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# COOK-WITTER REPORT

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## Exploring the Amazing *Changes* at the Illinois State Museum

Visitors are once again exploring the natural history hall on the first floor of the Illinois State Museum after being closed for two years. The Museum experienced its first major renovation since 1963, when it first opened its doors at the present location at the corner of Spring and Edwards Streets. “*Changes: Dynamic Illinois Environments*,” the new natural history exhibit, is part of a \$6.5 million project that was funded by the State of Illinois through the Capital Development Board. The grand reopening took place at a 10 AM ribbon cutting ceremony on June 12 with Department of Natural Resources Director Leslie Sgro, Senator Larry Bomke, Representative Rich Brauer, Representative Raymond Poe, Illinois State Museum officials, and representatives of Ameren Corporation in attendance. Financial support for various components of the exhibit was also provided by Ameren Corporation and grants from the National Science Foundation, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and the 1877 Club (Illinois State Museum Society).

Planning for *Changes: Dynamic Illinois Environments* began almost ten years ago. Ferry and Associates Architects and

Siciliano Inc., both of Springfield were responsible for the architectural design and modifications necessary to house the new exhibit. The final design and fabrication of the exhibits were handled by two Missouri firms: Ginkgo Designs based in St. Louis and Chase Studios, Inc. of Cedar creek.

The first floor natural history exhibit has been closed and under construction since October 2001 when Museum staff started removing the old exhibits. Large-scale dioramas of bison, wolves, and other animals dating back to the 1960s filled the previous natural history hall. The new exhibit hall examines 500 million years of environmental changes in Illinois by incorporating numerous examples of authentic fossils, hands-on interactive displays, life-sized dioramas, and amazing audio and

video effects. One special feature includes a video game, *Shark Attack!*, which allows players to view the tropical sea that once covered Illinois through the eyes of a Devonian shark. Near the video game and suspended in mid-air, a Devonian shark is being pursued by a giant fish with an armored skull, and squid-like animals (Cephalopods) seem to float through the exhibit depicting Illinois’ prehistoric tropical sea.

In the lobby, museum visitors receive a plastic card featuring a trilobite or giant dragonfly, which is used – much like a debit card – to activate various displays throughout the first floor exhibit. The team identification card is essentially an invitation for people to join the *Changes Institute*, the term used to describe

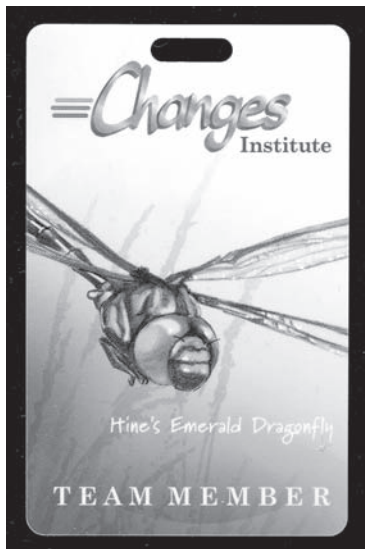
the virtual staff of scientists as they collaborate with museum visitors to explore 500 million years of environmental changes in Illinois. Three computer screens just inside the first floor exhibit space allow us to “Meet the Team” of zoologists, archaeologists, botanists, and geologists and learn about their areas of expertise and see what a typical work day is like for them. We learn how scientists interpret various records: geological, biological, and written records such as journal entries. In the new Earth Forces Theater, a brief movie is shown

demonstrating various causes of environmental change, whether it is the cyclical changes in the Earth’s orbit or changes resulting from human behavior.

For those people nostalgic for the dioramas from the old natural history hall, they won’t be as some have been reintroduced in refurbished and updated dioramas of diverse landscapes found throughout Illinois. Examples include the central prairie of McLean County, the northwestern forest, the Cache River Swamp, and the northeastern beach shrubland along Lake Michigan. Using studies based on geology, ecology, archaeology, and historic records such as land surveys to assemble the dioramas, the landscapes reveal how these places might have looked in 1673. The Museum’s famous mastodont skeleton



Grand opening ribbon cutting, June 12, 2004



"Team member" card given to visitor when entering exhibit.

a James Bond film.

Rather than being spoon fed information, the technological and interpretive elements of *Changes* challenge visitors to actively participate in the experience. That experience includes not only what our physical environment looked like at different stages over the last 500 million years from the time Illinois was covered by a shallow sea located south of the equator to the



*Mississippian Tropical Sea Covering Illinois 340 million years ago*

is also again on display, joined by skeletons of a Jefferson's ground sloth and of a giant beaver.

The new natural history exhibit includes the RiverWeb Digital River Basin that allows people to explore a twenty-mile stretch of the Illinois River Valley using computer simulations based on real data. Funded by a grant from the National Science Foundation, the RiverWeb Digital River Basin may not sound exciting, but the hands-on, interactive exhibit actually resembles something straight out of



*Digital River Basin*

time the state was covered by glaciers, but also the underlying reasons or scientific explanations for such changes. Visitors to the new natural history exhibit hall can gain a new or better appreciation for the skills and tools zoologists, archaeologists, botanists, and geologists use to recreate our past and study our present, as well as a better sense of the interdisciplinary nature of these scientific fields of study. *Changes: Dynamic Illinois Environments* also makes us keenly aware of how much human activity plays a role in transforming our environment. Near the end of the exhibit is a display of non-native species, for example, carp, starlings, and dandelions, that have been introduced to this country over the years, which reveals the responsibility humans share in shaping our surroundings.

The Museum has done a great job at presenting scientific information creatively. Technical information is presented in a way that makes it accessible. For example, climate data is presented "weather channel" style allowing the visitor to receive the detailed information in a format he or she knows and understands.

Aside from the variety of educational tools for people of all ages, it's pretty exciting when you really feel as though you are walking through a fluorite mine, and a few moments later, you find yourself in a glacial cave, and near the end of the exhibit, a replica of a cave in 1673's Monroe County where you can view typical cave formations like stalagmites, as well as bats, cave crickets, and other creatures typically found in a cave. Between the fluorite and glacial caves is located the Hall of Illinois Dinosaurs, which currently lacks any specimens. You will just have to go to the Museum and find out for yourself why it is empty! While at the Illinois State Museum, be sure to check out the renovated lower level, which was part of the \$6.5 million project – right now an exhibition featuring birds native to Illinois fills the newly-configured space.

(The Illinois State Museum is open Monday through Saturday 8:30 AM – 5 PM and Sunday Noon – 5 PM. For more information, call 217/782-7386)



## Bills Approved by Both Chambers and Sent to the Governor

The following legislation represents some of the highlights of the Spring legislative session. All of these bills received approval by both chambers during the Spring, and will eventually either be signed or vetoed by Governor Blagojevich.

**House Bill 752** (Rep. David Miller/Halvorson) would require children in kindergarten, second, and sixth grade to receive a dental examination. The legislation would apply to children in public, private, and parochial schools, but provides an exemption for children demonstrating a lack of access to a dentist.

If signed by Governor Blagojevich, **House Bill 3882** (Dugan/Haine) would strengthen the criminal penalties against manufacturers of methamphetamine when a fire or explosion results during the process of manufacturing this drug. A maximum 50-year prison sentence would apply to the offenders.

**Senate Bill 2165** (Petka/Bradley) would prevent property owners who shoot intruders on their property from being convicted of violating a local gun ban. According to the *State Journal-Register*, the bill is a response to a Wilmette restaurant owner who shot a burglar who had broken into his house twice. City officials charged the victim with violating a city ordinance banning handguns. Officials from city governments are concerned that this legislation takes away their power to enforce local restrictions.

**Senate Bill 2244** (Haine/Bradley) restricts the sale of a medication containing ingredients used to make methamphetamine. Retailers would only be able to sell two packages of certain medicine in a single transaction. The restriction would apply to medicine containing ephedrine or pseudoephedrine.

Groundbreaking legislation was passed during this spring legislative session. **House Bill 3857** (McKeon/Cullerton) allows organ transplants of an HIV infected donor to someone who has tested positive for HIV and who faces impending death if the transplant does not occur. Under these circumstances, the tissue bank providing the organ can not be held criminally or civilly liable for supplying that organ. Transplantable organs include liver, kidneys, lungs, heart, and pancreas, but excludes bone marrow or blood transfusions. The bill was sent to Governor Blagojevich on June 3<sup>rd</sup>. This landmark legislation, the first in the nation, has even sparked some attention from Hollywood. The medical series ER has already expressed interest in covering this issue in an episode this fall.

**House Bill 3978** (Eddy/Righter) makes it a Class 4 felony to make, use, or sell products that provide a false urine sample. The offense would carry a fine of up to \$1000.

Unsuccessful lawsuits in New York may have played a role

in some legislation passed in Illinois this spring. **House Bill 3981** (Fritchey/Cullerton) creates the Illinois Commonsense Consumption Act. The bill will not allow lawsuits to be brought against restaurants by people accusing the eating establishments of damaging their health with fattening foods. According to the *State Journal-Register*, Illinois could be the first state to ban people from suing fast food restaurants.

**House Bill 4006** (Eddy/Righter) amends the Illinois Vehicle Code to designate "hill jumping" and similar activities as reckless offenses. This legislation makes it a felony for drivers to intentionally cause a vehicle to become airborne by driving too fast over a railroad crossing, hill or other incline.

Under **House Bill 4027** (Delgado/Martinez), if a person fails to stop after an accident resulting in death or injury, he or she will be found guilty of a Class 4 felony (formerly Class A misdemeanor). With this legislation, a person must also report an accident within half an hour after the incident. Prior to this measure, people had an hour to report an accident.

**House Bill 4227** (Watson/Halvorson) requires the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) to maintain and advertise a Web site devoted to marketing Illinois goods and services by linking potential purchasers with Illinois producers of goods and services.

**House Bill 4361** (Burke/Walsh) creates the Fire Sprinkler Dormitory Act, which requires all colleges and university halls to have fire sprinkler systems installed. The bill also sets up a revolving loan fund to help schools handle installation costs.

A piece of legislation sent to the Governor limits the fees private agencies can charge in order to collect overdue child support payments. **House Bill 4393** (Bellock/Silverstein) establishes a fee cap of 35 percent of the overdue money that agencies can collect; however, the exact percent will be determined by the Illinois Department of Professional Regulation.

**House Bill 5207** (Bradley/Martinez) establishes a new commemorative occasion. Great grandparents will be honored every year on the first Sunday after Labor Day, if the Governor signs this bill.

**House Bill 6618** (Flider/Watson) determines who is allowed to accompany a 12 or 13 year old officiating at youth sports activities for a not-for-profit youth club, park district, or municipal parks. Prior to this bill, parents or guardians had to be present while the child officiated. Language in the bill expands the options to include any adult designated by the parent or guardian.

**House Bill 6786** (Gordon/Collins) establishes conditions for the parole of sex offenders, and requires a mandatory supervised release for registered sex offenders.

**Senate Bill 2134** (Cullerton/Delgado) is an attempt to prevent the “pirating” of films. This measure was sent to the Governor on June 2<sup>nd</sup> and awaits his signature. The bill makes it a Class 4 felony to operate a video camera in a movie theatre without permission.

**Senate Bill 2374** (Shadid/Bradley) sets the speed limit at 65 miles per hour for both cars and trucks on rural interstate highways. A similar piece of legislation passed last year, but Governor Blagojevich vetoed House Bill 1186 over concern about safety issues. The legislation did not receive the necessary votes to override the veto during the Fall Veto Session.



## In Memorium



Governor Blagojevich issued a proclamation ordering flags at state facilities to be flown at half-mast from June 5 to July 3, 2004 to commemorate our 40<sup>th</sup> president. Governor Blagojevich also named June 11<sup>th</sup> as a State Day of Remembrance. Ronald Wilson Reagan, the only president to have been born in Illinois, died at the age of 93 on June 5, 2004. The Governor’s proclamation details the significant events of his life: Reagan’s birth in Tampico, Illinois on February 6<sup>th</sup>; his childhood in Dixon from the age of nine until adulthood; and his college years at Eureka College where he earned a degree in Economics and Sociology. He made a name for himself playing football and taking part in theatre productions. Reagan worked as a radio announcer after college. After taking a screen test, he received a contract in Hollywood, taking part in 53 films. On a personal level, he married Jane Wyman in 1940. They had two daughters, Maureen and Christine (died in childhood), and adopted son Michael. After divorcing Jane Wyman, he married Nancy Davis in 1952. They had two children Ron and Patti.

At one point, Reagan served as president of the Screen Actors Guild. That foray into leadership led to an even more powerful role when Reagan served three terms as governor of California starting in 1966. National politics then beckoned, and he was elected the 40<sup>th</sup> President on January 20, 1981 and once again in 1984. On November 5, 1994, he retired from public life altogether when Alzheimer’s disease was started taking its toll on him. Governor Blagojevich stated about the late 40<sup>th</sup> president, “He was a man of strong convictions, and no

one communicated them better. His strong stance for freedom helped lead to the collapse of communism and the growth of democracy across the world.”

## Interstate 88 To Be Renamed in Honor of Former President Ronald Reagan

Governor Blagojevich issued an executive order on June 8<sup>th</sup>, renaming a portion of Interstate 88 the Ronald Reagan Memorial Highway. A portion of I-88 that is controlled by the Illinois Department of Transportation passes just south of the late 40<sup>th</sup> president’s hometown of Dixon. The renamed portion goes from Sterling/Rock Falls to the Quad Cities. The executive order takes effect immediately. The Governor, additionally, sent a letter to Tollway Chairman John Mitola requesting the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority to name the portion of the highway under their jurisdiction for President Reagan as well. That part of the highway runs from approximately Elmhurst to Dixon. Governor Blagojevich urged the Toll Highway Authority to convene a special meeting to address the name change. In response to the Governor’s request, the Illinois State Toll Authority’s board of directors unanimously voted to change the name of the East-West Tollway (formerly Illinois 5) to the Ronald Reagan Memorial Highway. The chairman, John Mitola, said about the name change, “Now, when people drive on I-88, they’ll remember Ronald Reagan and everything he did for our country.”

