



Foundation Document Overview

George Rogers Clark National Historical Park

Indiana



Contact Information

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Purpose



Located on the site of Fort Sackville, George Rogers Clark National Historical Park commemorates the accomplishments of George Rogers Clark and his associates during the American Revolution and the expansion of the United States into the Northwest Territory, while cooperating with partners in the preservation, renewal, and interpretation of the sites and structures in Vincennes associated with this story.



Significance

Significance statements express why George Rogers Clark National Historical Park resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- The military campaign led by George Rogers Clark in 1778 and 1779—culminating in the capture of Fort Sackville along the Wabash River in Vincennes—was the most significant accomplishment of the American Revolution west of the Appalachian Mountains. The campaign advanced the cause of the American Revolution by effectively interrupting British war plans in the western theater.
- Clark's victory at Vincennes, and control of the western frontier by American forces throughout the remainder of the American Revolution, was critical to the acquisition of the Northwest Territory. Congressional approval of the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 provided a unifying and enduring national strategy for the settlement and administration of new territories, profoundly influencing the patterns of westward expansion.
- The George Rogers Clark Memorial, located on the site of Fort Sackville, is the largest memorial on any American battlefield. The entire composition—including its landscaped grounds, statues, and the Lincoln Memorial Bridge approach—is an outstanding example of commemoration from the early to mid-20th century in America.



Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

The Memorial Building

The memorial building was completed in 1933 to commemorate George Rogers Clark's Revolutionary War accomplishments and the expansion of the United States into the Northwest Territory.

Designed Memorial Landscape

The formally designed cultural landscape of George Rogers Clark National Historical Park was developed in conjunction with the memorial building as part of the overall commemorative concept for the site.

Lincoln Memorial Bridge Approach

The Lincoln Memorial Bridge, completed in 1932, was designed as an important commemorative element contributing to the overall memorial landscape.

Site of Fort Sackville

Strategically located along the Wabash River in the frontier settlement of Vincennes, Fort Sackville was one of several Revolutionary War forts west of the Appalachian Mountains.

Murals

Inside the memorial building rotunda are seven large-scale murals depicting the Clark expedition, the capture of Fort Sackville, and related historic events.



Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

Topic: Campaign and Consequences

Clark's campaign and the capture of Fort Sackville not only affected the outcome of the American Revolution but also influenced the aftermath of the war and territorial expansion.

Topic: Character and Success

Commemoration and interpretation of the campaign led by George Rogers Clark invites exploration of the personal traits that contribute to success.

Topic: Context for the Clark Campaign

The Clark Campaign is one milestone in the broad sweep of westward expansion, one of the most significant migrations in U.S. history, and contributes to our understanding of the 18th- and early 19th-century struggles for control of North America.

Topic: Clark Memorialization

As with many other national parks, the development of George Rogers Clark National Historical Park sheds light on what America values and how the nation chooses to commemorate the past.



Description

George Rogers Clark National Historical Park is located within the city limits of Vincennes, Indiana, adjacent to the Wabash River. The 26.17-acre site contains the George Rogers Clark Memorial that commemorates the achievements of Lieutenant Colonel George Rogers Clark and his frontiersmen during the American Revolution. Following Clark's capture of British posts at Kaskaskia and Cahokia (in the Illinois country along the Mississippi River) in 1778, he led his small contingent of men in a daunting mid-winter march of 157 miles that culminated in the surrender of the British garrison at Fort Sackville on February 25, 1779. Clark's daring surprise capture of the fort is considered one of the greatest feats of the American Revolution. The event effectively checked British control of the region and was instrumental in the subsequent establishment of the Northwest Territory and American expansion west of the Appalachians. There are no surviving visible features of Fort Sackville, although the site of the fort (and potential archeological evidence) is believed to be in the immediate vicinity of the memorial building.

Completed in 1933, the memorial building was designed in the Neoclassical Beaux Arts style, and is considered among the last major classical style structures built in the United States, and one of the largest and finest examples of such a memorial outside of Washington, D.C. Formally designed grounds

surround and complement the memorial building. Spanning the Wabash River, the Lincoln Memorial Bridge was also designed as an integral element of the memorial, providing a grand approach to the site from the north. President Franklin D. Roosevelt formally dedicated the memorial on June 14, 1936. In 1966 the site was designated by Congress as George Rogers Clark National Historical Park and placed under the operation of the National Park Service.

Today, visitors to the national historical park have opportunities to learn about George Rogers Clark and his accomplishments as well as regional and U.S. military and political history. Many also come to appreciate the monumental architecture of the memorial, the memorial landscape, and the scenic location of the historic site. The visitor center includes interpretive exhibits and a documentary film. The park is open year round except for major national holidays.

Important historic sites in Vincennes associated with the park include Grouseland (the home of Territorial Governor and later U.S. President William Henry Harrison) which is a national historic landmark. Other state historic site buildings dating from the area's territorial period are also associated with the memorial.

George Rogers Clark National Historical Park and Related Heritage Sites in Vincennes, Indiana

