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Celebrate Independence Day at the Kaskaskia Bell State Memorial

SPRINGFIELD – The Kaskaskia Bell State Memorial on Kaskaskia Island in southwest Illinois will host its 55th annual patriotic ceremony celebrating our nation's independence at 1 p.m. Friday, July 4.

The 320-year-old village of Kaskaskia is home to the Liberty Bell of the West. The 650-pound bell was cast in 1741 and presented by France as a gift to the Catholic Church of the Illinois Country. Originally located at the Immaculate Conception Parish at Kaskaskia, the bell was rung by villagers to celebrate their July 4, 1778, liberation from the British by American Colonel George Rogers Clark. In later years, it became known as the Liberty Bell of the West.

The [Kaskaskia Bell State Memorial](#) is at 203 First St. in Kaskaskia. The July Fourth program begins at 1 p.m., and the food stand opens at 11 a.m. Visitors should bring chairs.

This year's program will feature a presentation by historian, public speaker and southern Illinois native Tim Heggemeier on "George Rogers Clark and his Long Knives Across Randolph County."

Other participants in the ceremony will include the Rev. Sebastian Ukoh; members of VFW Post 3553 and American Legion Post 487; the Steve Colonel family; the Chester Municipal Band; the mayors of Chester and Perryville, Missouri; area scout troops; the French Marines de Fort de Chartres; and Fort Kaskaskia staff.

The Kaskaskia Bell State Memorial, managed by IDNR, is located on an island in the Mississippi River about 60 miles southeast of St. Louis. The town was once physically connected to the rest of Illinois by a peninsula until the Mississippi River changed course in 1881. The site is accessible by land only from Missouri. Visitors can reach the site through St. Mary, Missouri; take Missouri Highway 61 to the Old Channel Bridge, turn east, then follow Kaskaskia Bell markers for approximately 5 miles to the state memorial site.

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