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Aurora Regional Fire Museum acquires 19 period firefighting items from Smithsonian

Exhibit opening expected in summer

AURORA, Ill. (March 8, 2010) The Aurora Regional Fire Museum recently acquired a collection of nineteen early firefighting items from the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History reflecting the history of firefighting from the 1800s-1920s. A new exhibit featuring these recent acquisitions will debut at the Aurora Regional Fire Museum in early summer of 2010.

"This was a rare opportunity to add some spectacular pieces to our collection which represent firefighting, and firefighters, in the nineteenth and early twentieth century" said David Lewis, curator of the Aurora Regional Fire Museum. Especially significant is the fact that many of these items reflect the social aspects of firefighting in the mid to late 1800s.

Some of the items in the collection include a decorative fire helmet used for social functions and parades and highly detailed scale models of fire equipment. Lewis said, "Early fire engines were icons of community pride. They were often decorated with elaborate paint schemes, wood carvings, and even oil paintings of local or national heroes." While the Aurora Regional Fire Museum does not own such an engine, now through the generosity of the Smithsonian Institution, visitors will soon be able to view a 24- inch model of a hand-pumped engine adorned with a miniature painting of Abraham Lincoln, and, a forty-four inch model of a nineteenth century ladder truck festooned with patriotic banners and a carved American eagle.

The nineteen items transferred to the Aurora Regional Fire Museum were originally part of the CIGNA Insurance Company's collection of nearly 3,000 firefighting and maritime items donated to the Smithsonian in 2005. After a thorough inventory and review, Smithsonian curators identified a small number of duplicate objects and items that might pose unique care and conservation challenges. In keeping with the best museum practices, the Smithsonian offered to transfer these objects to other museums that might best be able to care, interpret, and share them with the public. The Aurora Regional Fire Museum was among ten institutions to receive a selection of firefighting items from the Smithsonian.

For more information about the Aurora Regional Fire Museum visit the museum's website: <http://www.AuroraRegionalFireMuseum>. For more information about the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History see: <http://americanhistory.si.edu>

ABOUT THE AACVB:

The Aurora Area Convention & Visitors Bureau serves as the tourism marketing and management organization for Aurora, Batavia, Hinckley, North Aurora, Montgomery, Plano, Sugar Grove and Yorkville. This not-for-profit organization provides numerous travel resources to visitors via the Web site at www.enjoyaurora.com and a toll-free number 1-800-477-4369