

Headlines



Rock Island Receives Preserve America Grant

March 13, 2006

Rock Island, IL-- The Centennial Bridge Commission Building will get a new lease on life as a visitor's center, thanks to a \$43,342 Preserve America grant received by the City of Rock Island.

In a ceremony held on Capitol Hill on March 9, Mrs. Laura Bush, First Lady of the United States and Honorary Chair of *Preserve America*, announced the first round of *Preserve America* grants. Rock Island City Manager John Phillips and 5th Ward Alderwoman Evie White, already in Washington with the Quad City Development Group delegation, were present to accept the grant award.

The City of Rock Island will partner with the Quad Cities Convention and Visitors Bureau, Chippianock Cemetery Heritage Foundation, River Action and consultant Curtis Roseman for "Hosting Heritage Tourism in Rock Island." The City match is from in-kind resources and \$11,000 from the Downtown Tax Increment Financing District.

The goal is to turn the Centennial Bridge Visitor Center, a Rock Island Landmark building, into a DESTINATION. Although serving all tourism needs with brochure kiosks, interpretive displays at the Centennial Bridge Visitor Center will focus on heritage tourism sites in Rock Island. These attractive, quality displays will guide and direct tourists to other area venues, in addition to turning a visit to the Mississippi River into an experience. This location is potentially the best place in the Quad Cities to walk across and view the river. Very special attention will be paid to the Mississippi River and transportation over the river. Rock Island was the location of the first railroad bridge over the Mississippi in 1856. We also possess an engineering marvel in the 360-degree pivoting Arsenal Bridge. The City of Rock Island embodied forward thinking during the Great Depression by boldly financing and constructing Centennial Bridge, the first four-lane bridge over the Mississippi River and an architectural beauty.

"Hosting Heritage Tourism in Rock Island" also provides for the construction of a granite tourism information kiosk at Chippianock Cemetery, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is considered one of Rock Island's most unique tourism assets. The Chippianock Cemetery Heritage Foundation provided matching funds for this portion of the project.

Besides the granite work at Chippianock Cemetery, the \$86,684 total project will include

- ⇒ Creating interpretive displays, banners and informational kiosks that promote Rock Island's historic venues.
- ⇒ Providing a one-year paid, on-site Quad Cities Convention & Visitors Bureau manager to train volunteers and run operations.



Rock Island City Manager, John Phillips accepts the Grant Award from First Lady Mrs. Laura Bush.

- ⇒ Constructing a new limestone sign in keeping with the Rock Island Landmark building.
- ⇒ Advertising
- ⇒ Design and construction drawings for ADA accessible entrance and restroom.
- ⇒ Interpreting the national importance of the local transportation network as related to the Mississippi River and regional development.

“It was a pleasure and a surprise to know that we received the grant,” said Alan Carmen, Rock Island Planning and Redevelopment Administrator. “This was a nationally competitive grant, with hundreds of eligible communities.”

The first round of *Preserve America* grants provided \$3.5 million for projects in 28 states representing all regions of the country.

Rock Island was named a *Preserve America* community in 2004. It is the only *Preserve America* community in Illinois.

Preserve America is a White House initiative that encourages and supports community efforts to preserve and enjoy our priceless cultural and natural heritage. The goals of the initiative include a greater shared knowledge about the nation’s past, strengthened regional identities and local pride, increased local participation in preserving the country’s cultural and natural heritage assets, and support for the economic vitality of our communities.

More information on *Preserve America*, including a complete list of grant recipients, can be found at www.PreserveAmerica.gov.