

Historic Notes:

- St. Louis was founded in 1764 as a French fur-trading village by Pierre Laclede. He named the city “St. Louis” for King Louis IX, the crusader king who was the patron saint of Laclede’s then ruler King Louis XV. Here are some other interesting facts about the Gateway City.
- Today, the population of St. Louis City is 353,837. The metropolitan area has 2.8 million residents.
- The city was founded by the French in Spanish territory in 1764. French fur traders Pierre Laclede and Auguste Chouteau founded St. Louis on high land just below the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers.
- One of St. Louis’ early nicknames was “Mound City” because of the number of Indian mounds scattered throughout the region. St. Louis also was once nicknamed “First in booze, first in shoes and last in the American League,” a reference to the city’s leadership in the brewing and shoe manufacturing industries and the poor performance of the St. Louis Browns baseball team.
- When Thomas Jefferson signed the Louisiana Purchase for about four cents an acre in 1803, St. Louis was already a 40-year-old river town of 3,000 with a flourishing river trade and the beginnings of commerce.
- Explorers Lewis and Clark began their westward explorations in 1804, and St. Louis was positioned as the Gateway to the West.
- In 1818, Sainte Rose Phillipine Duchesne established a school that

became the first “free” school west of the Mississippi. She went on to establish more than 40 schools for white, black and Indian children. She was canonized by the Roman Catholic Church in 1989.

- Founded in 1818, Saint Louis University was the first university west of the Mississippi River founded by the Jesuits.
- The Cupples House, located on the campus of Saint Louis University, was built with 42 rooms and 22 fireplaces and is on the National Register of Historic Places.
- The Eads Bridge over the Mississippi River was the first arched steel truss bridge in the world. When it was first proposed, it was scoffed at as impossible to build. Completed in 1874, it is still in use today carrying MetroLink light rail and car traffic over the river.
- The first paddlewheel steamboat arrived in St. Louis in 1817. By the 1850s, 5,000 steamboats would land in St. Louis each year.
- The first cathedral west of the Mississippi River was built on the St. Louis riverfront in 1834 at the site of St. Louis’ first church. The Old Cathedral still stands there today.
- Reverend John Berry Meachum, a 19th century preacher, cooper and carpenter, founded the Freedom School aboard a steamboat anchored in the middle of the Mississippi River at St. Louis, in answer to the 1847 state law which prohibited blacks from being educated on Missouri soil. The floating institution was then under federal jurisdiction and exempt

from Missouri laws.

- Elizabeth Keckley, one of the Freedom School teachers, later went on to fame as seamstress and confidant to Mary Todd Lincoln at the White House.
- St. Louis’ Old Courthouse was the scene of Dred Scott’s historic slavery trial in 1847, which focused national attention on the slavery issue. Scott won his case in St. Louis but the decision was overturned in the U.S. Supreme Court in 1857. The court ruled that Scott was not a citizen and therefore not entitled to sue. The decision served as a flashpoint for the start of the Civil War. After the decision, Scott and his wife Harriett were freed by their owner. Scott died in 1858.
- In 1859, Ulysses S. Grant legally freed his only slave at the Old Courthouse.
- The Old Courthouse in St. Louis features the first cast iron dome ever built. It was erected in 1862 and still stands today as part of the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial.
- Susan Blow started the first kindergarten in the United States in St. Louis in 1873. St. Louis was also the site of the first public grade school and the first public high school west of the Mississippi.
- St. Louisan James Augustine Healy became the first black Roman Catholic Bishop in the country in 1875.
- The Wainwright Building, located on Seventh Street in downtown St. Louis, was the world’s first skyscraper. It was designed by architect Louis Sullivan and completed in 1891.

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- At the turn of the 20th century, more than 100 breweries were operating in St. Louis, including Anheuser-Busch. Today, visitors can tour the 1892 brew house and the Clydesdale horse stables.
- The 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis introduced the ice cream cone and iced tea to the world, and hot dogs and hamburgers were popularized at the event. Buster Brown children's shoes were introduced at the Fair, along with the turnstile.
- Formally called the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, the 1904 Fair commemorated the 100th anniversary of the Lewis & Clark expedition. The Fair was further immortalized by the movie, "Meet Me in St. Louis," which was based on the memoirs of writer Sally Benson.
- In 1904, the first Olympiad in the U.S. was held in St. Louis at Washington University's Francis Field, and gold, silver and bronze medals were first introduced. It was the first Olympiad with female participants, and the last Olympics with golf as a sport. Runner George Coleman Poage was the first African-American athlete to participate in the Olympic games.
- In 1927, a group of St. Louis businessmen gave financial backing to the first solo transatlantic flight from New York to Paris. The pilot was Charles Lindbergh and the plane was named "The Spirit of St. Louis."
- C.L. Grigg, a soft drink salesman and owner of a general store, introduced the Bib-label lithiated lemon-lime soda in St. Louis in 1929. In 1931 he changed the name of the drink to 7-Up.
- The Fox Theatre opened in 1929 as one of the crown jewels in William Fox's motion picture empire. With a seating capacity of 5,060, the Fox was second in size only to New York's Roxy Theatre.
- The Anheuser-Busch Clydesdales were originally a gift from August Busch to his father marking the end of prohibition. He presented his father with an eight-horse Clydesdale Hitch and a Budweiser beer wagon in April 1933. The team was sent to Washington, D.C. to deliver the first case of Budweiser beer brewed after prohibition to President Franklin D. Roosevelt.
- The Gateway Arch is a memorial to Thomas Jefferson and the historic role St. Louis played as the Gateway to the West. Designed by Finnish-American architect, Eero Saarinen, construction of the stainless steel Arch was completed in 1965.
- St. Louis boasts more free major visitor attractions than anywhere in the U.S. outside of the nation's capital. The Saint Louis Art Museum, Science Center, and Zoo, History Museum, Museum of Westward Expansion, Anheuser-Busch Brewery, Laumeier Sculpture Park, Citygarden and many other sites are open free of charge.
- St. Louis is spread along 19 miles of the Mississippi River shoreline just 12 miles south of the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri rivers.
- The first high school west of the Mississippi for black students, Sumner, boasts an impressive roster of graduates: comedian/activist Dick Gregory, Ronald Townson of the 5th Dimension, opera stars Grace Bumbry and Robert McFerrin, rock greats Chuck Berry and Tina Turner, and athlete Arthur Ashe.
- St. Louis' McDonnell Douglas Corporation, now part of Boeing, designed and built the space capsule that carried the first men into space in the 1960s.
- The Saint Louis Zoo, considered one of the finest in the world, was a pioneer in the use of open enclosures, placing animals in natural environments without bars. Marlin Perkins was the Zoo's most famous curator.
- The Climatron at the Missouri Botanical Garden was built in 1960 as the world's first climate-controlled geodesic dome designed as a greenhouse. The garden also is home to the largest traditional Japanese Garden outside Japan.
- Ted Drewes located on historic Route 66 has been selling frozen custards known as "concretes" since 1929.
- The Cathedral Basilica of St. Louis (called the New Cathedral by locals) features the largest collection of mosaics in the world, with 41 million pieces of mosaic tile.
- The Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra is the nation's second oldest symphony orchestra.
- Many of the historic transportation pieces housed at the Museum of Transportation in St. Louis were experimental vehicles in their time, and several are the only examples remaining in existence. The museum has a varied collection of locomotives, train cars, automobiles and other forms of transportation.

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- The Scott Joplin House State Historic Site is a four-family antebellum structure which was home to the “King of Ragtime” between 1900 and 1903 during some of his most productive years.
- Bronze stars imbedded in the sidewalk of The Loop neighborhood pay tribute to more than 100 famous St. Louisans who have contributed to the cultural heritage of St. Louis, the nation and the world.
- A new statue called “The Captain’s Return” commemorates the Corps of Discovery’s arrival on the St. Louis Riverfront after their 1804-1806 journey. The bronze statue is 23 feet tall weighs more than 3.5 tons.
- Jefferson Barracks Historic Park in south St. Louis County contains restored military buildings, museums and a national cemetery. Ulysses S. Grant, William Tecumseh Sherman, Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee and James Longstreet were all posted there prior to the Civil War.
- The 200-acre National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows in nearby Belleville, Illinois, is the largest outdoor shrine in the country.
- Grant’s Farm features the 1856 log home hand-built by Ulysses S. Grant prior to the Civil War. Grant and his wife, Julia (a St. Louisan), lived in the home and farmed the grounds they called “Hardscabble” before moving to Julia’s larger family home a few hundred yards away. That home, “White Haven,” is operated by the National Parks Service and is open to the public free of charge.
- At Laumeier Sculpture Park, you’ll find giant works like “The Way,” which is welded from red oil drums, and art by internationally known modern sculptors that is exhibited in the gallery.
- St. Louis has the only museum in the world that’s gone completely to the dogs. The American Kennel Club Museum of the Dog is dedicated to fine art depicting canine companions throughout history.
- St. Louis Union Station was once the largest and busiest passenger rail station in the world. Built in 1894 by architect Theodore Link, it houses a hotel and a festival marketplace of shops and restaurants.
- The boyhood home of children’s poet Eugene Field, who grew up to write “Winken, Blinken and Nod,” and “Little Boy Blue,” is open to visitors.
- Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site, a United Nations World Heritage Site, was once the home of the largest prehistoric Indian city north of Mexico. Archaeological finds date from 700 to 1400 A.D. The historic site and interpretive center are located just 15 minutes from downtown St. Louis.
- The Saint Louis Art Museum, designed by Cass Gilbert as the Fine Arts Palace during the 1904 World’s Fair, is the last building remaining from the Fair.
- St. Louis was the setting for playwright Tennessee Williams’ work, “The Glass Menagerie.” Williams, who lived here with his mother and siblings, worked for International Shoe in the building that today houses the City Museum.
- Other famous St. Louisans include Nobel Prize-winning author, T.S. Eliot; poet Maya Angelou; journalist Joseph Pulitzer who established the Pulitzer Prize awarded annually since 1917; “Joy of Cooking” author Irma Rombauer; rock ‘n’ roll pioneer Chuck Berry; piano man Johnnie Johnson; hip-hop superstar Cornell “Nelly” Haynes, Jr.; singer Tina Turner; actor Vincent Price; comedian Redd Foxx; pin-up star Betty Grable; entertainer Josephine Baker; and Academy Award-winning actor Kevin Kline.
- Famed Blues musician, W.C. Handy, wrote the classic “St. Louis Blues,” under the Eads Bridge on the Mississippi Riverfront. “St. Louis Blues” is the most recorded Blues song in history.