

# Jefferson National Expansion Memorial

NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE  
MISSOURI



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.

French fur traders from New Orleans founded St. Louis in 1764. Despite the fact that France had ceded Louisiana to Spain 2 years previously, the settlement slowly grew to be a center of French

culture in the upper Mississippi Valley. From 1770, when the first Spanish lieutenant governor arrived, until 1800, the growing city was the seat of Spain's government for Upper Louisiana. In 1800, however, France, buoyed by Napoleon's conquests in Europe and by dreams of empire in the New World, forced Spain to return Louisiana. The United States became alarmed and in 1803 purchased the entire territory. St. Louis with its French and Spanish heritage 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,

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

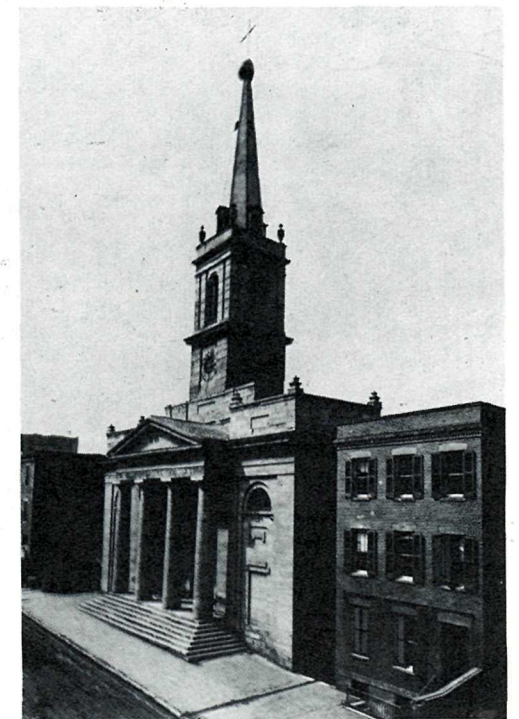


planters, farmers, and fur traders sold their products. Goods were manufactured here too: Newell & Sutton plows, Murphy wagons for the Santa Fe trade, Grimsley dragoon saddles, Hawken "plains" rifles, and the cast-iron stoves of Filley and Bridge & Beach.

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 Laclede 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.



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## FOR YOUR SAFETY

Efforts have been made to provide for your safety here at the park, but there are still inherent hazards that require your alertness:

Use caution on stone walkways, stairways, and step-down wells.

Be careful in buildings, especially at Old Courthouse, which has many steps and varying floor levels.

We want you and your children to have a meaningful, worthwhile, and SAFE visit.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

National Park Service  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

## 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 an extensive development program. In 1947 the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial Association held a national competition to select a design for the memorial. The late Eero Saarinen's design won over some 200 others.

The central feature of the Saarinen plan, the soaring 630-foot stainless steel arch, symbolizes St. Louis' historic gateway role. The arch, one of the most challenging engineering and construction projects ever attempted, is in the form of an inverted catenary curve—the shape a chain traces when hanging freely between two points. The

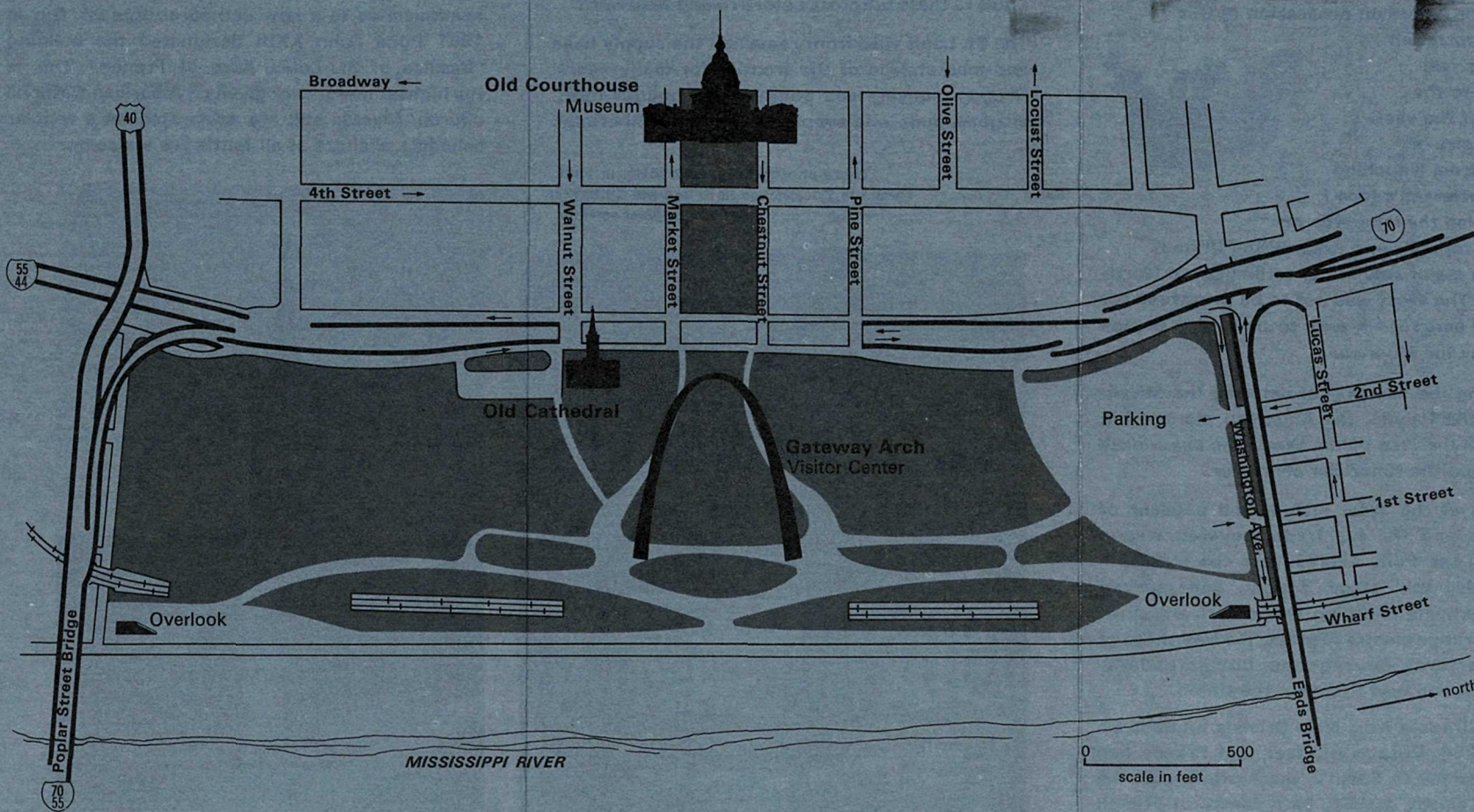
catenary is the soundest of all arches, for all weight passes through the legs into the foundation.

In cross section the arch is a double-walled equilateral triangle, 54 feet on a side with 3 feet between the 2 walls at the base. It tapers to 17 feet on a side at the top, where the space between the walls is 7-5/8 inches.

Up to the 300-foot level, the arch was strengthened by pre-stressed steel rods embedded in concrete between the walls. Above that height, steel stiffeners were used. In a 150 mile-per-hour wind, the arch would sway only 18 inches.

The first 72 feet of the arch, 6 sections in all, were lifted into place by a crane. Beyond that height, two special derricks were used. Mounted on tracks on each leg, the derricks crept up as they raised the other sections. To insert the last piece, a 2-foot gap between the legs was opened 6 more feet by jacks. When the jacks were released, the natural force of the legs clamped the section into place. The derricks then backed down, taking up their tracks and polishing the surface as they went.

The idea of Saint Louis as a gateway to the West is dramatically captured in Eero Saarinen's 1947 competition drawing for the memorial. This view, looking south, was one of several which he submitted to the board of judges.



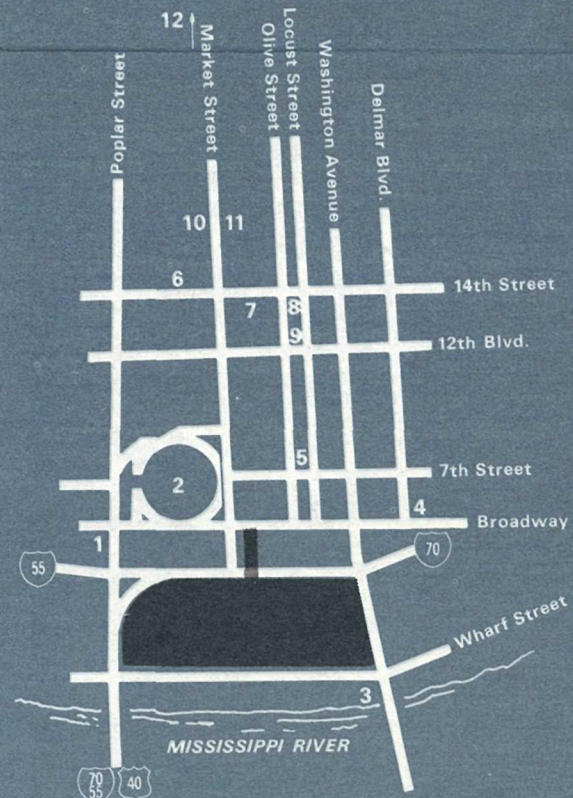
## ABOUT YOUR VISIT

The park is within easy walking distance of downtown Saint Louis. The Old Courthouse, with a varied program of exhibits and activities, is open daily.

A 40-passenger train climbs each leg of the arch to an observation deck at the top. Each train has eight cars, which are constructed somewhat like the baskets of a ferris wheel so that they are always level throughout the climb from the underground visitor center to the observation platform. A fee is charged for the ride. For group visits, please make arrangements in advance with the memorial staff.

Beneath the arch is the Museum of Westward Expansion. Artifacts from that period and the displays give an idea of the pioneers' hopes, successes, and failures. Admission to the museum is free.

Several points of interest outside the memorial can be located with the help of the numbered key and map below. 1. Eugene Field House; 2. Busch Memorial Stadium; 3. Steamer-Admiral Wharf; 4. Bus Terminals; 5. Old Post Office; 6. Kiel Auditorium; 7. Soldiers Memorial Building; 8. Public Library; 9. Chirist Church Cathedral; 10. Union Station; 11. Carl Milles Fountain; 12. Saint Louis Zoo.



## 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.