

HISTORY

Missouri became the twenty-fourth State of the Union Aug. 10, 1821. St. Charles was the site of Missouri's first state capitol. These are facts and while facts are important in history, to make history come alive we must look into the daily lives of men and women. Their values and aspirations, their skills and accomplishments, their vanities and even failures, give understanding to the past. This tour is intended as an introduction to a few of St. Charles' early citizens and the circumstances of their lives.

The village was founded by a small group of French Canadian farmers and hunters in the 1760s. France had ceded Louisiana to Spain shortly before losing the French and Indian Wars in 1763. The village was French but laid out according to Spanish law: one or two long streets paralleling the river. The French built vertical log homes with the ends in the ground (*poteaux en terre*) or on stone foundations (*poteaux sur solle*). There was no business district as the private home served as shop, storefront or government office as well as family residence. Early land owners were Jos. Robidoux (the founder of St. Joseph, MO), Pierre and Auguste Chouteau (from the founding family of St. Louis) and Alexander McNair (Missouri's first governor).

Daniel and Rebecca Boone, and five of their children, came to St. Charles Co. in 1799. The Spanish had "courted" Boone, giving him a large land grant complete with tools and stock in exchange for his influential presence in settling the rich bottom lands. Captains Meriwether Lewis and William Clark were in St. Charles for 5 days in May of 1804. They "continued on" up the Missouri River looking for a water-way to the Pacific Ocean. Both Lewis and Clark would return to serve as Territorial Governors of Missouri.

Explorers Lt. Zebulon M. Pike (in 1806) and Maj. Stephen H. Long (in 1819) both stopped in St. Charles on their way west up the Missouri River. Pike was accompanied by 51 Osage and Pawnee men, women and children who had been ransomed by the U.S. and a large delegation of chiefs and warriors who had been to Washington to visit Pres. Jefferson.

Timothy Flint, a Presbyterian minister and popular author "back East", moved to St. Charles in 1816. He wrote "there was but one brick building when I arrived but by the early twenties many fine brick buildings lined Main St." Many of our restored buildings date to that time.

James Beckworth, the famous black mountain man and explorer, grew up in St. Charles, as did Bill Sublette who became a prosperous fur company owner. Both traveled the Missouri River in company with Jim Bridger who had children in boarding school in St. Charles.

While business seemed to flourish during the statehood period (1821-1826), money was scarce. Barter economy continued as a way of life, for in the 1820s St. Charles was still a frontier town on the edge of westward expansion.

Later steamboats, railroads and gold "in them there hills" influenced life in St. Charles. By river or overland many people passed through; some came to stay. Of all these men, women and children only one thing can be said for certain: Each had a story to tell. May you meet one or two of them on your journey down Main Street.



SOUTH MAIN STREET

SAINT CHARLES, MISSOURI

SOUTH MAIN STREET

WALKING TOUR

1. 101 South Main - OLD MARKET AND FISH HOUSE (1832) This building, with a new addition on the front, served as City Hall from 1886 to 1976 when the new City Hall on Second St. was built. The Old Market now houses the Archives of the St. Charles County Historical Society. Open for general research and exhibition on Mon., Wed., Fri. and Sat. (May to Aug.) from 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.



2. 117 and 119 - South Main - ODD FELLOWS HALL (1878) AND POST OFFICE (after 1905) The old Post Office occupies the site of the second Court House which served the Co. between 1848 and 1904. Looking west at the corner of Jefferson and South Main, to Second Street, the new County Courthouse (1904) can be seen with its copper dome atop the hill. The Courthouse on South Main sustained some damage during a "hurricane" on Feb. 26, 1876. The bank and concert hall next door was destroyed during the tornado and on its site was built the three story Odd Fellows Hall. The Odd Fellows were an odd lot; they believed in temperance! A bank rented the main floor. Benjamin Emmons, a descendant of both old French and American families, started a title company in this building when it was known as the Moose Hall. We owe much of our early recorded history to his diligent and professional research.

3. 208 - 216 South Main - THE FIRST STATE CAPITOL OF MISSOURI (1821 - 1826) This structure, built in 1818, is actually three buildings under one saddle back roof. The two buildings on the south end with the arched alleyway leading to the ferry and the river were owned by two brothers, Ruluff and Charles Peck. The first floor was used as their residence and store. The second floor served as "The Great Assembly Hall" from 1821 - 1826. The 3rd building, on the northern end, was the home of a carpenter, Chauncey Shepard. The rooms on the second level were used for the Governor's office and committee rooms. Missouri legislators met here from June 4, 1821 through October 1, 1826. They then moved to the newly completed City of Jefferson. This historic site is open to the public 7 days a week.



4. 217 South Main - HEYE STOVE AND TIN BUSINESS This three story brick shop was part of a family business. Frederick Ebeling owned a tin shop (1106 N. Second St.) and evidently made a handsome profit. His will provided homes for his daughters with the exception of Mathilda Heye who, with her husband, already owned this tin shop. The small city park to the south once contained the imposing French style vertical log home of James and Amelia Morrison. Their front porch was 5' off the ground and ran the entire length of the house. It was here that Zebulon M. Pike stopped on July 17, 1806 to converse with with the Osage. The house was probably built before Morrison bought the block in 1806 and stood for over 100 years.

5. 230 South Main - THE ST. CHARLES TOURISM CENTER (1986) Open 7 days a week, Mon. - Fri. from 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Saturday from 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. and Sundays from 12:00 noon - 5:00 p.m. It was formerly the location of the Chambers Hotel built in the early 1800s by John Mullanphy, a St. Louis millionaire who made his fortune shipping cotton on the Mississippi during the War of 1812. It was a wedding present to his daughter Jane M. Chambers.



6. Missouri River - STEAMBOATS (1818 - 1992) Steamboats were big business on the Missouri River in the 19th century. Innumerable boats - keelboats, flat boats, bull boats, pirogues, canoes - plied the waters for centuries before, but no boat captured the imagination like the steamer. It was, however, a dangerous business! The current was treacherous and the water shallow. Many a boat lies buried in the mud. Life expectancy of a steamboat on the Missouri was 3 years. Most were stern-wheelers, for even fully loaded they only drew 6 feet of water. The

"Independence" inaugurated steam boat traffic on the Missouri in 1818. The fur companies based in St. Louis employed and/or owned many of the boats on the river especially in the first half of the century. After the Civil War the military transported goods, men and horses to the upper Missouri for the Indian Wars. A complete list of steamboats and passengers stopping in St. Charles to put on fuel at the wood yards would be voluminous. One of the most recognizable names was John James Audubon aboard the Steamer Omega with Capt. A. Sire in 1843. The last steamboat to visit St. Charles was the Delta Queen in 1992.

7. 301 & 302 South Main - PARMER/COLLIER HOUSE (1819 & 1820) 301 was built by Anthony Parmer in 1819. A year later when Charles Reynolds built his brick house to the south, he shared a wall with Parmer. Reynolds immediately sold his house to John and George Collier, merchants, who had moved to St. Charles from Maryland in about 1816. In 1820 they advertised a fantastic collection of goods: "Superfine and common cloths and cassimeres, callicoes, Irish linen, Brown Holland, hosiery, gloves, shirting, ticking, scythes, sickles, saws, loaf and brown sugar, salt, tobacco" and more!



8. 307 South Main - DUQUETTE HOUSE (1825) Notice the three foot alley to the south of the Collier House. In 1825 Widow Duquette, a very prominent French woman, bought a lot from George Collier and built a brick house adjoining his on the second floor, leaving the alley below. The Duquettes had moved to St. Charles in 1795. Francois Duquette was a merchant/fur trader from French Canada. His wife, Marie Louise Bauvais, was the daughter of a wealthy Ste. Genevieve family. The Duquette's held title to large tracts of land including the 4 block tract on which the Academy of the Sacred Heart was built on the corner of Second and Clark. The grounds include the shrine of St. Rose Philippine Duchesne, who brought the order to Saint Charles in 1818.



CALIFORNIA HOUSE
WINE, BEER AND OYSTER SALOON
BY
F. METZ

The best liquors, the choicest wines (foreign and native), and fresh beer always on hand.
OYSTERS served in every style.

From the "St. Charles Cosmos" Sept. 30, 1864

10. 318 - 330 South Main - **STONE ROW** (1820s)

Thomas Lindsey of South Carolina came to St. Charles in 1815. In 1816 for \$742.50 he purchased 250 feet on Main St. with a dwelling house and other buildings. Over the next 10 - 15 years he built Stone Row, selling or renting space as it was available. The stone was probably mined from the construction site itself - possibly by slave labor. Lindsey, a slave owner, freed his slaves at his death in 1843 and provided passage for all 19 to Liberia. Lindsey is also credited with founding the Presbyterian Church in St. Charles in 1818.



11. 334 South Main - **JEREMIAH MILLINGTON HOME** (1821)

Brothers Jeremiah and Seth Millington were both physicians and large landowners in St. Charles in the early 1800s. Jeremiah bought this lot in 1820 and was living here in 1822. Not only would his doctor's office have been here, but because he was also Postmaster, letters were held here as well. It was the addressee not the sender who paid the postage. Dr. Jeremiah moved about 1826 and rented this building to the next Postmaster, John Lilly. The Millington brothers were manufacturers of the ever famous and most effective cure-all of all times: castor oil.

12. 337 South Main - **THE MARBLE WORKS**

(circa 1870) Joseph P. May, a stone cutter, built this building about 1870. It continued to be known as The Marble Works as late as 1917. Notice the carved Corinthian columns and the ornate lintels above the windows on the second floor. What wonderful advertisement for his craft and craftsmanship. The main floor inside slopes towards the street. This allowed May to roll the finished stonework more easily from the shop, across the high threshold and onto an awaiting wagon.



13. **Corner of Jackson and Pike - SAN CARLOS BORROMEIO CHURCH** (1791)

This entire block is clearly identified in early land records as the site of the Catholic Church and graveyard. This drawing is incomplete, leaving to your imagination what the original vertical log church looked like. The church was dedicated by Spanish Lieutenant Governor Manuel Perez on November 7, 1791 as San Carlos Borromeo. The name of the village was also changed at that time from Le Petites Côtes

(Little Hills) to San Carlos. The exact location of both church and graveyard remains unknown. Early church records are incomplete as St. Charles did not have a resident priest for years. Weddings by visiting priests as recorded indicate how rarely they came. Case in point: Louis Blanchette and his Native American wife were married by Father LeDru in 1790 the same day he baptized their first grandchild.

14. 401 South Main - **FRENCH COLONIAL BRICK**

(circa 1820) The Catholic Church owned this entire block and they may have let the buildings here as rental property. #401 is a classic example of the brick version of the Colonial French style building. The original brick has two separate rooms laterally lined. It sits on an earthen cellar with stone walls. The lean-to in the back is framed and was added later. The lintels above the doors and windows are flat (flat-jack lintels) which predate the arched lintels of later buildings on Main Street. There was no commercial district in early St. Charles. Shops and offices were in private homes, often in buildings like #401 where one side could be used for a residence and the other for business.



15. 418 - 420 South Main - (circa 1845)

KREMER/KEMPER/KUHLMANN Two architectural details help date early brick buildings in St. Charles. The flat-jack lintel predates the arched lintel; dental work at the top of the wall under the gutter line is a detail and structural support found on early brick buildings. Notice the different brick on the facade of #418-420 and #422. Can you tell the old from the new? The front addition to #422 was added in the 1970s. Notice also the shutters. Which pairs actually fit the windows? Windows were not double hung, so shutter pulls were needed

only on the lower half. #418, #420 and #424 were built by Henry Kremer and Adolph Kemper about 1845. Kemper sold his blacksmith shop at #420 to Herman Kuhlmann in 1848. Kuhlmann also used the small brick building behind #422 as part of his wagon shop, which in 1917 was a sizable wagon factory.



16. Looking East down Tompkins Street - the **KATY DEPOT** (1895)

can be seen in Frontier Park. The depot was built in 1895 and served the MKT railroad until the late 1970s. In the mid-1950s, an average day at the depot would see six freight trains and two passenger trains. In 1978 local restorationists had succeeded in saving the depot from destruction. It was moved to Frontier Park and restored, with many volunteer hours, to its original design - turn of the century Victorian Gothic.



17. 500 South Main - **MOTHER-IN-LAW HOUSE**

(circa 1880) After arriving in Saint Charles in 1853, Francis X Kremer leased a large flour mill in the 400 block and purchased most of this block. On this site was a brick grain warehouse which he insured against fire loss in 1869. However, it was not fire but a tornado which destroyed the warehouse in 1876. Kremer never-the-less rebuilt. Local legend places Kremer's mother-in-law in residence here with Kremer and his family. Some say she resides there still!



SOUTH MAIN STREET WALKING TOUR



18. 515 South Main - ECKERT'S TAVERN (circa 1820s) Ownership of City Block 27 reads like an early Who's Who of St. Charles. Joseph Robidoux, the French fur-trader, sold the block to Charles Tayon on April 2, 1807 for \$500 payable in skins. Tayon lived on the property for several years in a house which probably faced Pike. When William Eckert bought the lot in 1821 for \$1500, this house and probably a large frame (log) house were included. The entire block was known as Tavern Square. It was the center of town until the 1860s. The tavern, at the time of Eckert's death, was called the St. Charles Hotel. Local legend places the drafting of the Santa Fe Trail here. Major George Sibley, the only commissioner actually to go to Santa Fe, returned to St. Charles after his trip and together with his wife, Mary Easton Sibley, founded Lindenwood College in 1828.



The building directly behind 600 South Main was Zeisler's Soda-Water Factory, est. 1860. He bottled "soda-water, sarsaparilla, ginger ale, concord grape soda, My Cola and seltzer."

20. 617 South Main - THE METHODIST CHURCH (circa 1830s) In September of 1821 Catherine Collier bought for \$50 a small lot in Tavern Square upon which "she was already building a brick house for a church." Later she built #617 and bequeathed it, in 1834, to the Methodist Episcopal Society... "to be occupied as a Church by said society, leaving a portion of said house separated off for people of color as it now is for their use." Catherine also bequeathed \$10,000 to be used by her son George to establish the St. Charles College for Men. George moved to St. Louis after the death of his mother and wife in 1834, but continued to own property in St. Charles and oversee the college. He amassed a huge fortune from his lead mine, steamboat and railroad interests. It was through George Collier that in 1840 William Clark (of Lewis and Clark) was able to borrow \$10,000 by placing in Collier's hand a Deed of Trust for Clark's home in St. Louis.



22. Looking east on Perry Street you will see the LEWIS AND CLARK MONUMENT in Frontier Park (2003) This bronze monument stands fourteen feet high and features Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, along with Seaman, which was Lewis' Newfoundland dog. The sculptor is Pat Kennedy from Colorado.



24. 701 - 703 South Main - FEDERAL STYLE HOUSE (circa 1820s) A wealthy Frenchman, Toussant Cerres, received the original Spanish land grant for this block. However, it may have been "owned claimed and settled on" by Louis Blanchette, the founder and first commandant of St. Charles. His son had to relinquish all title in 1817 before the property could be sold. This two story Federal style building with plain facade and supported chimneys was a popular style in the 1820s and 30s. Local legend contends that this was the site of the Spanish Government house. No Spanish officials resided in St. Charles - only their appointee French Canadian Louis Blanchette. If he did own this block, the old story could ring true.



26. 719 South Main - FRENCH COLONIAL STYLE (circa 1820s) All addresses on both the east and west sides of this block are original pre-1900s buildings. #719 was restored in the 1970s paying close attention to original construction materials. The post and beam walls have no nails. The attic has pit-sawn one inch flooring. The timbers are mortised, pegged and numbered. The millwork around the original doors has hand-planed beading. Part of the walnut lap siding on the exterior is original. The wainscoting on the inside of the rear gallery dates to the 1850s. The framed galleries were additions and have brick fire places. If the walls of #719 had been vertical log, this building would have been built in the 18th century and would have been the type of "frame" building seen in St. Charles in 1804 by Lewis and Clark.



25. 709 South Main. - WAGON AND BLACK-SMITH SHOP (circa 1890) Herman Schemmer bought this lot in 1884 from Adolph Kemper. Kemper had had a blacksmith shop here since 1830. Schemmer built the new shop and after his death his sons Herman Jr. and John continued the business. Notice the large front door (now window) for carriages and wagons. There is an identical doorway on the west side, so wagons could drive through. Herman Schemmer and Herman Hackman owned all of Block #25. Schemmer deeded #723 (his home) to daughter Hermine (who incidentally was married to a Herman), and #719 to daughter Laura. Herman Jr. already owned #715. Notice #715 and #723 are look alike Victorian style homes.



27. 300 Water Street - SPRING HILL BREWERY

(circa 1850) A one block walk west to the old brewery complex is well worth the effort. Early residents of St. Charles walked this way, buckets in hand, for drinking water from the springs which gush forth in this natural cove. The waters create a stream, hidden underground now, which feeds the Missouri River. Christian Heuser, a Prussian born brewer, purchased the springs in 1850 and started the operation of the Spring Hill Brewery. Heuser's son-in-law, Theodore Rung, developed the cavern storage approximately 65 feet underground for beer and ice. Rung bought the brewery in 1856 and sold it after 33 years to Jacob Moerschel. Jacob's son Otto created a first class beer called "White Pearl" with an output of 10,000 barrels annually. Moerschel Springs Brewing Co. owned several taverns including the Farmer's Home at 700 South Main in 1912. Van Dyke Brewing, the last to operate on this site, closed in 1971. Many brewery buildings still survive including the Moerschel ice house. Moerschel installed the first commercially available refrigeration after seeing an exhibit at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair. Water Street derived its name not only from the spring fed creek running adjacent to it, but by the puddles left by scores of ice wagons making deliveries. Ice was still available at the ice house 30 years ago, by the block, large or small, unwrapped.



28. 903 South Main - CHARLES TAYON HOUSE

Tayon lived on Tavern Square in 1811 and on Block #18 by the tanyard in 1808. It is possible he lived here too, but in any case the NE corner of this block was owned by Charles Tayon, second Commandant of St. Charles. His father owned the N.W corner of the block. The house actually is brick, covered with stucco to protect the soft brick made of Missouri clay. Notice the two black metal diamonds on either side of the front door. In the center of each diamond is a nut to which a metal cable is attached. The cables stretch East to West holding the walls together. This is the only building on South Main where the exposed cables can be seen under the ceiling.



29. 906 South Main - BLANCHETTE SITE (1760s)

We are uncertain as to the exact year the French Canadian hunter Louis Blanchette, his cousins Michou and Moreau, and their native American wives settled on the north bank of the Missouri River. Blanchette was probably deeded Blocks #19 and #20 (where the pink stone maker stands) along with other lands. Deeds were commonly conveyed orally and freely exchanged. We may never know the exact location of the original settlement or why they settled on the isolated north bank. The house at this site dates to the 1850s.



30. 920 South Main - THE MILL (1760-1850)

Louis Blanchette conveyed this property to John Coontz, in 1789, who built a mill and operated it until about 1811. Blanchette before him could have had a mill at this site. Water power turned the huge dressed stones which ground grain into flour and meal. The mill served a social purpose as well. It was a place to visit and share local news. Gibbs and Broadwater converted the grain mill to a steam powered woolen mill in the 1850s. At the turn of the century it was being used as the Missouri Corn Cob Pipe Factory.



31. 1000 South Main - Carter-Rice House (1850)

This 2 1/2 story Greek Revival with 2 part rear wing was probably built by two owners: Wm. Carter (1837-1851) and Dr. Caleb Rice (1859-1865). Over the years 100s of "squares of rock" raised the level of the roadway making the 1st floor noticeably below street level. Peter Hausam bought the house in 1866. In the 1850's Hausam contracted to build the St. Charles Western Plank Road along the Boonslick Trail. While the idea of a Plank Road was extremely popular for builders, the reality of a wooden road proved it impractical. Notice the suspended 8' plank on the north wall of the rear wing. A farmer "rescued" this plank from the road to use in his barn. When the barn came down in the 1980's the plank was returned.



32. 1001 - 1003 South Main - THE WESTERN HOUSE

The Western House Hotel according to a 1857 ad was managed by Mrs. Francina Eckert who continued in the hotel business after the death of her husband. The two had operated a tavern in St. Charles since 1821. Dr. Brewer, a dentist, advertised from her hotel "his ability to relieve sufferers from offending molars." F. William Meyer bought the building and lot in 1862 for \$500. Meyer leased it to August Blesse, tavern keeper, for \$250 annually.



33. Corner of Boonslick and Main - BOONSLICK TRAIL

The Boonslick Road starts here. It ends as far west as you wish to go. Quoting from the "Old Franklin Intelligencer" of April 23, 1819: "During the month of October no less than 271 wagons and four wheeled carriages and 55 two wheeled carriages and carts passed near St. Charles bound for Boone's Lick country." On April 14, 1849 the "Western Star" reported 30,000 pioneers left for California by this route over a 3-month period.



34. 1219 South Main - WEPPEMICH WINERY

(circa 1869) In the 1830s, again in the 1850s and once again in the 1880s large numbers of Germans came to Missouri - many to the Missouri River valley where they began to cultivate the wild grapes. By the 1860s, many wineries were well established. Grapes were planted here on the hillside and the wine was stored underground in the cool caves.



35. Foot of Boone's Lick Road by the Missouri River - LEWIS & CLARK BOAT HOUSE AND NATURE CENTER

(2003) Three-dimensional exhibits depict the great adventure of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Also featured are the Indians they encountered and amazing discoveries from their journals. Browse through a museum shop with a trading post atmosphere. A wide selection of gifts, books and items that reflect the early history of the west. Open 7 days a week, Monday-Saturday 10-5 pm and Sunday 12-5 pm.

