickes, met with representatives of each of the ten states to develop the Great River Road concept. The Mississippi River Parkway Planning Commission, later known simply as the Mississippi River Parkway Commission (MRPC), was established. Each state formed its own Parkway Commission and worked with each other "to define issues and coordinate



*A Great River Road logo sign in Prescott.*

the development, promotion, and maintenance of the Great River Road and its amenities."

The Federal Highway Act of 1954 followed up on the original feasibility study and appropriated \$250,000 for the initial planning phases for the Parkway. Each state was asked to designate one existing route within its boundaries for the Parkway. Between 1974 and 1989, more than a billion dollars was spent on Great River Road projects.

The ten states and the MRPC has been promoting and marketing the Great River Road for over 60 years. In cooperation with state tourism offices, the Commission has been developing marketing strategies that include travel shows, familiarization tours, public relations events, and magazine and newspaper articles.

The Great River Road is identified along its length with a green and white pilot's wheel logo marking the route. The routes lead travelers to museums, interpretive centers, historic sites, and scenic overlooks. Tour books and brochures suggest itineraries through each state.

### Communities and Interpretive Sites on the Upper Mississippi Great River Road

To be most effective, the visitor center in Freedom Park should focus interpretation on those communities and sites that are within easy driving distance of Prescott. People will be encouraged to visit these nearby sites to experience different aspects of the Great River Road stories.

As the northern gateway of the Great River Road in Wisconsin, special emphasis should be placed on communities and sites within the state. Travelers will also be encouraged to visit sites just across the river in Minnesota and Iowa.

To limit the scope of interpretation and provide a quality experience for travelers, we recommend interpreting communities and sites from Minneapolis, MN to Dubuque, IA. The following is a list of significant communities and sites from north to south. This information has been compiled from several sources, including the "Wisconsin Great River Road" website ([www.wigreatriverroad.org](http://www.wigreatriverroad.org)) and *Seeing History on Wisconsin's Great River Road* (Wisconsin Department of Tourism).

#### Wisconsin Inventory

##### Prescott, WI

The northern gateway of the Great River Road in Wisconsin. Settled in 1840 where the St. Croix and Mississippi Rivers meet, the community became a center for river shipping, steamboat transportation, and milling. The Pierce County Welcome & Heritage Center interprets the settlement of this area.



Prescott, WI

##### Lake Pepin

Lake Pepin was formed 10,000 years ago when the sandy delta of the Chippewa River dammed the Mississippi channel. Today the Lake is 1 ½ to 2 miles wide and 22 miles long. The 400-500 foot high bluffs that surround Lake Pepin provide scenic byway travelers panoramic views on both sides of the river. This lake has been the scene for many dramatic boating incidents. Steam boat races, storms, and thick ice have made it a focus of interest on the Upper Mississippi. Commercial "clamming", Pearls, and button manufacturing were major industries here until the 1940's.



Lake Pepin

### Diamond Bluff, WI

The prominent limestone bluffs surrounding this old river town were landmarks for early pilots. This was the site of the largest inland water disaster when the Sea Wing Riverboat capsized on July 13, 1890. Ninety-eight people died, including 20 citizens from Diamond Bluff and Trenton.

### Mero Site Complex

*Diamond Bluff, WI and Red Wing, MN*

Between 600 and 1,100 years ago, Oneota Indians lived in this area and established numerous camps and villages. This may have been the northern-most outpost for the extensive trade network of the Mississippian Indians. Over 500 earthen mounds were built, and a few were shaped like animals (effigy mounds). The Archaeological Conservancy purchased part of this site in 1990.

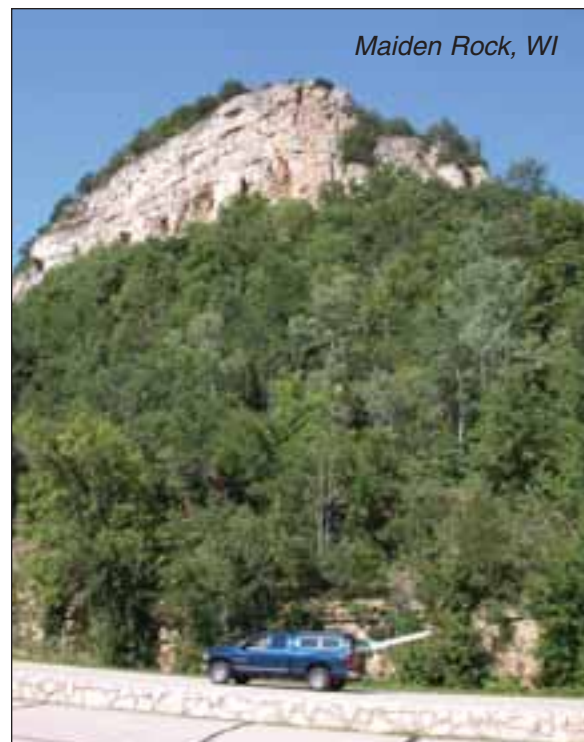
### Hager City, WI

This quiet city was founded in 1886 by the Chicago, Burlington & Northern Railroad. Everts Resort has provided recreational opportunities on the river since the early 1940s. A unique “bow and arrow” rock formation built on the side of a bluff is near the city. The origin dates back to before the area was settled. A historic plaque just off of the road provides information and a clear view of the formation.

### Bay City, WI

Bay City is located at the head of Lake Pepin on the Mississippi River. Silica has been mined from miles of tunnels in the limestone bluffs for making glass. The Bay City Mine is now a State

Natural Area, and over 10,000 bats hibernate in the tunnels every winter. Only research access to the mines is allowed. The scenic riverfront has always attracted tourists, and two small resort cabins from the 1930s still stand. The village park has picnic facilities and a campground along the river.



*Maiden Rock, WI*

### Maiden Rock, WI

Located at the confluence of the Mississippi and Rush Rivers is Maiden Rock, with scenic vistas of Lake Pepin. This community is named for a prominent 400-foot bluff where legend claims a heartbroken young Indian maiden jumped to her death. A historic marker below the bluff tells the story. A lakeside campground, picnic area, and bed-and-breakfast facilities serve tourists.



### Stockholm, WI

One of the few Swedish immigrant settlements in Wisconsin. Eric Peterson selected this site on Lake Pepin in the early 1850s, and was soon joined by friends and family. Several historic buildings still stand. Stockholm is known as a “Renaissance village,” home to artisans and professional craftspeople who moved to the area for inspiration.

### Fort St. Antoine Site

*Between Stockholm, WI and Pepin, WI*

A historic plaque marks the location of an archeological site. This was long considered to be the place where Nicholas Perrot established Fort St. Antoine in 1686, the first of several forts built on Lake Pepin. Recent research indicates it may be the site of Fort La Jonquiere built in 1750, the final decade of French rule.

### Pepin, WI

Laura Ingalls Wilder, author of the "Little House on the Prairie" books, was born on a farm near Pepin in 1867. The Little House Wayside, 7 miles northwest of Pepin, marks the author's birthplace with a replica of the "Little House in the Big Woods" - the log cabin

Wilder describes in her childhood memories of the Pepin area. The Pepin village park is named for Wilder and has a memorial to her. The Depot Museum has exhibits about area logging, steamboating and railroading history. The Pepin Historical Museum focuses on local history and the Wilder legacy.



### Nelson, WI

Nelson is a small village set against a backdrop of high, rugged bluffs. Castleberg Park, beneath the twin bluffs at the south end of town, is a popular picnic spot. North of Nelson is the 12,500-acre Tiffany Bottoms Wildlife Area River. Hunting, fishing, trapping, nature photography, and wild berry picking are popular activities. Primitive camping available by permit only.

### Beef Slough

*Between Nelson, WI and Alma, WI*

The slough was a sluggish branch of the Chippewa River that served as a storage pond for logs floated downstream. A major logging company formed here, and disputes between Beef Slough and Eau Claire sawmills occurred in 1868. A historic plaque provides more information.



*Buena Vista Park, Alma, WI*

### **Alma, WI**

A quaint river town that was established in 1848. There is a panoramic view from Buena Vista Park, perched atop a 500-foot bluff above the town. Downtown Alma has many 19th-century waterfront buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In the heart of the town is Lock and Dam No. 4 with observation areas that provide close views of lock operations. In fall, thousands of Tundra Swans and other waterfowl can be seen at Rieck's Lake Park, which has a viewing deck with scopes and interpretive panels.

### **Buffalo City, WI**

Unlike most rivertowns, Buffalo City is oriented north-south and east-west instead of facing toward the river. Shortly after the city was founded in 1856, a flood caused the Mississippi's main channel to jump to the Minnesota side and steamboats could no longer reach the city. The first county jail was built here in 1861, and it is still stands in the city park. Located on the banks

of the backwaters of the Mississippi River, it is popular for birding and fishing. The Foelsch River Side Park has a 1 mile nature trail.

### **Cochrane, WI**

The Chicago, Burlington & Northern Railroad founded Cochrane in 1886, bypassing Buffalo City. Cochrane is a small river town with quiet scenic streets and roads. "Cochrane Chert," a rare fine-grained chert used by Native groups, can be found on the bluff tops. The Prairie Moon Gardens and Museum has a collection of folk art and Americana. The grounds are ornamented with fantastic concrete forms encrusted with shells, rocks, and shards of glass and pottery created by Herman Rusch. Stop at Goose Lake Memorial Park for a picnic or a swim in the heated outdoor pool.

### **Fountain City, WI**

Settled by German immigrants in 1919, Fountain City was the first permanent settlement in Buffalo County. The city was named for multiple natural springs in the area, which fostered several breweries. The panoramic view of Fountain City is highlighted by Eagle Bluff, which stands 550 feet above the river, the highest point on the Mississippi. Visitors can watch river traffic at Lock and Dam No. 5-A. The Fountain City Historical Society museum has one of the best collection of Indian spearpoints and arrowheads in the state.

### **Merrick State Park**

*Box 127*

*Fountain City, WI 54629*

Located along the lazy Mississippi River north of Fountain City. Enjoy fishing from or docking your boat at your campsite. River waters are a haven for summer and winter anglers. The marshy backwaters are home for egrets, herons, muskrats, and otters.

### **Centerville, WI**

The town was named for its location at the heart of the broad Trempealeau Prairie. The crossroads developed into a small trading post for long-distance travelers.

### **Trempealeau, WI**

This community is named after Trempealeau Mountain, a nearby bluff completely surrounded by the Mississippi. The downtown originally faced the river. But after an 1888 fire swept through the city, business owners moved to Main Street. Six original buildings that survived the fire are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. At the south edge of the village is Lock and Dam No. 6 with an observation platform offering close views of lock operations.

### **Perrot State Park and Trempealeau Mountain**

*Box 407*

*Trempealeau, WI 54661*

Two miles northwest of Trempealeau is Perrot State Park, named for fur trader Nicolas Perrot, who wintered here in 1685-86. The 1,400-acre park is nestled among bluffs where the Trempealeau and Mississippi Rivers meet.

Trempealeau Mountain (“The mountain whose foot is bathed by water”) is a 500-foot bluff completely surrounded by the Mississippi River. Over 30 archaeological sites in and around the park demonstrate the importance of this area for Native Americans. Petroglyphs and mounds can be found in the park. Visit the park interpretive center to learn about the people and artifacts.



*Trempealeau Mountain  
at Perrot State Park, WI*

### **Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge**

*W28488 Refuge Road*

*Trempealeau, WI 54661*

This 6,200-acre wildlife refuge is an isolated backwater cut off from the Mississippi and Trempealeau Rivers by dikes. It serves as an important resting and feeding area for waterfowl and

other migrating birds on the Mississippi flyway. Diverse habitats support bald eagles, osprey, and Blanding's turtles. A self-guided wildlife drive and two interpretive trails describe this unique area.

### **Van Loon Wildlife Area (Seven Bridges Area)**

*La Crosse DNR*

*3550 Mormon Coulee Rd.*

*Room 104, SOB*

*La Crosse, WI 54601*

Located east of Trempealeau on the Great River Road, this 4,000-acre wildlife area is a rich, hardwood swamp in the bottomlands of the Black River before it spills into the Mississippi. Visitors can walk on the historic McGilvray Road with its six steel bowstring, arch-truss bridges now being restored by the Wisconsin DNR. The bridges were built between 1905-1908 to improve the road through the marshy river bottom.

### **Holmen, WI**

Holmen is a young village incorporated in 1946. Deer Wood Park is a 40-acre community park with hiking trails, a sledding hill, picnic areas, and playing fields.

### **Midway, WI**

Midway is a small community that hosts a Department of Natural Resources parking area for the Great River State Trail, which also links with the LaCrosse River State Trail. The Great River State Trail is a 24-mile rail bed trail winds its way through the Mississippi River bottom lands north from Onalaska through Trempealeau,

Perrot State Park, and the Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge.

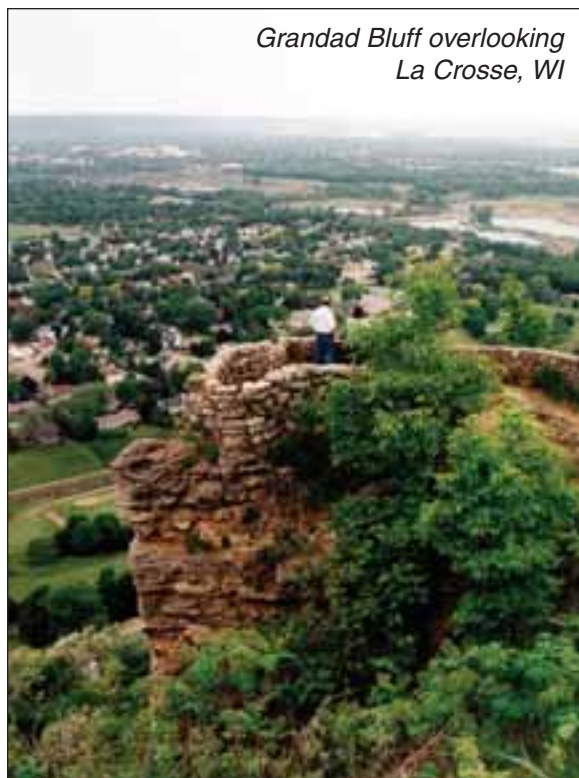
### **Onalaska, WI**

Onalaska's location near the junction of the Black and Mississippi Rivers made it an important lumber town. The first sawmill was established here in 1852, and within decades, 33 mills crowded the riverbank. Lake Onalaska (Pool #7 on the Mississippi) is an excellent spot for fishing and bird watching. The home of lumber baron Frank Eugene Nichols, still overlooks the lake. Onalaska is also the trailhead for the Great River State Trail.

### **La Crosse, WI**

La Crosse is Wisconsin's largest Mississippi River city. Established at the outlets of the Black and La Crosse Rivers, it was in a prime location during the lumber era. The city also benefitted from being an early railroad hub in 1858. La Crosse offers a variety of attractions. The 600-foot Grandad Bluff overlooks the city of La Crosse, the Mississippi River Valley, and three states (Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa). The Riverside Museum has exhibits that chronicle the history of La Crosse, focusing on the Mississippi River and its importance to the area. The Hixon House was owned by a lumber baron in 1860. Visitors can take tours through the Victorian style house with original furnishings. Cruises are also available on steamboats like the Julia Belle Swain and the La Crosse Queen Paddlewheeler. The La Crosse River Bike Trails are accessed here as well.





*Grandad Bluff overlooking  
La Crosse, WI*

### **Stoddard, WI**

This village became a river town in 1937 when the pool created by the construction of Lock and Dam No. 8 in Genoa flooded 18,000 acres of bottomland and brought the river to its doorstep. Stoddard Park features a river beach, a marina and a campground.

### **Genoa, WI**

A small bay once filled the valley attracting steamboats needing an overnight harbor. The village was founded in 1854 by Italian and Swiss immigrants relocated from the lead-mining community of Galena, Illinois. From the village, you can watch towboats and barges "lock through" at Lock and Dam No. 8. Scenic river

overlooks are located along the Great River Road.

### **Victory, WI**

Five settlers laid out the village in 1852 and named it "Victory" to commemorate the final battle of the Black Hawk War fought south of the village 20 years earlier. Victory prospered during the wheat boom of the 1850's and 60's. However, the land was quickly depleted.

### **De Soto, WI**

DeSoto is named for the daring Spanish explorer who discovered the Mississippi in 1541. During the Black Hawk War of 1832, heavy fighting took place between here and the mouth of the Bad Axe River. Many historical markers detailing local Indian history and the war's end are found along the section of Wisconsin's Great River Road. De Soto was established in 1854 on the site of a small outpost of the American Fur Company. By building wing dams in the Mississippi, the channel was diverted and allowed steamboats to reach the town. Blackhawk Park offers riverfront campsites, picnic areas, a fishing dock, a sand swimming beach and boat-launching facilities.

### **Ferryville, WI**

This community was originally called "Humble Bush," but was renamed Ferryville when platted in 1858. The founders hoped to establish ferry service across the Mississippi to Lansing, Iowa. When the ferry began operating several years later, it transported grain, livestock, and other

produce. Today, the village is known for its quilts, cheese outlet, and flowers.

### Lynxville, WI

Before the lock and dam system, Lynxville was a popular landing for steamboats due to the stable depth of the river. From 1850 to 1895, it was a busy port with warehouses full of fish, clam shells, and ice. In 1896, the largest log raft on the Mississippi was assembled here: 260 feet wide, 1,550 feet long, and contained 2.25 million board feet of lumber. Today, visitors can watch river traffic pass through Lock and Dam No. 9.

### Prairie du Chien, WI

An Indian village that became a fur-trading center, Prairie du Chien is the oldest community on the Upper Mississippi. Fur warehouses built by the American Fur Trading Co. in the 19th-century still survive on historic St. Feriole Island. The Fort Crawford Museum displays medical history and relics of 19th century medicine. The city is built on an elongated valley deposit, formed by glacial meltwater. At the south end of this prairie, the Wisconsin River empties into the Mississippi.

### Villa Louis Historic Site, Prairie du Chien

*Wisconsin Historical Society*

*816 State Street*

*Madison, WI 53706*

Located on St. Feriole Island, Villa Louis is the historic home of Hercules Dousman, a 19th century fur trader and frontier entrepreneur. Over 90% of the furnishings are original to the house. The Fur Trade Museum and

Wisconsin's only War of 1812 battlefield are also located on the historic site.

### Wyalusing State Park

*13081 State Park Lane*

*Bagley, WI 53801*

One of Wisconsin's oldest parks, Wyalusing is perched on bluffs 500-feet above the confluence of the Wisconsin and Mississippi Rivers. In 1673, Father Jacques Marquette and Louis Jolliet discovered the Upper Mississippi at this confluence. The park features hiking trails, canoe trails, Indian burial mounds, caves, waterfalls, nature trails, historic markers, camping, and wildlife watching. Over 2,600 acres of hardwood forests, pine plantations, springs, wetlands, and backwaters provide a diverse habitat for many species of wildlife.



*Wyalusing State Park, WI*

### Wyalusing, WI

The first Wyalusing was established in 1843 north of its current location. The village did not prosper, the land was sold, and the second Wyalusing was established at its current location in 1856. Steamboats delivered supplies and a ferry service was established.

Competition from nearby Bridgeport and the railroads led to an early demise of its commercial ventures. Today, visitors can enjoy a sand swimming beach along the river. A commemorative bridge on Cty. C was built by the state of Wisconsin to honor The Great River Road.

### **Bagley, WI**

Laid out in a north-south axis, the Mississippi River was not important to the village founders. Bagley was established in 1886, a year after the Chicago, Burlington, and Northern rail lines were laid here. Today, the quiet town offers two inviting campgrounds. The community is well known in this area as a "duck hunter's paradise" because of the national flyway leading to and from Canada.

### **Glen Haven, WI**

In the 1830's, steamboats made this location a busy livestock shipping port. The community was founded in 1857. The Main Street reflects the importance of the river, running from adjacent farmland directly to the landing. In 1884 when railroad tracks were laid, the shipping business moved to the train depot. Today, trains still pass through the town every twenty minutes. Restaurants and Bed-and-Breakfasts serve visitors to the area.

### **Cassville, WI**

Early Cassville boosters hoped it would be chosen as the state's capital. Steamboats were constantly arriving from St. Louis and other river towns. However, the city was not selected, and land developers went bankrupt.

Historic brick homes are reminders of the early prosperity. Riverside Park has playground areas, picnic facilities, and a boat launch ramp. The narrow channel makes it ideal for watching river traffic. The Cassville Car Ferry is the only remaining ferry on the Upper Mississippi River, and travels to Turkey Creek, Iowa.

### **Stonefield and Nelson Dewey Homesite**

*P.O. Box 125*

*Cassville, WI 53806*

Wisconsin's first governor, Nelson Dewey, spent most of his adult life in Cassville. He built a Gothic Revival mansion on a large estate and called it Stonefield. Today, visitors can visit the mansion and a reconstructed turn-of-the-century community named Stonefield Village. A State Agricultural Museum and recreated early 1900s farmhouse are also located on the grounds.

### **Nelson Dewey State Park**

*Box 658*

*Cassville, WI 53806*

Perched on top of the bluffs, this park offers panoramic overlooks of the Mississippi River and wooded campsites with spectacular views. Several trails lead visitors through native prairie, near several Indian mounds, and through woodlands.

### **Potosi, WI**

Native Americans were the first to mine lead in this area. In 1827, Willis St. John turned a lead-filled cave into a mine, and miners swarmed to the site from

Galena, Illinois. By the late 1800s, the settlement expanded into a village. "Potosi" is a Spanish word that means "lead." The long, winding streets were influenced by the valley's topography. In fact, Potosi has the longest main street without an intersection in the world (three miles). The St. John Lead Mine, believed to be the oldest in the state, is open for tours. The Passage Thru Time Museum interprets the local history. The Potosi Brewery operated continuously from 1852 to 1972, producing a legal "near beer" during Prohibition. The Brewery has recently been awarded as the site of the new National Brewery Museum & Library. The Grant River Recreation Area, designed and built by the Army Corps of Engineers, has modern camp sites and a picnic area on the banks of the Mississippi.

#### **Tennyson, WI**

This village was originally called "Dutch Hollow" and was a settlement of mine workers of similar ethnic background. Later named Tennyson in honor of poet Alfred Lloyd Tennyson, it was one of a dozen communities that grew up in the mid-1800's around the more than 10,000 hand-dug lead mines in the area. The region produced virtually all of the lead shot for the Northern forces of the Civil War.

#### **Dickeyville, WI**

This agricultural community was founded in the late 1840s by a settler named Dickey. The Dickeyville Grotto, built by Father Mathias Wernerus in the 1920s, is famous throughout the region. The concrete shrine is decorated with

rocks, shells, and other materials from around the world.

#### **Kieler, WI**

The Immaculate Conception Catholic Church serves as the focal point of Kieler, demonstrating its important role in community life. The village was founded in 1855 by German Catholics. In 1859, a small wooden church was constructed. This was replaced by a larger stone building in 1869. Gothic Revival detailing was applied to the main entrance and two stone towers were added to the front of the church in 1896.

An official Wisconsin Travel Information Center is located here at the intersection of Highways 11, 35, 61 and 151. The center will become the Southern Gateway to the Wisconsin Great River Road in the near future. Travelers can cross a bridge to connect with The Iowa Great River Road.



*Immaculate Conception  
Catholic Church in Kieler, WI*

## Minnesota Inventory

### **Minneapolis, MN**

Originally called St. Anthony for the 16-foot waterfall that powered the city's rapid growth. Mills grew up on the falls, and the city became the country's largest flour producer in the 1890s.



### **Mill City Museum**

704 South 2nd Street  
Minneapolis, MN 55414

Built in the ruins of the Washburn A Mill, this museum dramatically tells the story of the development of Minneapolis and the importance of flour milling.

### **St. Anthony Falls Heritage Trail**

Minneapolis, MN

A two-mile loop trail that interprets the rich history of Minneapolis' historic flour-milling district. The trail provides views of St. Anthony Falls, the only waterfall on the Mississippi. Visitors can walk over the Stone Arch Bridge, a beautifully restored railroad bridge now open to pedestrians.



*Mill City Museum, MN*



*Fort Snelling, MN*

### **St. Paul, MN**

This community was settled by squatters from Fort Snelling who had been evicted. Originally called Pig's Eye after one of the community's founders, it was renamed St. Paul in 1841 after a chapel was built.

### **Fort Snelling**

Fort Snelling History Center  
Saint Paul, MN 55111

Costumed interpreters guide visitors through a restored 1820s fort overlooking the confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers. Philander Prescott worked here as an interpreter for the Dakota tribe.

### **National Park Service Mississippi River Visitors Center**

*Science Museum of Minnesota  
120 West Kellogg Boulevard  
Saint Paul, MN 55102*

Located just off the lobby of the Science Museum of Minnesota, the center is staffed by NPS rangers. Exhibits interpret the culture, landscape, and recreational opportunities of the entire Mississippi River Corridor.



*Mississippi River Visitors Center at the Science Museum of Minnesota*

### **Science Museum of Minnesota**

*120 West Kellogg Boulevard  
Saint Paul, MN 55102*

In the Mississippi River Gallery, visitors can test their skills as a barge pilot, see live Mississippi River fish, climb aboard an actual towboat, and fly down the entire Mississippi from Lake Itasca to the Gulf of Mexico. The museum offers breath-taking views of the Mississippi River.

### **Hastings, MN**

A scenic rivertown at the junction of the Mississippi, St. Croix, and Vermillion Rivers. Settled in 1857, the city has a classic Main Street downtown and an 1871 County Courthouse.



*Downtown Hastings, MN*

### **Red Wing, MN**

Local clay deposits supported pottery and pipe manufacturing here for many years. Today the renowned Red Wing Pottery Factory has been transformed into offices, shops, and restaurants. The historic Saint James hotel is a favorite place for meals and overnight accommodations.

### **Wabasha, MN**

This historic river town is a favorite dock and stop over for river boats like the Delta Queen and the Mississippi Queen. In winter, it is a good location to observe Bald Eagles. This city is the future home of the National Eagle Center.



### **La Crescent, MN**

During the spring blooming season, the Hiawatha Apple Blossom Scenic Drive is a rewarding sightseeing trip.

**Iowa Inventory**



**Effigy Mounds National Monument**

151 Highway 76  
Harpers Ferry, IA 52146-7519

These unique effigy mounds were constructed about 500 BC to 1300 AD by the Eastern Woodland Culture. Twenty-nine of the 200 mounds are in the shape of mammals, birds, and reptiles.



**Yellow River Forest State Recreation Area**

729 State Forest Road  
Harpers Ferry, IA 52146

This 8,000 acre forest is highlighted by scenic river bluffs and cold water streams. Hiking, horseback riding, camping, canoeing, hunting, and fishing are available here.

**Pikes Peak State Park**

15316 Great River Road  
McGregor, IA 52157-8558

One of Iowa's highest Mississippi River bluffs offers spectacular views of the river valley. Hiking, camping, and picnicking are popular here.

**Mines of Spain State Recreation Area**

8991 Bellevue Heights  
Dubuque, IA 52003

This natural area offers a variety of river related recreational activities including an extensive trail system, wildlife watching, and a nature center.

**National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium**

3rd Road Street Hbr  
Dubuque, IA 52001

The large museum and aquarium focus on the natural and cultural history of the Mississippi River. The extensive exhibits provide a good overview for travelers on the Great River Road.







## Chapter 3:

# Themes & Messages



**Themes** are the important ideas that organize the stories we wish to tell about Prescott and the Great River Road. They create a framework for planning and help place resources and events into meaningful contexts for visitors.

## Themes and Messages

**T**hemes are the important ideas that organize the stories we wish to tell about Prescott and the Great River Road. They create a framework for planning and help place resources and events into meaningful contexts for visitors. Once these important concepts are identified, we can make decisions about what site resources and media are most appropriate to help us tell these stories. Compelling interpretive themes link a tangible resource to the interests of visitors. The theme statement, which is the main idea of an interpretive product, should always contain a universal concept.

**Universal concepts** are intangible meanings that have significance to almost everyone, but may not mean the same thing to any two people. They are the ideas, values, challenges, relationships, needs, and emotions that speak to the human condition.

Interpretation is most effective when themes and media allow visitors to grasp meanings and apply them to their own lives. Visitors may not parrot the themes we write— but if they are provoked, inspired, want to know more, or can apply it to something in their own lives, we have been successful. Themes are used to develop ideas that say something powerful and important, igniting the interests of visitors. Interpretation should provide opportunities for people to explore ideas and meanings about resources and events and to arrive at their own conclusions.

When used effectively, a theme provides a

focus that allows people to consider meanings and understand and appreciate the resource in ways they might otherwise have missed.

## Unifying Interpretive Messages

The themes selected for the Freedom Park Visitor Center were adapted from the Mississippi River Byways—Interpretive Workshop. Eleven themes were approved by representatives from the Mississippi River Parkway Commission (ten states), byway leaders from nationally designated scenic byways, and resource people and interpretive specialists from private and public organizations. These themes help “to unify and coordinate interpretive efforts throughout the Great River Road.” A complete listing of the themes developed from the workshop is available in Appendix 2. Six of the eleven themes directly related to the unique characteristics of the Prescott site were used to develop the interpretive stories for the Freedom Park Visitor Center.



## Primary Theme

The **primary theme** represents the main idea we are hoping to communicate about Prescott and the Great River Road. All interpretation in the visitor center and on site should relate to this overall theme.

Prescott, a classic River Town and gateway to the Great River Road, is a gathering place where rivers, wildlife, and people blend into a dynamic living community rich in history and grand scenery.



## Sub-theme 1:

The Mississippi and St. Croix Rivers are ribbons of life for people, plants, and animals.

**Sub-themes** split the primary theme into several more specific and workable ideas.

**Messages** break down the sub-themes further into very specific stories that can be told with personal and non-personal interpretation.

### Messages

#### The Great River

- 1.1 The Mississippi River is the longest and largest river in North America, flowing 2,300 miles.
- 1.2 "Mississippi" is an Anishinabe (Chippewa, Ojibwa) word that means "Great River" or "Gathering of Waters"
- 1.3 The watershed of the Mississippi River stretches from the Allegheny Mountains in the east to the Rocky Mountains in the west, nearly 40% of the United States. This includes 31 states and 2 Canadian provinces.
- 1.4 Among the rivers of the world, the Mississippi ranks third in length, and second in watershed area.
- 1.5 The largest continuous system of wetlands in North America is found adjacent to the Mississippi.
- 1.6 The Headwaters of the Mississippi flow from Lake Itasca in northern Minnesota to St. Anthony Falls in Minneapolis. The Mississippi begins as a small, clear stream, but the water is gradually stained brown from bog vegetation tannins.
- 1.7 The Upper Mississippi flows 908 miles from St. Anthony Falls in Minneapolis to the mouth of the Ohio River at Cairo, Illinois. The river channel is more narrow than the southern stretches, and steep bluffs line the valley.
- 1.8 Lake Pepin formed about 9,500 years ago when a delta of sand from the Chippewa River partially blocked the Mississippi River valley. It is 1 to 2.5 miles wide and 22 miles long. It traps sediments and pollution, enhancing river quality downstream.



*Overlook at Lake Pepin, formed by a delta of sand from the Chippewa River.*

- 1.9 The Lower Mississippi River flows from Cairo, Illinois to the Gulf of Mexico in southern Louisiana. The river channel is broad and shallow, with characteristic swamps and bottomland hardwood forests.
- 1.10 The Lower Mississippi has not been dammed, but has been channelized and shortened by 140 miles.
- 1.11 The dramatic Upper Mississippi River channel was formed by glaciation. From 15,000-10,000 years ago the melting Wisconsin glacier increased water flow in the Mississippi. Two glacial rivers, the Warren (Minnesota River) and the St. Croix fed the Mississippi's erosive powers, scouring the channel to more than 800 feet deep. When the glaciers melted to Canada, the river began filling with sand and gravel, a process which continues today.
- 1.12 The massive and steep bluffs of the Upper Mississippi are made of material formed by an ancient sea. From 600-300 million years ago, sediments from a rising and falling sea formed thick layers of shale, dolomite, limestone, and sandstone overlying granite.
- 1.13 The rugged bluffs of the Upper Mississippi represent a karst landscape, characterized by sinkholes, caves, springs, and streams. In places, cliffs rise 500 feet above the river.



*A boat anchored in Lake St. Croix near Point Douglas.*

Scenic River in 1968, one of the first eight to be given this designation. The Lower St. Croix was added in 1972. It is one of the most pristine large river ecosystems in the Upper Midwest.

- 1.15 The St. Croix starts as a small spring north of Gordon, Wisconsin, and flows 154 miles to Prescott where it joins the Mississippi. It makes up 120 miles of the border between Wisconsin and Minnesota.
- 1.16 The last 25 miles of the St. Croix River is known as Lake St. Croix, likely formed from hydraulic damming by the Mississippi. It was a major staging area for assembling log rafts for transport to sawmills downriver.
- 1.17 When the glaciers began melting nearly 10,000 years ago, the St. Croix valley was a major drainage channel for glacial meltwater from Lake Superior.

#### The St. Croix

- 1.14 The Upper St. Croix River was designated a National Wild and

#### Wildlife

- 1.18 The Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge



is the longest refuge in the United States, stretching 261 miles from Lake Pepin to Rock Island, Illinois.

- 1.19 The Mississippi is home to many rare, threatened, and endangered species, including the bald eagle, peregrine falcon, Massasauga rattle snake, pallid sturgeon, and two freshwater mollusks: Higgins eye and fat pocketbook.
- 1.20 Bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), attracted to the open water of the Mississippi, are a common sight from Freedom Park during the winter. The park was named after a rehabilitated eagle released from the site in 1982.
- 1.21 The wingspan of a bald eagle is 6-8 feet. They can fly at 65 mph in level flight, and up to 200 mph in a dive. Eagles need open water for eating fish and tall trees for nesting. They are monogamous and add new material to nests year after year.
- 1.22 The bald eagle is the National Emblem of the United States, passed by the Second Continental Congress in 1782. It is the living symbol of freedom, spirit, and pursuit of happiness.
- 1.23 A heron rookery is also visible from Freedom Park on the opposite side of the Mississippi. Great blue herons (*Ardea herodias*) are the largest herons in North America with a wing-span of 4 feet. Their nests are platforms of loose sticks in the top of trees.
- 1.24 The Mississippi Flyway is a migration corridor for 40% of North America's waterfowl and shorebirds.
- 1.25 Freedom Park is listed in the *Audubon Great River Birding Trail* brochure (Map Section 5 of 15). It is an excellent place to watch the fall migrations of hawks and migratory waterfowl.
- 1.26 At Prescott, the Mississippi River Valley narrows to a one-mile wide corridor, creating a natural bottleneck for migrating birds.
- 1.27 A bird count between Hastings, MN and Prescott from March 11 to April 25, 2001 resulted in 100,332 migrants. This included 75,584 waterbirds, 5,315 raptors, and 19,432 other birds, mostly passerines. Some unique species included 500 common loons, 3,147 American white pelicans, 4,147 double-crested cormorants (a record count for Minnesota), 2,188 bald eagles, and 90 red-shouldered

hawks (a species of Special Concern in Minnesota). [Bardon, Karl J. "The Hastings-Prescott Bird Count." *The Loon* 73:231-235 (Winter 2001)]

- 1.28 Tundra swans rest and feed on the pools of the Upper Mississippi River as they migrate to their wintering grounds on Chesapeake Bay. They eat the starchy tubers of plants like arrowhead and wild celery.
- 1.29 Tundra swans can fly at speeds up to 100 mph with a tail wind. Some flocks reach an elevation of 6,000 to 8,000 feet, high enough to be hit by planes.
- 1.30 The observation platform at Rieck's Lake Park in Alma is one of the best places to view tundra swans and other waterfowl up-close.
- 1.31 Across the river from Freedom Park is a large floodplain forest managed by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. It includes parts of the Gores Pool Wildlife Management Area and Vermillion River Bottoms.
- 1.32 The Vermillion River Bottoms is 17- mile by 2.5-mile floodplain forest nestled between the Mississippi River and the Vermillion River in Minnesota. This area represents the vast floodplain forests that once spread throughout the Mississippi River Valley. It provides critical habitat for a variety of wildlife.
- 1.33 Using the power of advertising for the first time in the service of conservation, Wil Dilg and the Izaak Walton League mustered

widespread public support for preserving the wetlands in the Upper Mississippi River Valley.

- 1.34 Hexagenia mayflies thrive in many areas of the Mississippi. The population boomed after the construction of the 9-foot channel. The large hatches are a nuisance to most people, but are excellent food for fish.
- 1.35 Mayflies, for a few brief days, might be so abundant that their bodies can build up on bridge approaches and sidewalks impeding traffic. On the river, they can blot out navigation lights with their mass or cover pilothouse windows.



*A large hatch of mayflies may be a nuisance to people, but is an invaluable food source for fish.*

Habitat

- 1.36 Historically, the bluffs lining the Upper Mississippi were predominately grassy areas with a few scattered trees. Oak savanna (prairies with scattered oaks) and "goat prairies" (rocky and dry areas with prairie grasses and wildflowers) were common.

## Sub-theme 2:

The history of the Mississippi and St. Croix River transportation is a dramatic story reflecting the river's economic and commercial importance.



*A steamboat participating in the 2004 Grand Excursion.*

### Messages

#### Early Transportation

- 2.1 Mound builders developed extensive trade routes on the river systems. Goods, like Wisconsin copper, were traded as far away as Florida and Mexico. Cahokia near modern-day St. Louis was a major population center for the Mississippian culture.

#### Lumbering

- 2.2 Lumber rafts were the dominant vessel on the Upper Mississippi and St. Croix from 1860 to the 1890s. The last lumber raft floated past Prescott in 1914.
- 2.3 Prescott was the headquarters for the St. Paul Boom Company. Rafts of logs were assembled in Lake St. Croix in preparation for transport down the Mississippi to lumbermills. Peak years were from 1875-1895.
- 2.4 Pine lumber, especially white pine, was ideal for rafting to sawmills because it was lightweight, strong, grew straight, and was buoyant.
- 2.5 Sawdust and woodchips were abundant river sediments from St. Paul downriver from 1860-1900.
- 2.6 Deforested watersheds at the turn of the century resulted in extreme flood and drought conditions, which confounded river navigation and ironically made lumber rafting difficult.
- 2.7 By 1857, 3,000 men were employed in Wisconsin lumbering.
- 2.8 Logs were "stamped" by the lumber camp that cut them for identification downriver at the sawmill.
- 2.9 Lumber companies used water wagons to create ice roads to "skid" loads of logs to the rivers.
- 2.10 White pine was floated in rafts downriver to mills and markets. The first rafts were made of lumber, but after 1843, whole logs were rafted in booms.
- 2.11 A large lumber raft was comparable in area to the flight deck of an aircraft carrier. Cut lumber was stacked into a 16'x32' crib. A Mississippi raft held 120-200 cribs.

- 2.12 Slow moving rafts of logs often clogged the river and created problems for packet boats. Loose logs also created potential disasters for boats.
- 2.13 Skippers used smaller steamboats attached by crosswire at the front of the rafts to help steer. A large boat at the rear pushed the raft.
- 2.14 By the 1880s, the Mississippi River Boom and Logging Company had become the major financial power on the river. Railroads had greatly diminished steamboat commerce, leaving the lumber industry to dominate river transportation.

#### Steamboats

- 2.15 Prescott flourished during the steamboat era. During low water, it was the northern terminus of the Mississippi River.
- 2.16 Steamboats were built and repaired at Prescott. In 1856, the Prescott Dry Docks and Shipbuilding Company was formed.
- 2.17 Nowhere was steamboating more important in the 1830s-50s than on the waterways of the Mississippi River Valley, where neither canal barges or sailing ships could compete.
- 2.18 While eastern steamships used low-pressure engines for safety, the boats on the Mississippi used high-pressure engines. These were lighter and smaller, allowing more room for cargo and passengers. They were loud, vibrated excessively, and were quite susceptible to exploding. Boats were expected to last no more than 5 years.
- 2.19 The specializations and adaptations of the steamboats to the Mississippi River and their impact on economics and culture were a notable achievement of America's Industrial Age.
- 2.20 The sinking of the Sea Wing on Lake Pepin on July 13, 1890 was the greatest steamboat disaster on the Upper Mississippi. Ninety-eight people died. The small towns of Diamond Bluff and Trenton each lost 10 citizens. Most others were from Red Wing, Minnesota.
- 2.21 Early steamboats had prized bells. After 1845, steam whistles replaced the bells. People on the River could identify boats by their whistles.
- 2.22 Crews would constantly measure the depth of water in the channel with marked poles or lead lines. Lead lines had felt and leather spliced into them, so even in the dark, a crew member could feel the depth as it passed through his hands.
- 2.23 The river boat crews had their own language and terms:
  - Levee: Place where steamboats land
  - Slough: The water behind an island separate from the main channel
  - The Texas: The cabin on the roof that contained the captain's stateroom
  - Roosters: Deck hands
  - Floaters: The hands working on rafts
  - Old Man: The Captain



- Towing: Meant pushing, not pulling
- 2.24 At the height of steamboating's popularity on the Upper Mississippi in 1858, St. Paul had more than 1,000 boats dock in its port.
- 2.25 In addition to goods, steamboats brought culture to river towns: tourists, immigrants, musicians, theater, and circuses.
- 2.26 For a brief period after the Civil War, steamboats became quite ornate and elegant with carpeted staterooms and food that rivaled eastern hotels.
- 2.27 Professional gamblers on the Upper Mississippi were satisfied with much smaller stakes and profits than on the Lower River frequented by wealthier plantation owners. Groups of 2 or 3 gamblers often worked the boats together, and with the assistance of the boat's bartenders, would use marked cards to relieve victims of their money.
- 2.28 As steamboats evolved, they became more shallow, narrow, and long. Many needed less than 18 inches of water to float.
- 2.29 Twin smokestacks as high as 90 feet above the water helped sparks to burn out before they fell onto the boat deck. Bridges over the river created the need to hinge the stacks.
- 2.30 Riverboats were designed with long rakes on the bow to facilitate tying up without the need of a wharf. A landing stage at the bow could be swung from boat to shore to load and unload freight and

passengers.

- 2.31 Waste "fat" and pine knots would be added to the steamboat's firebox to increase speed. This practice compromised safety as boilers were prone to explode.

### Railroads

- 2.32 Steamboats carrying freight were replaced by railroads in the 1880s. Railroad companies bought up the remaining steamboat interests to kill competition.
- 2.33 By 1889, railroads had taken over all the freight shipment of the Upper Mississippi region and 75% of the passengers.
- 2.34 River traffic on the Upper Mississippi was limited to the period between March and mid-November. Trains could run year-round.
- 2.35 During the river navigation season, the trains transported goods at a loss, only to raise rates in the winter when boats could not compete.
- 2.36 Railroads out-competed riverboats for freight and passengers. This caused a virtual bankruptcy for river navigation in the last half of the 19th century, until Congress authorized 9-foot shipping channels.
- 2.37 The first train in Prescott, owned by the Winona, Alma, and Northern Railroad, arrived on May 30, 1886. The city had a day-long celebration.
- 2.38 Meeting the trains was a social event. Modern, stream-lined trains like the Zephyr in the 1930s drew crowds of viewers.





*A view of a train from the Prescott cemetery.*

- 2.39 The Prescott Depot was constructed in 1886 from precut wood shipped to the location. According to longtime railroader, O.P. Tronnier, the larger Prescott depot was supposed to go to Pepin, but ended up in Prescott by mistake. The smaller depot in Pepin is still in use today as a museum.
- 2.40 Due to the sharp curve of the rails in Prescott, prior to crossing the St. Croix bridge, old iron train wheels would “squeal” as they turned the corner.
- 2.41 Trains turning the sharp curve in Prescott needed to slow their speed. Hobos could easily get on

and off the trains. They often sought shelter in a large concrete culvert.

- 2.42 Railroad builders sought the easiest grades, and therefore built tracks along the river. In towns, the tracks usually separated Main Street from the river in order to be near lumberyards, grain elevators, and warehouses. Multiple tracks blocked access to the river banks.

### Barges

- 2.43 Upper Mississippi River transportation was revived after a 1926 meeting in Minneapolis of the Upper Mississippi Barge Line Company. The federal government got involved and formed the Federal Barge Lines.
- 2.44 When the barge lines were created, it was necessary to revive the old retired river captains and lumber raftsmen, because they knew the river. They trained others who were often relatives and friends from their hometowns.
- 2.45 Diesel towboats started to replace steamboats in 1932. Diesels saved money because they could be shut off in port, unlike steam that had to be maintained.
- 2.46 Diesel boats are not required to be inspected by the U.S. government like steamboats. There are no government regulations about crew sizes, so crews could be cut at least in half.
- 2.47 The standard tow on the Upper Mississippi consists of 15 barges in a 3 wide/5 long configuration. This is the most efficient size to fit



- the locks.
- 2.48 The standard tow on the Lower Mississippi is 35 barges in a 5 wide/7 long configuration.
  - 2.49 Over 3,000 towboats and 25,000 barges operate on the Mississippi River system.
  - 2.50 One barge has the capacity to carry 1,500 tons, 52,500 bushels, or 453,600 gallons. One barge can carry the equivalent of 15 jumbo hopper railroad cars or 58 large semi trucks.
  - 2.51 Barges are ideal for moving commodities in bulk. The cost of moving cargo on water is less than rail or truck.
  - 2.52 Whole grains are the most

common cargo shipped on barges (over 20% in 1990). The second largest commodity is coal, followed closely by refined petroleum, crude petroleum, fertilizers, and chemicals. Crude materials, like rock and stone, sand and gravel, iron ore, and forest products are also commonly shipped.

Bridges

- 2.53 The first railroad bridge over the Mississippi was built at Rock Island Rapids near Davenport, Iowa. Fifteen days after it opened, the Effie Afton sidewheeler smacked into the bridge piling,



*A barge on the Mississippi from the Maiden Rock overlook on the Great River Road.*

collapsing its smokestacks and burning to the waterline. Three-hundred oxen leapt into the water. No lives, human or oxen, were lost, but lawsuits and salvage operations followed. Abraham Lincoln was the winning attorney for the railroads. James B. Eads, later famous for his steel bridge over the river at St. Louis, was the salvage operator

- 2.54 As a result of the Rock Island wreck, Congress gave the Army Corps of Engineers authority to review all bridges to ensure their safety for shipping.
- 2.55 In the later half of the 19th century, 1 out of every 4 bridges collapsed.
- 2.56 The Prescott Bridge Company was formed in 1920, and the first car tollbridge opened on June 22, 1923. Toll prices were 25 cents for a car and 5 cents for each passenger up to 35 cents. Bicyclists, hitchhikers, motorcyclists, and wagon drivers all paid the toll.
- 2.57 To avoid the Prescott bridge toll, some people hid on fenders away from the toll collector to avoid paying. Newspaper trucks from Minnesota would drop the bundles of papers on the Minnesota side of the bridge to avoid paying the 25 cent toll. Paper boys from Prescott would pay 5 cents to walk across and carry paper bundles back. In winter when Lake St. Croix froze solid, cars would drive over the ice to avoid the tolls.



*The Prescott railroad bridge spanning the St. Croix River.*

- 2.58 Bridge tenders would often fish from the bridge during the slow traffic of the 1920s.
- 2.59 Kids would swim out to the bridge piers, climb them, and dive into the river.
- 2.60 A unique spiral bridge was built in Hastings, Minnesota in 1895. The spiral allowed traffic to arrive and depart through the business district, whereas a standard design would have brought traffic over and away from the developing downtown. The bridge was replaced by a standard design in 1951. Postcards and photos help the city remember the bridge, as does a replica on display at the Little Log House Village, 10 miles south of Hastings.
- 2.61 In the 1800s, Congress passed a law that required any bridge that could not be opened to be high enough to provide a 52-foot clearance at high water.
- 2.62 Approximately 170 bridges span the Mississippi River.

## Sub-theme 3:

The Mississippi and St. Croix are working rivers that have sustained people's livelihoods throughout history.

### Messages

#### Freshwater Mussels: Buttons and Pearls

- 3.1 In 1891, John Boepple opened a button making factory in Muscatine, Iowa on the Mississippi River. He discovered that the river mussels worked as well as ocean, mother-of-pearl shells for making buttons.
- 3.2 By 1898, there were nearly 50 button factories on the Upper Mississippi.
- 3.3 Freshwater pearls were commonly found in the Upper Mississippi, and even served as legal tender for drinks in the bars of Winona, Minnesota.
- 3.4 By the late 1890's, the button industry had taken the place of the timber industry as the most important business in river towns. At its peak, 20,000 people were employed.
- 3.5 From 1911 to 1921, James Atchison from Prescott ran a clamboat called the *St. Croix* on the Mississippi and St. Croix Rivers. The shells were opened to search for rare pearls, and then sent to button factories along the Mississippi.
- 3.6 Mussels face upstream with their siphons open to receive oxygen and food. They snap shut on anything that touches them.
- 3.7 The "crowfoot" is a bar with hooks that collects mussels when dragged along the bottom of the river.
- 3.8 Mussels grow slowly. A 4-inch shell takes 25 years to develop.
- 3.9 Mussels are sensitive to changes in water temperature, flow, and sedimentation. Pollution, such as sewage, pesticides, fertilizers, and agricultural runoff, impact them. Zebra mussels, introduced in the 1990s, adversely affect them as well.
- 3.10 It took more than a century to deplete the beaver, 50 years to cut all the Pineries, but less than 25 years to exhaust the mussels in the Mississippi River.



*Clams and shell buttons from Evelyn Everts, Hager City.*

- 3.11 Lake Pepin was renowned for being rich with mussels. By the late 1890s and early 1900s, more than 500 clammers worked the Lake.

### Commercial Fishing

- 3.12 Carp were introduced in 1872 by Robert Poppe and by the U.S. Bureau of Fisheries in 1877. No preliminary studies of their potential effects were done.
- 3.13 Historically, Lake Pepin was an ecological mix of the best lake and river habitats. There were walleyed pike, northern pike, pickerel, muskie, small and large-mouth bass, sauger, yellow perch, crappies, bluegills, rock bass, catfish, and sturgeons.
- 3.14 Before the dams were built, species of fish like skipjacks migrated freely up and down the Mississippi River.
- 3.15 Evelyn Everts, long-time Hager City resident, describes her husband Rolland's work as a commercial fisherman in 1956. He would soak barley and spread it over cleared water to attract carp and sheephead for seining. All fishermen dream of making a "big catch." Rolland came home late one day, and said, "We hit 'em!" Evelyn called all the fish buyers and her husband unloaded the fish into trucks. They hauled all day and all night until 2 a.m.
- 3.16 Commercial fishing, sport fishing, and pleasure boating were revolutionized by the power boat, which became common in the 1950s.
- 3.17 Five to ten-million pounds of carp, buffalo, sheephead, and catfish are harvested each year on the Upper Mississippi.

### Recreation on the River

- 3.18 Resorts, like the Everts Resort in Hager City, have catered to tourists' recreational needs since the early 1940s.
- 3.19 Recreational boats evolved from tin boats with flat bottoms and oars, to V-bottom boats with inboard motors, to modern boats with outboard motors.
- 3.20 Fishing has always been an important recreational activity on the river. Visitors of the Everts Resort still remember the big fish fry and bonfire every Friday night.
- 3.21 The Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge reports 3.5 million visitors per year, more than Yellowstone National Park.
- 3.22 Waterfowl hunting in the Mississippi Flyway is valued at \$58 million per year, and fishing is valued at \$100 million annually.



*Rolland Everts hauling in fish from the Mississippi. Photo courtesy of Evelyn Everts.*

## Sub-theme 4:

The Mississippi River has nurtured prehistoric and historic cultures.

### Messages

#### Woodland and Mississippian cultures

- 4.1 Prehistoric mounds overlooking the Mississippi River were once common on the Freedom Park Ridge. J.V. Brower in 1903 wrote, "Along the heights overlooking Prescott, Wisconsin, there is a large group of mounds and embankments which have been nearly denuded by gardeners and others."
- 4.2 By 1920, only 5 prehistoric mounds remained. Most of these were destroyed in the 1930s.
- 4.3 Mounds were likely built by native people of the Woodland tradition (500 B.C. to 1000 A.D.) The culture fished, hunted deer and bison, and gathered native grains, corn, and beans for food. They also developed elaborate pottery.
- 4.4 The Mississippian (Oneota) culture thrived in the Upper Mississippi River area from 900-1700 AD. They established several large mound and village complexes on the terraces near Red Wing. They also cultivated fields of corn, beans, and squash.
- 4.5 The Mero Site near Diamond Bluff is a large mound group



*"Winona's Leap. Lake Pepin, Miss. River"*  
painted by Seth Eastman in 1848.

surrounding several villages. Occupied from 1000-1300 AD, remnants of the Woodland (Late Woodland) and Mississippian (Middle Mississippian and Oneota) traditions were excavated.

#### Dakota and Chippewa tribes

- 4.6 The Upper Mississippi and St. Croix region was a land of dynamic tension when Europeans began to arrive.
- 4.7 The eastern Dakota (Sioux) were stressed by new diseases introduced by Europeans, like smallpox and malaria. At the same time, the Chippewa were expanding westward into traditional Sioux lands. Between 1680 and 1805, the Dakota in the Mississippi Valley may have declined by as much as 1/3.
- 4.8 Once the Indians began trading with whites, they were forever entangled in the vast economic system of which they had little power to control.
- 4.9 The competition and excesses of the fur trade added to the

- disruption of social stability. Fighting between the Dakota and Chippewa erupted over trapping territories as game diminished.
- 4.10 As the fur trade increased, the game animals became more scarce. The Indians became dependent on the traders, missionaries, and federal Indian agents for survival.
- 4.11 Starvation and dependency on government rations reached its breaking point in the 1850s, and by 1862 the “Dakota Conflict” erupted.
- 4.12 Over 500 white settlers lost their lives in the Dakota Conflict. Thirty-eight Dakota warriors were found guilty and hung at Fort Snelling in the largest mass hanging in U.S. history. Hundreds of other Sioux were barged downriver to prisons. Still others were sent to a reservation in eastern Nebraska.
- 4.13 In the 1800s, Dakota elders were pressured by the American government to sign treaties relinquishing tribal lands for American settlement.
- 4.14 Many early European settlers in the Mississippi and St. Croix Rivers region were very interested in the Native Americans. They learned their language, painted them, wrote of their culture, and became members of their families.
- 4.15 After the 1862 Dakota Conflict and the imprisonment and ejection of the Dakota to western reservations in South Dakota, the ongoing generations did not forget their homeland and roots. Many native people had little choice but to take white names and assume identities as farmers.
- 4.16 Some Dakota people, such as the “Henry Paul” family, returned from western reservations under the assumed identity of German immigrants to farm in the former Wisconsin hunting ground.
- 4.17 Other Dakota families carved canoes from cottonwood trees in South Dakota to float down the Missouri River to St. Louis, where they could paddle back home to the Upper Mississippi.
- 4.18 Many Dakota from Prairie Island went across the river to Wisconsin and were coached by other survivors. A high percentage of the early settlers of Buffalo County were Indians passing as whites.



*Line of conical mounds at Effigy Mounds National Monument, Iowa*

## Sub-theme 5:

Mississippi River towns, like Prescott, reflect mid-19th century life.

### Messages

#### Philander Prescott

- 5.1 Philander Prescott was the personification of frontier life. His life and death reflected the turbulent history of the Northwest Territory.
- 5.2 Philander Prescott worked in the fur trading business out of Fort Snelling. He had a close relationship with the neighboring Dakota tribes.
- 5.3 Henry Rowe Schoolcraft wrote of Philander Prescott in the 1850s... “allied to the Sioux (Dakota) tribe; of whom he records the customs and traditions, speaks their language fluently, and has lived many years among them in various situations and positions...”
- 5.4 In 1823, Philander married a Dakota chief’s daughter named Spirit in the Moon (*Nag-he-no-Wenah* in the Dakota language). She was later known as Mary. She and her family typified people on the frontier who lived in multiple cultures.
- 5.5 Many white men took Indian wives, but mostly did not marry in a Christian church. Philander and Mary Prescott eventually did.
- 5.6 In 1839, Philander and a few



*Philander Prescott*

- soldiers from Fort Snelling went to the mouth of the St. Croix to claim land. He and his family lived on the claim with many hardships until 1843.
- 5.7 Philander accepted an interpreter’s job at Fort Snelling in 1843, and became the superintendent of Indian farming in 1849. A friend of the Dakota tribes, he reported on how treaty money was withheld or misspent.
  - 5.8 Prescott’s death in the 1862 Sioux Uprising is an ironic tragedy since few whites were more empathetic to the Dakota or dealt more honestly with them than he.
  - 5.9 Mrs. Prescott and the children were taken prisoners and placed in a camp of captured women. Despite threats, they escaped from

the camp and were not followed. Mrs. Prescott died in 1867 at her daughter's home in Shakopee, Virginia.

- 5.10 Philander translated a story of a battle between the Dakota and Chippewa at the present site of Lake St. Croix in Prescott (*Fifty Years in the Northwest*, W.H.C. Folsom, 1888).

#### The Town of Prescott

- 5.11 In 1851, Philander Prescott obtained title to about 200 acres of land at his original claim.
- 5.12 The area of Philander's claim was originally known as the Mouth of the St. Croix. By 1849, the community was known as Elizabeth, named after the daughter of early settlers. In 1851, the name was changed to Prescott, and served as the Pierce County seat from 1853 to 1861.
- 5.13 When the first settlers arrived in the 1840s and 50s, Prescott was a wilderness. People used the river for transportation and water, footpaths to move around town, and cleared the land for farming.

#### Prescott and the Rivers

- 5.14 Prescott was a frontier town on the edge of wilderness. The clash of cultures reached a boiling point in 1862 during the Sioux Uprising. Nearly 500 settlers were killed.
- 5.15 The town of Prescott depended on the rivers for jobs and for contact with the larger world.
- 5.16 Emigrants arrived by boat to Prescott from the East or from Europe.

5.17 Children in Prescott grew up being very familiar with the rivers. George Merrick tells of the days when every boy could identify the boats that came to Prescott by the sounds of their bells.

5.18 The convergence of the Mississippi and St. Croix Rivers created a natural landing at Point Douglas across from Prescott. It was also a logical location for a ferry crossing and later, for bridges.

5.19 River towns, like Prescott, had street grids that were oriented to the Mississippi rather than north/south or east/west.

#### Tourist Park (Freedom Park)

- 5.20 The old city "detention hospital," built in 1901, stood on the Tourist Park property. The building had housed sick paupers and travelers.
- 5.21 The Prescott Scenic Tourist Park opened in 1928, the culmination of an intensive community effort to invite travelers to enjoy the Mississippi River Valley scenery from the 300-foot bluff. The picnic pavilion and "comfort station" were built with community support.
- 5.22 On October 22, 1982, Tourist Park was renamed Freedom Park to commemorate the release of an American bald eagle named "Freedom." The injured bird was rehabilitated at the University of Minnesota Raptor Center and had taken part in the Washington D.C. ceremonies following the release of Americans held hostage in Iran.

## Sub-theme 6:

As rivers have influenced people, people have influenced the rivers.

### Messages

#### Multiple Uses

- 6.1 There is a dynamic interplay between the need to reestablish and maintain a healthy river ecosystem and a competitive river economy.

#### Floods

- 6.2 When a river overflows a broad floodplain, its speed is slowed. A narrow, channelized river is faster and more destructive.
- 6.3 Manmade changes to the Mississippi River from 1888 to 1868 reduced the surface area of the river by 1/3, the island areas by 1/2, and the riverbed by 1/4.
- 6.4 Dams on the river's side channels have closed off other areas where floodwaters once flowed.
- 6.5 The removal of pine forests, the draining of marshes, and the rapid runoff of farm fields causes exaggerated flooding and drought cycles.
- 6.6 Following logging, the deep 6" layer of organic duff on the forest floor was burned by uncontrollable wildfires. The layer was an important "sponge" that absorbed and slowed water runoff.



*Large floods on the Mississippi in the 1950s and 60s transformed roads into streams. Photo courtesy of Evelyn Everts.*

- 6.7 The greatest floods on the northern reaches of the Upper Mississippi occurred in 1952-53, 1965, and 1969.
- 6.8 On the Lower Mississippi, the Great Flood of 1927 was a landmark event that is considered one of our largest national disasters. The Flood of 1993 again refocused national attention on how we manage and live with the river.
- 6.9 Much of the Upper Mississippi, in places like Prescott, is less affected by flooding than the Lower Mississippi, due to elevated banks and the reduced area of the floodplain.
- 6.10 "The river is a living thing like us. Feed it bad things and it feels it... The floods used to clean the system." Evelyn Everts, long-time resident of Hager City.

Navigation and River Improvements

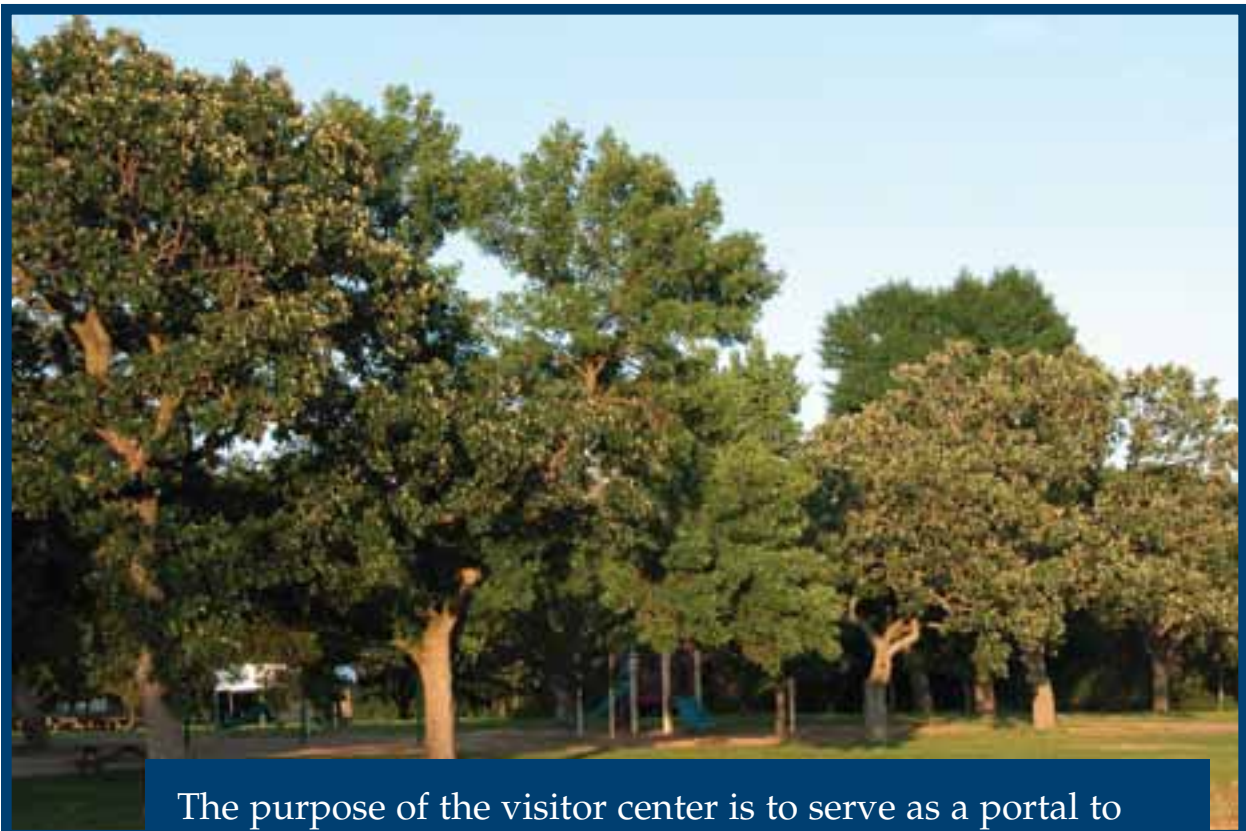
- 6.11 The Civil War, from 1861-1865, disrupted shipping on the River, and deterred the development of a navigation system.
- 6.12 Prescott and St. Paul were iced in for up to five months each winter. The ice usually broke up last in Lake Pepin.
- 6.13 Low water during drought years was a major limiting factor for shipping on the River. Water depth at Prescott prior to the lock and dam system was only 1-3 feet. Old-timers tell stories of herding cattle across the river to graze. In July, 1863, the *Journal* noted that five Prescott ladies had forged the Mississippi.
- 6.14 In 1878, under pressure from farm groups, merchants, railroad critics, and lumber and milling interests, Congress authorized the Army Corps of Engineers to establish and maintain a 4.5-foot channel. Ships laden to the 4-foot mark could remain profitable and competitive with railroads.
- 6.15 Early Army Corps of Engineers work on the Mississippi mainly resulted in scraping sandbars and removing snags, sunken boats, and overhanging trees.
- 6.16 After 1878, the Army Corps of Engineers was very busy dredging the channel and constructing wing and closing dams.
- 6.17 Wing dams were built at right angles to the river banks, causing the river to concentrate its energy and scour a deeper channel. The flow of current around the ends of the dam scoured the channel and deposited mud, sand, and sawdust in eddies behind the dams.
- 6.18 Closing dams were built to divert water from sloughs and side channels, and to concentrate low water in the main channel. In 1878, work was begun on a closing dam at the head of Prescott Island.
- 6.19 River improvements increased employment in towns like Prescott. In 1881, Bob Wilson “was building nine barges for Uncle Sam” at his Lake Street boatyard.
- 6.20 By 1907, legislation called for deeper, more expensive, and ecologically damaging 6-foot channels.
- 6.21 By 1930, Congress authorized a 9-foot channel with a system of 29 locks and dams.
- 6.22 The Mississippi River was important to war mobilization, especially in World War II when ocean-going tankers were built in Savage, Minnesota. From 1943 to 1946, 18 tankers were towed downriver past Freedom Park. The boats were launched at Savage, but construction continued as they were towed downriver.
- 6.23 NUN buoys and CAN buoys mark the shipping channel past Freedom Park. They are anchored at the channel end of wing dams.
- 6.24 A red starboard-side crossing daymark board can be seen upriver from Freedom Park.





## Chapter 4:

# Building and Site Concepts



The purpose of the visitor center is to serve as a portal to Freedom Park and to focus visitor attention on the views and meanings of the Mississippi and St. Croix Rivers. It is intended to invite travelers to explore the Great River Road.



## Building and Site Concepts

The design of the visitor center and the redevelopment of the Freedom Park site should be compatible with and enhance the interpretive messages of the Great River Road. Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters and Cedar Corporation have worked closely to develop a building and site plan that conveys the primary

interpretive theme, blends into the natural landscape, and serves the needs of Prescott residents and byway travelers.

The following sections provide rationale and recommendations for various components of the visitor center and site.



Freedom Park is an ideal site for the Great River Road Visitor Center, perched on a bluff overlooking the Mississippi and St. Croix Rivers, Prescott Island, and the Vermillion River Bottoms.

## Unifying Features

To provide a cohesive and attractive site for visitors, features like the visitor center, shelters, trails, overlooks, and parking areas should be visually unified.

**Limestone** is a natural material that can be incorporated into different elements to visually connect the site. The bluffs that line the Upper Mississippi, including the ridge Freedom Park is perched on, are composed of limestone. It is harmonious and endemic to the region and ties this site to other WisDOT waysides on the Great River Road which have already incorporated limestone.

Blocks of limestone bordering the parking areas define the edges while serving as a transition to the interpretive experience. Limestone lining the entrance walkway reassures visitors they are on the right path and symbolizes bluffs along the Mississippi. On the visitor center, the chimney, columns, and partial walls made of limestone will be unified with similar features on the shelter buildings. Limestone posts on overlooks and viewing areas will blend seamlessly with limestone walls along the bluff trail.

*Waysides along the Great River Road, like the “Bow and Arrow” Historical Marker, use limestone to define and unify the site.*



## The Entrance: A Visitor's First Perspective

Visitor expectations about Freedom Park and the interpretive center are set early in the experience. The moment they see a sign for Freedom Park and turn off of the Great River Road, they begin to develop a perspective about the site.

The signs, parking lot, and entry walkway are components of the interpretive center that visitors will encounter first, and will therefore make indelible impressions. The entry must be carefully planned to be attractive to visitors and thematic with the stories of the site.

*An inviting, thematic entrance sign to the visitor center is essential for attracting travelers.*

## Entrance and Direction Signs

- Signs should be professional and durable.
- They should be thematic with the stories of the site.
- Materials like wood and limestone would unify signage with the building and provide a high-quality appearance.
- The Great River Road and National Scenic Byway logos should be included either on the sign face or on the supports.
- Direction and entrance signs must be large enough to attract attention and guide visitors to the site. A 4'x6' sign is recommended for the entrance.
- Signs should attract visitors on the Great River Road who have unstructured travel (no set plans, but are open to new experiences) and should be located well in advance of the turnoff to Freedom Park.



## Parking Lot

- The parking area should be buffered with islands of vegetation to avoid an expedient commercial feel.
- The edge of the lot should be screened with vegetation so it does not dominate views from the park and building.
- Keep lighting to that needed for safety; avoid light spillover.
- The parking lot should be screened and buffered from residential housing as much as possible.
- The parking lot needs to accommodate school and tourist buses with a turn-around.
- The parking area can be paved with porous materials that reduces potentially harmful run-off.
- The parking area should be landscaped with limestone.
- The parking lot should accommodate at least 25 cars.
- Handicap parking stalls should be included near to the entrance walkway.
- Special parking for motorcycles and larger recreational vehicles should be considered.
- Bike racks should be available for long-distance bikers and local residents.
- The walkway to the center should be visible and clearly indicated. A view of the visitor center is desirable.



*The parking lot should be landscaped with limestone and screened with vegetation to unify it with other WisDOT waysides.*

driving to the more relaxed and natural experience at Freedom Park.

- It should meander beneath the spreading oak trees, lined by low limestone walls; a metaphorical river leading to the building.
- It should allow visitors access to decks, overlooks, trails, and restrooms, even when the building is closed.
- The walkway must be wide enough to meet physical (ADA) needs and satisfy social distance needs.
- The walkway should accommodate emergency and maintenance vehicles.
- The visitor center should be easily visible from the parking lot and entrance walkway, assuring visitors that they are in the right place.
- The walkway must be paved and nearly flat for universal accessibility.
- Low level lighting should be installed along the trail for evening programs (perhaps embedded within the limestone walls). Light spillover should be avoided.
- Create a line-of-sight into the lobby area from outside.

## Entrance Walkway

- The walkway to the building should serve as a transition from highway



## The Visitor Center: A Portal to the Site

The visitor center will serve as a portal to Freedom Park and the panoramic views of the Mississippi and St. Croix Rivers, while inviting people to explore other sites along the upper Great River Road.

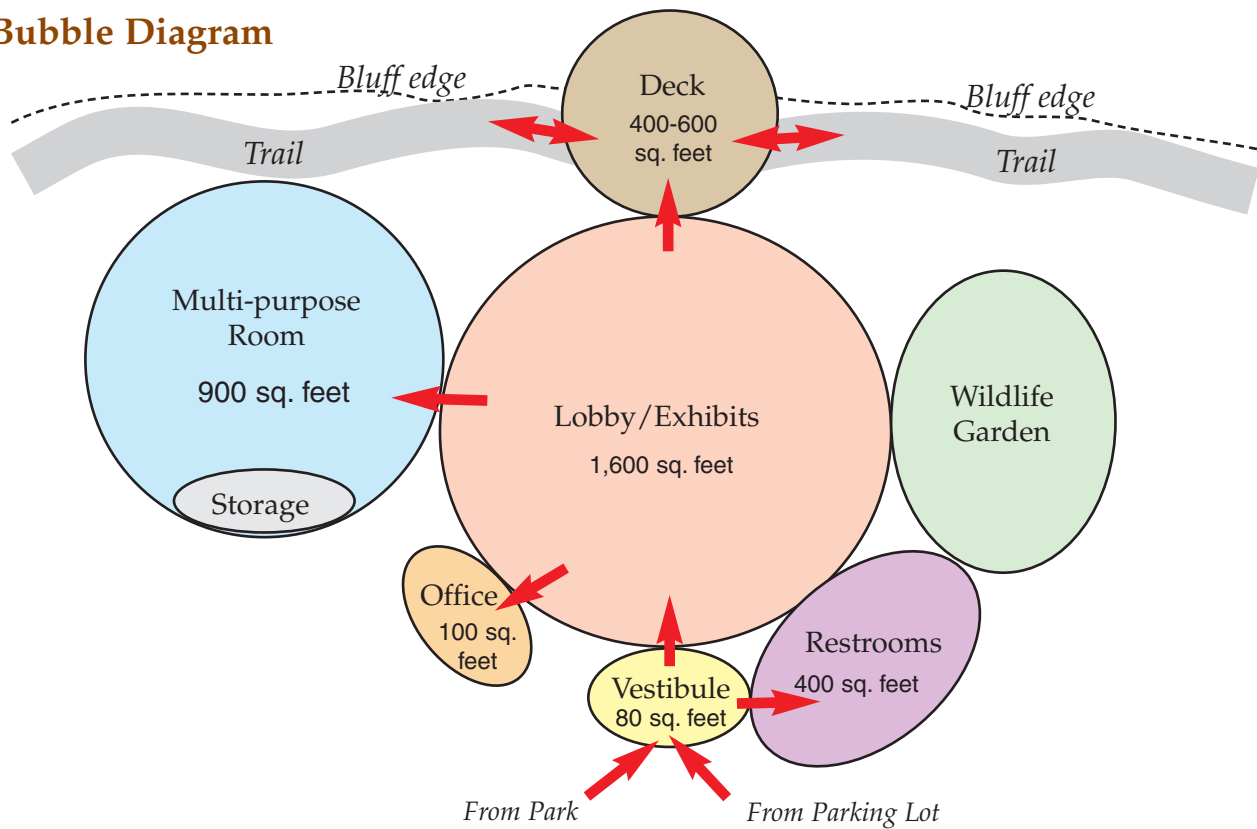
To be successful, the building must be designed in harmony with Freedom Park and not detract from its natural character. It must serve the needs of both visitors traveling the Great River Road and the residents of Prescott.

The visitor center and surrounding area is a gateway to the diverse stories of Prescott and the rivers.

### Bubble Diagram

A bubble diagram shows the general sizes and relationships among various components of the visitor center, based on the specifications outlined in this section. Architects use the diagram as a foundation for developing an actual floorplan.

### Visitor Center Bubble Diagram

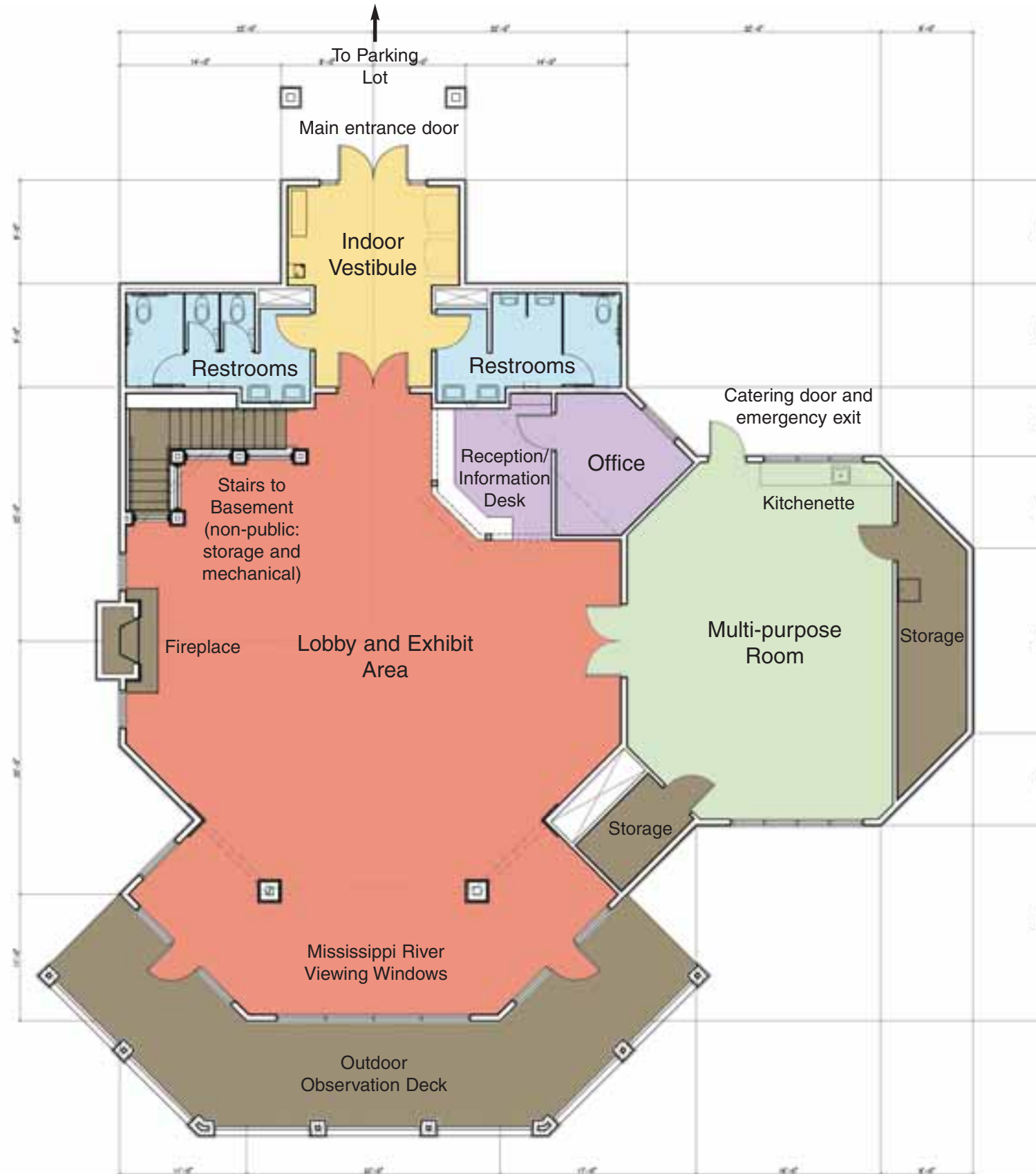


Great River Road Visitor Center at  
Freedom Park, Prescott, WI

Overall Floor Plan

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Great River Road Visitor Center at  
Freedom Park, Prescott, WI

Front of Building (South Elevation)

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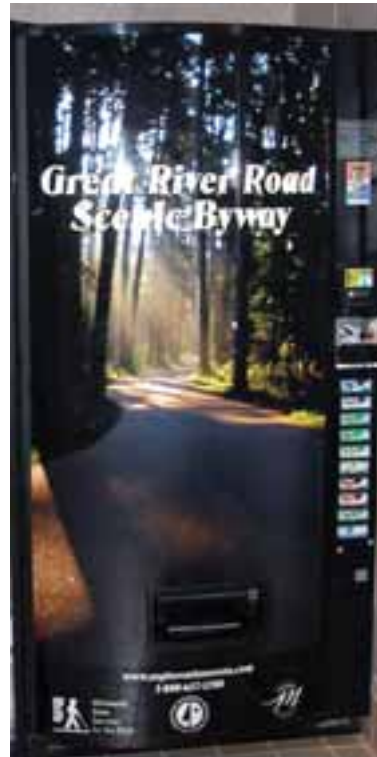


## Building Design

- The building should not dominate the view, but rather serve as a harmonious focal point along the edge of the bluff.
- Native building materials like limestone and timbers blend well with the natural character of the site and are inviting to visitors.
- Optimal building materials should be used that minimize long-term costs of maintenance.
- Allow for expansion. As the programs grow in the future, additions to the building may become necessary. Future expansion should be planned for.
- Use sustainable building techniques that are environmentally-friendly and economical wherever appropriate. These include building on disturbed sites, using renewable and indigenous materials, and finding clean alternatives for heating, cooling, and electricity.
- The building should reflect the vernacular architecture of Prescott and the region.
- Large windows opening the building to the river will bathe the interior of the center with natural light and serve as a focal point to draw visitors through the center.
- The interior of the building should feel warm, cozy, and homey, providing visitors with a comfortable place to relax and linger. Wood, carpeting, natural light, and comfortable furniture should be used to enhance this feeling.
- Limestone should not dominate the interior of the building, since it can make the building seem cold and gray and is expensive. However, it should be incorporated into aspects of the design (fireplace, information desk, pillars) to thematically tie the interior to other site structures and landscaping.

## Indoor Vestibule

- The indoor vestibule can provide 24-hour access to information for travelers to the Great River Road.
- When the building is open, the vestibule leads into the lobby of the visitor center. When the building is closed, the doors between the lobby and vestibule will be locked.
- A drinking fountain and vending machines will provide refreshment for travelers and park users in the entryway. Vending machines
- The doors leading into the vestibule and into the lobby should be glass, providing views into the building and beyond that invite visitors to enter.
- A large map of the Great River Road with a “You are here” will orient travelers. Folding maps and publications directly related to the Great River Road will be accessible in racks adjacent to the map.
- A general brochure rack will provide travelers with information about the region: sites to visit, restaurants, hotels, and shops.
- A durable, low maintenance touch-screen computer will provide layered information about the Great River Road and sites to visit. Photographs, video, and sound can provide a multimedia experience.
- Lights inside the entryway should be on 24 hours or turned on by a motion detector for security.
- A telephone will be provided for emergency use.
- A barrier-free, airlock entry will be installed with grates and floor mats.
- *Approximate size: 80 sq. feet*



*Vending machines are important sources of refreshment for byway travelers and revenue for the visitor center. The machine can be toned down and thematic with photographs from the byway, like this one in Minnesota.*



*Durable touch-screen computers, like this one at the National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium in Dubuque, can provide layered information even when the building is closed.*

## Restrooms

- The restrooms can be accessible 24-hours, even when the building is closed.
- Doors in the vestibule provide access for park users and visitors in the center.
- Stainless steel fixtures can be installed that are easy to maintain and resist vandalism.
- *Approximate size:* 200 sq. feet per restroom. Three stalls in the women's restroom, two stalls and two urinals in the men's restroom.

## Lobby and Exhibit Area

### Lobby

- Some features of the information desk in the lobby should be constructed of limestone to maintain thematic unity.
- The desk should have a space for sales items protected by a window.
- Part of the desk should be accessible to people in wheelchairs and children.
- The information desk should be brightly illuminated with natural and directed lighting.
- The desk should be far enough from the entryway that it does not intimidate entering visitors.
- A volunteer or staff person working the front desk should have a clear view of the pathway leading to the building through windows. This helps to prepare them for large or unannounced groups.



*Part of the front desk should be lower to accommodate people in wheelchairs and children, like the left side of this desk at Lebanon Hills Visitor Center in Minnesota. Sales items can be incorporated into the desk.*

### Exhibit Area (more details in Chapter 5)

- The lobby and the exhibit area should blend together seamlessly.
- The focal point exhibit is a full-size statue of an eagle in flight, lifting a fish from the water. The eagle is a dramatic symbol of Freedom Park and of the ecological recovery of a Mississippi River species. Eagles can be viewed year-round from the park, but many casual visitors would not know to look for them.
- Tactile objects such as eagle eggs, talons, prey species, and audio buttons that emit eagle calls would be located on the large exhibit stand surrounding the eagle statue.
- The room has a high ceiling with exposed beams and clerestory windows that illuminate the eagle from above and give visitors a sense of spaciousness.

*Approximate size of lobby/exhibit: 1,600 sq. ft.*



*A fireplace is familiar, inviting, and comforting to travelers, like this one at the Mather Lodge in Petit Jean State Park, Arkansas.*

### Fireplace

- Tucked away in one corner of the building, a fireplace provides an intimate space for small groups (15 people or less) to gather.
- Near the fireplace, windows provide views of the river valley and the wildlife gardens.
- The fireplace adds to the warm, inviting, and comfortable feeling of the building's interior. Especially in fall and winter, it serves as a comfort station from the cold, windy roads and overlooks.

- It provides a natural gathering area to view the wildlife gardens and feeders.
- The fireplace should be constructed of limestone to maintain thematic unity.
- *Approximate size:* Should accommodate 15 people.

### Multi-Purpose Room

- The multi-purpose room will serve the needs of both visitors and Prescott residents. Visitors will be able to watch audio-visual presentations about the Great River Road, and attend interpretive programs there. The community can use the room for meeting space and special events.
- The room should have an open and airy feeling. The ceiling should be high and open to the rafters. This provides a pleasant space for meetings and enough room for projection equipment and large viewing screens.
- A wall of windows overlooking the river valley and park will provide natural lighting for meetings. High-quality shades should be installed to shield the sunlight for audio-visual programs.
- No fixed seating should be installed. All tables and chairs should be moveable to allow for maximum flexibility.
- A storage room adjacent to the multi-purpose room is essential for storing extra tables, chairs, tablets, and other items.

- A small kitchenette with a counter, sink, and small refrigerator would be useful for potlucks and catered food.
- *Approximate size:* 900 sq. feet. Should accommodate 30-40 people around tables

### Office Space

- A small office behind the information desk will provide space for volunteers or staff to work.
- Windows will provide natural lighting and make the office a more pleasant place to work.
- The space should accommodate a desk, chairs, and storage areas for files, books, and program equipment.
- *Approximate size:* 100 sq. feet

### Viewing Deck

- The “real story” of Prescott and the rivers is outside the walls of the visitor center. The viewing deck on the back of the center allows for direct connections between stories and what can be seen.
- The observation deck serves as a focal point for visitors inside the center. Large windows provide a view of the deck and the scenery beyond. These visual cues arouse visitor’s curiosity and invites them to explore.
- The deck should be built out over the bluff far enough to provide views both up and down the Mississippi River. The confluence of the St. Croix and Mississippi should be clearly visible.
- A roof should cover at least half of the deck, providing shade and shelter

from the elements.

- The deck should be accessible 24-hours, even when the building is closed. It should be incorporated into the trail system.
- The deck needs to be fully accessible to people of all physical abilities.
- Viewing scopes will provide visitors with a magnified perspective of boats, bridges, wildlife, buildings, and other scenery. Interpretive panels describe what visitors are seeing. At least one viewing scope should be installed at a height that accommodates children and people in wheelchairs.
- The viewing deck is a natural gathering place for visitors and community members. Seating should be built into the deck to encourage people to linger.
- Railings on the deck should meet all safety standards, but should permit good viewing by small people and people in wheelchairs.
- *Approximate size:* 400-600 sq. feet



*A viewing deck tangibly connects visitors with the stories of the Mississippi and St. Croix rivers.*

## Freedom Park Site: Connecting to the Rivers

Since its founding in 1928, the Freedom Park site (called Tourist Park until 1982) has been a favorite place for tourists and community members to gather together and view the dramatic river valley scenery.

Enhancements to the site will benefit both travelers on the Great River Road, visitors to the Prescott area, and local residents.

### Landscaping

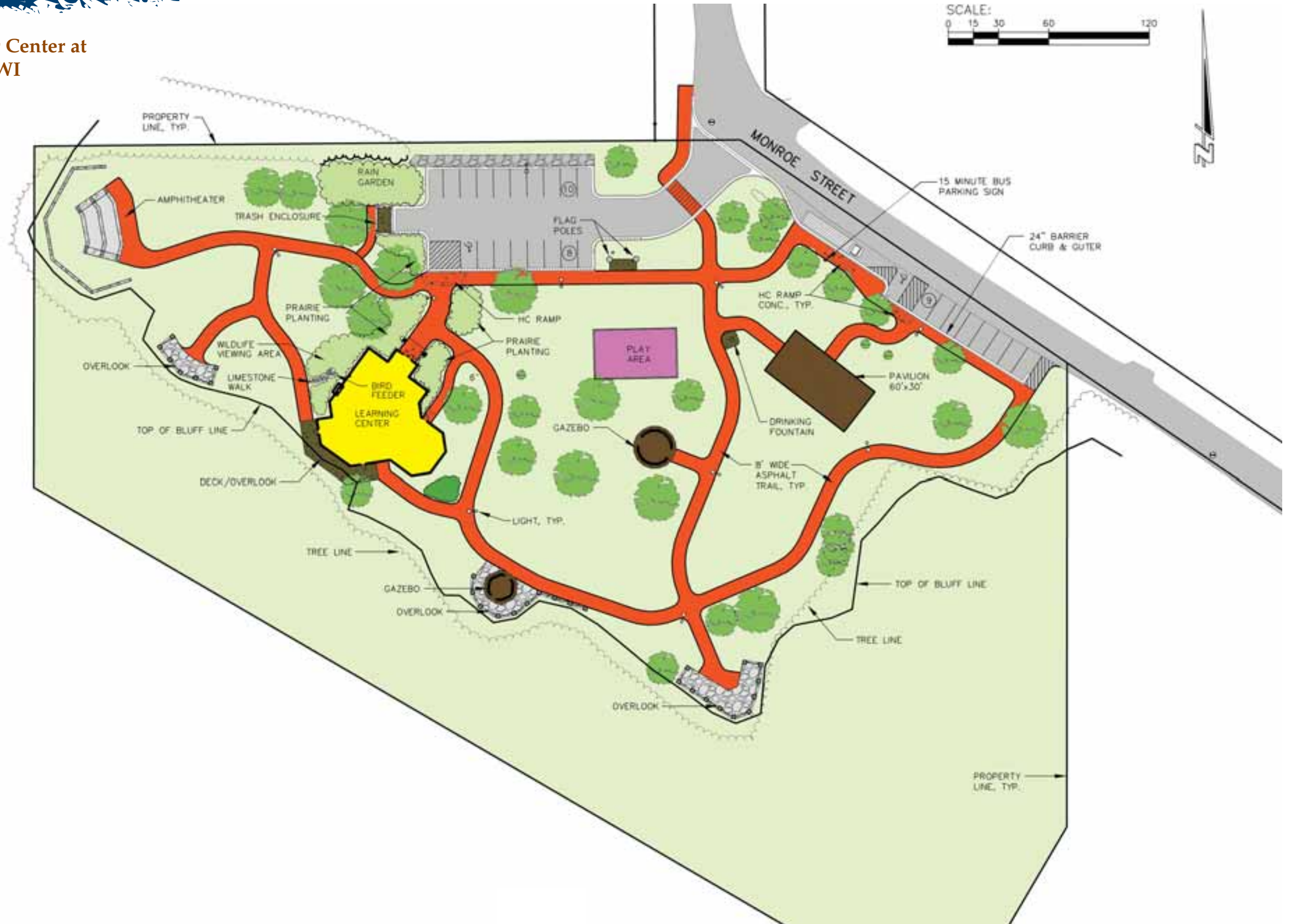
- The area around the visitor center and trails should be planted with prairie species. Historically, the bluffs bordering the Mississippi were open oak savannah habitat. A mixture of spreading oaks and prairie maintains the park-like setting and tells a historic story.
- Limestone is a visual element that links the building, overlooks, trails, shelters, parking lot, and other features of the site. It is harmonious and endemic to the region and ties this site to other WisDOT waysides on the Great River Road which have already incorporated limestone.



*Oak savanna habitat once dominated the bluffs along the Upper Mississippi.*

Great River Road Visitor Center at  
Freedom Park, Prescott, WI

Site Plan





### Interpretive Trail

- A trail should be constructed that meanders along the edge of the bluff, a natural path already heavily used by visitors.
- The trail should be hard-surfaced and visually assure safety to families with small children, people with mobility impairments, and people traveling alone.
- The trail will contain elements that create a harmonious unity with other park landscaping and materials, such as limestone walls, similar roofs and supports, and high-quality interpretive panels with standard colors and fonts.
- Interpretive panels will involve people with succinct dramatic messages, with visuals like historic photographs and paintings, and with tactile objects and audio effects.
- The trail should be designed to connect visitors to the site. The experience should be relaxing, unique, and reveal meanings to those who are seeking to understand the region and its history. It should prepare travelers for their journeys on the Great River Road.
- The pathway should offer opportunities to view the Mississippi and St. Croix Rivers in unique ways and from new perspectives.
- Semi-private areas with seating should allow people to linger and watch the river drift by while observing wildlife and experiencing the dynamics of weather.
- Trail panels should be arranged and clustered thematically to develop stories and provide insights about what people are seeing.

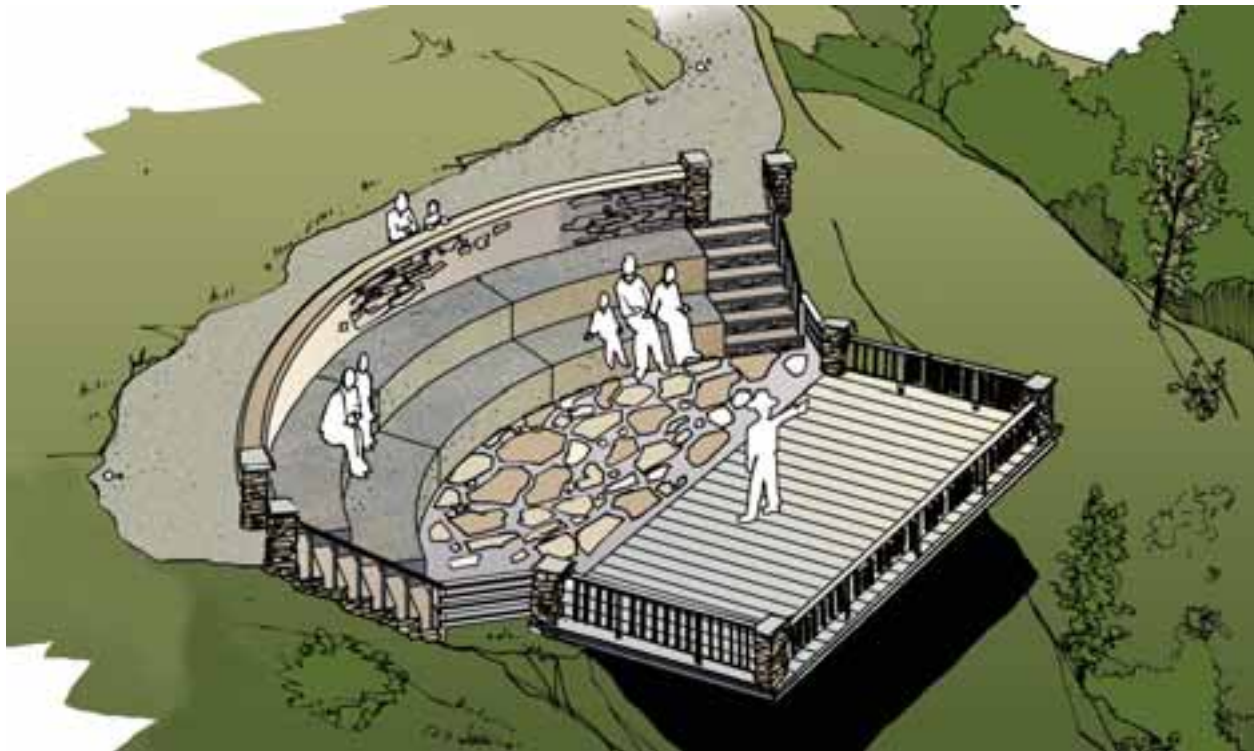


*Limestone walls unify the bluff edge trail with other elements on the site, while a hard surface accommodates strollers and people in wheel chairs.*

- The northern overlook (group viewing area) might interpret bridges, railroads, and the Prescott waterfront that can be seen from this view.
- The southern overlook might interpret navigation on the Mississippi River since buoys, lights, day boards, wing dams, and barges can be viewed here.
- The deck on the visitor center, with its spotting scopes and views of eagles and the heron rookery across the river, would be a logical site to interpret wildlife.

### Group Viewing Area

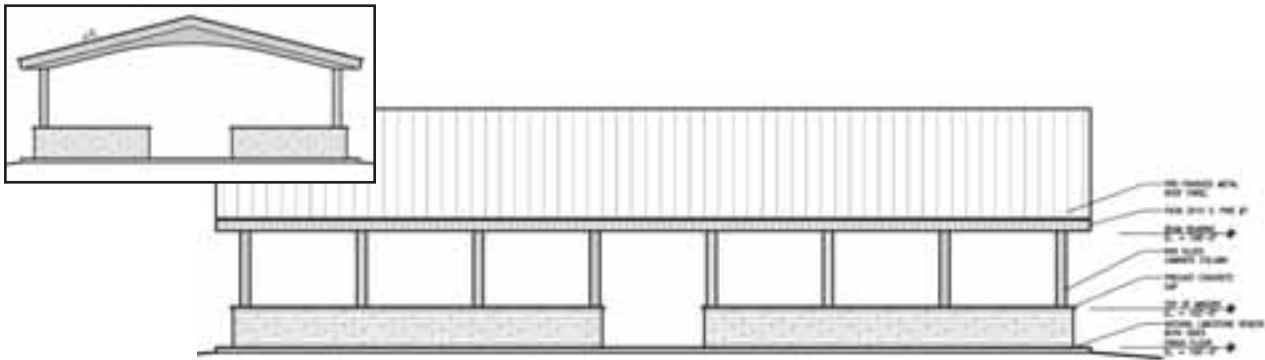
- A group viewing area would serve as a staging area for orienting and conducting programs for school classes and other large groups of visitors.
- It should be constructed on the northwest bluff, that offers a commanding view of the converging rivers.
- The group viewing area should be built on the brow of the bluff to take advantage of the natural slope. It will be perched unobtrusively below the crest of the bluff, out of sight from the park.
- The group viewing area would be a series of concrete benches that cascade down the slope to a lower deck overlook. The deck serves as the “stage area” where speakers can present.
- An “upper deck” area above the group viewing area seating provides a higher view of the Mississippi and St. Croix Rivers. Steps and a ramp provide access to the concrete seating and “lower deck.”
- Low limestone walls would visually unify the structure with the rest of the park landscaping. A poured concrete structure with bench seating prevents erosion.
- The northwest orientation of the group viewing area minimizes sun glare in the audience faces and frames summer sunsets over the Mississippi River banks.
- *Approximate size:* Should accommodate 50 people (minimum)



### Picnic Shelter Pavilion

- A large pavilion is an ideal place for tourists to picnic out of the rain and for community members to hold celebrations and special events.
- The roof and supports of the shelter should be unified with the visitor center design. Limestone and timbers should dominate, and similar rooflines will make the structures compatible.

- A limestone fireplace in the shelter is a natural gathering place, providing warmth in the fall and winter.
- Freedom Park should be interpreted with some photographic panels within the shelter building. The present name and the historic name of the park, as well as the history of the park should be shared with the community at this site.
- *Approximate size:* Should accommodate 60 people

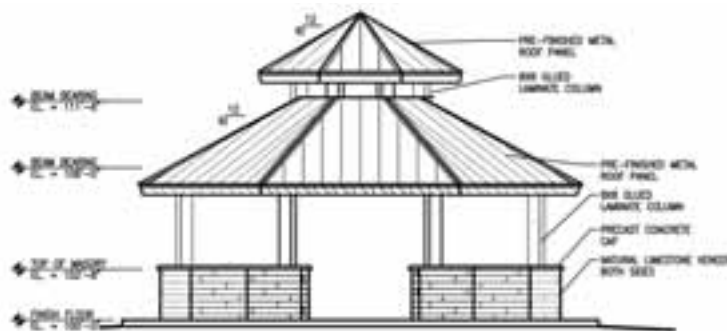


### Community Gazebo

- The roofed gazebo in the middle of the park would be a gateway to introduce community visitors to the history of the park from its days as a shelter for sick travelers and poor people, to its days as a tourist park,

to its evolution as Freedom Park.

- The pavilion should be unified with the picnic shelter and visitor center. Native building materials and similar roof lines would ensure compatibility.
- *Approximate size:* Should accommodate 6-8 people







## Chapter 5:

# Interpretive Media



Interpretive media are non-personal forms of communication that connect the meanings of the resource to the interests of the visitor.

## Interpretive Media

**I**nterpretive media are non-personal forms of communication that connect the meanings of resources to the interests of people. At Freedom Park, media will be used to connect Prescott residents, visitors, and scenic byway travelers to the significant stories of the Mississippi River and region.

The primary modes of media include exhibits inside the visitor center and interpretive panels on the site.

## Unified Signage Along the Great River Road

A standard “Great River Road Network” sign will be prominently displayed at the entry trail into the visitor center building. This panel will be consistent with others at all Great River Road interpretive facilities, and provides design unity throughout the 2,400-mile corridor. The complete specifications for the sign have been included in Appendix 3.

*A “Great River Road Network” sign will be installed in Freedom Park to unify with other interpretive centers along the corridor.*





## Unified Design Standards

To enhance recognition and provide a holistic interpretive experience for visitors, all media should be graphically and visually unified. Incorporating standard colors, typography, and unifying elements will tie together the different media components.

### Colors

A standard set of colors helps to unify media and evoke feelings about the organization. Colors chosen to represent the Freedom Park Visitor Center should be thematic with the river stories being told and blend in with the landscape.

### Typography





#### Typeface

Each typeface has its own unique personality. Font styles used for the Freedom Park Visitor Center media should be friendly, readable, and versatile.

For headlines and sub-headings, a stylized font like Maiandra GD adds character and evokes a sense of the river. The font is informal, flowing, easy to read, and friendly.

Although a stylized font works well for short headings, it does take more time and energy to read. Simpler standard fonts have less character, but can be read with

### Recommended colors for Freedom Park Visitor Center media

 <p>Pantone Process Coated DS 281-1 C CMYK=90-0-100-40</p>	<p><b>Dark green</b> creates frames, bars, and boxes that command attention on a panel while harmoniously blending with the landscape. It provides effective contrast when combined with light beige for words, represents land when combined with light blue.</p>	 <p>Pantone Process Coated DS 5-9 C CMYK=2.75-2.75-14.5-0</p>	<p><b>Light beige</b> works well for headlines and text in dark green or light blue boxes. It also is ideal for a background color if an image is not used. The light splash of color is less glaring than pure white.</p>
 <p>Pantone Process Coated DS 209-6 C CMYK=40-20-0-15</p>	<p><b>Light blue</b> complements the dark green coloration, and can be used in conjunction with it to create attractive frames, bars, and boxes. It provides good contrast with light beige words. It represents water when combined with dark green.</p>	 <p>Black CMYK=0-0-0-100</p>	<p><b>Black</b> is the standard color for most text when placed on a light beige or light image background. People have an easier time reading black text on a light background.</p>

little effort. The main text and captions should be a font like Helvetica. The type is a clean and neat sans-serif font that provides maximum readability and is widely available.

### Size

A hierarchy of text sizes emphasizes the importance of different sections of text. Headlines are the largest, followed by main text headings, main text, sub-text headings, sub-text, captions, and photo credits. Some visitors will only spend a few seconds looking at a piece of media. They should be able to grasp the main interpretive message just by looking at the headings and graphics.

Media should be developed according to the “3-30-3 rule.” Visitors can understand the main message of the media in three seconds, thirty seconds, or three minutes.

The typeface and size proportions should be unified for all interpretive media.

### *Unifying Elements*

Certain graphic elements can be replicated on all media. The Great River Road logo, for example, should be clearly visible on interpretive panels and some of the visitor center exhibits.

Other elements might be replicated on specific types of media. A water-textured bar coupled with an undulating green bluff shape on top creates a thematic headline that can standardize interpretive panels throughout the site. A green bar on the bottom of the panel visually frames the interpretive stories.

Headlines and sub-headings:

**Maiandra GD**

Main text and captions:

**Helvetica**

Grid systems can also be designed for each type of media to unify text, graphic, and object placement. By using templates, new media can be quickly and easily developed, and old media updated.

The principles of unified design should be applied to all types of media developed for the Freedom Park Visitor Center. Exhibit fabrication companies will establish unified design criteria for the various exhibit components inside the visitor center.

For interpretive panels outside the visitor center, the following standards are recommended to unify shape, color, typography, and other elements.

*The Great River Road logo is a standard element on all media.*



## Design Standards for Interpretive Panels

### *Shape*

Most visitors expect to see normal rectangle interpretive panels. However, modern panel fabrication techniques allow thicker signs to be cut into a variety of shapes. An undulating shape on top of the sign can represent the limestone bluffs that line the Mississippi River and are integral components of the interpretive stories. The unique shape has the potential to attract visitors that might not look at a traditional panel, while thematically connecting with the site.

### *Unifying Elements*

Specific graphic elements will be repeated on each interpretive panel to unify them throughout the Freedom Park site. The undulating green top (bluffs) and horizontal water-textured box (river) form the headline bar for each panel. The Great River Road logo is placed on the left side of the headline bar. A thin green horizontal box at the bottom of the panel matched the undulating green on top, and completes a visual frame for the sign. A drop cap focuses attention on the main message. One image is larger than the others and serves as a focal point for the panel to draw attention and create a visual flow. An image might also break into the headline bar to add interest and enhance the visual flow.

### *Color*

Dark green is used for the undulating top and rectangle bottom. Light blue with a water-texture overlay composes the headline bar. The Great River Road logo and the headline are light beige to contrast with the green and blue. The headline also has a shadow behind it to enhance contrast. The background is faded image masked with light beige. The main text, sub-text headings, sub-text, and captions are black for readability.

### *Typography*

The text must be large enough and have an appropriate level of contrast for maximum readability.

<b>Headlines:</b>	Maiandra GD, regular, 130 pts
<b>Main text:</b>	Helvetica, medium, 42 pts (Drop cap: Maiandra GD, regular, 135 pts)
<b>Sub-text headings:</b>	Maiandra GD, demi bold, 32 pts
<b>Sub-text:</b>	Helvetica, medium, 24 pts
<b>Captions/ Photo Credits:</b>	Helvetica, oblique, 18 pts

## Recommended Design Standards for Interpretive Panels

Typography	Color
Shape	Unifying elements

**Undulating top** represents bluffs and attracts attention.

**Great River Road logo**

**"River" headline bar**

**"Bluff" headline bar**

**Dark Green**  
Pantone Process Coated DS 281-1 C

**Light Beige**  
Pantone Process Coated DS 5-9 C

**Light Blue**  
Pantone Process Coated DS 209-6 C

**Headline:** Maiandra GD, regular, 130 pts

**The Mississippi River gains power as it rolls south to its Delta. Rivers like the St. Croix add water, stories, and mystique to the fabled history of the Mississippi.**

**Building Log Rafts**  
The last 25 miles of the St. Croix River is known as Lake St. Croix, formed from hydraulic stamming by the Mississippi. It was a major staging area for assembling log rafts for transport to sawmills downriver.

**Blending of the Waters**

**Main Text:** Helvetica, medium, 42 pts

**Sub-text:** Helvetica, medium, 24 pts

**Sub-text headings:** Maiandra GD, demi bold, 42 pts

**Black**

**Light Beige**  
Pantone Process Coated DS 5-9 C

**Dark Green**  
Pantone Process Coated DS 281-1 C

**Focal point graphic**

**Bottom framing bar**



# The Gathering of Waters

The Mississippi River gains power as it rolls south to its Delta. Rivers like the St. Croix add water, stories, and mystique to the fabled history of the Mississippi.

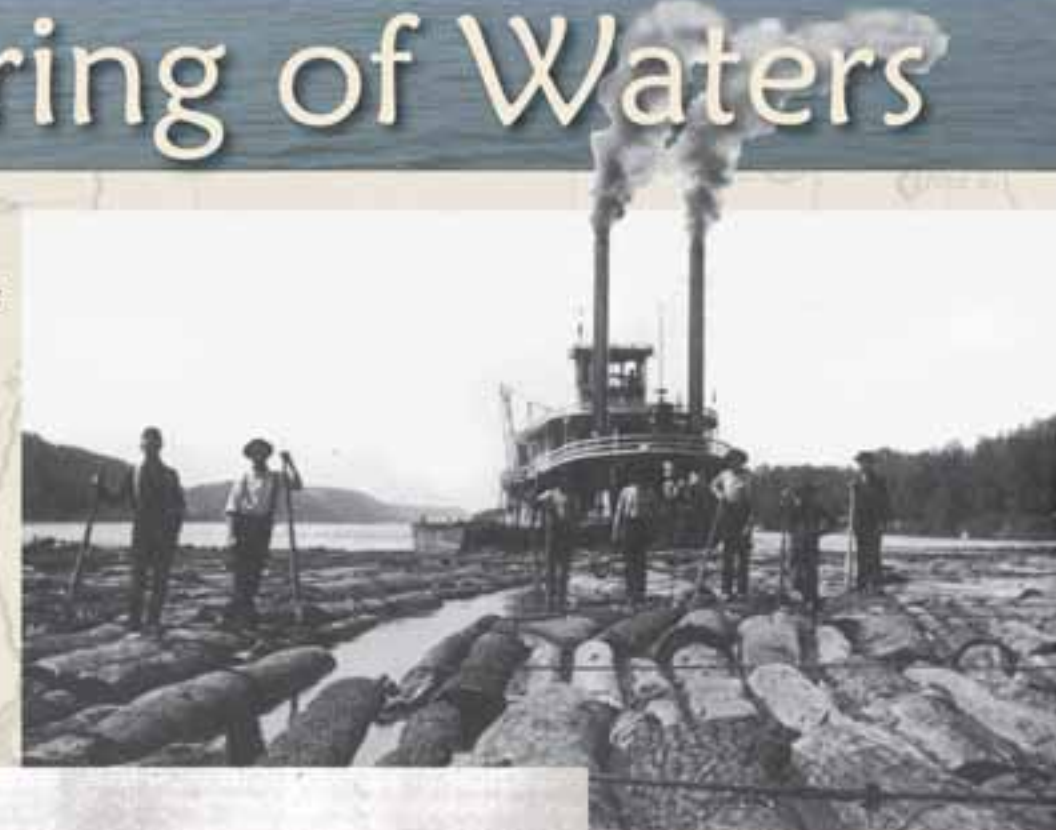
## Blending of the Waters



The mix of the muddy Mississippi with the clearer waters of the St. Croix is a slow process visible for miles below their confluence. Look downstream toward the railroad bridge, and you can see these contrasting rivers.

## Building Log Rafts

The last 25 miles of the St. Croix River is known as Lake St. Croix, formed from hydraulic damming by the Mississippi. It was a major staging area for assembling log rafts for transport to sawmills downriver.



Cut logs from northern Wisconsin and Minnesota were lashed together with cross wires into massive rafts. They could be 1,200 to 1,600 feet long and 300 feet wide—the size of an aircraft carrier!

This picture was taken around 1880 from the spot where you're standing. You can see the tip of Prescott Island (right). The sternwheeler *B. Hershey* is pushing a raft of logs downriver. A smaller bowboat in front of the raft (left) steers the floating mass.



## Panel Fabrication

### Materials

The most efficient and cost effective process for panel fabrication is **high-pressure laminate**. Digital layouts are printed on special paper impregnated with melamine resins, a harmless type of plastic that cannot be melted or reshaped after being molded once. The paper is then pressed at high pressures and temperature with phenolic resin layers (another type of plastic) and a UV-resistant overlamine. This process fuses the layers into a strong and durable solid core, similar to a countertop.

The finished panel is resistant to vandalism, UV-fading, and other weather conditions. Several nationally reputable companies offer this fabrication process and guarantee their products for at least 5-10 years.

Unlike many other fabrication techniques, high-pressure laminates can be produced in a variety of thicknesses. Panels 1/2"-thick or higher are rigid and durable enough to stand on their own and do not require metal frames. Without a frame, unique shapes can be cut around the edges to increase the visual impact of the panel. Threaded inserts mounted into the back of the panel during fabrication makes installation quick and simple.

To reduce cost and provide options for panel shape, we recommend that panels developed for the Great River Road Visitor Center at Freedom Park are fabricated with **3/4"-thick outdoor-grade laminate**.

High-pressure laminate companies:

#### **Folia Industries Inc.**

58 York Street  
Huntingdon, Quebec  
J0S 1H0 CANADA  
888-264-6122  
[sales@folia.ca](mailto:sales@folia.ca)

#### **Fossil Graphics Corp.**

Mark DeCesare  
44 W. Jerfyn Blvd.  
Deer Park, NY 11729  
631-254-9200  
[markd@fossilgraphics.com](mailto:markd@fossilgraphics.com)

#### **iZone**

Scott McCallum  
2400 Wilson Place  
Temple, TX 76504  
254-207-7000  
[mccalls@wilsonart.com](mailto:mccalls@wilsonart.com)



*High-pressure laminate is an inexpensive panel fabrication process that produces vividly colored, high-resolution images and can be cut into unique shapes.*

## Frames and Support Bases

Panels that have a thickness of less than 1/2" require frames to secure and protect them. If panels are 1/2" thick or more, like those recommended for Freedom Park, frames are not needed.

An inexpensive cast aluminum support base secures a thicker sign panel to the substrate, and consist of legs and backplate that bolts to the back of the panel.

According to National Park Service guidelines, the panels should be installed at heights and angles favorable for viewing by most visitors, including those in wheelchairs. For cantilevered bases, the panels should be at a **30° or 45° angle** and at a **height of 30-34"** from the bottom of the panel to the finished grade. Vertical panels should be **24-28"** from the bottom of the panel to the finished grade.

### Support base companies:

**Best-Ex, Inc.**  
820 Industrial Ct.  
P.O. Box 454  
Baraboo, WI 53913  
800-356-4882  
bestex@tds.net

**Hopewell Manufacturing, Inc.**  
Paul Kramer  
11311 Hopewell Road  
Hagerstown, MD 21740  
301-582-2343

**KVO Industries**  
Steve Vandyk  
1825 Empire Industrial Ct., Suite A  
Santa Rosa, CA 95403  
800-657-6412



*Support base for a 1/2"-thick or greater high-pressure laminate panel.*

## Maintenance

Under normal conditions, high-pressure laminate panels should last 5-10 years without fading, blistering, or delaminating. General cleaning can be done with mild soap and water. To prolong the life of exterior panels, a coat of polymer-based car wax should be applied annually.

The panels are also very resistant to most types of vandalism. The hard surface resists scratching. Nicks, blemishes, or small scratches can be concealed with a polymer-based car wax or surface treatment. Graffiti, including spray paint, lipstick, permanent markers, and crayons, can be removed with an organic solvent (non-abrasive citrus-based cleaner). Worse graffiti may require mineral spirits and a rinse with water.

If a determined vandal does scratch or break the panel in some way, it will not deteriorate any further. High-pressure laminate panels are inexpensive, and the quick turn-around time (4-6 weeks) makes them easy to replace.

## Describing Media Concepts

The media described in this chapter are conceptual. The purpose is to achieve consensus on the components needed to achieve the interpretive goals of the Great River Road Visitor Center in Freedom Park. These concepts are a starting point for future design and fabrication.

Each media concept includes:

- **Purpose:** Why should this media component be developed? The purpose describes what we are hoping the media will accomplish.
- **Messages:** What stories will the media tell? To ensure that the stories are thematic, messages are listed as codes from Chapter 3—Themes and Messages.
- **Objectives:** What will visitors learn, feel, and do? Successful media connects with visitors in 3 domains:
  - *Cognitive:* What visitors will learn
  - *Affective:* What visitors will feel
  - *Behavioral:* What visitors will do
- **Description:** What is the media concept? The description outlines the general look of the exhibit and the various tactiles, interactives, models, photographs, text, stories, and other components that will be integrated.
- **Concept Rendering:** What will the media look like? The concept rendering is an artistic impression of what the exhibit might look like when completed. It is intended merely as visual concept; the actual design could vary significantly.



*A variety of media, like these exhibits at Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado, is used at interpretive centers to engage different learning styles, ages, and social groups.*

## Interior Exhibits

Exhibits that include artifacts, real objects, and interactive devices usually need extra protection from the elements and potential vandalism. The interior of the visitor center will be enriched with focal point and participatory exhibit components that tell the story of the Great River Road at Prescott.

### Focal Point Exhibit: “A Delicate Balance”

**Purpose:** To draw visitors into the exhibit area with a dramatic soaring eagle model, and to tell the story of balancing human use and natural ecology on the Mississippi represented by eagles.

**Messages:** 1.1, 1.4, 1.5, 1.18, 1.19, 1.20, 1.21, 1.22, 1.33, 5.22, 6.1

### Objectives:

*Visitors will learn:*

- That eagles, like the one released in 1982 at Freedom Park, are common residents of the River.
- Eagle populations have been increasing due to human efforts to protect the environment.
- Eagles have unique adaptations for living with the River.
- The bald eagle story is representative of the greater struggle between preserving the natural history of the Mississippi and developing it economically.
- About other sites and events in the area that focus on eagles.



*“A Delicate Balance” is a focal point exhibit highlighted by an eagle statue in flight. Interactive components around the statue would feature tactile skulls and talons, push-button audio to hear an eagle call, and tactile light-up eggs to view the effects of DDT.*

Great River Road Visitor Center at  
Freedom Park, Prescott, WI

Concept Rendering: Interior Exhibits

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*Visitors will feel:*

- Stimulated to explore the eagle exhibit and to look for diving eagles from the viewing deck over the river.
- Connections to the eagle as a symbol of patriotism, freedom, and spirit.

*Visitors will do:*

- Touch a model eagle talon and skull, press a button to hear an eagle call, touch an eagle egg to see the embryo inside.
- Use spotting scopes on the viewing deck to look for live eagles.
- Visit other eagle viewing areas and events in the region.

**Description:**

The bald eagle is a dramatic symbol for the visitor center that effectively ties together the stories of the Great River Road.

Freedom Park was named for an eagle released from the site in 1982. Eagles are commonly seen year-round from the bluff overlooking the Mississippi River.

Interpretively, an eagle serves as a tangible icon that represents wildlife and people sharing the Mississippi Corridor.

The focal-point exhibit is a full-size statue of a bald eagle landing on a nest of twigs. The eagle is carrying a carp in its talons, and young chicks in the nest have their mouths open ready for the morsel.

Dramatic natural lighting from above draws visitors into the building and encourages them to explore the exhibit.

A stand around the nest would include the following exhibit components:

- Tactile models of eagle talons and skull.
- A grip that could be squeezed to demonstrate the pressure of an eagle talon.
- A button that can be pressed to hear the different calls of an eagle.
- A tactile eagle egg that lights up to reveal an embryo when touched. This would reflect the damaging effects of DDT on past eagle populations.
- Photographs and descriptions of the conservation efforts that led to the protection of the Upper Mississippi.
- A flip-up game with tactile models interpreting different species of prey.
- Identify eagle viewing areas up and down the Mississippi River.



*Tactile components, like this alligator tail at the Everglades National Park, invite visitors to participate with exhibits and enhance understanding.*

### Traveling the Great River Road: Interactive Map

**Purpose:** To alert visitors to the existence of the Great River Road, and encourage them to visit other nearby communities and sites in the corridor.

**Messages:** 1.2-1.9, 1.11-1.16, 1.30-1.32, 2.39, 2.60, 3.11, 3.13, 4.4, 4.5

#### Objectives:

*Visitors will learn:*

- About the importance of the Mississippi River and how it compares to other rivers of the world.
- The Mississippi River is a thread that ties together diverse communities and stories
- About recreational opportunities along the Upper Mississippi, such as museums, scenic overlooks, historic sites, nature centers, parks, and wildlife viewing areas.
- About different communities along the Upper Mississippi and what makes them unique.

*Visitors will feel:*

- Interest in visiting other Great River Road attractions.
- Amazed at the diversity of stories and places along the Great River.

*Visitors will do:*

- Pull out the panels and drawers to explore possible destinations and touch topographic maps and model artifacts.
- Visit other communities and sites along the Upper Mississippi.

#### Description:

A large satellite image of the Upper Mississippi River will be placed on a wall. The Great River Road from Minneapolis to Dubuque is highlighted on the exhibit.

Communities and sites along the road will be interpreted through pull-out panels. Visitors can pull out a section of the map from the wall (like a thin drawer) and view photographs and descriptions of each community. Tactile objects (like a relief of Diamond Bluff) will also be included.

The dynamic map encourages visitors to explore other nearby communities and sites along the Great River Road in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Iowa.

Communities and sites that could be interpreted are included in the resource section of Chapter 2—The Planning Process. The exhibit should focus on Wisconsin opportunities, but also include neighboring significant sites in Minnesota and Iowa.

This interactive map exhibit and the following touch-screen computer exhibit could be fabricated at other Great River Road visitor centers in Wisconsin.

## Concept Rendering: Interactive Map Exhibit



*The interactive map exhibit would feature pull-out panels and drawers for visitors to explore and access more detailed information. Three-dimensional topographic maps and artifact models engage and reward visitors.*

### Traveling the Great River Road: Touch-screen Computer

**Purpose:** To provide visitors with specific information about communities, sites, and amenities along the Great River Road even when the visitor center is closed or the receptionist is busy with other guests.

**Messages:** 1.2-1.9, 1.11-1.16, 1.30-1.32, 2.39, 2.60, 3.11, 3.13, 4.4, 4.5

#### Objectives:

*Visitors will learn:*

- The Mississippi River is a thread that ties together diverse communities and stories
- About recreational opportunities along the Upper Mississippi, such as museums, scenic overlooks, historic sites, nature centers, parks, and wildlife viewing areas.
- About different communities along the Upper Mississippi and what makes them unique.
- About various amenities, festivals, and events in each community.

*Visitors will feel:*

- Interest in visiting other Great River Road attractions.
- Amazed at the diversity of stories and places along the Great River.

*Visitors will do:*

- Touch the computer screen to discover various levels of information about the Great River Road.
- Visit other communities and sites along the Upper Mississippi.

#### Description:

Travelers arriving at the visitor center after-hours will still require access to information about the Great River Road. A durable, vandal-resistant, touch-screen computer unit in the vestibule can provide detailed information in a small space.

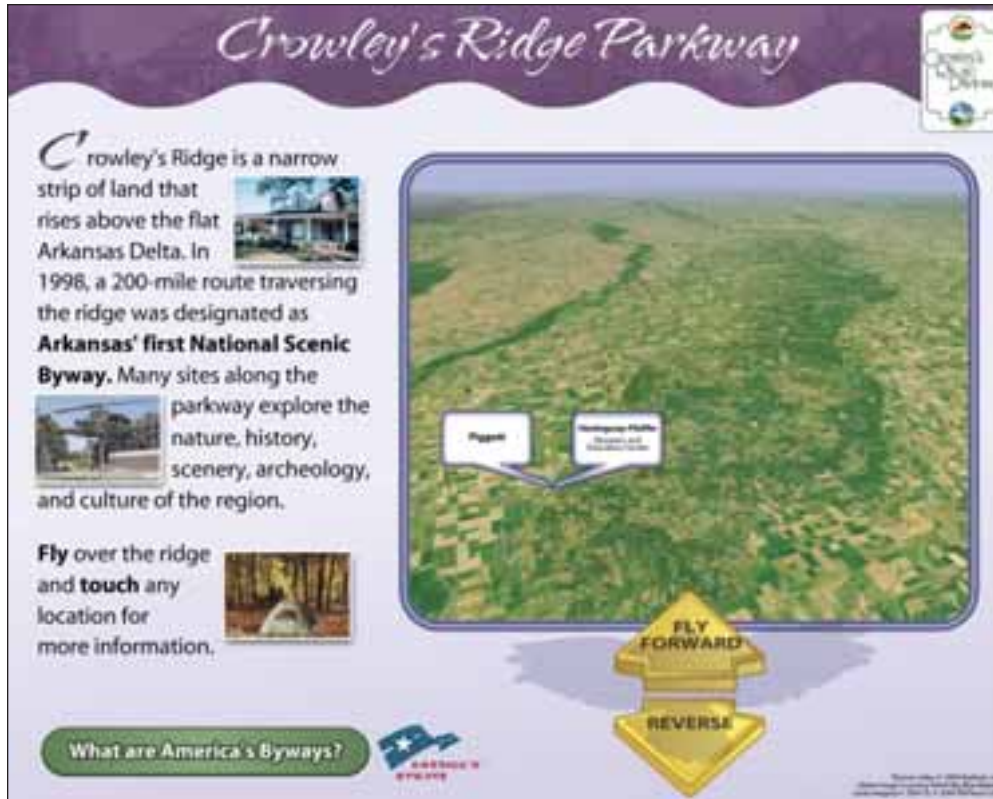
Computers are ideal tools for providing information: visitors choose their own path, information can be layered so it is not overwhelming, and information can be easily updated. The interactive nature of computers is attractive to many visitors.

A unique overhead moving illustration will allow visitors to “fly over” the Upper Mississippi Great River Road. As various sites and communities come into view, visitors can touch the screen for more information. Each site will contain a brief history and how it thematically ties into the Great River Road story. Large, colorful photographs visually tell the story. Visitors can click on buttons to receive additional information on specific facilities, amenities, events, festivals, contact information, or other stories. Clear navigation buttons allow visitors to go back to a previous screen or to the flyover menu.

Traditional brochures, pamphlets, and maps will also be available in the vestibule for visitors who are not comfortable using computers, or travelers who want to bring information along with them.



Okefenokee National  
Wildlife Refuge, Georgia



The “Crowley’s Ridge Parkway” kiosk program is an interactive tool to interpret significant sites along a byway in Arkansas. This type of format is recommended for the Great River Road.

Visitors can fly forward or reverse over the parkway by touching the arrow buttons. When a community or feature comes into view, a white box appears on the map that can be touched.

When a community or feature is touched, a new page opens with graphics, interpretation, and specific information.

A large arrow makes it easy to get back to the original flyover map.

The Crowley’s Ridge Parkway program was designed by David Schaller of Educational Web Adventures ([www.eduweb.com](http://www.eduweb.com)), The flyover map was created with Keyhole Pro software.





## **“A River of People” Exhibits**

A parade of life-size people cutouts created from historic photographs will stand on one side of the eagle exhibit. A Dakota Indian, a log rafter, a steamboat pilot, a clammer, and a fisherman represent different uses of the Mississippi River over time. Each person cut-out will have thematic exhibit components that interpret their unique relationship with the river.

The following series of exhibits will connect visitors to the human history of the River through compelling personal stories that visitors can relate to their own lives.

### **Those Who Came Before**

**Purpose:** To introduce visitors to the rich Native American history on the Upper Mississippi and to the dynamic period of European settlement and change.

**Messages:** 2.1, 4.1-4.18, 5.1-5.19

### **Objectives:**

*Visitors will learn:*

- Native Americans have lived on these river banks for thousands of years, and tribes like the Dakota are still a part of the river community.
- Philander Prescott founded the community that would later bear his name, and he worked closely with the Dakota tribe.
- Trade and land rights caused major conflicts between the European settlers and Native American tribes.

*Visitors will feel:*

- Empathy for the losses and challenges that occur as cultures clash and merge.
- Excitement of the early community of Prescott at the edge of wilderness.

*Visitors will do:*

- Turn a crank to listen to the Dakota language, lift lids of barrels and boxes to touch and view historic trade goods, and listen to the words of Philander Prescott describe a great battle that occurred here.
- Visit other sites along the Upper Mississippi that are significant to early Native American culture.

### **Description:**

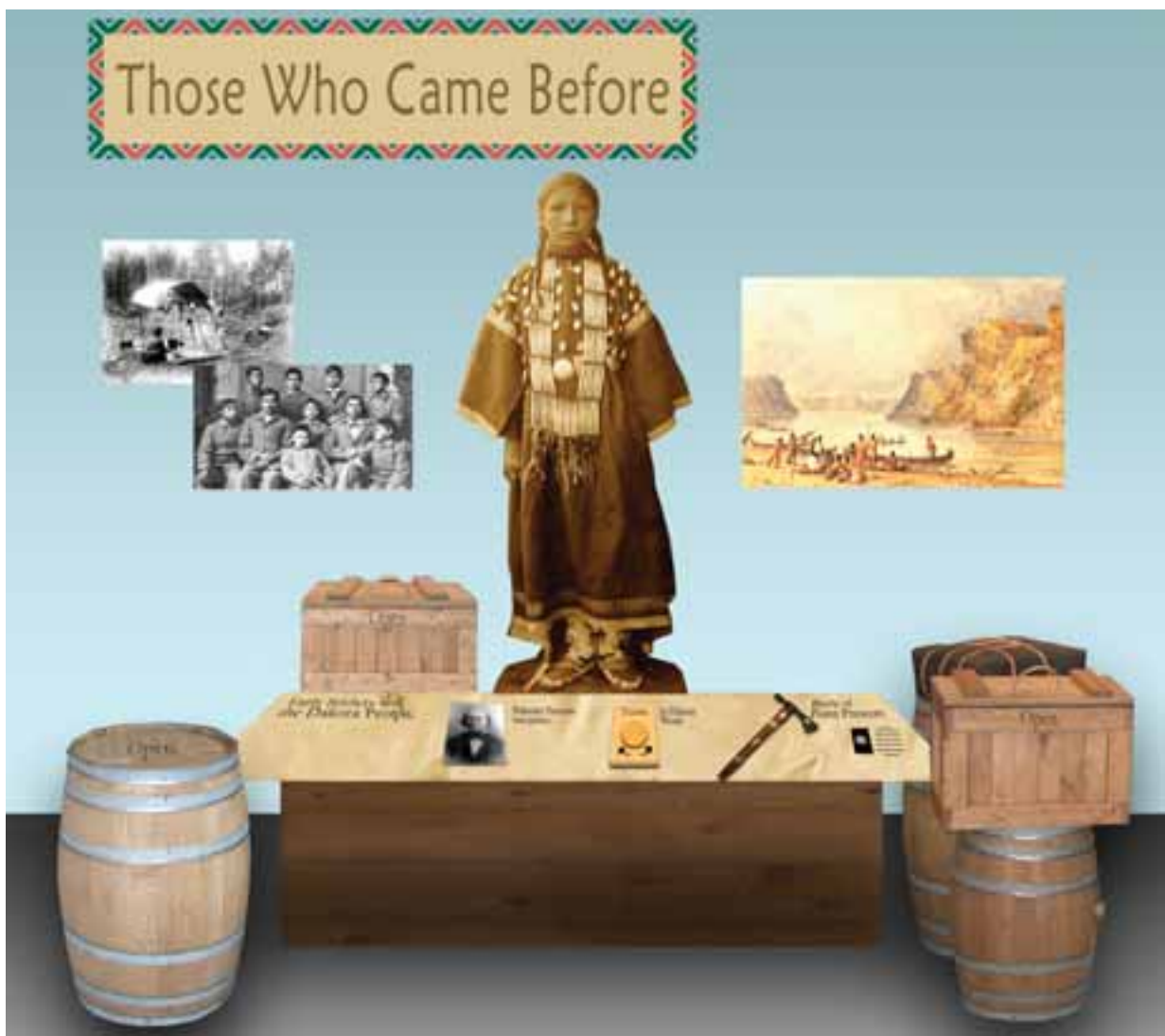
- Tactile trade goods (pelts, beads, hatchets, shovels, hoes, whiskey) will be accessed by lifting the cover of wooden boxes and barrels. Visitors will determine the worth of different goods based on the number of pelts.
- A press-button audio will recount the great battle between the Iroquois and Chippewa tribes that occurred near this site using the words of Philander Prescott.
- A crank can be turned one way to hear a Dakota person speaking in his or her native language. When the crank is turned the opposite way, the visitor hears the Dakota person speaking in English.
- A picture and description of Philander Prescott describes the close

connections between the Dakota tribal members and the new European settlers.

- A hologram shows a Dakota chief in traditional native clothing when

looking from one angle, and formal European clothing at another angle. This interprets the American government's policy to integrate Dakota members into white society.

### Concept Rendering: "River of People" "Those Who Came Before" exhibit



*The "Those Who Came Before" exhibit interprets the clash between Native Americans and early European settlers. Visitors can open wooden boxes and barrels to touch trade goods, listen to an account of a great battle, and crank a box to hear the Dakota language.*

### Pike Poles and River Pigs

**Purpose:** To interpret the logging era when lumber rafts dominated traffic on the Mississippi and St. Croix Rivers.

**Messages:** 2.2-2.14

#### **Objectives:**

*Visitors will learn:*

- For 30 years, buoyant white pine logs were pushed by steamboats downriver to sawmills, where lumber build the Midwestern frontier.
- The life of a log rafter was adventurous and treacherous.
- At the confluence of the St. Croix and Mississippi, Prescott was a major center of commerce for logging.

*Visitors will feel:*

- A connection with historic events as they view photographs of log rafts passing the very place where they are standing.

- Appreciation of the dangers log rafters faced.

*Visitors will do:*

- “Stamp” lumber brands onto simulated logs, smell the aroma of pine sawdust, and walk on a simulated log raft.

#### **Description:**

- Magnetic stamps that leave a dark imprint on a clear surface that can be erased, similar to a Magna Doodle. This interprets the various stamps used on the end of logs to distinguish between different companies.
- A small box will emit the aroma of pine saw dust when a button is pressed.
- A series of partially submerged “logs” will be embedded into a springy floor, creating a sensation like walking on a floating log raft.
- Photographs of steamboats pushing logs downstream will connect visitors to the Prescott site.



*Exhibits, like this magnetic log brander, encourage visitors to be involved. North Mississippi Regional Park, Minneapolis.*

**Concept Rendering: “River of People”  
“Pike Poles and River Pigs” exhibit**



*The “Pike Poles and River Pigs” exhibit interprets the exciting and dangerous lives of lumberjacks and log rafters. Visitors can stamp company brands onto simulate logs, smell the aroma of saw dust, and step onto a spongy log raft.*

### *At the Pilot's Wheel*

**Purpose:** To introduce visitors to the brief but exciting era of steamboating on the Mississippi, when Prescott was often the northern-most port on the River.

**Messages:** 2.15-2.31, 5.15-5.17

#### **Objectives:**

*Visitors will learn:*

- Steamboats were the exclusive means of transportation between the 1830s and 1850s, defining culture and commerce on the Mississippi.
- Bells and whistles were used for communication and to identify individual vessels.
- Prescott was often the northern terminus for steamboats, a bustling community filled with immigrants and activity.
- Steamboat accidents were common, and major disasters like the sinking of the Sea Wing occurred nearby.

*Visitors will feel:*

- A sense of excitement over the boom days of settlement on the dynamic frontier.
- Adventurous stepping up to the pilot's wheel and blowing a whistle.
- Remorse for the people who lost their lives in steamboat accidents.

*Visitors will do:*

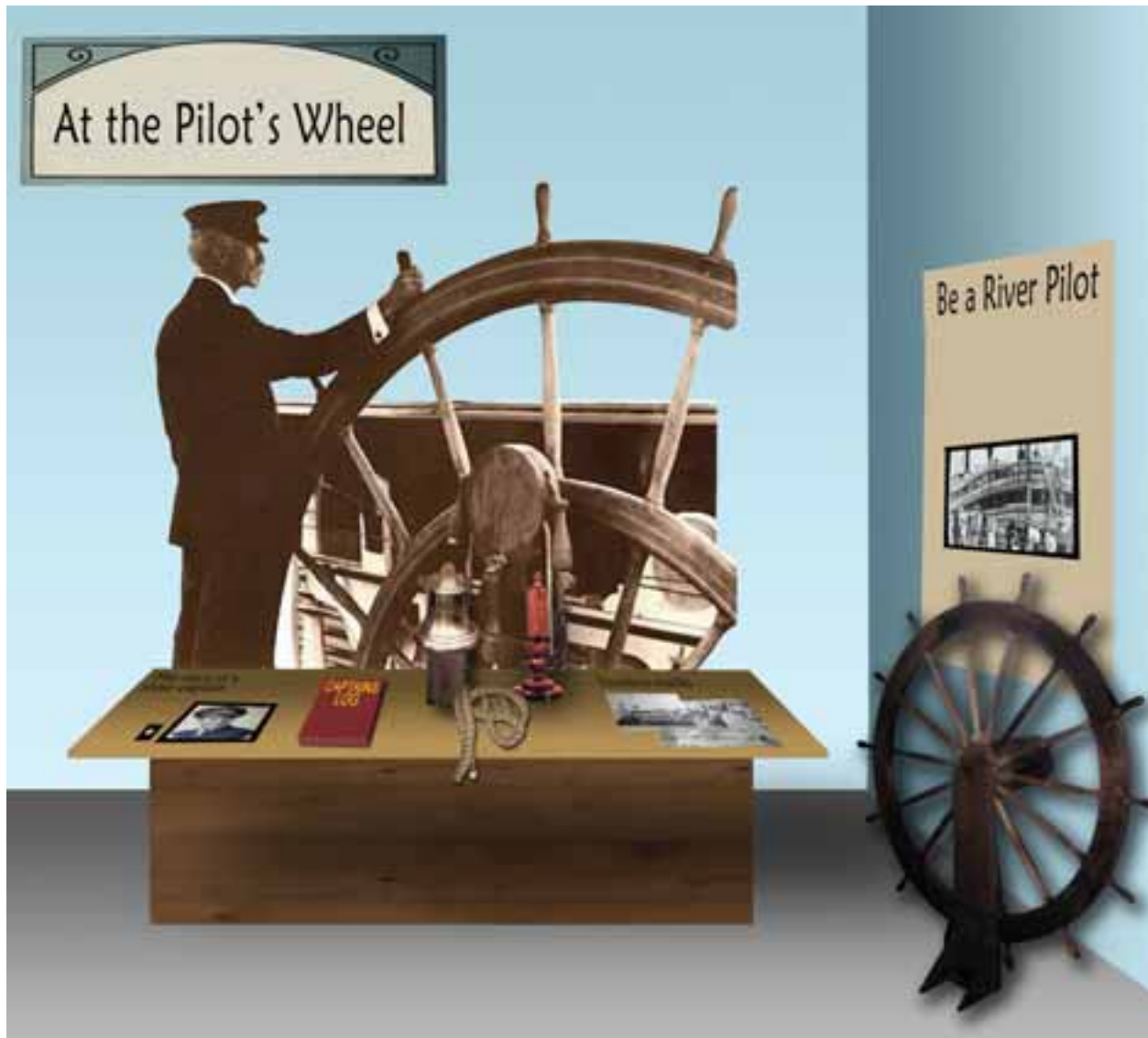
- Ring bells and blow quiet steamboat whistles, turn a pilot's wheel to view historic photographs, and watch an interview with a longtime Prescott Pilot on a video screen.

#### **Description:**

- A large pilot's wheel can be turned, revealing pictures of different steamboats that have docked in Prescott.
- A quiet whistle can be blown and a small bell can be rung to demonstrate the distinctive sounds of individual steamboats
- A telescope can be looked through to see a historic view of the river and what the river traffic was like during the steamboat era.
- The story of gambling will be told through insightful and entertaining quotes.
- A rope with leather tied at different intervals will interpret how to measure the depth of the river and the term "Mark Twain."
- The unique language of the steamboat crews will be described in a durable booklet with turning pages.
- A small video screen will play an interview with local Prescott resident "Popeye" talking about piloting a steamboat.
- Historic photographs of steamboat disasters and quotes will interpret the dangers of the steamboat era.
- Newspaper accounts detail the sinking of the Sea Wing on Lake Pepin in 1890, the greatest steamboat disaster on the Upper Mississippi.



**Concept Rendering: “River of People”  
“At the Pilot’s Wheel” exhibit**



*The “At the Pilot’s Wheel” exhibit interprets the brief but exciting era of steamboating. Visitors can spin a pilot’s wheel to view rotating historic photographs, blow a quiet whistle and ring a bell, watch a video of a long-time river pilot describe his experiences, open a book to discover the unique language of steamboat crews, and read newspaper accounts of the Sea Wing disaster.*

### Living With the River

**Purpose:** To share the pleasures and challenges of working and recreating on the Mississippi River.

**Messages:** 3.1-3.22, 5.15, 5.19, 6.1-6.10

#### **Objectives:**

*Visitors will learn:*

- The Mississippi and its tributaries provide jobs and recreation for millions of people.
- The significance of clamming and commercial fishing to the economy, culture, and ecology of the Upper Mississippi.
- Major floods rejuvenate the Mississippi ecosystem, but are devastating to the residents of the valley.

*Visitors will feel:*

- Empathy with those who depend on the river for their livelihood.
- Surprised that buttons were once made of Mississippi clamshells and that huge hauls of fish were common.

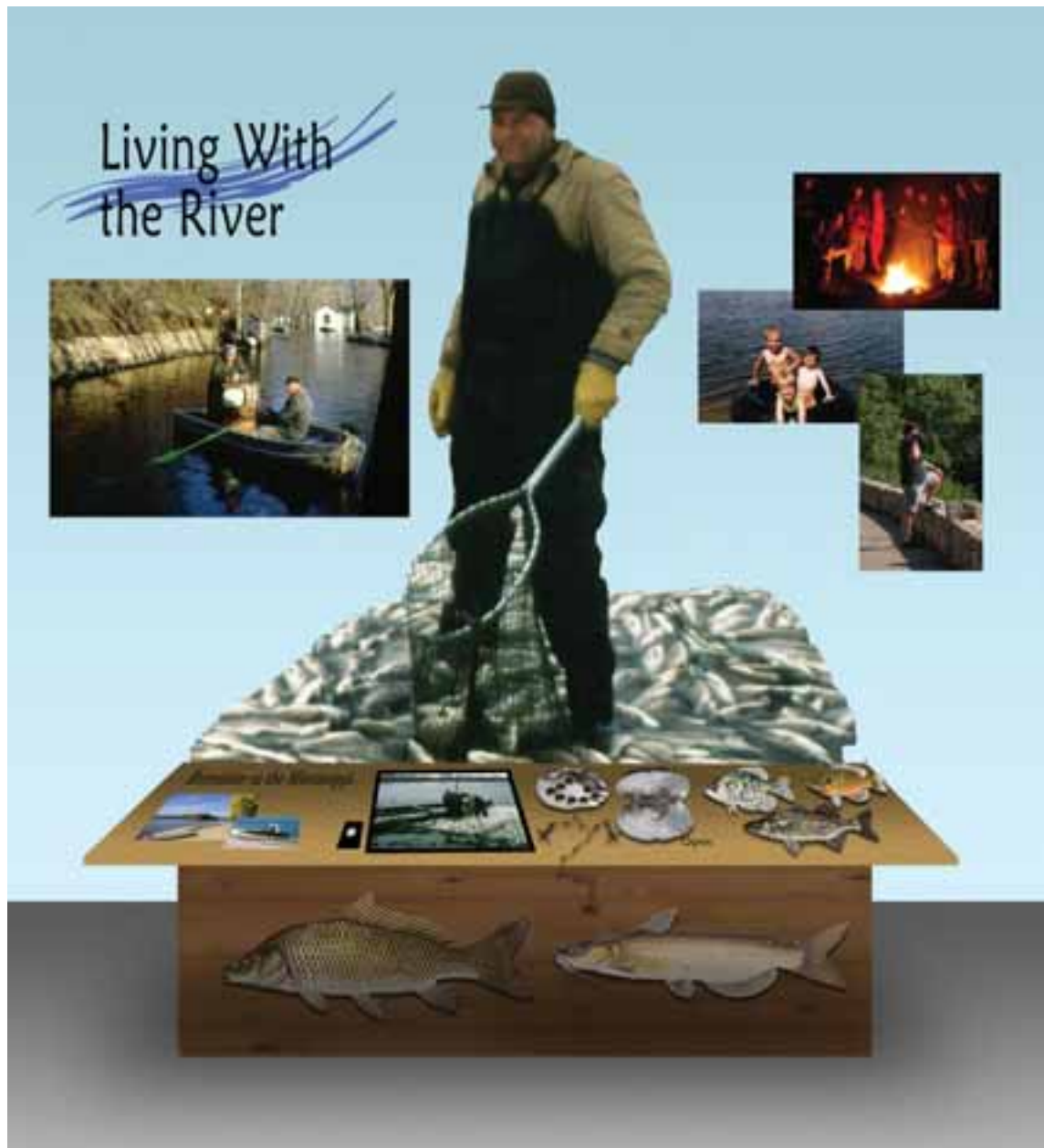
*Visitors will do:*

- Listen to firsthand stories of fishing, floods, and clamming from a video of a longtime river resident, touch representative species of river fish, drag a “crowfoot bar” over a simulated river bottom and watch magnetic clams “grab on” to the hooks.
- Visit other sites and participate in other recreational opportunities along the Great River Road.

#### **Description:**

- The cut-out fisherman will be Rolland Everts, the husband of Evelyn Everts who still lives in Hager City. Rolland worked as a clammer, commercial fisherman, and resort owner with Evelyn.
- A small video screen will play an interview with Evelyn Everts, describing her life on the Mississippi River, the flooding of her resort, and how the river has sustained people over time.
- Artifacts such as pearls, buttons, and clam shells with holes will be displayed in a protected enclosure.
- Visitors can open up a clam shell to view a model and read the story of the “largest pearl found in this area” by Rolland Everts.
- Different Mississippi River commercial fish species will be represented by tactile models that fit into the background cut-out.
- Photographs will interpret the many types of recreation that have been popular over the years, such as resorts, fishing, and boating.

## Concept Rendering: “River of People” “Living with the River” exhibit



*The “Living With the River” exhibit interprets the commercial and recreational use of the river. Visitors will watch a video of a long-time resident, see real buttons and shells from Mississippi clams, open a clam to find a pearl, and touch river fish models.*

### **“A Ribbon of Life” Exhibits Wildlife of the Mississippi Corridor**

As visitors walk from the parking lot to the building, they will be greeted by prairie restorations reminiscent of the vast oak savannas that once dominated the Mississippi River bluffs. Many wildlife species depend on these areas of grass, wildflowers, and scattered oaks

Inside the building, large windows overlooking a wildlife garden will attract visitors to the Wildlife Viewing Area. The Mississippi River Corridor is a migration route for millions of birds annually. The shelter, food, and water provided by the wildlife garden will attract a diversity of animals.

**Purpose:** To connect visitors with wildlife that live in and migrate through the Upper Mississippi River corridor.

**Messages:** 1.24-1.27

#### **Objectives:**

*Visitors will learn:*

- A combination of food, water, and shelter is ideal for attracting wildlife.
- A great diversity of birds use the Mississippi corridor as a migration route.
- Oak savanna dominated the historic bluff habitat along the Upper Mississippi.

*Visitors will feel:*

- Excited to see the behavior of live birds and mammals eating at the bird feeders and bathing in the water.
- A sense of connection to the great distances birds migrate both north and south.

*Visitors will do:*

- Look through binoculars at wildlife, listen to the sounds of birds singing, flip panels to discover the essential components of a wildlife garden.
- Open “bark doors” on a panel to see traces of wildlife and view historic photographs of the area when oak savanna dominated.
- Visit the prairie plantings outside the center and other restored habitat areas along the Great River Road.

Several exhibit components will be directly connected to the prairie plantings and the wildlife viewing area.

#### **Prairie Restoration panel**

- Prairie species planted around the visitor center in conjunction with the spreading oaks already on the site will represent the oak savanna habitat that was once common along the Mississippi River bluffs.
- An interpretive panel installed near a prairie restoration area will interpret the different types of prairie species and the wildlife they attract.
- Historic photographs will describe the open oak savanna habitat that once dominated the bluffs of the Upper Mississippi River, including the Prescott area.
- A picture of an oak tree will have “bark doors” that visitors can open to discover the diversity of animals that depend on oaks for survival (squirrel dens, woodpecker holes, scat and prints of deer and turkey on the ground that had been scavenging for acorns).



***Wildlife Viewing Area exhibits***

- In front of the window, a rail will hold several sets of binoculars and field guides for identifying birds and small mammals.
- A microphone outside will send the sounds of birds into the building through a speaker system.
- A flip-panel game will invite visitors to search for essential components of a wildlife garden, including food (feeders, native plantings, aquatic insects), water (stream and waterfall, heated birdbath), and shelter (wildlife houses, native plantings).
- A large map of the migration routes through North America will identify the Mississippi River Corridor as a major flyway for millions of birds.



*A Wildlife Viewing Area, like this one at Mount Magazine State Park in Arkansas, provides a comfortable opportunity to watch birds and small mammals year-round. A natural-looking creek, bird feeders, and special plantings outside the windows attract a diversity of animals. Binoculars, field guides, and audio units enhance the experience for visitors.*



## Exterior Exhibits

Exterior exhibits interpret the Great River Road even when the visitor center is closed. They connect people directly to what can be seen, providing a powerful experience. Although exterior panels must be durable to resist damage from the elements and vandalism, tactile and interactive components can be incorporated into their design.

## Main Viewing Deck Panels

The main viewing deck will be attached to the visitor center and partially covered by a roof. The deck is also accessible after the building closes via the trail system. The deck extends out over the bluff, providing panoramic views upstream and downstream of the Mississippi River. Interpretation on the main deck will focus on the natural history of the Mississippi

## Concept Rendering: Main Viewing Deck



*The Main Viewing Deck, with spotting scopes and panoramic views of the river, is an ideal site for interpreting the natural history of the Upper Mississippi.*

River. Two spotting scopes will give visitors a closer look at eagles, waterfowl, boats, bridges, and other features of the corridor.

**Purpose:** To interpret the natural history of the Upper Mississippi River, with special focus on wildlife and habitats that can be seen from the deck.

**Messages:** 1.5, 1.11-1.35

**Objectives:**

*Visitors will learn:*

- The muddy Mississippi River and the cleaner St. Croix River meet at Prescott.
- Bald eagles and great-blue herons are common residents of the area and have unique adaptations for living with the rivers.
- Floodplain forests once dominated the Mississippi River Valley, but are becoming scarce due to human development.
- The narrowing of the Mississippi River Valley at this point funnels a great number and diversity of migrating birds, including the endangered tundra swans.
- Other sites along the Great River Road that offer wildlife viewing and natural history interpretation.

*Visitors will feel:*

- Intrigued by viewing the two different colors of the St. Croix and Mississippi Rivers mixing.
- Excited to see eagles soaring, herons hunting, and migrating birds traveling through the valley.
- A sense that floodplain forests are important and worth protecting.

*Visitors will do:*

- Look through viewing scopes at wildlife species, Hastings structures across the river, and boat traffic.
- Feel tactile models of heron and eagle feet and beaks.
- Visit other viewing areas and natural sites along the Great River Road.

The following interpretive panels will be installed on the main viewing deck.

**Bald Eagles and Herons:**

A heron rookery is visible from Freedom Park during the winter. Great-blue herons are a common sight on the Mississippi year-round. The habits of herons will be interpreted. Tactile heron feet and beak will enhance the experience.



For visitors who did not enter and see the eagle exhibit in the building, this panel will also describe the habits of eagles and why they are so numerous in this area. Tactile talons and beaks will also be incorporated.

*Mixing of the Waters:*

The mixing of the muddy Mississippi River and the clear St. Croix River is obvious from this location. Interpretation will describe the similarities and differences between the rivers, and the importance of this site in history.



*Floodplain Forest:*

The Vermillion River Bottoms and Gores Pool Wildlife Management Area can be seen as an unbroken forest on the opposite side of the river. The area represents the vast floodplain forests that once spread throughout the Mississippi River Valley. The panel will interpret the importance of floodplain forests to wildlife, and focus on the unique characteristics of the cottonwood tree.



*A Migration Corridor:*

Over 100,000 birds migrate through the Prescott area in spring, including hawks, waterfowl, and tundra swans. Here, the Mississippi River Valley narrows to a one-mile wide corridor, funneling birds near the Freedom Park site. The panel will interpret some of the unique species of birds that migrate, and what they need to survive their journey.

*What Do You See?:*



Several buildings and bridges can be seen from the deck, most of them in nearby Hastings. The panel will point out these unique features on a panoramic landscape photo, and show a close-up picture of the actual structure.

### Southeast Observation Deck Panels

The observation deck on the southeast side of the park provides an excellent view of the Mississippi River flowing downstream. The Mississippi is truly the “Great River Road” for barges, trains, commercial fishing boats, and recreational boats. Interpretation on the southeast observation deck will focus on river transportation and navigation.

**Purpose:** To interpret transportation and navigation on and along the river, focusing on modes of transportation that visitors will likely see from the viewing deck.

**Messages:** 2.2-2.3, 2.32-2.42, 2.43-2.52, , 2.13-2.14

#### Objectives:

*Visitors will learn:*

- Barges are the work horses of the Mississippi, hauling incredible amounts of cargo up and down the river.
- Trains ushered in a new era of transporting people and goods, and remain an important link for businesses along the river.
- Historically, log rafts and steamboats dominated the river traffic, and gave rise to the economic use of the Mississippi for transportation.
- Other sites along the Great River Road that offer close-up views and interpretation of barges, trains, and other transportation.

*Visitors will feel:*

- Amazed by the number of barges and trains that pass this site every day.

- A connection between their lives and the cargo that trains and barges carry.
- A connection to past river transportation with historic photographs taken from the site.

*Visitors will do:*

- Watch barges, trains, and recreational boats on the river.
- Feel tactile models of barges and see small vials of actual cargo the barges are hauling.
- Visit other sites along the Great River Road that deal with transportation.

The following interpretive panels will be installed on the southeast observation deck.

#### Barges:

Many barges pass the Freedom Park area each day. Interpretation will focus on where the barges are going, what they are carrying, and how people depend on barges for everyday items. Tactile models of barges will show the 15 barges (3 wide and 5 long) being pushed by a towboat. Durable vials of whole grains, coal, petroleum, and rocks will demonstrate the common cargo shipped on barges.



***Trains:***

Several trains rumble directly below the Freedom Park bluff every day. An observation deck over the bluff will provide a unique top-view of the trains. Historic photographs will highlight the first train arriving in Prescott in 1886, the Prescott Depot, and hobos catching a ride as the trains slowed for the sharp curve. The panel will also interpret the modern railroad line and the types of cargo being hauled.



*Training crossing bridge at Prescott*

***Log rafts and steamboats:***

Historic transportation on the river included long rafts of lumber and logs, often pushed by a steamboat. Steamboats carried cargo and passengers up and down the river. Historic photographs of log rafts and steamboats near Prescott Island will make a direct connection with visitors.



*The sternwheel steamboat B. Hershey pushes a raft of logs downriver just past the tip of Prescott Island circa 1880. The photograph was taken from the current site of Freedom Park.*

### Group Viewing Area (Northwest Deck) Panels

The observation deck on the northwest side of the park provides an excellent view up the Mississippi River. The Prescott railroad bridge over the St. Croix River is visible, as are many navigational aids that boaters use while on the river. The interpretation on this deck will focus on navigational improvements and structural changes that people have made to the Mississippi.

**Purpose:** To interpret bridges, dams, navigational aids, and other changes that humans have made to tame the mighty Mississippi River, focusing on structures they can see from the group viewing area.

**Messages:** 2.53-2.62, 6.11-6.24

#### Objectives:

*Visitors will learn:*

- Different colored buoys and markers on the river are like street signs, aiding the navigation of boat traffic.
- Before dams were built, people could sometimes walk across the Mississippi when the water was low.
- Wing dams and the lock-and-dam system were used to ensure a deep channel for river traffic, but forever changed the ecology of the Mississippi.
- Bridges across the Mississippi not only aided pedestrians, trains, and later cars to cross in a timely manner, but also generated money, like the toll bridge in Prescott and spiral bridge in Hastings.

- Nearby locks and dams, and other sites along the Great River Road that interpret bridges and navigational improvements.

*Visitors will feel:*

- Realization that the colorful buoys and markers mean specific things to river pilots.
- Awed by the man-made changes that have turned the slow-moving, shallow waters of the river into a deep, quickly flowing channel.
- Nostalgia for the railroad bridge where generations of children played and humor for the different ways people evaded the toll bridge.

*Visitors will do:*

- View the Prescott railroad bridge, buoys, and markers.
- Look at historic photographs and read accounts of the bridges in this area and what they meant in people's lives.
- Visit nearby locks-and-dams and other sites that deal with navigational improvements.

The following interpretive panels will be installed on the northwest group viewing area deck.



*Starboard side NUN buoy, with Freedom Park in the background*

**Navigational Aids:**

NUN buoys and CAN buoys mark the shipping channel past Freedom Park. They are anchored at the channel end of wing dams. A red starboard-side crossing daymark board can also be seen. A navigational map with close-up photos will describe these features and their importance to boaters.

**River Improvements:**

Before dams were constructed, people were able to walk across the Mississippi River at Prescott during low water. Over the years, wing dams were installed to sour the channel deeper. By 1930, a series of locks and dams were built to establish a 9-foot channel. This panel will interpret the



*A mooring/guide cell at the tip of Prescott Island looks like a man standing. This navigation aid should be interpreted.*

history of these river “improvements,” and their effects on the shipping business and the ecology of the river.

**Bridges:**

The railroad bridge at Prescott can be seen from this point. A tollbridge in Prescott opened in 1923, and people discovered all sorts of ways to avoid paying. This panel will tell the story of bridges on the Mississippi, focusing on the local Prescott bridge and the unique spiral bridge in Hastings.



### Community Gazebo Panels

The gazebo building in the middle of the park will be used for family gatherings and community events. The interpretive messages here will focus on the history of Freedom Park, from its days as a “detention hospital” in 1901, to its development as a “Tourist Park” in the 1920s, and finally to being named “Freedom Park” in 1982.

**Purpose:** To interpret the history of the Prescott community and Freedom Park primarily to residents who would be using the shelter.

**Messages:** 5.1-5.22

#### Objectives:

*Visitors will learn:*

- Philander Prescott, the future namesake of the community, was an interpreter with the Dakota Indians at Fort Snelling, and claimed land at the mouth of the St. Croix in 1839.
- Prescott was a frontier town when it was founded, and depended on the river for jobs and contact with the larger world.
- The site of Freedom Park once housed a detention hospital, but was developed as a “Tourist Park” in the 1920s.
- Freedom Park was named after a bald eagle released from the site in 1982.

*Visitors will feel:*

- A modern-day connection with past events that shaped the community of Prescott and Freedom Park.

*Visitors will do:*

- View historic photographs of Prescott and Freedom Park, and identify some of the old buildings and sites that still exist.

The following interpretive panels will be installed in the community gazebo.

#### City of Prescott:

The panel will explain how the town was named for Philander Prescott and describe the city’s cosmopolitan atmosphere when it was the northern terminus of river traffic in the 1850s. Historic photographs of the city will allow residents to see how present locations have change from those of the past.



*The steamboat Capitol as seen from the Prescott levee in the early 1920s.*

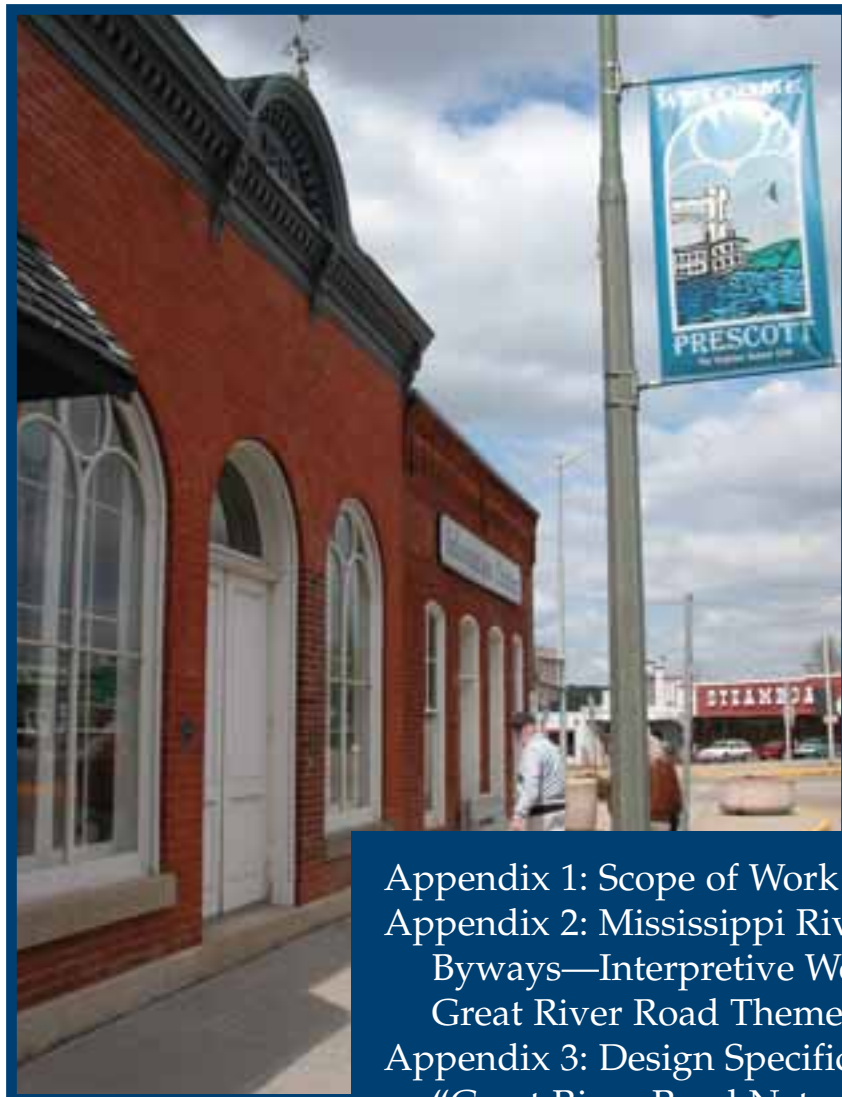
#### Freedom Park:

The current city park has evolved over the last 100 years from being the site of a “detention hospital” to the Gateway of the Great River Road in Wisconsin. The panel will interpret these changes.





# Appendices



Appendix 1: Scope of Work  
Appendix 2: Mississippi River  
Byways—Interpretive Workshop:  
Great River Road Themes  
Appendix 3: Design Specifications:  
“Great River Road Network” Signs



## Appendix 1: Scope of Work

### Scope of Work

This contract between the Cedar Corporation of Menominee, WI and Ron Zimmerman of the Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters in Stevens Point, WI (Consultant Team) will result in a Conceptual Interpretive Master Plan to guide the development of the Prescott Interpretive Center to be constructed on the Great River Road National Scenic Byway in Prescott, WI. Deliverable outcomes and products are listed below.

### Phase 1: Inventory and Analysis

#### 1A. Site inventory

In consultation with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) and the city of Prescott, the Consultant Team will research and inventory the interpretive elements of the site as they relate to the history of Prescott and the Mississippi River Corridor. This will include investigating the goals, interpretive themes, and relationships of other corridor interpretive entities such as the National Park Service/St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, the National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium in Dubuque, IA, the National Park Service's Mississippi National Center at the Science Museum of Minnesota in St. Paul, and other

pertinent efforts in the ten-state area. A minimum of 14 days will be spent on site.

#### 1B. Market analysis of target audiences

The Consultant Team will gather quantitative and qualitative data from existing sources such as WisDOT traffic counts, U.S. census surveys, and similar attractions in the area and through interviews, focus groups sessions, and other techniques in the summer of 2004. This information will be used to help determine appropriate themes and messages as well as facility needs in the visitor center. Meetings with Prescott citizens will be scheduled as deemed appropriate by city officials and WisDOT.

#### 1C. Comprehensive listing of the interpretive concepts, messages, and themes

The Consultant Team will develop a framework of concepts and themes that tell a cohesive story of the Prescott site and its relationship to the greater river corridor and the National Scenic Byway. Themes and sub-themes will be developed to unify the diverse storylines into a cohesive whole, so visitors can perceive the wholes through interpretive media.

## Phase 2: Deliverable Products

### 2A. Conceptual Interpretive Master Plan

A high-quality, full-color document will be developed that can be used for architectural programming and for future fundraising by the community.

Thirty copies of the plan will be submitted to the client. The plan will:

- Outline and quantify functions of the building and specific conceptual needs for the architectural team.
- Organize interpretive themes, sub-themes, and messages into a logical framework for developing unified media.
- Prescribe and illustrate exhibits and other media through full-color drawings and narratives.

The Consultant Team will share their principal ideas and solutions with the Cedar Corporation prior to document preparation and will incorporate the architectural team's ideas into the plan.

### 2B. Wayside exhibit panels

Ten interpretive wayside exhibit panels will be developed as unified prototypes for the interpretive center using the themes and messages set forth in the interpretive plan. The signs will be designed in an electronic format suitable

for fabrication by an interpretive sign production firm. The Consultant Team will provide the clients with panel files, graphics, fonts, and templates stored on CD-ROMs.

### 2C. Selection of exhibit firm

The Consultant Team will assist Cedar Corporation and the clients in selecting a reputable exhibit firm capable of fabricating and installing exhibits in a timely and professional manner.



## Appendix 2: Mississippi River Byways- Interpretive Workshop: Great River Road Themes

On May 9-10, 2002, America's Byways Resource Center, in cooperation with the Mississippi River Parkway Commission (MRPC), sponsored a workshop in St. Louis to discuss interpretation along the ten-state Great River Road corridor. Professors Michael Gross and Ron Zimmerman from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point facilitated the workshop.

Attendees included representatives from the Mississippi River Parkway Commission (ten states), byway leaders from nationally designated scenic byways, and resource people and interpretive specialists from private and public organizations.

### Workshop Outcomes

#### Vision:

The plan will provide a unifying interpretive framework that will assist all partners in telling the stories about the river and its resources.

#### Goals:

1. Provide a template/framework outlining general methodology/guidance to develop and implement Great River Road interpretation plan, including "how to's" for developing:
  - A database
  - Themes

- Stories
  - Assessment of customers
1. In addition, identify implementation strategies for delivery.
  2. Provide a quality visitor experience through interpretation to increase visits, revenue, and return on investment (ROI) to specific Great River Road destinations.
  3. Devise an active and well-recognized network of well-connected Great River Road interpretive centers.
  4. Create unified marketing elements.
  5. Build interpretive partnerships between local, state, and national organizations and industries.
  6. Develop local pride and visitor appreciation for the Great River Road's natural, historic, and cultural resources.
  7. Enhance the experience.
  8. Locate or create funding for development of resources.
  9. Enhance preservation of the Mississippi River Valley's resources.
  10. Develop interpretive products and services consistent with the managing community's needs.
  11. Draw visitors to an experience involving people and communities, occupations, environment, water, food, drink, entertainment, economics, and industry.
  12. Create a sense of place.

**Primary Theme: The Mississippi River is the flow of life shaping land and peoples**

**Theme 1: The Mississippi River is a ribbon of life for people, plants, and animals.**

- a. The Mississippi River system hosts vastly diverse habitats, including



- sloughs, side channels, and oxbow lakes, which support a wide variety of plant and animal species comprising a significant component of the continent's bio-diversity. Congress recognizes the Upper Mississippi as a nationally significant ecosystem.
- b. Prior to settlement by Europeans and hydrological modifications, the Mississippi River flooded approximately 21 million acres, depositing rich alluvial sediments that supported millions acres of forest wetland. Today fewer than 5 million acres of these forests remain as important sources for timber and wildlife habitat. The rich alluvial soils support agricultural production.
  - c. The Mississippi River is home to many rare, threatened, and endangered species, including both state listed and federally listed species. Federally listed species are bald eagle, peregrine falcon, Louisiana black bear, pallid sturgeon, Massasauga rattler, and two freshwater mollusks: Higgins eye and fat pocketbook.
  - d. The Mississippi River has international importance as a migratory corridor for mid-continent water-fowl populations. The river corridor is also important for maintenance, conservation, and preservation of diverse mid-continent fish and wildlife populations.
  - e. Development and change in the Mississippi River, during and immediately after the last glacial advance and retreat, have influences the location and character of the present river, including the deposits of "Ice Age" loess soil.
  - f. The Mississippi River is a dynamic system involving sedimentation, erosion, channel changes, floods, and droughts.
  - g. The Mississippi River's watershed- about 1,250,000 square miles- extends from the Allegheny Mountains and drains parts of two Canadian provinces and 31 states.
  - h. The natural history of the Mississippi, including its geography, geology, flora, fauna, and ecology, is vital component in the river's importance and relationship to the entire United States.
  - i. Human inhabitants of the Mississippi River valley have adapted to its rich biotic resources; these adaptations, which involve hunting, fishing, and resource-gathering techniques, a great variety of water-craft and water-related material culture, and centuries of fold wisdom, constitute an essential unit of Mississippi River ecological analysis.
  - j. The origin, character, and development of the river's landforms affect human use of the river corridor.
  - k. The Mississippi River is a major recreational resource. The river's easy access and diverse resources attracts millions of people annually, but the increasing number of people using the river creates problems and concerns among different user groups.
- Theme 2: As the River has influenced people, people have influences the river.**
- a. Some local, state, and federal agencies regulate, protect, preserve, and enhance natural resources. State-of-the-art resource management and environment and environmental engineering approaches in both the upper and lower Mississippi River restore wetlands. A large portion of the upper

river corridor is a federally designated refuge.

- b. Individuals and private and interagency groups (such as the Upper Mississippi River Conservation Committee, the Izaak Walton League, GREAT, and Environmental Management Programs) have played pioneering roles, especially on the upper river, in protecting the welfare and integrity of the river environment for future generations to enjoy.
- c. Many areas along the river are relatively pristine and isolated despite the environmental transformation caused by historic and contemporary human activity.
- d. Sedimentation alters fish and wildlife habitats, impedes commercial and recreational navigation, increases the frequency of dredging, and can contribute to degraded water quality conditions. Historical erosion and displacement of rich topsoil of the Midwest has had negative effects on Midwest agricultural and way of life, but it helped create and maintain the delta in Louisiana.
- e. Exotic plant and animal species pose severe threats to the river's natural inhabitants and municipal, industrial, and recreational activities on the river.
- f. Pollutants from a number of sources, including spills, continue to degrade Mississippi River water quality. This results in fish consumption advisories, nonattainment of water quality standards, algae blooms, nutrient enrichment, high turbidity, and decreasing populations of intolerant aquatic species.
- g. The cumulative effects of recent human intervention in the Mississippi River

natural system are many: channel modifications have altered erosion cycles, channel bed stability, and sediment loads.

**Theme 3: The Mississippi River has nurtured prehistoric and historic cultures.**

- a. A great diversity of cultures existed in pre-European times, beginning around 12,000 years before the present (B.P.), with the Paleo-Indian hunters of the mammoth and mastodon. Archaic hunters and foragers of 9000 B.P. followed. Then the Woodland Mound builders of the Hopewell culture came. Later, the Mississippian and Oneonta cultures with prosperous farms flourished in the half-century before the time of Columbus.
- b. From the earliest settlement, patterns of economic exchanges and alliances facilitated by the Mississippi River system influenced cultural developments in the Midwest and Old Southwest that distinguished these regions from their counterparts on the East Coast.
- c. The most sophisticated prehistoric Indian civilization north of Mexico, centered at Cahokia Mounds, established a regional center for Mississippian culture at the primary confluences of the Mississippi, Missouri, Illinois, and Ohio Rivers.

**Theme 4: The Mississippi River inspires a variety of folk like, literary, fine art, and musical forms.**

- a. The indigenous music of the Mississippi River includes folk, gospel, blues, jazz, country, and folk songs of

traditional river people. An interweaving of Creole, Cajun, Anglo-Celtic, and African-American musical traditions inspired these unique sounds.

- b. The Mississippi River Valley nourished a rich oral tradition that contributed to a distinctive regional literature and nurtured and disseminated regional linguistic diversity.
- c. The fluidity of populations in “golden ear” river town (before lock and dam) gave the settlements a diverse and boisterous character. Long lasting stereotypes of “river rat” behavior and character emerged, furnishing never-ending fuel for literary imaginations and contributing to the American frontier mythology.
- d. The Mississippi River has served as a channel for the movement of ideas, and the dissemination and diffusion of materials, folk, and popular culture can be traced both east and west from the Mississippi River, as well as along its north-south course.
- e. A wealth of intricate traditional knowledge regarding the Mississippi River survives among the few people whose livelihoods still depend on the river. While river people have adapted this knowledge to modern times, it still shares much with what the pilots of Mark Twain’s time knew, connecting river users through the ages.
- f. The Mississippi River Valley has a multicultural history, with many ethnic peoples playing significant roles and contributing to the arts, letters, music, historic events, and traditional culture.

**Theme 5: The Mississippi River has profoundly shaped American history.**

- a. The historical Mississippi River fur trade merged Indian and European cultures. Native people, trappers, and the parent trading companies interacted to have an impact on European settlement, regional economic growth, European American and American Indian culture, and American Indian/European American relationships. As the fur trade moved up the Missouri River, the trans-Mississippi west opened to American settlement.
- b. The central story of post-Columbian American Indian history in the Mississippi River Valley is the process by which Europeans and American settlers displaced native tribes and disrupted their cultural base.
- c. The history of the Mississippi River is significant not only to Americans but to Europeans, as the river was an important border zone between rival colonial powers and played a major role in opening the continents French, Spanish, British, and American exploration, trade, and settlement.
- d. The Mississippi River system (including the Ohio and Missouri Rivers) provided access to the interior and southern outlet for surplus goods, linked the eastern states with the west instead of with Europe, allowed for political unity via Louisiana Purchase, supported the spread of the southern cotton economy and slavery-based labor system, and sustained a distinct American culture.

- e. Slavery became a significant political, economic, and social issue in American history because of its expansion into the Mississippi River Valley. The river was central to the operations of the plantation and creation of planting “aristocracy” in the antebellum South, which dominated political, economic, and social affairs in the lower Mississippi River Valley. The river also served to transport enslaved people downriver and offered a route north to freedom for escaping fugitives.
- f. By providing growth and opportunity, the Mississippi River Valley supported an American democracy composed of individuals with strong belief in social ideas, responsibility, and populist reform.

**Theme 6: The strategic importance of the Mississippi River has resulted in conflict between nations and peoples.**

- a. The Mississippi has played a central role in American Indian, American, and international military history. The river was a prize of war and a boundary in treaties. It also served as a home to Civil War presidents and generals, and became key to the Civil War’s outcome. Later, it supported mobilization in World War II.

**Theme 7: The Mississippi River architecture reflects distinctive styles affected by cultural and natural resources.**

- a. Architectural styles in Mississippi River towns were affected by climate, topography, natural resources, ethnic culture, and construction dates.
- b. Consistent architectural styles in Mississippi River towns reflect rapid communication and flow of ideas along

the river, the rapidity with which the river was settled, the cultural backgrounds of the first immigrants to make permanent settlements, and a deep cultural and communication gap between river people and inland farming people.

- c. Vernacular architecture along the Mississippi River reveals many ethnic influences.
- d. Surviving river town architecture represents the boom years of wealth along the river, wealth generated through transportation and other river-based commercial activities.
- e. The ethnic diversity of the small river towns provides international visitors with shared architecture, language, cultural events, and history.

**Theme 8: The Mississippi is one of the world’s great rivers noted for its beauty, grandeur and diversity.**

- a. The richness and beauty of much of the Mississippi River corridor remain one of the nation’s “best-kept secrets.” Scenic resources along the Mississippi River are many and varied, offering majestic bluff vistas as well as tranquil, low-lying views.

**Theme 9: The history of Mississippi River transportation is a dramatic story reflecting the river’s economic and commercial importance.**

- a. The Mississippi River is a vital interstate trade route linking North and South, and through its tributaries, the Missouri, Illinois, Ohio, and Arkansas rivers, linking East and West.

- b. Mississippi navigation has evolved from the transportation of good in dugouts, pirogues, rafts, bateaux, flatboats, and keelboats to the heyday of the steamboat era to establishment of the present inland waterway system with its towboats and barges.
  - c. Eastern attempts to reach the Mississippi, the interior river if commerce, resulted in internal improvements such as canals, turnpikes, bridges, and railroads.
  - d. Evidence of historic river transportation is preserved in the numerous documented and undocumented shipwrecks that are recorded for the Mississippi River channels and its backwaters.
  - e. The Mississippi River plays an important role in bulk commodity transportation and world trade and provides the nation’s most inexpensive means of transportation.
  - f. The Mississippi River System is a federally designed navigation channel, providing economic benefits to river communities and the region.
- c. Navigation and flood control improvements on the Mississippi have changed the river’s landscape to such an extent that both the upper and lower Mississippi River today differs markedly from the natural river views by Indians, explorers, and early settlers.

**Theme 11: The Mississippi River is a working river sustaining many industries.**

- a. Many industries depend on the river for water power and transportation and use the river for its natural resources.
- b. Historic river-based industries, including commercial fishing, pearl button, ice, lead, and timber, have given way to the present-day oil, cement, limestone, grain, and coal industries. Other industries, including milling and hydroelectric generation, have spanned the decades.

**Theme 10: Mississippi River towns and cities reflect mid-19<sup>th</sup> century like.**

- a. For most towns, the river was the location and site factor in economic development before the 1870s. Only limited, capital-intensive conventional economic development has ensued, but the river now offers important opportunities for tourism development.
- b. The physical layout of river towns provides access to the river and to adjacent lands, securing an economic and cultural advantage over inland towns.





## Appendix 3: Design Specifications: “Great River Road Network” Signs

The following specifications for the standard “Great River Road Network” signs that will be installed at all interpretive centers were developed by:

Mission Creative  
140 East 9th Street  
Dubuque, IA 52001  
(563) 583-0853  
[www.missioncreative.biz](http://www.missioncreative.biz)

November 9, 2004  
SPECIFICATION FORM / Great River  
Road Signs

Job Number: 04045315  
MC Contact: Tom Culbertson

Furnish (47) single faced Great River  
Road signs per attached sketch.

Posts: SignComp Series Round post  
#1007, 10' long each

Caps: SignComp #3 1/4" round #5254

Post Finish: Sprayed Matthews Acrylic  
Polyurethane Brushed Aluminum  
Metallic

Sign Panel: .080 Aluminum

Panel Finish: Sprayed Matthews Acrylic  
Polyurethane White

Graphic: 3M Scotchprint with clear cost  
finish. File for each sign will be  
provided by Mission Creative.

Packing: Packing for shipment included

Appendix 3—Design Specifications for “GRR Network” Signs



Furnish (12) single faced Great River Road signs per sketch. Packaging for shipment included. Engineering of final sign shall be responsibility of sign supplier.

