

*The Old Courthouse (George Dorrill photo)*

# JEFFERSON NATIONAL EXPANSION MEMORIAL

ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

# Jefferson National Expansion Memorial



United States Department of the Interior

Harold L. Ickes, *Secretary*

National Park Service, Newton B. Drury, *Director*



The Jefferson National Expansion Memorial commemorates the westward growth of the American Nation and preserves as a historic site one of the principal gateways to the West.

The westward movement of the American people from the Alleghenies to the Pacific, filling in the Nation's boundaries and bursting through them to force the acquisition of new territories, is one of the epics of history. It is the story of Daniel Boone and his neighbors who defied the Appalachian barrier, the King's edict, and the Indians, to settle the wilderness of Kentucky and Tennessee; of the men who followed George Rogers Clark through the drowned lands to take Vincennes and help establish our western boundary at the Mississippi; of tough flatboatmen who carried the produce from the scattered settlements of the Ohio Valley down to Spanish New Or-

leans and then walked home over the bandit-ridden Natchez Trace; and of farsighted Thomas Jefferson who set out to open the Mississippi for the westerners by peaceful means and gained in addition the vast new territory of Louisiana. It is the story of fur traders who, while they searched for beaver, probed through the mountain and desert barriers and prepared the way for the great migration which followed; of settlers by the million pouring over the new turnpikes, canals, and railroads to transform in a single generation the Mississippi Valley from wilderness to an inland empire; of militant Texans, covered-wagon pioneers on the Oregon Trail, gold-mad '49ers; of pictur-

*Diorama in the Museum of the Memorial. Ste. Genevieve, a French Village on the Mississippi, near St. Louis, 1797 (George Dorrill photo)*





*Diorama. The Closing of the Mississippi by Spain in 1802 (George Dorrill photo)*

esque cowboys; and of dogged homesteaders clinging to their sod-house claims in spite of grasshoppers, blizzards, and droughts. Other chapters tell of Indians fighting for their hunting grounds, Mormons forced to find new homes in the wilderness, wars of aggression, and roughshod business methods.

The story of the westward growth of our Nation is many-sided and complex. The purpose of the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial is to present this American story for the benefit, understanding, and appreciation of American citizens.

### *Gateway to the West*

The Memorial is located on ground made historic by successive phases of our national expansion. It contains the site of the colonial village of St. Louis, founded by French traders in 1764 while the American frontier still was east of

the Alleghenies. For 40 years it was a center of French culture and Spanish government, with manners and customs that differed widely from those of American pioneers. The village became part of the United States under the Louisiana Purchase, and within the Memorial area a formal ceremony of transfer was enacted in which the Spanish authorities (who had not yet been removed by the French) relinquished control of all Upper Louisiana. Here Lewis and Clark were welcomed back to civilization and spent most of their later years of public service.

St. Louis was the headquarters of the Far Western fur trade. Lisa, the Chouteaus, Ashley, Sublette, Campbell, and other leaders of the trade built their homes and warehouses here, and from them directed the activities of their employees in the field. Along the river front large steamboats from the East and South met the smaller craft that served the frontier communities and

outposts of the upper Mississippi and Missouri Rivers. Mercantile establishments and lodging houses were erected to handle the business at this major transfer point. For many years this small area continued as a supply base and market place for the frontier; the Oregon pioneer and the gold seeker bought tools, guns, and grub; and the lumberman and farmer sold his products. It was one of the places where westward moving settlers congregated before starting across the high plains. The site of the Memorial was an important gateway to the West.

### *The Site*

The Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, established as a national historic site under Executive Order of December 21, 1935, occupies an area of 82½ acres, or nearly 40 city blocks. It lies on the west bank of the Mississippi River in what was for many years the business center of St. Louis. The construction of

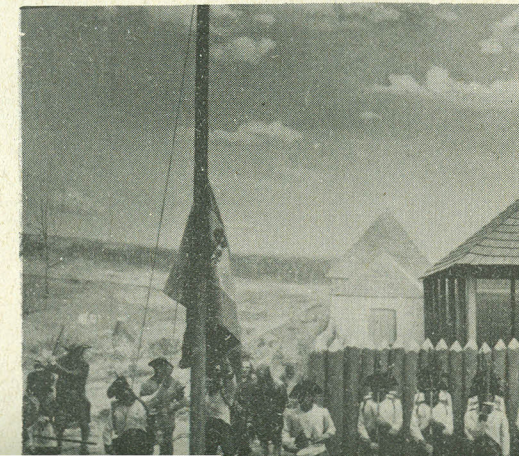
Eads Bridge and the development of railroads in competition with river traffic led to the decline of the river front as business moved uptown. In 1936 the National Park Service undertook the development of the area as a historic site and memorial. The land was purchased with funds provided jointly by the city of St. Louis and the Federal Government, and the crowded industrial buildings—many of them shabby and vacant—were cleared away. Development of the Memorial, although delayed by the war, is in progress to a limited extent.

Among the principal features of the Memorial are three historic buildings which have been preserved—the Old Courthouse, the Rock House, and the Old Cathedral. Each of them has a different story to tell of life in the early West.

### *The Old Courthouse*

Standing high above the river at the edge of the former business district, the Old Courthouse was the focal point of the town in the years when St. Louis was the threshold of the West. In and around it mingled many people whose interests led them beyond the frontier. It was a public forum as well as a courthouse. In the rotunda men met in national convention to project a

*Diorama.*



railroad to the Pacific and the community honored troops sent to the Mexican War. In this building Dred Scott first sued for his freedom, introducing a case which later became a storm center of the slavery controversy. Lawyers worked here to adapt the body of the law to western conditions.

The courthouse was begun in 1839 to replace a small brick building that had been outgrown. The rotunda and west wing were opened formally in 1845, but because of the rapid growth of the community the new structure soon proved inadequate, and in 1853 additional construction was started. The east wing was built to complete the original plan and large wings were added on the north and south. The west wing was remodeled, and a new and much taller Italianate dome replaced the first one. The entire building was completed in 1862, including the historical murals by Carl Wimar in the rotunda.

The Old Courthouse was used first by St. Louis County, and then for 85 years by the city of St. Louis. It now serves as the headquarters of the Memorial and houses the present exhibits of the Museum of National Expansion which tell by means of historic objects, dioramas, and other graphic devices the story

of the westward movement. The National Park Service is restoring accurately the exterior and selected parts of the interior to their appearance as of 1870, when the building was at its prime. The remainder of the interior is being rehabilitated for administrative and museum use.

### *The Rock House*

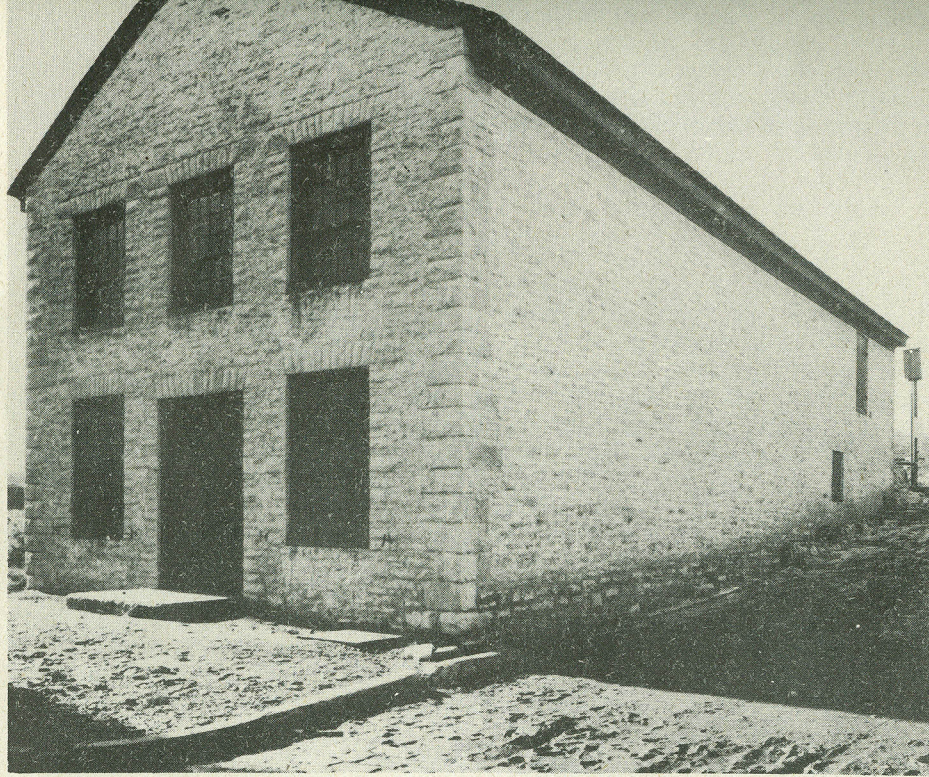
Manuel Lisa, a noted fur trader of his day, built this unpretentious warehouse in 1818. After Lisa's death in 1820, the Rock House continued to be used by fur traders for storing trade goods and furs. Later the building was occupied by a sailmaker who specialized in wagon covers, tents, and tarpaulins for the emigrants moving west. In more recent years it became a river front saloon. When the National Park Service took charge of The Rock House, it was the one structure that remained on the waterfront from the early days of the fur trade. The weakened condition of the walls necessitated extensive reconstruction, so that the building now again looks as it did over 125 years ago.

### *The Old Cathedral*

Although it is in the Memorial area, this building — the oldest church in St. Louis — remains the property of the Roman Catholic

*The Transfer of Upper Louisiana, at St. Louis, 1804 (George Dorrill photo)*





*The Rock House, Built by Manuel Lisa, 1818*

Church and actively serves a parish. The square upon which it stands was set aside for religious purposes when the town was founded and has been occupied by a church since 1770. The present structure is the fourth to be built here. It was completed in 1834 as the cathedral for Bishop Rosati. The exterior of the church has changed little. Inside, new altars and pews were installed about 50 years ago, but many original features remain to give it much of the old appearance and atmosphere.

In a wing at the rear of the building, formerly occupied by the parish school, the church has installed a museum containing exhibits relating to its history and to the early town.

### *How to Reach the Memorial*

The Jefferson National Expansion Memorial is within walking dis-

tance of the downtown hotels and business district of St. Louis. The headquarters and museum in the Old Courthouse at Broadway and Market Street are reached by the Broadway, Forest Park, and Manchester street cars which connect with other lines extending to all parts of the city. The Union Station is 13 blocks west on Market Street, and the principal interurban bus terminals are 7 blocks north on Broadway. Motorists crossing the Mississippi by the municipal MacArthur Bridge on U. S. Routes 40, 50, 66, and 67 pass within sight of the Memorial and can get to it readily from the west end of the bridge.

### *Facilities for Visitors*

The Museum of National Expansion in the Old Courthouse is open every weekday from 9 a. m. to 4:30 p. m. and on Sunday afternoon from

1:30 p. m. to 5 p. m. Tours of the Old Courthouse are conducted twice daily, and of the Memorial areas once daily, Tuesday through Saturday. Special guided tours for groups may be arranged by appointment. Illustrated historical talks are given at the Old Courthouse each Sunday afternoon. These services are free to the public.

Throughout the Memorial area temporary historical markers erected by a committee of the Young Men's Division of the St. Louis Chamber of Commerce in collaboration with the National Park Service provide information about the men and events associated with this site for those who wish to explore the Memorial without a guide. Other places of historical interest, including the famed Eads Bridge, are in close proximity to the Memorial area.

### *Administration*

The Jefferson National Expansion Memorial is administered by the

*The Old Cathedral (George Dorrill photo)*



National Park Service of the United States Department of the Interior. Communications concerning the Memorial should be addressed to the Superintendent, Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, 415 Market Street, St. Louis 2, Missouri.

VICINITY MAP

