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Ohio Links Visitors to the Past and Future

CHILLICOTHE, Ohio – *March 1, 1803 – Governor Tiffin announced today the declaration of statehood for Ohio. During the Ohio General Assembly meeting, the governor produced a document signed by President Jefferson on Feb. 19, 1803 officially giving Ohio its statehood. Roars of applause were heard from the Congress who had spent the past 29 days drafting the state's constitution and from the galley who were now proud citizens of the great state of Ohio.*

COLUMBUS, Ohio – 2009 – Ohio has a rich history dating back thousands of years to a time when mastodons and woolly mammoths roamed the hills and bands of hunters donned bows and arrows in pursuit. While vacationers to Ohio can travel without worry of charging mastodons or slinging bows, formations and features across the state allow them to learn about history from remnants left by these ancient people. Sites such as Serpent Mount and Fort Ancient allow visitors to see the structures, tools and crafts made by these Native Americans.

Native Americans are critical to the history of Ohio, even to the naming of the state. Ohio is derived from the Iroquois word, "Oheo," meaning large or beautiful river, which the Iroquois had called the waterway that now forms the southern border of the state, the Ohio River. Today, this heritage can be found at sites across the state. At Fort Recovery, where Native Americans took a victory over General Arthur St. Clair's troops in 1791, a monument stands to remember the defeat. Ironically, the Indians suffered a tremendous loss at the nearby Fallen Timbers where a monument also stands.

Ohio's place in history was solidified when it became known as "The Mother of Presidents," for being the birthplace or home of eight presidents. In fact, in the 53 years between the Reconstruction Era and the Roaring Twenties, eight of the 10 presidents hailed from Ohio. Homes and historical sites commemorating these men are located throughout the state. Ohio also houses the National First Ladies' Library in Canton.

As a transportation corridor, Ohio's heritage is as long as the Ohio & Erie Canal itself. Through painstaking restoration, visitors can view dioramas that depict the life of a canal builder. Using simple tools to construct the locks and passageways, the workers built, by hand and with oxen, the 110-mile waterway. Now part of a heritage greenway, visitors can walk the towpaths and ride the historic canal boats. At historic Roscoe Village, visitors can experience life in a canal village with costumed interpreters guiding them along the way. Ohio has three routes through its historic greenway with the other two being the CanalWay Ohio National Scenic Byway and the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad.

Also in the Canal Zone, Zoar Village, founded in 1817 by German religious dissenters, offers a rare look into a communal society and religious separatist faith. Today, many of the sturdy structures built by the Zoar Separatists remain, 10 of which are restored museums operated by the Ohio Historical Society.

Ohio has 15 designated scenic byways, as well as the Zane Grey National Road. The longest of these roads is the Ohio River Scenic Byway that rambles along the Ohio River through historic river towns such as Marietta. These driving tours offer visitors the chance to get off the beaten path and enjoy the

historical and charming small towns in Ohio's backyard.

As a religious haven, Ohio attracted the Amish and Mennonites who emigrated from Germany and Switzerland. Today, Ohio is home to the world's largest population of Amish. This unique cultural juxtaposition between the simple life and the technologically driven 21st-century makes for a most unique vacation experience. Ohio's Amish can be found mainly in the eastern portion of the state, in Holmes, Tuscarawas and Geauga counties. Visitors can enjoy the heirloom crafts and furniture created by the Amish, as well as the hearty food at restaurants frequented by Amish families.

Ohio also was an important pathway to freedom for slaves escaping persecution during the 1800s. The homes of abolitionists, who opened their doors and harbored slaves in basements and attics, can be found from the southern portion of the state along the Ohio River to Lake Erie and Ashtabula County, where the slaves escaped into Canada. In 2004, the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center opened in Cincinnati, heralding the commemoration of the brave men and women, free people and slaves who helped bring down slavery. The Center also will commemorate people from all corners of the globe who have been engaged in freedom movements.

Ohio's Passage to Freedom trail links visitors to various Underground Railroad sites throughout Ohio, where they'll find a kiosk of information regarding the area's history, attractions and other points of interest.

During the past 200 years and more, Ohio has played an important role in the foundation of the country and in the people who inhabited the area now known as Ohio. Visitors interested in learning about the history and heritage of this area need to look no further than the sites and activities that bring Ohio's history to life.

For more information about Ohio's remarkable history and contribution in shaping the United States, visit the Ohio Historical Society's Web site at www.OhioHistory.org or www.DiscoverOhio.com.

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