

photo by Shawna Kadlec



Welcome

to the Confluence Heritage Area...where the Grand Kaskaskia meets the Mighty Mississippi in Randolph County, Illinois. This territory is rich in folklore, natural beauty, culture and history. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has helped develop river resources for improved and reliable navigation, flood damage reduction, water supply, environmental stewardship and water-based public recreation. From the Eagle Watch in February to camping, picnicking, and boat launching any time, the locality offers four seasons of enjoyable activities. Thank you for visiting the Confluence Heritage Area. May your time here instill a sense of its beauty and significance.



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Kaskaskia River Project - Kaskaskia Lock & Dam
and Visitor Center
4800 Lock and Dam Road, Modoc, IL 62261
618-284-7160
www.mvs.usace.army.mil/Kaskaskia

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - Middle
Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge
1293 Rocky Hollow Road, Rockwood, IL 62280
618-763-4420
www.fws.gov/refuge/middle_mississippi_river

Illinois Historic Preservation Agency -
Randolph County Historic Sites
1350 State Route 155, Prairie du Rocher, IL 62277
618-284-7230 - www.ftdechartres.com

Randolph County -
Chester Welcome Center
10 By-Pass Road, Chester, IL 62233
618-826-2721 - www.chesteril.com
www.edrandolphcounty.com

Ste. Genevieve - Welcome Center
66 South Main Street, Ste. Genevieve, MO 63670
573-883-7097 - www.visitstegen.com

Highway Mileage Chart (to the Lock & Dam)

From St. Louis, MO.....60 miles
From Cape Girardeau, MO.....65 miles
From Springfield, IL.....145 miles
From Paducah, KY.....125 miles
From Evansville, IN.....160 miles



Kaskaskia & Mississippi Rivers



Confluence Heritage Area

Meet The Rivers

The Mighty Mississippi

The Mississippi is the largest river system in North America. Approximately 2,300 miles long, the river originates at Lake Itasca in Northern Minnesota and flows southward to its delta which enters the Gulf of Mexico. With its other two great tributaries, the Missouri River and the Ohio River, the Mississippi River system drains all or parts of 31 U.S. states stretching from the Rocky Mountains to the Appalachian Mountains. The drainage basin or watershed of the Mississippi covers more than 1,245,000 square miles, approximately 40 percent of the continental U.S. making the Mississippi River system the fourth largest watershed, the fourth longest and most economically important river system in the world! Witness the power and majesty of the Mississippi River up close at the Confluence.



cover aerial photo by Alan Dooley

The Grand Kaskaskia

The second longest river in Illinois, the Kaskaskia River, originates in Champaign County and flows in a southwesterly direction approximately 292 miles to its confluence with the Mississippi River in Randolph County. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has constructed and operates two flood damage reduction reservoirs along the Kaskaskia River, Carlyle Lake and Lake Shelbyville. The lock, dam and 36 mile long navigable channel at the Kaskaskia River Project were also constructed and are maintained by the Corps of Engineers. The lock and dam structure maintains nine foot navigation depths that are needed for commercial towing and barge operations. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources manages approximately 20,000 acres of public lands along the waterway for fish and wildlife conservation and outdoor recreation.



The Kaskaskia River Confluence Trail and Heritage Area

Located at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Kaskaskia River Project, the Kaskaskia River Confluence Heritage Trail leads to where the Kaskaskia and Mississippi Rivers meet. This paved one mile round trip hiking and biking trail is ideal for people of all ages and abilities. The trail winds through high quality bottomland forest and offers diverse native wildlife watching opportunities. When you reach the stone amphitheater and fire ring, relax and enjoy the spectacular experience of the Kaskaskia and Mississippi Rivers confluence.



Relax at the River

The Kaskaskia River Project offers 15 campsites with amenities like electrical hook-ups, paved camp pads, vault comfort stations, boat ramps, and picnic shelters. Hike or bike the trail, treat yourself to a picnic, enjoy the fire pit and stone amphitheater overlooking the rivers. Interpretive programs and special events are conducted periodically at the Confluence.

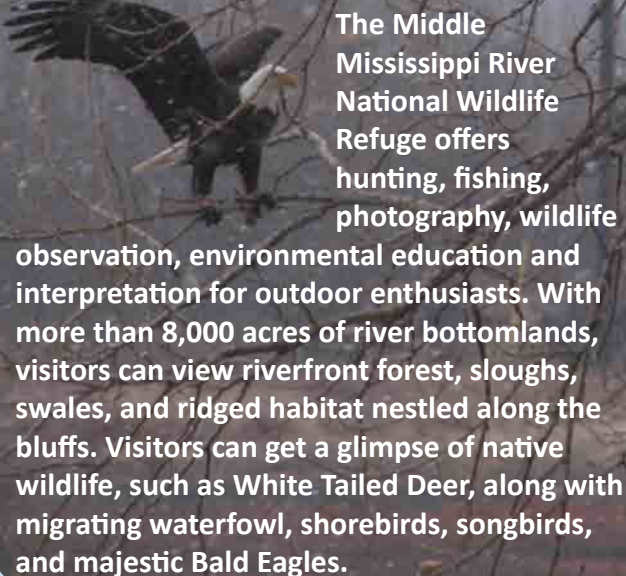
The Middle Mississippi River Region



The mouth of the Kaskaskia River is located approximately 117.5 river miles above the Ohio River mouth, right in the heart of the *Middle Miss*. The Middle Mississippi River starts at the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers Confluence just north of St. Louis, Missouri and extends approximately 195 miles downstream to the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers at Cairo, IL. Unlike the Upper Mississippi, which is impounded by a series of locks and dams, the Middle Mississippi River is free-flowing.

The Middle Mississippi River meanders through its floodplains between bluffs shifting across the Illinois and Missouri state lines. The main river channel is approximately one mile wide. On the Missouri bank the river is bordered by steep bluffs. In Illinois, the river is bordered by the rich alluvial American Bottom floodplain, varying from four to ten miles in width and bordered by dramatic bluffs. The American Bottom has seen numerous channel migrations as the river has flooded and receded over thousands of years. This natural meandering of the river has been greatly restricted over the last 100 years as flood control levees have been constructed along the entire length of the floodplain to protect crops, property, cultural heritage and rural communities.

The Middle Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge



The Middle Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge offers hunting, fishing, photography, wildlife observation, environmental education and interpretation for outdoor enthusiasts. With more than 8,000 acres of river bottomlands, visitors can view riverfront forest, sloughs, swales, and ridged habitat nestled along the bluffs. Visitors can get a glimpse of native wildlife, such as White Tailed Deer, along with migrating waterfowl, shorebirds, songbirds, and majestic Bald Eagles.

Respect the River

The Kaskaskia River Confluence Heritage Area and Trail is a fun and educational place to visit. With the Mighty Mississippi literally at your fingertips, always remember **safety first!** Follow these simple rules to make sure your trip to the confluence is a memorable and safe experience.

- ⊕ Dangerous currents! The water may not look like it is moving, but it is actually moving very quickly - **NO swimming or wading!**
- ⊕ Watch out! Stay away from unstable banks
- ⊕ Keep a close eye on children
- ⊕ Keep pets on leashes
- ⊕ Keep fires in contained areas only
- ⊕ Confluence area is closed when flooded



Auto Tour Route

This scenic route takes visitors to all of the historic and natural wonders of the region. Enjoy the beauty of the Confluence Heritage Area as you travel via automobile to the many historic and natural landmarks that comprise this special area. The auto route, identified on the map as a *red and white dashed line*, will help you navigate through this area and highlights the visitor information centers along the way. At these centers, you will find all the assistance you will need to continue your journey and further explore this region's unique attractions.

Where Illinois Began...It Happened Here!

- ✿ 1699: the French-Colonial trading post of Cahokia was established.
- ✿ 1703: the French-Colonial village of Kaskaskia was established.
Early 1700's: the Kaskaskia Trace, *the first road in Illinois*, developed into the main overland road connecting Kaskaskia and Cahokia.
- ✿ 1763: after the French were defeated by the British in the French and Indian Wars, the Illinois Country came under British rule.
- ✿ 1778: During the American Revolutionary War, Colonel George Rogers Clark and his soldiers retook the Kaskaskia region from the British without firing a single shot. In celebration of their independence, Clark and his troops rang the Kaskaskia Bell, a gift from King Louis XV of France in 1741. The bell has since become known as the *Liberty Bell of the West*.
- ✿ 1795: Kaskaskia became the seat of the civil government for the newly established Randolph County.
- ✿ 1803: the Lewis & Clark Expedition arrived at Kaskaskia, recruited 12 soldiers, and obtained equipment and supplies for their journey westward.
- ✿ 1809: the Kaskaskia region became the Illinois Territory, with the governor residing in Kaskaskia. Kaskaskia's population swelled to its historic peak with approximately 7,000 citizens.
- ✿ 1818: Illinois was admitted into the union and Kaskaskia became the first state capital. The capital was moved to Vandalia in 1820.
- ✿ 1881: the village of Kaskaskia began slowly relocating due to the changing course of the Mississippi. The river damaged the original village and separated Kaskaskia from the rest of Illinois, creating today's Kaskaskia Island. Before this course change, the mouth of the Kaskaskia River was located near Chester, eight miles south of its current location.
- ✿ 1962: construction of the Kaskaskia River Navigation Project was authorized. The project consists of one 600-foot lock; dam; gated spillway; 36 mile-long navigable waterway; 2,901 acres of public lands and 5,593 acres of flowage easement.

Old Kaskaskia Village & Trace

In the early 1700's, the French-Colonial village of Kaskaskia settlers began using a primary overland route to Cahokia known as the Kaskaskia Trace. The Trace is one of the oldest roads in the nation and the oldest road in Illinois. The approximate route can be seen on the Thomas Hutchins 1778 map to the right. Fort Kaskaskia State Historic Site is also a must see on the bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River and Kaskaskia Island.

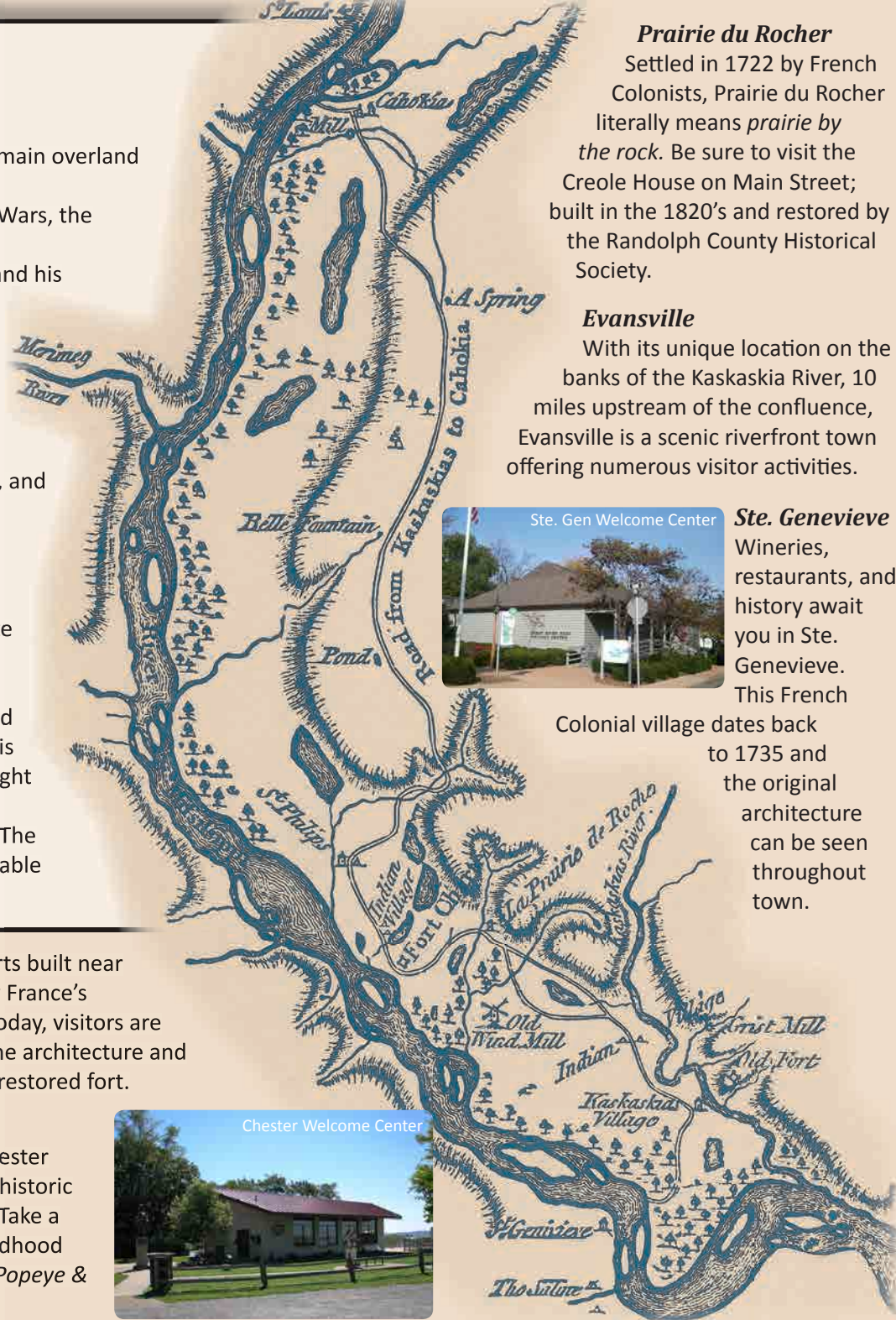
Fort de Chartres

Built in the 1750's, this state historical site is the last

of four 18th century forts built near the Mississippi River by France's colonial government. Today, visitors are invited to experience the architecture and history of this partially restored fort.

Chester

Established in 1819, Chester offers visitors a unique historic river town experience. Take a step back into your childhood as you stroll down the *Popeye & Friends Character Trail*.



Prairie du Rocher

Settled in 1722 by French Colonists, Prairie du Rocher literally means *prairie by the rock*. Be sure to visit the Creole House on Main Street; built in the 1820's and restored by the Randolph County Historical Society.

Evansville

With its unique location on the banks of the Kaskaskia River, 10 miles upstream of the confluence, Evansville is a scenic riverfront town offering numerous visitor activities.



Ste. Genevieve
Wineries, restaurants, and history await you in Ste. Genevieve. This French

Colonial village dates back to 1735 and the original architecture can be seen throughout town.



