



***Struggle for Statehood* Traveling Exhibit at State Historical Society of Missouri through March**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

COLUMBIA, MO, Feb. 23, 2021 – Starting this week, mid-Missouri residents will have the chance to explore Missouri’s journey to statehood in a traveling exhibit that examines the conflict, crisis, and compromise surrounding its admission into the Union. The exhibit, *Struggle for Statehood* is on display at the State Historical Society of Missouri Center for Missouri Studies, 605 Elm St., Columbia, Missouri, now through March 26. The Missouri Humanities Council and its partners developed the exhibit, which has been traveling across the state in commemoration of the bicentennial this year.

The exhibit explores the many facets of the Missouri crisis on both a national and local level. Learn about the history of Missouri leading up to its battle for admission and how that history shaped the future state. Visitors can examine what it means to be a state and how that meaning differed for the diverse groups of peoples living in Missouri at the time of its admission.

“No state, I can readily assure you,” said Dr. Steve Belko, Executive Director of the Missouri Humanities Council, “entered the Union with greater fanfare.” When the residents of the Territory of Missouri petitioned Congress in 1818 for admission into the United States, a three-year-long political and ideological battle began between “free” and “slave” states, almost destroying the very union Missouri sought to join. The political upheaval was temporarily resolved with the “Missouri Compromise,” in which Maine entered the Union as a free state, and Missouri – a slave state – became the 24th state in the United States of America. “Missouri’s admission to the Union laid bare the undercurrents of division over slavery and the increasingly fraught political balance between the North and South that would culminate in the American Civil War. In the two centuries since its admission, Missouri has become an integral part of the nation,” said Belko.

The exhibit was developed by the Missouri Humanities Council in consultation with the Kinder Institute on Constitutional Democracy and is supported by the Missouri Bicentennial Alliance. Companion programming has been made possible in part from funding provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities. A digital exhibit tour of *Struggle for Statehood* is also available on the Missouri Humanities Council website: <https://mohumanities.wixsite.com/struggleforstatehood>

In addition, the State Historical Society’s Art Gallery features a special bicentennial exhibit *Native Creatures: The Indigenous Mammals and Birds of Missouri* displaying images of animals that inhabited Missouri at the time the territory became a state in 1821. Images created in that era by John James Audubon and Karl Bodmer depict animals and birds that are still found in Missouri, as well as some that are now extinct or no longer exist in the state. Later works by artists such as Charles Schwartz and Jay Norwood “Ding” Darling represent Missouri’s biological diversity and encourage viewers to consider how settlement, industrialization, and agriculture have changed our ecosystems.

through Friday from 10 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Facial masks are required while visiting the State Historical Society during the pandemic. Free parking is available on-site using the entrance off Locust Street. For more information on the Missouri Bicentennial, visit missouri2021.org.

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