

# Jefferson National Expansion Memorial

ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

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 and Kentucky and Tennessee. By 1800 they had reached the banks of the Mississippi.

The vision of President Thomas Jefferson, the great architect of westward expansion, led to the purchase of the vast French empire of Louisiana from Napoleon in 1803. This brilliant act doubled the land area of the infant republic and assured the United States of a major role in the settlement of the North American continent. The West was not to be preserved for Old World empires. It was to be a rich land of opportunity for Americans.

In mastering the vast region between the Mississippi and the Pacific, the American pioneer left historic marks on the face of the West, and 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; boom towns, and new States in the Union.

Founded in 1764 by French fur traders from New Orleans, St. Louis slowly grew to be an outpost of French-Canadian culture and a governmental center of imperial Spain. In 1803 the city became part of the United States through the Louisiana Purchase.

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 built 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 and Independence sprang up. Thousands of wagons which rolled to Santa Fe, Oregon, and California were moved by steamboat from St. Louis to these outposts before moving westward by wheel.

This stretch of 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 the Eads Bridge was completed in 1874 and the railroad came of age, business moved uptown, the riverfront declined, and the historic buildings gradually disappeared. Only two—the Old Courthouse and the Old Cathedral—still stand within the memorial.

## THE MEMORIAL CONCEPT

This memorial was established in 1935 as a testament to Thomas Jefferson and others who directed the territorial expansion of the United States to the Pacific and to recount the exploits of those who explored and occupied the 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 along the riverfront. In 1947 the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial Association, a group of citizens interested in this work, held a national competition to select a suitable design for the memorial. The Gateway Arch, submitted by the late Eero Saarinen, won over some 200 others.

The central feature of the Saarinen plan—one filled with architectural innovation—is the soaring stainless steel arch, symbolic of St. Louis's historic role. One of the most challenging engineering and construction projects ever tackled, the arch rises to 630 feet—75 feet higher than the Washington Monument. In section, the arch is an equilateral triangle, 54 feet on a side at the base, tapering to about 17 feet at the top. A capsule transporter in each leg whisks visitors to the observation platform at the top. The underground visitor center at the base of the arch will contain the elaborate Museum of Westward Expansion.

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 to replace an outgrown smaller brick structure and completed in 1864, after many changes in the original plans. Carl Wimar's historical and allegorical murals—now restored—decorate the rotunda. The building was a public forum as well as a courthouse. Here the community honored its volunteers returning from the Mexican War; a national convention met to project a railroad to the Pacific; Senator Thomas Hart Benton delivered his famous oration, using as his theme Bishop Berkeley's phrase, "Westward the course of empire"; and the slave Dred Scott sued for his freedom and in a decade of litigation focused national attention anew on the slavery controversy.

The Old Cathedral, adjacent to the memorial, was built between 1831 and 1834 on land set aside for religious purposes when St. Louis was founded. The only structure standing on its original foundations in old St. Louis, it narrowly escaped destruction in the disastrous fire that swept the riverfront in 1849. The design is Greek revival. The importance of the cathedral declined sharply after the Civil War when the archdiocese moved its headquarters to a new cathedral uptown. The cathedral is now designated the "Basilica of St. Louis of France," and services are held daily. It is open to visitors of all faiths. The extensive preservation and restoration work done on the cathedral in recent years has contributed greatly to the development of the memorial area.

## ABOUT YOUR VISIT

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

## ADMINISTRATION

Jefferson National Expansion Memorial is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

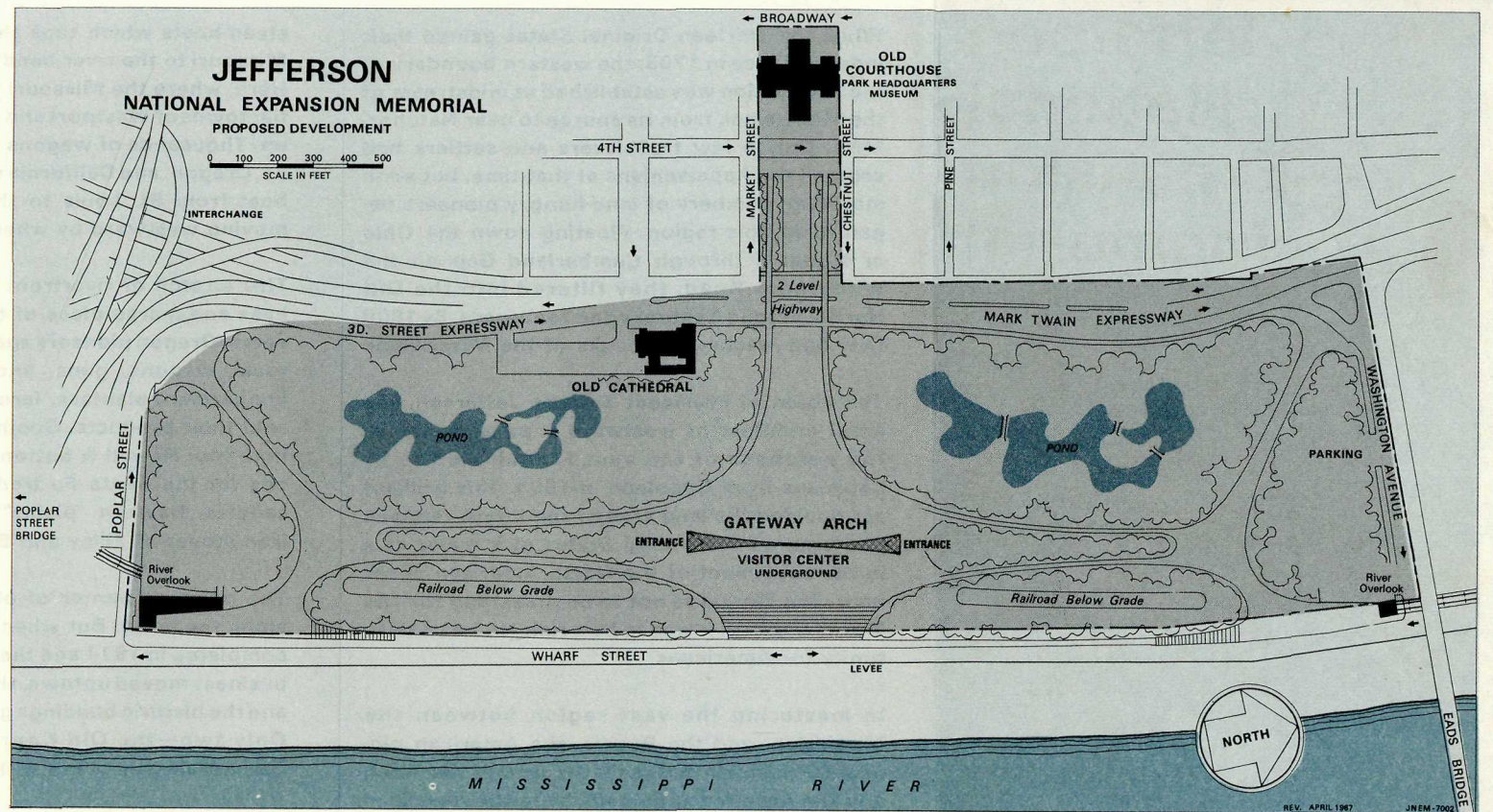
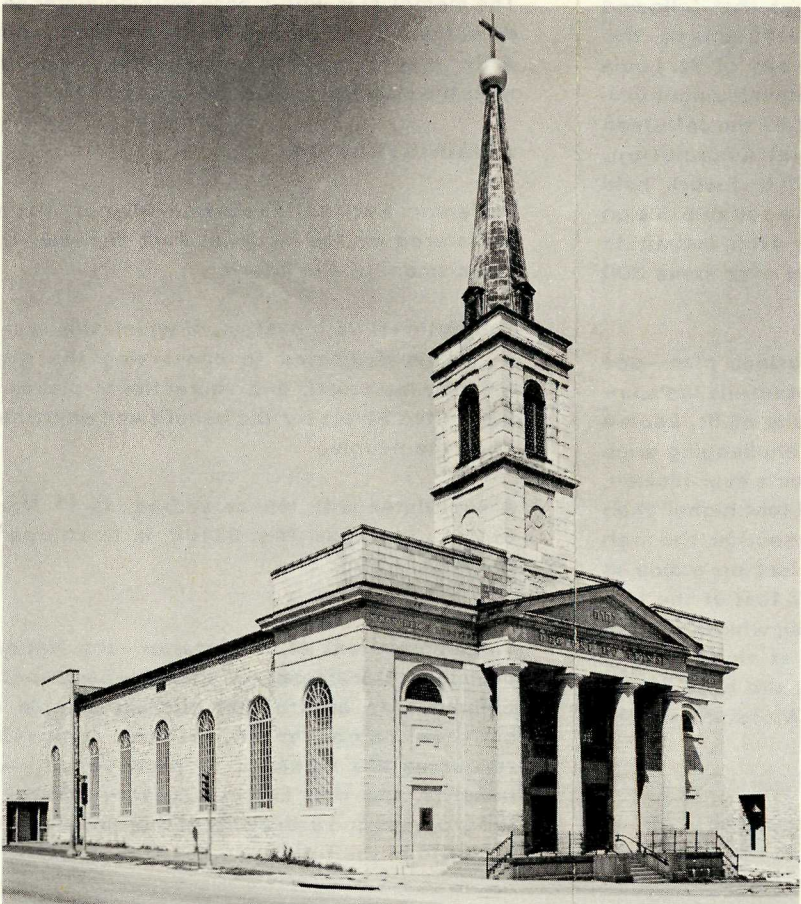
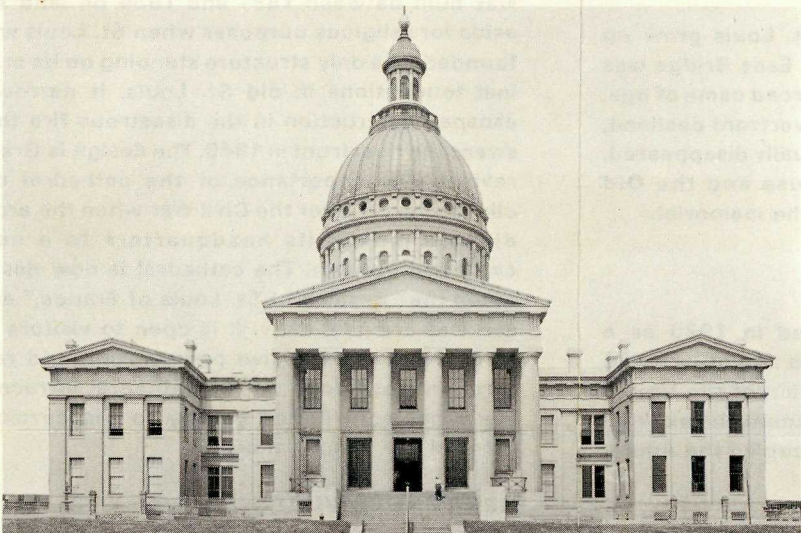
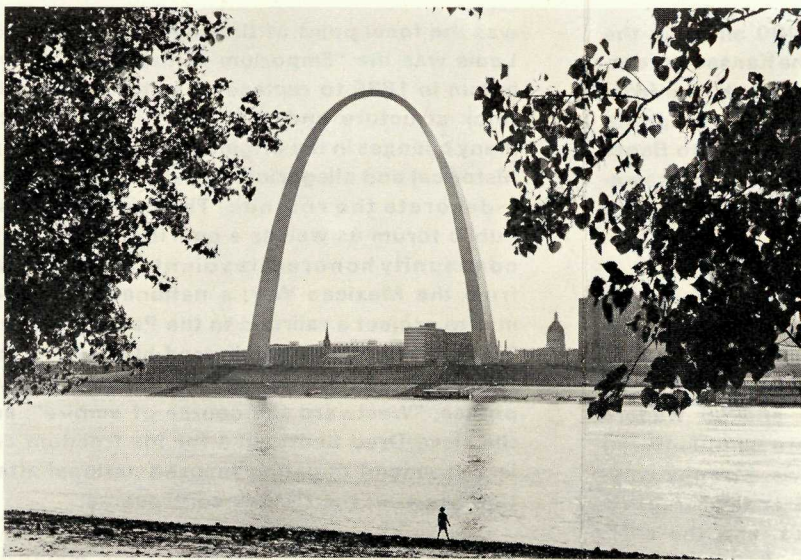
The National Park System, of which this area is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the great natural, historical, and recreational places of the United States for the benefit and enjoyment of all the people.

A superintendent, whose address is 11 North 4th St., St. Louis, Mo. 63102, is in charge of the memorial.

The Department of the Interior—the Nation's principal natural resource agency—has a special obligation to assure that our expendable resources are conserved, that our renewable resources are managed to produce optimum benefits, and that all resources contribute to the progress and prosperity of the United States, now and in the future.

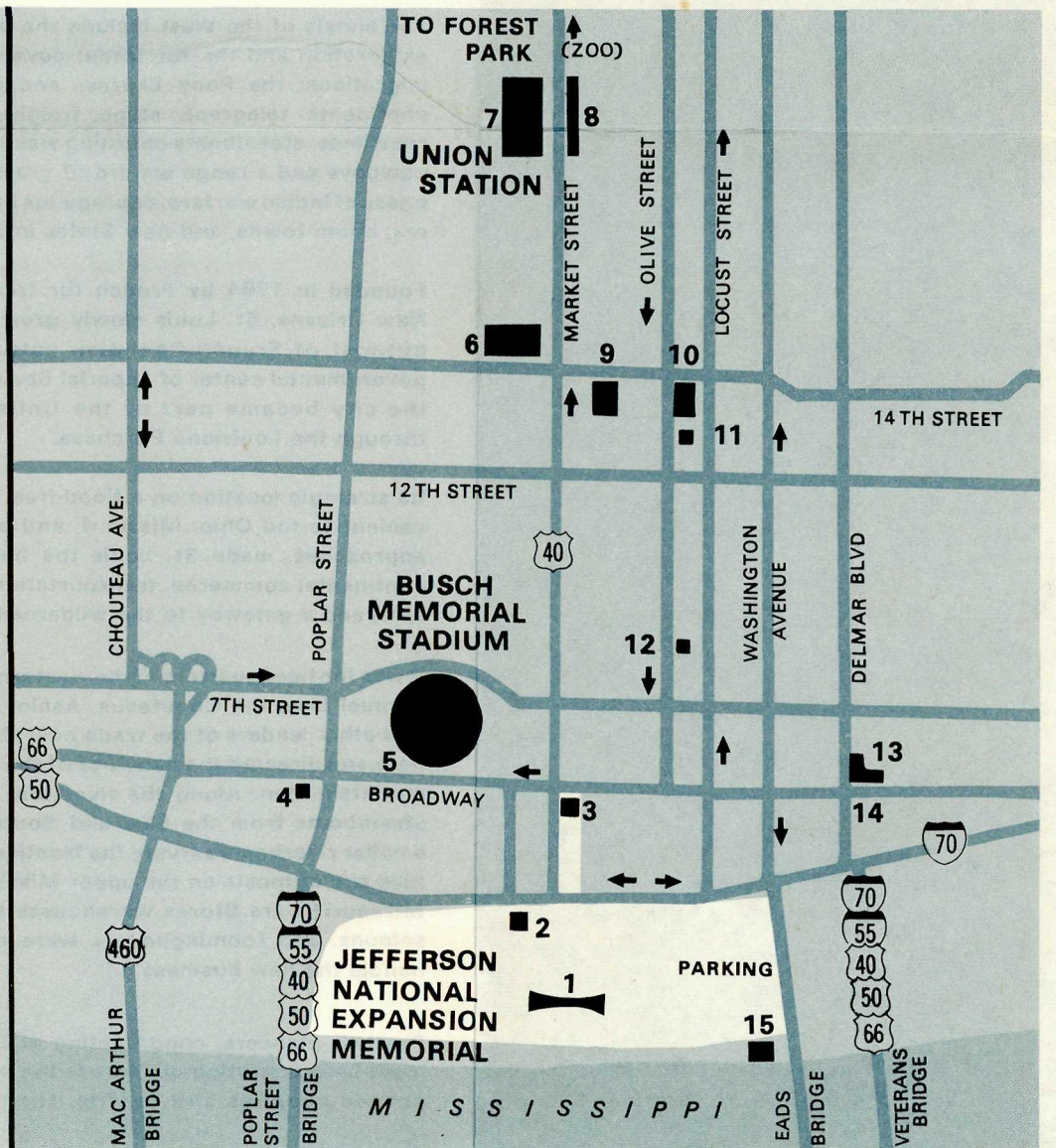






## DOWNTOWN ST. LOUIS

- 1 GATEWAY ARCH
- 2 OLD CATHEDRAL
- 3 OLD COURTHOUSE
- 4 EUGENE FIELD SHRINE
- 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



APRIL 1967 REV. MARCH 1968