

# FORT BELLE FONTAINE PARK



Belle Fontaine was the first U.S. military post in the Louisiana Territory. It was established in 1804 as a frontier military fort and fur trading post. Many expeditions to the west started out from this point. In 1809, the trading post was discontinued and it became a United States Military Fort until 1826, when the soldiers relocated to Jefferson Barracks. Over time, the river shifted in its banks and now the original fort is somewhere in the middle of the Missouri River.

#1. Find the Grand Staircase. As you arrive, look around for a sign and plaque that talk about Lewis and Clark. They stayed at the fort both at the beginning and end of their travels. What was the date they stayed here on their way back?

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#2. The Grand Staircase was built by Works Progress Administration (WPA) workers during the Great Depression (1936-1940). This, and other limestone structures you will see, was part of a resort built to attract visitors to the area during that time. Walk all the way down one side of the staircase and count the steps. Remember how many! When you come back up later (you'll be at the bottom for a while), use the other side and count again. How many stairs are on the left side? \_\_\_\_\_ The right side? \_\_\_\_\_



#3. At the bottom of the stairs, find Belle Fontaine Spring – the clear spring that flows from the limestone outcropping along the bank. ('Belle Fontaine' is French for 'beautiful fountain'). Here's how to find it – when you get to the bottom, turn left and walk until you get to a park bench. From there, walk out towards the river. Head for the point, but before you reach the end, look back over your right shoulder towards the bank. If the river isn't up too high, you will see and hear the spring. Did you find

it? \_\_\_\_\_

#4. Walk back to the trail and continue on until you reach the Outdoor Living Room (Picnic Area #5). Also built by the WPA, this is a place where visitors would hang out and relax. A waterfall used to cascade over the back rock wall into the pool below. Bet that looked cool! How many fireplaces are in the Outdoor Living Room? \_\_\_\_\_



#5. Keep going along the trail. Your next stop is the bathhouses. These were showers where people could rinse off after swimming. This picture shows what it used to look like, but it's in ruins now. How many pillars are still standing? \_\_\_\_\_