

Have fun, learn at Lewis and Clark event on May 20 in Cape Girardeau, Mo.

You're invited to an entertaining and educational festival on Saturday, May 20, in Cape Girardeau along the Mississippi River in southeastern Missouri for a day of Lewis and Clark speakers; a tour of the replica of a historic house owned by the Cape Girardeau founder who greeted Meriwether Lewis during the expedition; and family-oriented events.

The Southern Prairie Region of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation will host activities in conjunction with Cape Girardeau's annual Red House Heritage Festival Day.

Planning for the festival is still underway by the community of Cape Girardeau, but, if last year's event is any indication of what can be expected, this year's festival, beginning in the afternoon, may likely feature live music, exhibits, pioneer demonstrations, and historic displays from spoon carving, rag rug twining, gypsy flower carving, basket weaving, flinting knapping, Native American artifacts, quill writing, beehive oven cooking, leather tooling, black powder weapons and blacksmithing—and, yes, possibly mule jumping!

In addition, there will be tours of the [Red House Interpretive Center](#) that commemorates the life of community founder and French-Canadian Louis Lorimier, as well as the visit of the Lewis and Clark Expedition in November 1803. The center is a certified Lewis and Clark Trail Site and a Missouri Legacy Project. [Click here](#) to learn about the expedition's connection to Louis Lorimier and Cape Girardeau.

The Lewis and Clark speakers during the morning: Lou Ritten, the immediate past president of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, and Dr. Don McGuirk, an expert on antiquarian maps, will be two of three speakers who will give presentations related to the Lewis and Clark Expedition during Heritage Festival Day in Cape Girardeau, Mo.

Lou will talk on the topic of "The Control of the Mississippi River" in the times before, during and after the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

Don will talk about "The Missouri River, Before, During, and After Lewis and Clark."

The third speaker has not yet been announced.

(See more information about Lou and Don later in this calendar entry.)

Their talks will be part of the events hosted by the Southern Prairie Region and held at the Courtyard by Marriott, 400 Broadway Street in Cape Girardeau. The events will begin with social time at 9:30 a.m. and introduction at 9:50 a.m. by Dan Sturdevant, Southern Prairie president who will talk about Lewis and Clark's time in November 1803 when the expedition arrived at Cape Girardeau.



The Red House in Cape Girardeau, Mo. According to the Red House Interpretive Center, "Lorimier's Trading Post was the largest and most well-known trading post between St. Louis and Memphis." Today, it is an interpretive center themed around Lewis' visit there on Nov 23, 1803. Photo by Robert Heacock and posted in lewis-clark.org.

Special room rates for this event

Book a room by April 15 for special rates at the Courtyard by Marriott in Cape Girardeau. These special Lewis and Clark rates will be for the nights of Friday, May 19, and Saturday, May 20, with checkout on Sunday, May 21. [Click here](#) to book your room.

Lou's talk will begin at 10 a.m.; Don's, at 10:45 a.m. The third speaker will be scheduled for 11:30 a.m., followed by box lunches at noon and then, at 1 p.m., a short drive from the Marriott to the Red House Interpretive Center, 128 Aquamsi Street.

Then, at 1:15 p.m. there will be a tour of the Red House, a replica of the Lorimier Homestead where the Cape Girardeau founder, Louis Lorimier, lived in the early 1800s. On Nov. 23, 1803, Meriwether Lewis met Lorimier at Cape Jeradeau, as Lewis spelled "Girardeau." He wrote in his journal that Lorimier was "a man of very considerable property" and "very cheerfull."

More information about Lou, Don, the third speaker, the festival, as well as recommended hotel arrangements, are available on the [website](#) and [Facebook page](#) of the Southern Prairie Region. But, for now, here is a bit of info about Lou and Don:

Lou Ritten—since retiring after a 30-year career in financial trading—has focused on his interest in history. He is an active member in such organizations as the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation and the Oregon-California Trails Association. He is the author of *Fort Adams, Wilkinson County, Mississippi: Forgotten Linchpin of the Lower Mississippi Valley*.

He has written articles for *We Proceeded On*, the quarterly academic publication of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation. He has been active in the organization's Great Lakes Region and has organized and planned meetings in New Orleans, and Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota—cities along the Mississippi River. Lou has also traveled extensively along the Mississippi River, resulting in research and writing that have helped him create his presentation. [Click here to learn more about Lou.](#)



Lou Ritten

Don McGuirk lives in Kansas City, Mo., which he enjoys (as does almost everyone in the great city) reminding people that KC is the home of the 2023 Super Bowl champion, the Kansas City Chiefs!

Don is a retired pediatrician, a Colonel USAR, and author of two books, 11 articles, and numerous presentations regarding historical maps. His collection of antiquarian maps includes more than 200 examples of the developing state of Missouri, the dates of which range from 1813 to 2005.



Don McGuirk

[Click here](#) to learn about the expedition's journey up the Mississippi River. The link will take you to Nov. 20, 1803. To go to the next day in time, click on the next date (Nov. 21, 1893) on the right side of the page.

Don's presentation in Cape Girardeau will include many of those maps, other historical images, and contemporary descriptions of the Missouri River dating from its European discovery in 1673 to just beyond statehood in 1821. The importance of the Missouri River, its native tribes, and the explorers who sailed it will be emphasize during his presentation.

Don is the author of an insightful book, *The Last Great Cartographic Myth: Mer de l'Quest*, about a great inland sea—believed to be the size of the Mediterranean Sea—that supposedly existed west of the Great Lakes, which would have possibly placed it somewhere in the unexplored northern regions of the Missouri River drainage. "Mer de l'Ouest" is the French name for inland sea.

The inland sea, however, was "only wishful thinking," Don noted during a 2020 presentation to members of the Missouri-Kansas Riverbend Chapter of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation. "A map is a snapshot of the world at that moment, of what people

knew in those days. Mapmakers were very educated people who used what information they had. Sometimes, though, they just made up details because they wanted it to be there.”

The control of the Mississippi River, as well as the Missouri River, was a critical issue in the late 1700s and early 1800s. Many Native American tribes relied heavily on the waterways for transportation and fish.

But once Europeans began using the river in the later 1600s, control was juggled back and forth between France and Spain. River traffic carried furs from the Great Lakes and Missouri River regions, and it was obvious the river would be the major waterway for transporting people and agricultural products. The United States became the controlling entity through the 1803 [Louisiana Purchase](#).

For the Lewis and Clark Expedition, the Mississippi River was the waterway of transition that carried the explorers from the Ohio River to the Missouri River. After traveling downstream for 981 miles and 76 days on the Ohio River, the expedition left the mouth of the Ohio River on Nov. 20, 1803, and began an arduous journey against the Mississippi’s current. The explorers arrived on December 11 at the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri rivers; there, they built their winter encampment, Camp River Dubois.



The Southern Prairie Region of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation covers the states shown above. However—and this is important—anyone living anywhere in the world can choose to designate the Southern Prairie as their “home region” when they become members of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation. And...you don’t need to be a member to attend Southern Prairie events. [How to join the organization](#).

[Click here](#) to see a map of all of the regions, plus their newsletters and other information.