

Immortalizing the memory of Roy Chapman Andrews

By Hillary Gavan hgavan@beloitdailynews.com | Posted: Saturday, August 30, 2014 10:00 am

Everyone's invited to celebrate in Beloit's sixth Wisconsin state historical marker, honoring Beloit's hometown explorer Roy Chapman Andrews.

The marker will be unveiled and dedicated on Friday, Sept. 5 at 5:30 p.m. at Riverside Park, on the south end of the Turtle Island playground near the Rotary River Center. The public is invited and encouraged to come in appropriate explorer garb. Wisconsin Department of Tourism Secretary Stephanie Klett has been invited along with other local officials.

"It's an honor for the Beloit community to have had the Wisconsin Historical Society affirm our belief in Andrews as a famous native son. Being able to recognize him in the community in this very permanent way helps to assure people will continue to value Andrews as a prominent local boy made good," said Ann Bausum, a founding member of the Roy Chapman Andrews Society.

The marker will be placed along the Rock River, scene of some of Andrews' early adventures.

Bausum, who drafted the marker's text, said the marker summarizes Andrews' Beloit roots, his career after he left community and the influence he continues to have in the scientific profession.

"It recognizes Andrews as perhaps the most significant historical figure to have come from the Beloit community," Bausum said.

Roy Chapman Andrews Society Treasurer Andrew Janke said the society is excited about the location as it speaks to Andrews' experiences in Beloit. Janke said the Roy



Roy Chapman Andrews

Chapman Andrews Board of Directors, the Beloit Plan Commission, Parks and Recreation Commission, City Center Commission and Beloit City Council all agreed Riverside Park was the best spot for the marker.

“You can read and gaze up the river. Roy’s life is so much about discovery. Children will be able to play at Turtle Island and can learn about Beloit’s explorer,” Janke said.

Andrews, born and raised in Beloit, graduated from Beloit College in 1906 and became one of the 20th century’s preeminent explorers. His expeditions for the American Museum of Natural History found the first nests of dinosaur eggs and were the first motorized explorations of the Gobi Desert in Mongolia and China. Andrews died in 1960 at the age of 76 and is buried in Beloit’s Oakwood Cemetery.

During his formative years in Beloit, Bausum said Andrews discovered his love of the outdoors, a love he shared with others throughout his life. Andrews was a taxidermist who taught himself how to mount animals. Because taxidermists were rare at the time, the skill earned Andrews enough money to help him pay for college.

The Roy Chapman Andrews Society was founded in 1999 in Beloit to honor the explorer and his legacy. Each year the organization presents an award in his honor to most notable scientific explorers of modern times. Thirteen awards have been presented since 2003. Margaret D. Lowman, a pioneer in the exploration of treetop ecosystems, received the 2014 Roy Chapman Andrews Society Distinguished Explorer Award.

The Andrews marker is a joint project of the Roy Chapman Andrews Society and the Beloit Parks and Recreation department, in coordination with the Wisconsin Historical Society. It will be Beloit’s sixth state historical marker, after those at Beloit College, near Morgan Elementary School (for Wisconsin’s first aviator), downtown at the Rock River Heritage Walkway (for Turtle Village and Black Hawk) and at the I-90 tourist information center (one for Black Hawk War and one for the Medal of Honor).

Bausum said Janke led up the charge to get the marker. Bausum worked with Janke along with the Society’s Bill Green.

“This is an idea that had been percolating for awhile but once the Society decided to act it happened quickly,” she said.

Roy Chapman Andrews Society President Carla Swain issued the following statement:

“I appreciate all the time and energy the committee has put into the development and placement of this historical marker for future generations to recognize Beloit’s own Roy Chapman Andrews,” said Carla Swain.

Green said Bausum and Janke did a lot of work along with Rick Dexter, a Roy Chapman Andrews

Society Board member for many years who happened to be a retired employee of the Wisconsin Historical Society.

Information about Andrews and the Roy Chapman Andrews Society is available at www.roychapmanandrewssociety.org.