

# News Release

## *DeSoto & Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuges Visitor Services*

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Steamboat Bertrand 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemoration March 27-29 at DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge**

**Missouri Valley, Iowa** – Commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the sinking of the Steamboat Bertrand on March 27-29 at DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge. Sunk on April 1, 1865, the steamboat Bertrand was lost to the ages until she was rediscovered nearly a century later within the boundaries of the DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge. Over 250,000 artifacts were uncovered, many of them were rare and well preserved items found at few other archaeological sites: Wooden tools, metal objects, textiles, and foodstuffs, just to name a few. This steamboat Bertrand collection is an important tool used in understanding the material culture of the Civil War-era, and a treasure to be appreciated for many years to come.

Commemoration activities kick off Friday afternoon with special tours of the Bertrand excavation site and steamboat museum from 2:00-4:00 p.m. The formal reception starts at 4:00 p.m. with a social hour followed by formal presentations starting at 5:00 p.m. The evening's keynote speaker is Archaeologist and retired National Park Service Superintendent Ronald R. Switzer who will speak about the early preservation of the Bertrand artifacts. He will also be signing copies of his new book on the Bertrand following his talk.

Events continue at the refuge on Saturday and Sunday, March 28-29. A variety of activities are offered for the whole family including show-and-tell with select artifacts, a steamboat photo station, 1860s period play time for kids, waterfowl viewing stations and more. Special talks on Saturday include an encore presentation by Ronald Switzer at 10:00 a.m. and a presentation on metal artifact conservation by a Gerald R. Ford Center Conservation Technician Megan Griffiths at 1:00 p.m. Tours of the museum collection and special archeologist-led tours of the Bertrand excavation site will happen on the hour from 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

If you have a personal connection or memory of the Steamboat Bertrand excavation, you are invited to visit the oral history station to share your story. Please bring any personal photographs or newspaper articles so that we can scan and return them to you during your interview. Your recollections and stories will be recorded and kept in the archives of the museum.

Fees will be waived for all visitors during the weekend anniversary commemoration.

The Missouri Valley and Blair Post Offices are offering a special pictorial postmark in honor of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the sinking. To receive the postmark, visit the refuge visitor center on Wednesday, April 1 from 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. All mail must have a regular stamp and then can receive the postmark. Mail with the proper stamp (and stamped return envelope) can also be dropped off at the refuge ahead of April 1 to receive the postmark and then be mailed out.

( more )

DeSoto & Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuges are located north of Omaha, Nebraska along U.S. Highway 30 between Missouri Valley, Iowa and Blair, Nebraska and along U.S. Highway 75 near Ft. Calhoun, Nebraska. For more information contact 712/388-4800 or email the refuge at [desoto@fws.gov](mailto:desoto@fws.gov). Check our websites, [www.fws.gov/refuge/desoto/](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/desoto/) or [www.fws.gov/refuge/boyer\\_chute/](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/boyer_chute/), for refuge updates. Like us on Facebook - search for DeSoto and Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuges.

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