

DINE OUT –ROAD RUN

HISTORIC ARROW ROCK, MO

Sunday, September 23, 2018

The entire village of Arrow Rock has been designated a National Historic Landmark recognizing its association with Westward Expansion, the Santa Fe Trail and artist George Caleb Bingham. The Missouri Department of Natural Resources operates a museum and visitors center in the village that recounts the rich history of the area.

For generations, the Arrow Rock bluff was a significant landmark on the Missouri River for Native Americans, explorers, and early westward travelers. This flint-bearing, high limestone bluff first appeared on a 1732 French map as “pierre a fleche,” literally translated as “rock of arrows.” Archaeological evidence shows that for nearly 12,000 years indigenous cultures used the Arrow Rock bluff as a manufacturing site for flint tools and weapons.

Following the War of 1812 and the subsequent peace treaties with Indians in 1815, large numbers of immigrants from Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia began pouring into the fertile “Boone’s Lick Country,” so named for the salt spring or “lick” across the river.

In the 1820s, the earliest travelers on what became the Santa Fe Trail crossed the river on the Arrow Rock ferry and filled their water barrels with fresh water at “the Big Spring” before heading west. In 1829, the town of Arrow Rock was founded on the bluff above the ferry crossing. Originally named Philadelphia, the town’s name was changed in 1833 to coincide with the better-known landmark name, Arrow Rock.

Many citizens prominent in state and national affairs were closely associated with Arrow Rock including Dr. John Sappington of quinine fame and George Caleb Bingham, Missouri’s preeminent artist of the mid-1800s. Three 19th century Missouri governors also came from Arrow Rock.

When the Civil War began, Arrow Rock had reached its peak population of 1,000. The region had a decidedly southern character evidenced in its culture, politics and architecture. One-third of Saline County’s population was enslaved African Americans. The Civil War precipitated an economic decline from which Arrow Rock never fully recovered. Steamboats and river commerce gave way to railroads that bypassed the town. Two fires devastated the business district, and the population dwindled to 400 by 1910. Today, 45 full-time and 33 part-time residents call Arrow Rock home.

While the village is small, don’t be fooled by its size. Arrow Rock remains a vital community. The restoration of the Huston Tavern in 1923 marked the beginning of historic preservation in the state of Missouri and set the stage for Arrow Rock’s future. In 1963, the entire town was designated a National Historic Landmark because of its association with the Westward Expansion. In 1968, the home of artist George Caleb Bingham was listed separately as a National Historic Landmark. Arrow Rock is also a certified site on the Lewis & Clark and Santa Fe Trails.

We’ll begin our journey to the past with a visit to the old-time Country Store, the town’s tiny post office, and the interesting period shops on Main Street, better known to locals as “The Boardwalk.” Other highlights include the J. Huston Tavern, the oldest continuously operating restaurant west of the Mississippi; the Arrow Rock Station, where diners enjoy a year-round Christmas display; Catalpa restaurant, recently voted Best Restaurant in the Best of Rural Missouri reader survey; and, of course, the Arrow Rock Lyceum Theatre, Missouri’s oldest professional regional theatre.

We’ll meet at 9:00AM at the I-70 Rest Area at Mile Marker 198 in Wright City. Then an interstate drive to Exit 98 to Arrow Rock/Pilot Grove; Right onto Hwy. 41, turn left, then right onto Van Buren St. in Arrow Rock.

LUNCH AT THE FAMOUS J. HUSTON TAVERN IN ARROW ROCK

Please RSVP to Curt and Nancy Baker 314.578.1395