



## A Witness to History

Nestled in a fertile valley along the banks of the powerful Missouri River, the place where the Boeing Leadership Center now stands has been witness to a rich tapestry of historical events over the millennia. With fertile soil underfoot and the grand vistas that can be enjoyed from the workshop deck and the living rooms at the ends of the residence corridors, this place is, at its core, a place of expectation and grandeur, of exploration and discovery, and of purposeful activity and creativity.

As you came through the entry gate and onto what are now the Boeing Leadership Center grounds, you passed fields of corn, soybeans, and wheat. The 286 acres Boeing purchased in 1996 is a mix of 160 acres of forest and wetlands, 46 acres

of groomed grounds, and 80 acres of farmland that is still cultivated by a tenant farmer whose family has tilled this land for almost 150 years.

It was not much different in 1000 B.C. during the Woodland Period, when you could have watched the development of horticulture. Supplementing a diet of wild seeds, fruits, and nuts foraged from the surrounding woodlands, people with primitive wooden tools scratched the soil to plant knotweed, sunflower, goosefoot, and maygrass.

As the second millennium dawned, small fields with new additions to the agricultural palate were planted: squash, gourds, and maize. The recently introduced bow and arrow provided the tools for more effective hunting and fishing.

## The Rise of Commerce

The area that is now St. Louis was a key location in the economic trade network of the time. Across the Mississippi River was the site of



*Cahokia Mounds Historic Site, Collinsville Illinois.*

Cahokia, the largest community north of Mexico, and at its peak the dominant political, economic, and religious center. It wasn't until 1830, when the population of Philadelphia swelled to 30,000, that any other community surpassed the size and population of Cahokia.

If you had been traveling through this area around 1710, you may have chanced upon a Frenchman named Commander Etienne Veniard de

Bourgmonte. He was the first European commissioned by the French government to officially explore and map the area.

Watching the river from its banks along the Boeing Leadership Center property around 1769, you would have seen an increase in commerce and transportation activity, when St. Charles, just a few miles west of the Center, became the first major settlement on the Missouri River.

In 1785, you could have witnessed the growth of the French settlement now known as Florissant, from the French *fleurissant*, meaning "flowering."

## Exploration and Discovery

Standing on the banks of the Missouri River where the Boeing Leadership Center is, you could have caught a glimpse into one of American history's greatest adventure stories. In 1803, after President Thomas Jefferson negotiated the Louisiana Purchase, he commissioned a group of explorers, called the Corps of Discovery, to explore and chart the land to find a passage to the Pacific Ocean.



From the banks of the Missouri River just below the Leadership Center, you could have seen the crew of four dozen woodsmen and volunteer soldiers go by. Led by U.S. Army Captains Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, they traveled in two small boats, called pirogues, and one larger boat that measured 55 feet bow-to-stern and 8 feet wide. The larger steel-keeled boat carried 10 tons of provisions for the long and unpredictable journey. It also carried one dog, the Newfoundland purchased by Meriwether Lewis for \$20 to accompany him to the Pacific Ocean.

The base camp for the Corps of Discovery was Camp Wood, also known as Camp Dubois, and was a few miles downriver from the Leadership Center on the east side of the Mississippi River, across from the mouth of the Missouri River. Lewis and Clark embarked on their adventure from Camp Wood on May 14, 1804. On November 2, 1805, they walked on the sands of the Pacific Ocean, near the Columbia River, 554 days and over 4,000 miles after having passed where the Leadership Center now stands. The first connection between St. Louis and the Northwest had been forged.

Watching from the bank of the Missouri River almost two and a half years later, in late September of 1806, you might have seen the worn and tattered Corps of Discovery pass once again, returning from their history-making expedition that had covered 8,000 miles.

## The Grand Vision of Joseph Desloge

During the early 1900s, wealthy people from St. Louis built summer homes around Florissant, commuting to jobs in the city via steam train from nearby Ferguson. Joseph Desloge Sr., who had acquired his fortune mining lead, and his wife Anne believed that if they built their residence in this farm community, other moneyed families would follow. So, in 1925 and 1926, standing on these grounds, you could have watched the construction of the marvelous and elegant seventeenth-century style chateau that is now part of the Boeing Leadership Center grounds. Joseph Desloge named his estate *Vouziers* after the French village where he earned

a medal of honor from the French Army for standing by his artillery when others had fled, thereby saving the village.

## A Home for the Family

The chateau was built on the highest point of the Desloge's original 2,000-plus acres, and is a four-story, 15,270 square foot mansion constructed of Indiana limestone. It has steep slate roofs and copper detailing that approximates the French style Joseph saw in his World War I tour of duty in



France. It was built at a cost of \$40,000. There are ten bedrooms, nine fireplaces, a Gothic-style reading room, a children's stage and play area, and a unique underground complex, or *sous sol* ("room without sun," also known as a rathskellar), that was used for a variety of purposes, from elegant parties to intimate gatherings of friends. Among many distinguishing features, it includes two balconies overlooking a lower level and a massive carved stone fireplace—all in the "basement."

The rathskellar was not part of the original building. During the 1930s, it was added to the estate, along with the teahouse, the front facade and entry (featuring Etowah pink marble), the top floor that housed the children's stage and play area, the studio, the carriage house, and the ballroom along with the nearby pavilions. To add the front entry and the rathskellar, the entire building had to be raised on jacks, quite an engineering feat in the

1930s. To help endure the hot Missouri summers, the teahouse was built. It was situated to catch the cooling afternoon summer breezes and also had marble floors to keep it cool.

### **A Place to Dance and Meet With Friends**

In 1946, the 3,500 square foot ballroom was built into the gently sloping hill to avoid obstructing the view of Missouri Bottoms and the limestone cliffs of Illinois from the chateau. Along with the outdoor amphitheater bordered by the ballroom and the curved stone stairways, it became a busy center for social events, from spring threshing festivals to Shakespearean plays and debutante balls, as well as World War II fundraising events and Easter sunrise services. The ballroom was also a favorite play area for the Desloge children, who used it for roller-skating and roughhouse playing.



During the 1930s and 1940s, you could have seen the creation of exquisite formal gardens along the traditional French *allée* between the chateau and ballroom and framed by the two rows of birch trees. Although the gardens are long since gone, the lawn and trees still convey a gentle elegance.

### **Somewhere to Park the Packards**

In 1952, you would have seen the construction of the 5,600 square foot carriage house. Joseph Desloge used it as a garage for his collection of 1940 and 1950 model Packards. He and his family were also fond of riding horses, so you fre-

quently would have seen them riding around the estate or traveling to and from Florissant, which was a predominantly farming community.

Joseph was a personable man, a gentleman who did not flaunt his wealth. There are stories told of him driving home from his office in St. Louis in his green 1965 Chevy Impala with a big bag of White Castle hamburgers. An avid student of Lewis and Clark, he would often regale listeners with his knowledge.



### **Our New Grand Vision: the Boeing Leadership Center**

In July of 1997, you would have witnessed the ground breaking for the Boeing Leadership Center. With an eye toward integrating the Center into the existing estate and maintaining the beauty of the grounds and views, it was designed to offer participants the unique opportunity to separate themselves from the daily pressures of business life to focus on learning and leadership development.

On February 28, 1999, the doors of the Boeing Leadership Center opened and we welcomed the first group of people destined to become Boeing leaders. Over the centuries, this land has borne witness to many profound events. We trust this Leadership Center will meet the challenge that this land's heritage presents and continue the tradition of relentless exploration and discovery so that when someone looks back to this time, they will acknowledge what we have built here. The benchmark of our success at the Boeing Leadership Center will be the success and leadership of Boeing as a company.

Welcome!