

# Jefferson National Expansion Memorial

NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE  
ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI



National Parks Centennial 1872-1972

These photographs, both taken in 1868, show the Old Cathedral (left) and the Courthouse in their original settings.



The View in Locust Street courtesy Missouri Historical Society

When the Thirteen Original States gained their independence in 1783, the western boundary of the new Nation was established at midstream of the Mississippi, from its source to near Natchez, Miss. Only a few trailblazers and settlers had crossed the Appalachians at that time, but soon mounting numbers of land-hungry pioneers began to fill this region. Floating down the Ohio or trudging through Cumberland Gap on the Wilderness Road, they filtered into the Old Northwest, Kentucky, and Tennessee. By 1800 they had reached the banks of the Mississippi.

President Thomas Jefferson soon recognized the need for American possession of this vital transportation artery. This realization led to the purchase of the vast French empire of Louisiana from Napoleon in 1803. Jefferson's foresight doubled the land area of the young republic and assured the United States of a major role in the settlement of North America. The West was not to be preserved for Old World empires—it was to be a land of rich opportunity for Americans.

In mastering the vast region between the Mississippi and the Pacific, the American pioneer left his mark on the face of the West; the experience helped shape the American character.

The annals of the West include the pageant of exploration and the fur trade; covered wagon migrations; the Pony Express and the transcontinental telegraph; stage, freight, and railroad lines; steamboats churning western rivers; cowboys and a range empire of grass; the last phase of Indian warfare; courageous homesteaders; boomtowns; and new States in the Union.

Founded by French fur traders from New Orleans in 1764, only 2 years after France ceded Louisiana to Spain, St. Louis slowly grew to be a center of French culture in the upper Mississippi Valley.





From 1770 to 1800, the growing city, whose population was 1,000 in 1800, was the seat of Spain's government for Upper Louisiana. Spain, however, returned to France the Louisiana Territory in 1802 and the next year the United States bought it. Thus, in 1803 St. Louis became an American city.

Its strategic location on a flood-free bluff, convenient to the Ohio, Missouri, and other river approaches, made St. Louis the hub of mid-continental commerce, transportation, and culture, and a gateway to the wilderness beyond.

It was the headquarters of the western fur trade. Manuel Lisa, the Chouteaus, Ashley, Sublette, and other leaders of the trade made their homes here and directed the activities of the legendary mountain men. Along the riverfront, towering steamboats from the East and South met the smaller riverboats serving the frontier communities and outposts on the upper Mississippi and Missouri Rivers. Stores, warehouses, boatyards, saloons, and roominghouses were erected to handle the new business.

Restless pioneers, congregating at this settlement before starting out across the plains, purchased supplies and outfits, then boarded steamboats which took them 400 miles up the Missouri to the river bend at the Kansas border. Here, where the Missouri turns north, the frontier towns of Westport, Independence, and St. Joseph sprang up. Thousands of wagons bound for Santa Fe, Oregon, and California were moved by steamboat from St. Louis to these outposts before rolling westward.

The St. Louis riverfront remained the supply base and marketplace of the frontier for many years. Oregon pioneers and gold seekers bought tools, wagons, guns, and supplies here, and lumbermen, planters, farmers, and fur traders sold their products. Goods were manufactured here too: Newell & Sutton plows, Murphy wagons for the Santa Fe trade, Grimsley dragoon saddles, Hawken "plains" rifles, and the cast-iron stoves of Filley and Bridge & Beach.

The business center of old St. Louis grew up along the levee. But when Eads Bridge was completed in 1874, the railroad came of age and business moved uptown. The riverfront declined, and the historic buildings gradually disappeared. Only two—the Old Courthouse and the Old Cathedral—still stand and are now within the memorial.

*The Old Courthouse*, high above the river on the western edge of the old business district, was the focal point of the community when St. Louis was the "Emporium of the West." It was begun in 1839 and completed in 1864. The restored historical and allegorical murals by Carl Wimar and Ettore Miragoli decorate the magnificent rotunda. The courthouse also served as a public forum. Here, the community honored its soldiers returning from the Mexican War, and a national convention met to project a railroad to the Pacific. Here, Dred Scott initiated his suit for freedom which focused national attention anew on the slavery controversy.

*The Old Cathedral* was built between 1831 and 1834. The property had been set aside for religious purposes by Pierre Laclède in the spring of 1764 when he founded the Village of St. Louis. The building narrowly escaped destruction in the disastrous fire that swept the riverfront in 1849. Importance of the church declined sharply after the Civil War when the archdiocese moved its headquarters to a new cathedral uptown. But in 1961 Pope John XXIII designated the building "Basilica of St. Louis, King of France." This is the highest honor ever given an American Catholic church. Masses still are celebrated on a regular schedule. Visitors of all faiths are welcome.





## **THE MEMORIAL CONCEPT**

The park was established in 1935 to memorialize the role of Thomas Jefferson and others responsible for this Nation's territorial expansion to the Pacific, and of the countless pioneers who explored and settled the great American West.

To dramatize this growth and the great social, political, and economic changes that followed in the wake of the Louisiana Purchase, the National Park Service and the city of St. Louis have undertaken this extensive development program. In 1947 the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial Association held a national competition to select a design for the memorial. The catenary arch design, submitted by the late Eero Saarinen, won over some 200 others.

The central feature of the Saarinen plan, the soaring 630-foot stainless steel arch, symbolic of St. Louis' historic gateway role, was one of the most challenging engineering and construction projects ever attempted. In cross section, the arch is an equilateral triangle, 54 feet on a side at the base, tapering to 17 feet at the top. A capsule transporter in each leg carries visitors to the observation platform at the top. The underground visitor center between the legs of the arch will contain the Museum of Westward Expansion and two theaters.

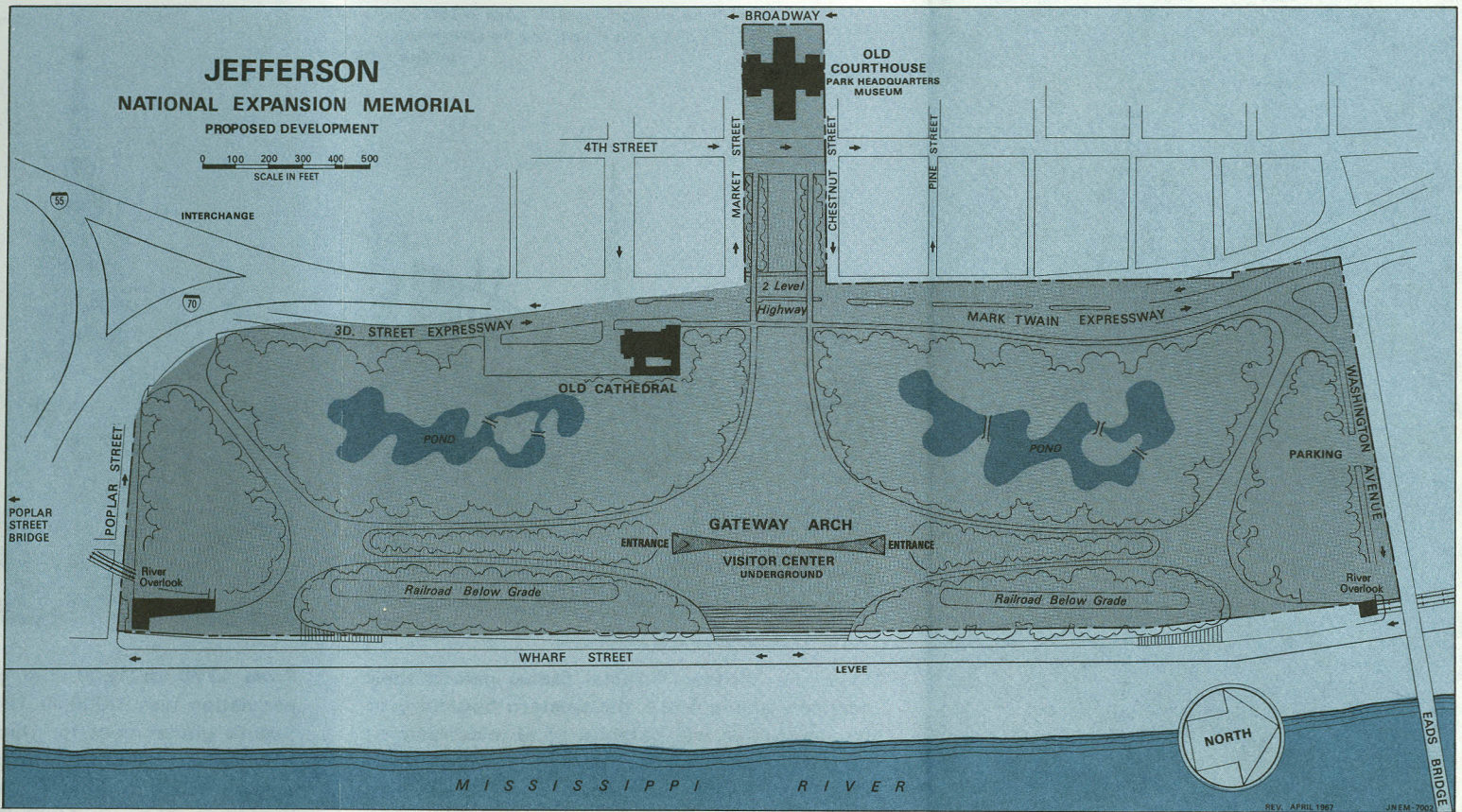
## **ABOUT YOUR VISIT**

The park is within easy walking distance of downtown St. Louis. The Old Courthouse is open daily. Please make arrangements in advance with the memorial staff for group visits.



# JEFFERSON NATIONAL EXPANSION MEMORIAL PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

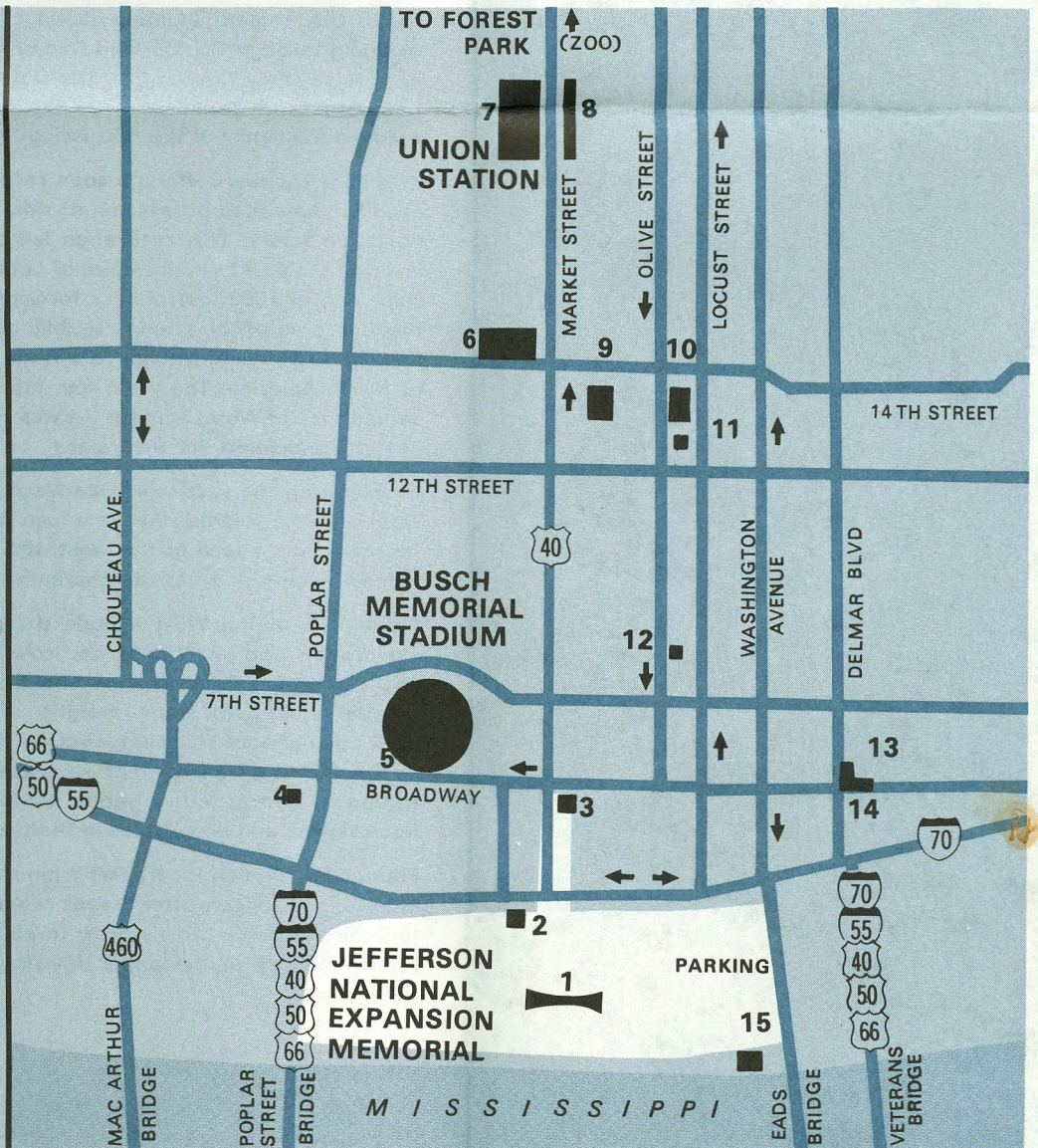
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SCALE IN FEET



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# DOWNTOWN ST. LOUIS

- 1 GATEWAY ARCH
- 2 OLD CATHEDRAL
- 3 OLD COURTHOUSE
- 4 EUGENE FIELD HOUSE
- 5 BUSCH MEMORIAL STADIUM
- 6 KIEL AUDITORIUM
- 7 UNION STATION
- 8 CARL MILLES FOUNTAIN
- 9 SOLDIERS MEMORIAL BUILDING
- 10 PUBLIC LIBRARY
- 11 CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL
- 12 OLD POST OFFICE
- 13 GREYHOUND BUS TERMINAL
- 14 CONTINENTAL TRAILWAYS
- 15 STEAMER-ADMIRAL WHARF





## **ADMINISTRATION**

Jefferson National Expansion Memorial National Historic Site is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is 11 North 4th St., St. Louis, MO 63102, is in immediate charge.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities for water, fish, wildlife, mineral, land, park, and recreational resources. Indian and Territorial affairs are other major concerns of America's "Department of Natural Resources." The Department works to assure the wisest choice in managing all our resources so each will make its full contribution to a better United States—now and in the future.

**National Park Service**

**U. S. Department of the Interior**