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Introduction

This story, featuring Missouri postal history, relies on letters written during the late period of the Spanish Territory, Louisiana Territory, Missouri Territory, and through the Statehood period beginning in 1821. During the early territorial time to statehood, most of the small towns grew as a result of exploration and trade on the Mississippi and Missouri rivers. The earliest post offices were established mainly along the west bank of Mississippi River before 1810. The letters often give additional insight into the lives of pioneering people and the places they called home.

Missouri is located in the geographical heartland of the United States with the Mississippi River at its eastern boundary running north and south connecting many major cities from St. Paul to New Orleans. The Missouri River, being slightly longer, begins in the Rocky Mountains of central Montana, flowing east and south, emptying into the Mississippi River north of St. Louis. River travel played an important part in development of the state at a time when land routes were almost non-existent.

Mail delivery in the early times was a slow process, as a few of the letters show, often being carried by friends from one place to another. There were only a small number of established post offices before 1810, and mostly tied to river traffic. In addition, the exact dates of establishment for some post offices is difficult to ascertain with any certainty.

During the late 1700’s, lead mining played an important part in early development in the eastern area. Then, by the late 1820’s to 1840’s, rapid migration from the East brought in settlers who took up the rich farmland in the central and eastern areas. Large crops of corn, cotton, tobacco, and wheat were raised and transported to market on the growing number of steamboats operating on the rivers.

An enjoyable sideline of collecting postal history is reading the personal details written in the letters. The early pioneers always seemed to be deeply concerned about health problems, shortage of supplies, loss of crops, family deaths, and possible Indians attacks. When one reads pioneer correspondence, it often gives pause to reflect on what a difficult time these hardy people had in developing civilization in a virgin unknown land occupied by primitive people and wild animals.
Early Exploration, French and Spanish Territory, 1762 to 1804

The earliest European exploration into the territory was led by the Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto. He had heard several stories about discoveries made by Cabeza de Vaca's exploration of Florida and the Gulf Coast areas in the New World.

Hernando de Soto

He was enticed by the chance to claim riches and fertile lands that de Vaca had encountered. The lure of exploration drove de Soto to sell all his belongings, using the money to prepare an expedition to North America. He assembled a fleet of 10 ships and selected a crew of 700 men based on their strength and fighting ability.

In April 1538, de Soto departed with his fleet from Sanlúcar, Spain for a great adventure. The first port sited after a long sea journey was Havana. Here, de Soto and his men were delayed in helping people in the city recover after the French fleet had sacked and burned most of the city. It was nearly one year later, in May of 1539, that de Soto and his fleet set out for Florida, arriving at Tampa Bay as short time later. During the next three years, de Soto and his men explored the southeastern territory, facing ambushes and conquering native tribes along the way. These travels included parts of present day Florida, Georgia and Alabama.

In Alabama, de Soto encountered his worst battle of the entire journey against Indian tribes at Tuscaloosa and, after several hard fought battles, emerged victorious. Then he and his men headed westward when, in time, they discovered the mouth of the Mississippi River. The voyage marked the first time that a European explorer had viewed the Mississippi River.
The Gulf Coast area was a breeding ground for many tropical diseases. After crossing and ascending the Mississippi River with a force of 400 soldiers, de Soto’s expedition was struck with a deadly fever. He died on May 21, 1542, near present day Ferriday, Louisiana. Members of his army sank his body in the river that he had discovered. By that time, almost half of de Soto's men had been taken ill or died by disease, with many suffering wounds in battles against the Indians. In his will, de Soto named Luis de Moscoso Alvarado the new leader of the expedition, who assumed command and continued onward. Alvarado traveled further northwest into what is now southeastern Missouri.

The Spanish government was largely a benign absentee landlord administering the territory from Havana, Cuba. The government on the mainland was made up of different nationalities, holding responsible positions as long as they swore allegiance to Spain.

It would be more than one hundred years until Father Jacques Marquette and Louis Joliet would arrive in 1673. They explored and mapped the upper Mississippi River region. In the years following, many people of French origin, including Hennepin, La Salle, and Count de Frontenac from eastern Canada, arrived in southeastern Missouri by 1700. Frontenac established a small settlement to trade with the Indian tribes. During this time, five trading posts were built from north to south along the west side of the Mississippi River. They were named St. Charles, St. Louis, Cape Girardeau, St. Genevieve and New Madrid, the most southern town reflecting the Spanish influence in the area. The Mississippi River was the main route of travel connecting these towns with the southern port of New Orleans.

The Spanish controlled the city of New Orleans for 40 years, and were largely responsible for developing the early parts of the city that today is normally associated with the French. Some of the best buildings in the "French Quarter" of New Orleans are actually of Spanish colonial era construction. Spanish control over this large region added strength to the Catholic church’s influence during these early times.

The first mineral discoveries of value were made in 1712. They were veins of lead ore found in surface deposits near the present site of Fredericktown and Renault north of Potosi, Missouri. Lead proved to be a valuable, and useful mineral. It was easy to process and refine to high purity because of its low melting point. The main use for lead was the making of rifle and pistol ammunition. The word quickly spread east about the lead discoveries, drawing other settlers into Spanish Territory seeking opportunities. Trade along the river developed rapidly as more discoveries were made. St. Louis became the most important center in the valley for
Dear Sir

Ste. Louis December 10, 1797

Urged by duty and a good opportunity I am induced to trouble you with a second letter, respecting business. I wrote you sometime since that I was disposing of my goods for lead which was destined for you; though the quantity I was unable to mention; I have now to inform you that I have nearly finished my sales, and that I have collected upwards of Thirty Thousand weight, which I was preparing two weeks ago to send to [Fort] Massach, as yet prevented from putting my intentions in executions by the ice in the Mississippi.

I fear it will be impracticable to send a boat down sooner than some time in February, however you may rest assured as soon as the navigation will admit I shall send to Massach at the least 30,000 pounds lead subject only to your order. I find I shall be obliged to go to Philadelphia by way of Orleans.

I shall write Mr. Pike accompanying the lead to forward you the receipt and account of lead received as soon as possible, and shall advise you at the same time to draw in favor of my correspondent in Philadelphia for the amount. And that I remain, Very respectfully.
Your most Obt Serv. Wm. Kenner
commercial trading. The entire population of St. Louis was 975 people according to Spanish records in 1791.

Spain divided Louisiana into Upper Louisiana and Lower Louisiana at 36° 35' North at about the latitude of New Madrid. This was a higher latitude than the French had set. They declared Lower Louisiana as the area south of 31° North (the current boundary of the State of Louisiana). This area was south of the Arkansas River, which flows into the Mississippi River.

French and Spanish Territory - 1762 to 1804

In 1673 two French explorers, Louis Joliet and Father Jacques Marquette traveled down the Mississippi River to a point near present day St. Louis. Just ten years later René-Robert Cavelier journeyed to the same area and claimed all the land naming it the Louisiana Territory in honor of King, Louis XIV. This vast area along the Missouri and Mississippi rivers were slowly settled with forts, and trading posts. In the 1760’s more lead deposits were discovered near St. Louis. Time went on and immigrants arrived traveling down the Ohio River in flatboats settling in this "Land of Opportunity". More settlers began arriving from the east over the Cumberland Gap into Kentucky and Tennessee, and later moving across the Mississippi River into Missouri.

In October of 1800 Spain turned the Louisiana Territory over to Napoleon Bonaparte. France was slow in taking control of Louisiana Territory from Spain, but in 1802 with the aid of Spanish authorities acting under French orders they revoked a United States-Spanish treaty that granted Americans the right to store goods in New Orleans. This effected American business along the central Mississippi River as far north as St. Louis.

In a short time, a great opportunity for America appeared, as Emperor Napoleon was in great need of money. President Thomas Jefferson had a great vision for the future of America, and after a short series of negotiations, an agreement was reached that ceded all the unexplored land totaling approximately for 828,000 square miles of land to the United States. The U.S. paid 50 million francs, or $11,250,000, plus cancellation of debts worth 18 million francs ($3,750,000), for a total sum of 15 million dollars. This amounted to about 4 cents per acre for the Louisiana Territory encompassing all or part of 15 present U.S. States and two Canadian Provinces.

The land purchased contained all of present-day Arkansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Iowa, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska and parts of Minnesota west of the Mississippi River, as well as most of North and South Dakota, northeastern New Mexico, northern Texas, and portions of Montana, Wyoming and Colorado east of the Continental Divide.
**Louisiana Territory, 1805 to 1812**

This important treaty with France was signed on May 2, 1803. Then during the October legislative session, the United States Senate ratified the purchase. By December 1803, France transferred authority over the entire region to the United States.

This historic event doubled the size of the United States and gained the important Gulf Coast seaport of New Orleans. The area became known as the Louisiana Purchase. Upper Louisiana, created on March 26, 1804 and later renamed by Congress as the District of Louisiana. It was known as such from October 1, 1804 to July 4, 1805. Louisiana Territory was created on July 5, 1805 and lasted until December 7, 1812 when Congress created the Missouri Territory.

The first major journey of exploration, led by Lewis and Clark, departed St. Louis on May 14, 1804. They traversed this territory and beyond, arriving on the Pacific coast at the mouth of the Columbia River in November 1805. They mapped much of the river system and mountain passes, recording much valuable information. They traveled back over roughly the same route they had taken going westward, arriving back at St. Louis on September 23, 1806.

Captain Amos Stoddard, the Commander at St. Louis, established a military government. This large unpopulated area passed through several stages of territorial government before the first capitol was established at St. Louis. In the period before 1812, the name “Louisiana” applied to all the land that would be included in the Missouri Territory. The Spanish named this area Upper Louisiana, and the region stretched from Hope Encampment opposite Chickasaw Bluffs northward to Canada and westward to the Rocky Mountains.

After the legal transfer from France to the United States, a great many pioneers began arriving in the eastern part of territory. They built homes and began clearing land for plowing that would yield large crops of corn, hemp, tobacco and wheat. This influx of settlers caused serious disturbances among the many different Indians tribes indigenous to the area. The Indians were constantly pushed west as the settlers took over the land. The area grew so rapidly that on December 7, 1812 Congress declared Missouri a Territory. This left the remainder of the large area as an Unorganized Territory, which in time was divided into new territories that later became states.

The difficulties with the local tribes often led to violent attacks on white settlers. The uprisings continued until the first of several peace treaties were negotiated and signed. In 1818, Missouri requested admittance to the Union as a slave state, however, in many of the Eastern states people were opposed to slavery. It took Congress several years to work out an agreement called the "Missouri Compromise," allowing Missouri to enter the Union as a slave state, and admitting Maine as a free state. On August 10, 1821, Missouri became the 24th State in the Union with St. Charles as its capitol. The state at that time was divided into five districts.

![Captain Amos Stoddard taking command of the Louisiana Territory at St. Louis on March 3, 1804](image)

![Missouri Territorial Districts](image)
Cape Girardeau

Cape Girardeau was one of the earliest settlements located in the Mississippi delta region. The city is named after Jean Baptiste de Girardot, who built a trading post in the area around 1733. He had served as a soldier with the French army at Kaskaskia in 1704-1720. The trading post was built on a high rock promontory above river, and by 1765 the town site was well established on the west side of the Mississippi River.

In 1808 a few of the leading citizens decided to incorporate as a town. This was thirteen years before Missouri became a state in 1821. Rapid growth of the steamboat traffic on the Mississippi River made Cape Girardeau the largest port on the Mississippi River between St. Louis and Memphis.

Dear Father

Received your letter dated 17th of November this inst and, glad to hear you are all in good health. John left this place on Wednesday last the fourteenth instant, to go by Kaskaskia and arrange his business there, which will detain him eight to ten days, we expect his return the last of February.

You may expect to receive by him about fifty dollars from me, as to the Marshalls I had last year requested to Mr. Thenard to have the money recovered from Pascal detachment, and the first intimation I had of its being paid was from Mr. Shannon on his return from Pittsburgh.

Give my love to my mother, brothers and sisters.

I am your dutiful Son.

Joseph McFerron, junr
The history of the St. Louis, Missouri area began with the settlement of Native America Mound Builder tribes, who were part of the Mississippian culture living in the area from the 800 to 1,400 A.D. They were followed by other migrating tribes from the Northeast as they were pushed westward by the advance of settlement.

In the late 1600s, French explorers traveled through the area, followed by British after their victory in the French and Indian War. A French trading company led by Pierre Laclede and Auguste Chouteau settled at St. Louis in February 1764. Many colonists settled across the river to St. Louis from French territory in Illinois. The town slowly developed as a lucrative fur trading center on the Mississippi River.

Saint Louis

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The “Mine a Burton” area was the earliest lead mining discovery in the territory found in 1760 by Francis Breton. In 1789 Moses Austin arrived from Virginia looking to develop a lead mining and smelting business. He saw much potential in the area, and obtained a land grant from the Spanish government. He set to work developing several rich surface deposits of galena known for its high lead content. A small town soon grew that was known as Austinville. Austin built two large smelter furnaces for processing ore, and in time Moses Austin came to be known as the “King of Lead.”
St. Genevieve was founded around 1735 located on the west bank of the Mississippi River 50 miles south of St. Louis. It is one of earliest settlements in Missouri, being originally included in what was known as the Illinois Country. New Orleans was the main seat of the French government for this large area. Sometime in 1805, the northern portion of the territory became known as Upper Louisiana Territory.

The early French settlers discovered rich salt deposits in the area, which were useful in curing animal hides and preserving foodstuffs. The settlers quickly exploited the rich salt springs on Saline Creek near St. Genevieve. Later discoveries of copper and lead were made in the La Motte and Renault areas.

**Figure 6.** Folded letter from Thomas Oliver, Justice of the Peace at St. Genevieve, postmarked “St. Genevieve, Up Louisiana Sept 29” (1810) with “40” rate marking to Jefferson County, Kentucky. Notation at bottom “1811 February 12th received”.

A letter to The Clerk of the District Court, Jefferson County, State of Kentucky

The enclosure contained in this letter is a long legal document about a court case concerning the sale of two horses and a wagon in the amount of $200.00. The case was to be heard during the second session in District Court of Jefferson County, Kentucky.

_Thomas Oliver, the Clerk of the Court of common pleas and quarter sessions, do hereby certify that the signature of Joseph Donohue, which appears on the document is a Justice of the Peace of the township. He holds a regular commission, and has been qualified as such for this official act._

_Signed Thomas Oliver_
_Deposition of Samuel Lewellen_
_Received Sealed, B. Helm 12th day of February 1811_
Dear Sir

Agreeable to a Regimental Order of the 20th of September 1810. I have the honor to enclose you a quarterly return of Capt. E. B. Clemson’s Company of 1st infantry, for the month of Oct, Nov, Dec. 1810. I must note that six of our Osage Indians have of late been killed by a party of Potawatomie’s.

J. Brownson
1st Regiment Infantry, Commanding Officer at Fort Osage

The letter carried down the Missouri River and posted at St. Louis for mailing to Detroit. Fort Osage was evacuated during War of 1812, with the garrison returning in 1815 to continue trading with the Osage tribe. George C. Sibley was the chief factor at Fort Osage during this time. Later the nearby town of Sibley was named in his honor.
Missouri Territory, 1812-1821

Mine a Burton

This early lead mining settlement called “Mine au Breton” or “Mine a Burton” was founded sometime around 1760 by Francis Azor who arrived from Brittany, France. The area became well known for its lead deposits, and in 1789 Moses Austin arrived from Virginia with his family, including his son Stephen F. Austin, later of Texas fame. Austin was able to obtain a land grant from the Spanish government, and began to mine lead in the area. In time, a small settlement grew which supported his mining operation. Austin changed the name of Mine a Burton to Potosi after the rich silver mining town in Bolivia. Potosi was named the county seat in 1814.

Figure 8. Manuscript postmark “Mine a Burton March 23” (1814) with “10” rate on folded cover from William Stanton to His Excellency William Clark, St. Louis. Note on verso “Rec'd 26 March 1814”. Only recorded postmark.

Town site of Mine a Burton from an old sketch
The post office at Herculaneum was established on October 1, 1811. The cover shown in Figure 9 is the earliest recorded postmark from the town, which is located south of St. Louis midway on the route to St. Genevieve. Moses Austin and his partner Samuel Hammond were very active in lead mining and smelting in the area developed the new town site, which proved an ideal point for shipping lead from their mines in Washington County.

Figure 9a. William Clark Signature on Deposition in Letter Illustrated in Figure 9.

William C. Clark was born in Caroline County, Virginia on August 1, 1770. The Clark family moved to Louisville when William was a young boy. In Kentucky, he joined the military in 1789, leaving that service in 1796. In 1803, at the time of the Louisiana Purchase, Clark became acquainted with Captain Meriwether Lewis who offered Clark a chance to share the leadership of a special exploration group known as the Corps of Discovery. This was the government’s first effort to explore the new territory known as the Louisiana Purchase.

The planning of the journey was done at Pittsburg, and begun at St. Louis, where the men obtained more supplies, and hired additional men to travel up the Missouri River. For the next three years, Lewis and Clark and twenty men explored the vast uncharted lands. They traveled all the way to the mouth of the Columbia River where it empties into the Pacific Ocean. Clark acted as mapmaker and artist, recording America’s first great historic journey of exploration into these new lands. They returned to St. Louis on September 26, 1806.

After Clark's successful return from the Pacific coast three years later, President Jefferson awarded him 1,600 acres of land, and made him brigadier general of the militia for the Louisiana Territory, as well as Superintendent of Indian Affairs. William Clark served as governor of Missouri Territory from 1813 to 1832. He died of natural causes in St. Louis on September 1, 1838 at age 68, and is buried at Bellefontaine Cemetery in St. Louis.
Rossville

An early pioneer named John Ross operated a ferry across the Mississippi River a short distance south of Cairo, Illinois. The area was first known as Ross Point with the name later being changed to Rossville. The site was first located in New Madrid County and later transferred to Mississippi County when that county was formed.

The enclosed letter is a deposition given by Stephen Norris regarding details of a sale of three Negro slaves now living in Cherokee Town, White River, Arkansas. Signed by Stephen Norris on February 22, 1817, filed February 26th by Edward Tanner, J. P.

Figure 10. Manuscript postmark and rate marking “Rossville M.T. 2d Febry 1817 Paid 37-1/2” on folded letter from Edward Tanner, Justice of the Peace, to the Circuit Court in Livingston County, Kentucky. One of two known covers from this post office.

The 15-Star American Flag in 1817
The town of Jackson, located in Cape Girardeau County, was founded in 1814. It was officially laid out in 1815 and is located between Goose and Hubble Creeks. A federal land office was opened in 1818 with the town having a population of 300 people, supporting small businesses with the population mainly involved in developing agriculture. Jackson was named the permanent site for the county seat, and a court house built in 1818.

In 1819, the town had the first newspaper called the Missouri Herald published in Jackson. The rich agricultural lands supported two flour mills, one bank, and other small business. The town was named to honor Andrew Jackson, the hero of the Battle of New Orleans, who later became the seventh president. The post office operated from 1817 to 1820.

Dear Sir

I am persuaded that Judge Spring has resigned the office of the Judge of General Court for the Illinois Territory. He has not held any court in his circuit for the last two terms, and the last I heard of him he was on the Allegheny Mountains making his way for his native state, Maryland. The judges of the General Court in our Territories have salary of $1200 per year.

I wish you would apply for and obtain this office. I practice in the counties opposite this and the other side of the Mississippi and as you would be allotted to that circuit, it would be particularly grateful to me, to have an old friend allotted to that Circuit.

Your old friend
Jason Chamberlain

Jackson

Figure 11. The earliest recorded postmark from the Jackson post office...a manuscript postmark “Jackson, April 25” (1817) with “25” cent rate marking on folded cover from Jason Chamberlain to The Hon. Royall Tyler in Brattleboro, Vermont. The folded letter is datelined April 23, Jackson, Cape Girardeau County.
The present site of the town of St. Genevieve was moved from the river bottom after the devastating floods of 1785. According to a sworn statement by one Julien Labriere, taken in October 1825, “there were about fifty or sixty cabins in the old village. The old village was flooded over so as to be on the tops of houses. The water in many places was twelve or fifteen feet deep.” The Mississippi River is well known for remaking the landscape.

Old Saint Genevieve on the Mississippi River

St. Genevieve

Although the Mississippi River was a natural barrier, travel back and forth across it was frequent. The first commercial ferry at St. Genevieve was established about 1800. When Missouri was first being settled, the native Osage tribe were the only ones between the Osage River and the Mississippi. They were of the same stock as the Sioux; therefore, hostile to the whites. Around 1787, the Spanish government, who had acquired the territory from France in 1762, brought in a band of Shawnee and Delaware Indians who had been friendly to the French, to help protect the settlers.
New Madrid

New Madrid was founded in 1776 by Spanish Governor Estaban Miro, who welcomed American settlers, but required them to become Spanish citizens and live under Spanish law. Soon after the Revolutionary War, Colonel William Morgan from New Jersey led a large group of American families to the area. The area was famous for its many earthquakes, some ranging to eight in magnitude. In 1811, the most powerful earthquake to ever occur in the United States shattered the town of New Madrid. This location is far from any major geologic plate boundaries, although it is the New Madrid Seismic Zone. The earthquake of 1811 was felt as far away as Pittsburgh and Boston.

Figure 13. Manuscript postmark “New Madrid Mo. T. / 1 Oct 1819” with “Paid 25” rate marking on folded cover from Caleb Cox to Miss Louis Heins in New Orleans.
Cape Girardeau was one of the earliest settlements located in the Mississippi delta region. The city is named after Jean Baptiste de Girardot, who built a trading post in the area around 1733. He had served as a soldier with the French army at Kaskaskia in 1704-1720. The trading post was built on a high rock promontory above river, and by 1765 the town site was well established on the west side of the Mississippi River.

In 1808 a few of the leading citizens decided to incorporate as a town. This was thirteen years before Missouri became a state in 1821. Rapid growth of the steamboat traffic on the Mississippi River made Cape Girardeau the largest port on the Mississippi River between St. Louis and Memphis.
The town of St. Charles is the third oldest city west of the Mississippi River. It lies just a short distance northwest of St. Louis on the Missouri River, therefore playing a significant role in the westward expansion.

St. Charles was the last stop for the Lewis and Clark Expedition in June of 1804 prior to their departure for the west coast. During this time, only a couple dozen buildings were located in the “town.” Leading west from St. Charles began the Boone’s Lick Trail, named for Daniel Boone, an early pioneer who explored lands west of St. Charles into central Missouri. The area became known as the “Boonslick Country.” The trail west went as far as Franklin, the home of William Becknell of Santa Fe Trail fame. In 1821, Becknell led a small group of traders on a long journey of over 600 miles through dry plains and high mountains to Santa Fe, Mexico.

Pierre Menard had many business connections in the St. Charles and St. Louis areas. He was known as a fur trader, working in partnerships with Manuel Lisa and the Chouteau brothers, operating the Missouri Fur Company. The company continued to expand, moving westward up the Missouri River where they established a trading post near present day St. Joseph.

The Portage de Sioux area, northeast of St. Charles on the Missouri River, was the location of the signing of an important Indian treaty in 1815. This settled all land claims in eastern Missouri and Arkansas, resulting in the move of the Fox, Osage, Sac, and Sioux tribes into western Missouri. The result of this treaty, which later came into question, led in time to the Black Hawk War, led by and named for Chief Black Hawk, head of the Sac tribe in the 1830’s. The tribe finally negotiated another treaty and were forced to give up their lands and relocate even further west.

Figure 15. Manuscript postmark “St. Charles November 27” (1819) with “12-1/2” rate marking on folded letter from J. Heueiex datelined at Portage de Sioux and addressed to Pierre Menard, Esq, Lieutenant Governor, Kaskaskia, Illinois.
St. Louis, The Center of Trade

Commerce after the Louisiana Purchase remained focused on the fur trade with the major operations located in St. Louis. The Chouteau family, along with Manuel Lisa and their alliance with the Osage tribe, helped develop the Missouri Fur Company, sending expeditions to the Rocky Mountains. In 1822, Jedediah Smith joined William H. Ashley’s Rocky Mountain Fur Company in St. Louis. Smith would later be known for his exploration of the West and for being the first American to travel overland to California. The fur trade continued as a major industry into the 1830s. In time, beaver fur lost its popularity in the 1840s, but St. Louis still continued as a hub of buffalo hide trade as well as other furs.

In time, St. Louis saw the opening of many new businesses that included banking and printing. Joseph Charles assisted in publishing the Missouri Gazette on July 12, 1808. This was the first newspaper west of the Mississippi. In 1816 and 1817, groups of merchants formed the first bank in the town, but mismanagement and the Panic of 1819 led to their closure. The effect of the Panic of 1819 and subsequent depression slowed business activity in St. Louis for the next few years.

The steamboat Zebulon M. Pike, traveling down the Ohio River, arrived at St. Louis on August 2, 1817. This opened a large area for trade, connecting towns both north and south. In the years ahead, larger steamboats helped to transformed St. Louis into a bustling inland port.

Missouri held its first ever state election on August 28, 1820, electing Alexander McNair governor.

The military post north of the city at Fort Bellefontaine was moved nearer to the city and was relocated at Jefferson Barracks in 1827. The St. Louis Arsenal was built in south St. Louis the same year, as was the construction of the county courthouse. The additional development of western lots to Ninth Street and a new City Hall adjacent to the river in 1833, gave a prosperous look to the city.

The 1830’s brought a dramatic population growth to St. Louis. It has increased from roughly 4,500 in 1820 to 5,832 in 1830. By 1835, it had reached 8,316, doubling to 16,439 by 1840, doubling again to 35,390 by 1845, and again to 77,860 by 1850. St. Louis became one of the most important trading cities on the Mississippi River.

Rapid growth of the population led to a cholera epidemic and further problems. In 1849, cholera killed over 4,000 people in St. Louis. This disaster led to better sanitation with the construction of a new sewer system. The two main cemeteries were moved to the outskirts of town at Bellefontaine Cemetery and Calvary Cemetery, which reduced groundwater contamination. In the same year, a large fire broke out on a steamboat at the levee, spreading to 23 other boats, and destroyed a large portion of the center city. The rebuilding of docks and the landing greatly improved business during the 1850s. Using the engineering planning of Robert E. Lee, levees were constructed on the Illinois side to direct water toward Missouri to eliminate sand bars that threatened the steamboat landings. This cleared a long standing problem with the flow of the river.
Figure 16. Type 2 italic straight line postmark in red “St. Louis Feb 1” (1819) with manuscript “25” rate marking on folded letter from Robert P. Ferris to his sister Mrs. Sarah Gay in Watertown, Massachusetts. One of three known examples of this marking, this being the earliest one known in red.

Mr. Ferris informs his sister that Mr. Silas L. Mart lately from Boston was in town yesterday. He and his brother Thomas are settled in the Illinois country about 40 miles from this place. He is highly pleased with the country and would not be indulge by any considerate to return to Massachusetts. He like many others who have tasted the “Milk and Honey” of the west, wonders at the infatuation that detains people in the country where the hardest of labors and closest economy is but little more than sufficient to procure necessaries for the intention of life.

Yours

Mr. R. F. Farris
The development of the steamboat on the three major rivers (the Mississippi, Missouri, and Ohio) began in 1817 when two small boats were put into service. In terms of numbers, only twelve boats were built by 1817, but over next two years 60 were completed and launched, helping to develop trade and river traffic on these rivers.

St. Louis was the main supply center for the soldiers stationed on the Missouri and Upper Mississippi Rivers. In May, 1819, an expedition led by Colonel Henry Atkinson was launched from St. Louis with the goal of ascending the Missouri River by steamboat. The expedition, popularly known as the “Yellowstone Expedition” or “Missouri Expedition,” also had a scientific team led by Major Long. They departed on a specially designed paddlewheel steamboat named the Western Engineer, which was designed for travel in the shallow waters of the Missouri River, measuring a scant 75 ft long, 13 ft wide with draft of 19 inches. The boat came to be known as "Long's Dragon" because of its distinctively carved bowsprit in the shape of a serpent.

Dear Brother

On Saturday last three steamboats left this place one for Orleans and one up the Missouri River with troops for the Yellowstone Expedition 1800 miles above this place. The other to ascend the Mississippi going north to Prairie Du Chien about 1,000 miles above this place. Please give my compliments to all inquiring friends,

Your friend and brother

James Watson
Their mission was to record information about the upper Missouri River. The Western Engineer traveled up the Missouri River as far as Manuel Lisa’s fur trading post at the mouth of the Platte, near present-day Omaha. There they were forced to stop, as winter had set in. Colonel Atkinson ordered the building of Cantonment Missouri which was later expanded and renamed to Fort Atkinson. One of the goals of the expedition was to establish an American presence at the mouth of the Yellowstone River to discourage British incursions on American fur trading territory. The War Department aborted the expedition in the spring, due to fever and scurvy.

Steamboat exploration of the Missouri River increased when in May 1820 when the “Independence,” a boat commissioned by Elias Rector and captained by John Nelson, ventured as far as the Boonville-Franklin area. The trip took thirteen days, leaving St. Louis on May 15 arriving at Franklin on May 28. They continued a short distance further to the town of Chariton, near present-day Glasgow, then making an eight day return journey to St. Louis, arriving on June 5th.

The other two boats also encountered difficulties, but all of them made it beyond Franklin and Chariton, passing these central Missouri River towns in mid July and early August of 1820. During the period between 1819 and 1830, there were probably fewer than 15 steamboats that operated on the Missouri River. It was shortly after 1830 when regular steamboat service began on the lower Missouri River. This covered a distance between St. Louis and Fort Leavenworth. This famous river helped open a larger territory for settlement.
Figure 18. Straight line Type 2 italic handstamp in black “St. Louis Aug 2” 1819 with manuscript “25” rate notation on folded letter from James Noble to his sister Bethesda Noble in Bethel, Vermont. Notation at lower left “Received Sept 14th”.

Figure 19. Straight line Type 4 non-italic handstamp in black “St. Louis, Aug 29” (1819) on folded letter from Beck and Crane Land Agents to William James in Albany, New York. This cover is free franked “Free N. F. Crane, PM” by postmaster Crane. This is the type listing cover for this variety of marking.
The Fur Trade Opened the West

Fort Osage, built in 1808, was the first outpost established by the United States in the Louisiana Territory. Captain William Clark selected the site high on a bluff on the south bank of the Missouri River. The 1st Regiment of the U.S. Infantry began its construction, having traveled up the Missouri River in six keelboats commanded by Captain Eli Demon. The fort became more than a military outpost, developing into a major trading center. George Sibley brought a large selection of trade goods from St. Louis attracting much interest among the Osage Indians. Trade flourished in both directions with the Missouri River as the main method of transportation.

Figure 20. Manuscript postmark in red “Ft Osage Mo– Dec 4” (1821) with “25” rate marking on folded letter from William F. Vaile, datelined at Union, Arkansas Territory on September 1, 1821, sent to Mrs. Ann Booth, Cor. Sec. of Union Mission Society, Philadelphia. Privately carried to Fort Osage. The only known letter posted at Fort Osage when operating as a Government Indian Factory.

Fort Osage, circa 1820
Steamboat *Yellow Stone* on the Missouri River
by Karl Bodmer

Prince Maximilian of Weid made an extended journey of exploration to the American west in 1833. He wished to record his findings, so commissioned Karl Bodmer, a noted artist of the day, to record the journey by painting and sketches. The journey ended a year later, after spending a very harsh winter at Fort Clark. Bodmer completed many fine landscapes and studies of native Indians. His work recorded many scenes of the early history along the Missouri River and the people who lived there. The painting above was produced in London in 1839.

Starting in 1831, the American Fur Company dispatched an annual steamboat expedition up the Missouri to Fort Union near the mouth of the Yellowstone River. The first boat bore the name *Yellow Stone* and arrived in June of 1832.

The first paragraph of an article that appeared in the St. Louis Missouri *Republican* newspaper July 10, 1832 is transcribed below, describing the return of the *Yellow Stone*:

The steamboat *Yellow Stone*, A. G. Bennett, master, arrived here Saturday last after a voyage of three months to the mouth of the river *Yellow Stone*, distant 2000 miles up the Missouri, carrying the goods to the traders employed by the American Fur Company; and bringing back a rich and full cargo of furs, pelttries, and buffalo robes.

Route of the *Steamboat Yellow Stone*, leaving St. Louis on March 26, 1832, arriving at Fort Union on June 17, 1832. The second trip in 1832, carrying the letter illustrated in Figure 21 (following page) went only as far as Bellevue, near Omaha.

The second trip of the *Yellow Stone* was mentioned briefly in an article that appeared in the September 4, 1832 issue of the *Republican*:

The broad-hulled steamboat *Yellow Stone*, was a side-wheeler measuring 130 by 19 foot, and had a capacity of 144 tons. The June rise occurred when the river water levels rose rapidly from the melting snow pack in the Rocky Mountain running into the Missouri River from multiple tributaries. Many more boats were to follow in the future as more forts were built and trade expanded.

After her time on the Missouri River, the *Yellow Stone* steamed directly into the struggle for Texas, as Santa Anna's army overwhelmed the Alamo and pushed General Sam Houston's force eastward. In April, 1836, Houston impressed the *Yellow Stone* into service to cross the flooded Brazos River. On April 21, at San Jacinto, Houston's force surprised the Mexican Army during their daily siesta. Subsequently, Houston remarked, "Had it not been for the Steam Boat *Yellow Stone*, we would have lost Texas."
Figure 21. Letter written on board the steamboat Yellow Stone by R. P. Beauchamp, a sub-agent under John Daugherty at the Upper Missouri Indian Agency at Bellevue (later Nebraska), who was on his way upriver on August 8, 1832. Carried downriver by the Yellow Stone “Care of I. V. A. Kerr” to John A Beauchamp in St. Louis. (Courtesy of Ken Stach)

Beauchamp writes (in part):

...On the evening of the 2nd inst. The boat which I am now on reached Fort Leavenworth...I went on board that same night and slept on the boat...left on the morning of the 3rd inst and this is now the 8th day...we shall get to the end of our trip in two days

Beauchamp’s destination was the Indian Agency at Bellevue, based on a letter in the Upper Missouri Agency records of the American Fur Company dated Aug 12, 1832 by Major Dougherty stating that he arrived at Bellevue with Doctors Davis and Martin to vaccinate the Indians. Donald Jackson’s book “Voyages of the Steamboat Yellow Stone” (pp. 58-66) corroborates, noting that the Yellow Stone arrived to Fort Leavenworth Aug 2, 1832 where the doctors went on board. The Yellow Stone then turned around at Cabanne’s post (near Bellevue) and returned to St. Louis with this letter per the directive (By S. Boat Yellowstone). Beauchamp reportedly died from cholera at Bellevue August 15, 1833, about a year after he wrote this letter.
This will be handed to you by Mr. Francis A. Chardon with whom you are acquainted. I have now had Mr. C with me during the space of nine years, he has always conducted himself in such a manner as to meet my highest esteem and confidence and I trust he will return to our employ in the spring. He goes down on a visit to friends in Philadelphia, and will be with you again after a few months have elapsed when I hope an engagement satisfactory to both parties will be made with him.

Most Respectfully,
Your Obedt and Hum Servant

F. A. Chardon’s role in the Upper Missouri River fur trade at Fort Clark for the American Fur Company is well documented in his 1834-1839 journal. His entries for Sept 16 and Sept 17, 1835 indicate the date when he left Fort Clark (near present day Mandan, ND) for Fort Pierre, St. Louis and ultimately Philadelphia (his destination, per Kenneth McKenzie’s letter and Chardon’s notes in his own journal). Based on the date of this letter (Sept 26), he likely arrived at Fort Pierre a day or so prior and then advanced on his way, acting as an express carrier for his company, for delivery of the letter to Saint Louis.
This will be handed you by Mr. F. Dervin who has bought out his term and leaves here tomorrow for your City...It becomes my painful duty to inform you of the unfortunate death of Mr. Wm. Aickson which took place on the Tagoyo River about a month ago...it is a matter of conjecture whether his death was caused by the accidental discharge of his pistol or was an act of suicide. I am inclined to think it was the latter...Buffalo are plenty here and were it not for competition we might expect a good trade. By the last intelligence from Fort Lucien I learn that Bent St. Vrain & Co have an establishment near that Post and also that they have sent Beckwith to the Crows with a considerable Outfit. I also hear that Mr. Brigier at the Vermillion is opposing us with goods which he obtains from A.L. Papin & Co of Bellevue in exchange for Peltries.

I hope Mr. Papin is now at Fort Lucien... for Mr. S. [Sibille] is not the man to be in charge of a large quantity of A... [alcohol] at a time when he is surrounded by white brigands of the mountains and three opponents to contend with in the way of Trade.
Figure 24. Folded letter written by Jacob Halsey Nov 14, 1835 in St. Louis and carried to Mr. William Dickson, “Near Vermillion River Upper Missouri”. Hand-carried by Pratt, Chouteau & Co’s express messenger “Mr. Billain”. (Courtesy of Ken Stach)

I shall leave here tomorrow in company with Chardon for Philadelphia. I have written you a letter and gave it to Mr. Chouteau who has promised to forward it to you per Winter express, it contains some garnishing needles and a ring for L’Englais.

The Bearer of this Mr. Billain is a nephew of Mr. Kipp, he is I believe engaged for 2 years. He will give you all the news.

You may expect to see me early in the spring. Compliments to your family and my own.

Jacob Halsey, clerk and partner in the “Upper Missouri Outfit”, served mainly at Forts Pierre and Union. He kept a journal at Fort Pierre and on one occasion varied its monotony by introducing an interesting dissertation upon the Mandan and Arikara Indians. He was a valuable man, but given to hard drink, which eventually ruined his constitution. In 1837, he had the smallpox at Fort Union. Late in the summer of 1843, while on a visit at Laidlaw’s home near Liberty, Missouri, he became intoxicated and in this condition rode on horseback at a rapid gait along a road through some woods. His head struck one of the trees and he was instantly killed.
**Fort Leavenworth, 1829 to 1850**

In 1827, the War Department assigned Colonel Henry Leavenworth the task of building a new military outpost on the Missouri river. He traveled with his officers and men of the 3rd Infantry Regiment who were stationed at Jefferson Barracks at St. Louis. Traveling up the Missouri River, and reaching the mouth of the Little Platte River, they built a “permanent” military cantonment on the east bank of the river. This location soon proved very unsatisfactory because of serious flooding in the spring.

Colonel Leavenworth surveyed areas further north, finding a new location 20 miles upstream and on the west bank more suitable. The fort was to be constructed on the bluff above the river, providing a fine location free of flooding. Cantonment Leavenworth increased in importance, becoming the western most outpost on the new frontier. The military post assumed even greater importance when, in 1831, it was renamed Fort Leavenworth in honor the founder.

Due to its strategic location on what was to become Oregon Trail in the early 1840’s, Fort Leavenworth became the most important supply station on the westbound route settlers took on their long journey west. The Mormons used it in their migration to Utah in 1846 and gold-seekers during the great Gold Rush to California in 1849.

Fort Leavenworth was one of the first of twelve national cemeteries established by President Lincoln in 1862. The remains of veterans as far back as the War of 1812 are buried there. One of the cemetery’s most famous occupants is Colonel Leavenworth himself. His monument is shown at the bottom of the prior column. The fort, city and county all bear his name.

In 1834, cavalry regiments stationed at Fort Leavenworth were ordered to help quell the Indian uprising on the Plains. When the Mexican War broke out in June of 1846, the post became the starting point for the army headed to New Mexico under the command of Colonel Stephen F. Kearney. The fort also served as the rallying point for the Regiment of 1st Missouri Volunteers called the “Army of the West,” led by Col. Alexander W. Doniphan of Liberty, Missouri, aiding in the conquest of New Mexico.
Figure 25. Folded letter manuscript postmarked “Cant Leavenworth Mo June 16th” (1829) with “25” rate marking to Major S. Taliafero, United States Indian Agent, St. Peters, Upper Mississippi. Notation on reverse: “If major Taliafero is absent from home Mr. Elias T. Langham will open this letter and oblige.” This is the earliest recorded postmark from what became Fort Leavenworth.

Figure 26. Folded letter manuscript postmarked “Fort Leavenworth 27 Nov” (1835) with “free” notation from Lt. James W. Hamilton to Col. Geo. W. Jones in Washington, D.C. In his letter, Lt. Jones is seeking urgent assistance regarding charges brought against him, which led to his being cashiered from the army. Lt. Jones died two years later on Nov. 26, 1837.
Figure 27. Folded letter datelined Fort Des Moines, Iowa Territory postmarked “Fort Leavenworth Mo. Feby 5” (1846) with manuscript “10” rate marking from 1st Lieutenant J. McElvain to Genl. N. Towson, Paymaster Genl, Washington, D.C.

Sir, I have the honor to inform you, that I have transferred my pay accounts, for the months of November and December 1846 to H. Rich. Sutler at Fort Leavenworth.

Yours respectfully J. Mc Elvain
2nd Battalion, 1st Lt. Dragoons.

Lt. Mc Elvain graduated from The Military Academy July 1840 and was accidently killed on July 12, 1847.

Figure 28. Folded letter postmarked “Fort Leavenworth Mo. Feb 26” (1850) in red, with matching “10” handstamp rate marking from William Dix to George Turner in St. Louis, Mo. Manuscript notation “From Fort Leavenworth Feb. 25th 1850.” St. Louis straight line handstamps from Mar 15 and Mar 30, as letter seemed to have been uncalled for.
Missouri Statehood, the 1820’s

Franklin

The town of Franklin, founded in 1816 and named for Benjamin Franklin, is also known as the home of William Becknell, known as the "Father of the Santa Fe Trail". He lived on a farm a few miles northwest of Franklin. In 1821, William Becknell put a notice in the Missouri Intelligencer newspaper in St. Louis stating he was creating a party to go "westward, for the purpose of trading for horses and mules and catching wild animals of every description." He had good response from adventurous young men and on September 1, 1821, he and his small party crossed the Missouri River at Arrow Rock and set out along what would become in a few years known as the Santa Fe Trail.

In the spring of 1827, extreme weather conditions brought a devastating flood that destroyed much of the town, prompting residents to move to higher ground, rebuilding the community as “New Franklin.”

Figure 29. Folded letter manuscript postmarked “Franklin Mo. March 1” (1822) with “18/0” rate marking from Dabney Carr to Messrs. Smith & Ferguson, Merchants, St. Louis. Earliest known statehood postmark.

Pioneer Log Cabin
Figure 30. Folded letter with manuscript postmark “Potosi April 16” (1823) with “18-1/2” cent rate notation from James Evans (datelined at Botetourt County, Virginia) to his cousin Augustus Evans in Franklin. Evans was not in Franklin and the letter was forwarded on with the “Franklin Mo. Aug 14” straight line marking to St. Louis, with an additional “18-1/2” rate, for a total of 37 cents due the recipient. This letter was delayed 198 days in delivery.

Dear Cousin  
By writing sooner to you it has been for the want of an opportunity to send them by someone person of whom I could depend as there is very little dependence in the mails. I have now an opportunity to send by H. Wheat who lives about 70 miles from Saint Louis who says he can send it direct to you.

I have good news and expect to make my last payment for my land next springs and if I have luck shall soon clear myself of all demands against me.
Your friend and cousin
James Evans

Map Showing the Trading Towns of Arrow Rock, Boonville and Franklin
I conceive myself somewhat fortunate in this affair: as I have made what appears to be a large mineral discovery on public land. A considerable vein of lead ore should prove most profitable to me in the future. The other land speculation I have bought is 174 acres for only $700 dollars including a two story brick house.

I must inform you I have only recently received a letter from an old acquaintance on the Yellowstone River, 46 Degrees, 30’ North Latitude. The pleasure it gave me induced me to think you might receive some pleasure from a letter from me even though hastily and legible forms. You shall all soon hear from me again. James Noble.
Figure 33. Folded letter postmarked “St. Genevieve Missouri September 17” (1823) with “18-1/2” manuscript rate notation from John Scott to Col. W. McBee, Armory Commissioner, Louisville, Kentucky. Forwarded with “Louise Ky. Oct 2” (Louisville, Kentucky) postmark with additional “25” cent forwarding (for a total of 43-1/2 cents due) to Pittsburg, Pa. The oval St. Genevieve postmark, with pen date, is unlisted in the statehood period. Docketing on reverse notes that the letter was received Oct. 16, 1823.

Sir, Your letter of the 14th of July was delivered to St. Louis and perhaps remained there some time before it was forwarded to St. Genevieve, my place of residence. I am glad to tell you about our area and prices of the following goods. Bar Iron 10 to 12-1/2 cents per 100, Bricks $7.00 per thousand. Lumber so far has never been priced, that I know of as it is so plentiful. Beef 3 to 4 cents, Pork about the same. Flour $2.00 to $2.50 country made, better grade Kentucky flour at $6.00 a barrel. Labor $12.00 to $15.00 month and men ready to work.

This is about what I can say on the subject. I wish you could have visited us for I am no judge any matter of things of this kind.

Your Obt. Sevt.
John Scott

John Scott was the third territorial delegate for Missouri to Congress from 1821 to 1827. He replies in great detail to Col Mc Bee’s request for local information about costs of living in the St. Charles and St. Louis area.
Thomas Hart Benton

Thomas Hart Benton was born at Harts Mill, North Carolina, March 4, 1782. His father was a wealthy lawyer and land owner, who moved the family to Missouri when still a territory. In 1820, the Missouri Compromise brought Missouri into the Union as state. Benton was one of the first Senators elected from Missouri. He served in the Senate from 1821 to 1851, becoming the first member to serve five terms. He was a staunch advocate of westward expansion of the United States and an architect and champion of the idea of Manifest Destiny.

Senator Benton was also an strong advocate for "hard money", that is gold coin or bullion as money as opposed to paper money backed by gold as in a gold standard. Soft paper or credit currency, in his opinion, favored rich urban Easterners at the expense of the small farmers and trades people of the West. His position on currency issue earned him the nickname “Old Bullion” and he fought for this idea all his life.

One of his major concerns was the territorial expansion of the United States to meet its "Manifest Destiny" as a great power. This was a great theme in the nation leading up to the Mexican War, that the nation’s natural border should reach the Pacific coast. He considered unsettled land to be insecure, and tirelessly worked for settlement introducing the Homestead Act offering land grants to pioneers who would settle remote areas and develop the land. One of his other efforts in the Senate was against soft money to discourage land speculation.

He offered support to his son-in-law, Captain John C. Fremont, to make journeys of exploration in the west. In 1842, Fremont made a most important trip, opening the way to the Pacific Northwest. Senator Benton had great vision of a transcontinental railway and telegraph line reaching from coast to coast.

His ideas on westward expansion did not bode well for the Native Americans. He was a strong advocate of the removal of any Indian tribes that were in the way of future growth. The central part of the country was growing rapidly in the 1840’s with thousands of European settlers arriving.

Thomas Hart Benton, “The Great Missourian,” died April 10, 1858. He is buried in Bellefontaine Cemetery in St. Louis.

The First State Legislature Meeting House in June, 1821
Fort Osage

Fort Osage was built in 1808 on a strategic bluff overlooking the Missouri River. The height and location provided a clear view of the river for defense. In 1822, the Army closed the fort. However, George Sibley continued operating there as a private trader from 1822 to 1825. Pioneers going west stopped at Fort Osage, as it was the last provisioning point before starting down the Santa Fe Trail. A supply station was much needed, as the trade between Missouri and Santa Fe was growing, which led to the towns of Independence and Westport being established further west, near the Missouri River.

Figure 34. Folded letter manuscript postmarked “Ft. Osage Mo. July 18” (1825) with “18-3/4” manuscript rate marking from B. H. Reeves, Lt. Governor to His Excellency Frank Bates, St. Louis, Missouri. Forwarded from St. Louis with an additional 6 cents forwarding fee, for a total of 24-3/4 cents due.

Dear Sir

I write to inform you that I am resigning from the present office to take up a position as Commissioner of the Mexican Road [Santa Fe Trail]. I wish to put this matter at rest, and believe it my duty to resign. I have done so by coming to the conclusion I was not influenced by an unwillingness to serve my country in any capacity. The generous support received would preclude the idea would to heaven that I had it in my power to render service equal to my zeal. I do hope heaven may spare us both a little longer.

My coming trip is arduous if not hazardous traveling such a great distance, however if I return may it yet be in my power in the character of a private citizen to spend some evenings of enjoyment with you. Please sir pardon me if my brain is confused my soul is sincere.

Accept the best wishes of My Heart for your Personal and political welfare.

B. H. Reeves
Lt. Governor
St. Charles

The town of St. Charles is located in St. Charles County, north and west of the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers. The town was selected as temporary capitol for the state in 1821 and remained the seat of government till 1826. During this period, the legislature voted to build a new capitol to better serve the entire state, selecting Jefferson City. This was in honor of former President Thomas Jefferson.

Figure 35. Folded letter manuscript postmarked “St. Charles Mo. Sept 14” (1826) with “Paid 25” in manuscript from Spencer Pettis to J. D. Bainard, Esq, Secy of Comth (Commonwealth) of Pennsylvania, Harrisburg.

A modern picture showing the first state capitol of Missouri, which was in St. Charles from 1821 to 1826.
Missouri State Capitol - Jefferson City, or “City of Jefferson”

The region along the Missouri River that was to develop into the state capitol at Jefferson City was formerly the home of ancient people known as Mound Builders. This area is one of the largest prehistoric sites in the state, established centuries before white settlers arrived. In 1673, the French explorers Joliet and Marquette arrived and just a little later, in 1682, the explorer LaSalle sailed down the Mississippi River and claimed a large area of land for France.

When more Europeans began arriving in the area in the mid 1700’s they found the Osage Indians controlled much of region along the Missouri River. While under Spanish control, settlements were developed along the west shore of the Mississippi River at Cape Girardeau, St. Genevieve and St. Louis. In 1780, the Spanish government started a road building project northward from New Madrid to St. Louis.

The route was later continued north to St. Charles on the Missouri River. On September 18, 1820, Missouri’s first state General Assembly met at the Missouri Hotel in St. Louis. Future meetings were later held at St. Charles, which was chosen as the capitol. St. Charles was subject to frequent flooding, so after a few years at this location Governor McNair suggested the legislature appoint a special commission to find a new location for a capitol. The committee concluded that Jefferson City also known as “City of Jefferson,” being more centrally located, was better situated to serve the needs of the entire population.

The town site of the “City of Jefferson” was laid out by Daniel Morgan Boone, the son of the great frontiersman Daniel Boone. It was named to honor U.S. President Thomas Jefferson who played an important role in the acquisition of the Louisiana Territory from France. The town was incorporated in 1825, and the General Assembly held its first meeting there in 1826.

At that time, the town was very small, with only thirty to forty families, a general store, hotel, and few other log buildings. For several years, other towns attempted to have the capitol city location changed, and in 1836 Governor John Miller suggested that a state penitentiary be built in Jefferson City to strengthen the town's position as capitol.

In 1837, the Capitol burned and all the state records were destroyed. A new larger new Capitol building was completed in 1842 at a better location in the city. In time, more businesses were attracted and good streets were developed. Steamboat traffic increased, with regular schedules to and from St. Louis. These facilities encouraged the growth of local industries, including a bank, flour mills, general store, lumber, tanneries, and distilleries.
Figure 36. Folded letter with manuscript “City of Jefferson 15th May 1827” and “6” rate marking from R. A. Ewing to J. O. Hockaday, Esq., Fulton, Mo.

Figure 37. Handstamp postmark “Jefn. Cit. Mo. Dec 10” (1829) on folded letter with manuscript “25” rate marking from Gen. Ramsay to Mr. Joab Hardin, Nashville, Ten.
Figure 38. Handstamp “Jefferson City Mo. Jan 21” (1835) on folded letter with “Paid 12-1/2” rate marking from Thomas Reynolds to Register & Receiver of State Land Office, Chillicothe, Mo.

Figure 39. Mailed from Joseph T. Coffee to Dr. Snyder, Jefferson City, Mo in a first issue three cent Nesbitt government stamped envelope; forwarded with “Jefferson City Mo. Jan 17” (late 1850’s) red postmark with three cent 1857 issue adhesive added to pay forwarding fee to Bolivar, Polk County, Mo.
Missouri Statehood, the 1830’s

Lexington

The town of Lexington, located on the bluffs above the Missouri River, was platted in 1822. Gilead Rupe built the first ferry located on the south side of the river in 1819 and is credited as being the founder of Lexington. He named the town in honor of the Revolutionary War battle fought at Lexington, Massachusetts in 1776. The area developed rapidly, with the town being named the county seat of Lafayette County.

The rapid growth as a trading center attracted John Aull, who opened a mercantile store there in 1822. He was joined by his brothers, James and Robert Aull, building a series of mercantile stores in Independence, Liberty and Westport. The rich agricultural land around Lexington produced abundant crops of cotton, hemp, and tobacco, as well as providing feed for raising cattle and horses. Lexington was one of largest cities west of St. Louis in the 1830s and 40's. During that period, it was the center for merchants and outfitters supplying emigrants traveling westward on the Santa Fe Trail. In 1843, it was recorded that total amount of goods sent west from Lexington were valued at $450,000.

In the 1840s, Russell, Majors and Waddell were the largest trading firm in the West. They established their headquarters on Main Street of Lexington. These three men were dominate in the freighting business throughout the 1850s. The company owned 3,500 wagons, and large numbers of live stock used in carrying goods from Missouri to California via Salt Lake City and other routes to points in the west.

Figure 40. Postmarked “Lexington Mo Feb 22nd” (1830) with “Paid 12-1/2” rate notation on folded letter from A. J. McGirk to Irvine O. Hockaday Esq., Callway County, Fulton, Mo.

Lexington September 21, 1830

Dear Sir, I will be on my way to St. Louis some time the latter part of March. On my return I expect to see you. I have received by the last mail information of the death of my Brother Isaac which to me is devastating beyond description.

I feel but little like doing business, however duty requires that all men at all time have this business in the best possible way so that in the event of death the last will would result to those who we are under obligation to. My wife desires that here love be sent to your wife, and Little Lou is in good health together with the rest of us. I am with respect your friend

Andrew J. McGirk.
Dear Payne
Old Franklin March 19, 1830

I arrived safe at home the day after I left you Able as I expected and times are partly brisk, better then when I left. The river is sufficiently high for any kind of Boats and rising very fast. Their are a good many going to Santa Fe from here and I think goods will command high price.

We have seven barrels of Bees Wax, say about 1200 lbs – If you want it you can have it at the St. Louis price. You will please write me by return of mail and give me as many drums of Peach Brandy as you can.

I remain your obt. Servant. Edward Simpson

Figure 42. Manuscript postmark “Boonville Mo. 2nd June 1830” with “25” rate notation on folded letter from Robert Morse to his father Dr. Alpheus Morse, Dorset, Vermont.
Figure 43. Rimless handstamp postmark “Jefferson Barracks Mo. Jul 23” (1831) with “Paid 25” in manuscript on folded letter from Henry Atkinson to F. P. Blair in Washington City. Francis Preston Blair, father of Montgomery Blair, who was a member of President Lincoln’s cabinet and served as Postmaster General during the Civil War.

Figure 44. Manuscript postmark “Fulton Mo Nov 28” (1832) with “25” rate on folded letter from M. V. Harrison to H. H. Blair, Editor Globe, City of Washington in which Harrison sends $2.50 for a subscription to *The Globe* newspaper.

Mr. Harrison Laments about the sorry state of the election in his district where a Mr. Daniel won a position in spite of all the votes against him. He states:

...Money is all power, give me money – Money and give Daniel, money and he is anyone’s man.
Your friend
M. V. Harrison
In 1833, the Shawnee town site was purchased by the Baptist missionaries, John C. McCoy and his son Isaac. The new owners filed a town plat in April 1834 changing the name from “Shawanoe” or “Shawnee” to Westport. During the next ten years, the mission established a large school system for Indians in the area. Many small tribes, including Delaware, Kansas, Osage, Potawatomi, Shawnee and Wyandotte Indians, were taught farming and other useful skills to improve their life.

Four miles north of Westport, on the Missouri River, was the site originally known as Westport Landing. Steamboats docked there to unload cargo taken by settlers traveling over the plains to the far distant settlements in Oregon and California. The location of Westport Landing in time became known as Kansas, later evolving into Kansas City. The small area of Westport, still known by that name, was absorbed by Kansas City. The Westport post office opened on May 27, 1834 with John C. McCoy appointed postmaster.

Isaac McCoy was the chief surveyor and in the letter shown in Figure 45 requests payment of five hundred dollars for work done on Indian lands. This letter is directed to the attention of Genl. William Clark, serving as Superintendent of Indian Affairs at St. Louis.
Figure 46. Fancy handstamp oval postmark “Liberty Mo. May 9” (1834) in magenta (or red?) ink with manuscript “25” rate notation on folded letter from Jonathan Reed to Mary Ann Reed, Urbana, Ohio, Champaign County. This is the earliest reported example of this type postmark with this ink and one of only two known.

Clay County   May 4, 1834

Dear Mother, sister and brother and all my relations and friends through the blessings of Divine Providence. I am permitted to inform you that myself and family are well at present. I am almost at a loss how to introduce myself to you as excusable for my negligence in writing I have received Sister’s letter the eighth of March and have not answered it until now. But I can hardly say it was not a want of respect or love for my friends though it might appear from my long absence my friends were forgotten.

I have appointed two definite times and each time I have lost a horse that I designed particularly for the journey, and I have been discouraged as it respects by business of farming on the account of my loss of stock. I would endeavor to change my situation by quitting the farm and working at my trade as my family was small and the prospect for business was tolerably good and to execute my design. I purchased a couple of lots in town and had been improving them and have got myself tolerably comfortable situation.

Sayeth no more.

I remain yours until death          Jonathan Reed
Joseph Bissonette (1818-1894) was born at the port of St. Louis. At age 18, in 1836, he moved west to take a job with the American Fur Company at a small trading post at the town of Kansas (Kansas City).

John B. Sarpy (1798-1857) was also born in St. Louis, part of an important fur trading family. He is best known for the building of Fort John as a trading post for the America Fur Company. It was later renamed Fort Laramie, located near the confluence of the Laramie and the North Platte Rivers. This well known location was a convenient stopover and re-supply point for immigrants on the road to Oregon, California and on the Mormon Trail.

**Kansas**

John B. Sarpy (1798-1857) was also born in St. Louis, part of an important fur trading family. He is best known for the building of Fort John as a trading post for the America Fur Company. It was later renamed Fort Laramie, located near the confluence of the Laramie and the North Platte Rivers. This well known location was a convenient stopover and re-supply point for immigrants on the road to Oregon, California and on the Mormon Trail.

**Figures 47. Manuscript postmark “Kansas Mo 20 May” (1836) with “10” rate marking on folded letter from Joseph Bissonette to John B. Sarpy, Esq., St. Louis, Mo. Notation at lower right “Care of Mr. Geroux.”**
Harmony Mission

Harmony Mission was the first Missouri Indian Mission School in Missouri, located at Rich Hill on the north bank of the Osage River. This had been a centuries old camping site of the Great and Little Osage tribes. The United Foreign Missionary Society was founded in New York in 1821. The missionary group consisted of 41 members, including teachers, mechanics, and farmers, headed by minister Nathaniel B. Dodge. Their first white settlement was located in Bates County, named for Missouri Governor Frederick Bates.

In earlier times, a small French trading center known as Papinsville was located on the Osage River. The Osage tribe gave land to the United States, who agreed to provide a building fund. And, with much effort, the missionaries soon built homes and a school. One of the major accomplishments was the Osage-English Dictionary of some 2000 words. This was made with the help of "Bill" Williams, later famed as the "Mountain Man," who was serving as interpreter at a nearby U.S. trading post. The school was only a moderate success, largely because the Osage ceded the last of their Missouri land to the United States in 1825. Then, the tribe began slowly moving away, and the mission ceased operation in 1836.
Platte Purchase - 1836

In 1837, the United States government made a large land acquisition from the Fox and Sac Indian tribes. The purchase was composed all lands on the east bank of the Missouri River south of the 36° 30' parallel, and added 3,149 square miles to the northwest corner of the state of Missouri. This expansion of the slave state lands of Missouri was in violation of the Missouri Compromise Law enacted in 1820. The law prohibited the extension of slavery in any part of the former Louisiana Territory.
The town of Far West became an area with many problems as the Mormon migration of 1838 grew larger in 1839. This area was first chosen by the Mormons, as it had been a little-inhabited region. The Mormon leaders soon established their own county, naming it Caldwell, with Far West as the county seat. The population grew rapidly with increasing numbers of Mormons spilling over into adjacent counties, resulting in many incidents, which led to a small civil war between the “Saints” and the “Gentiles,” known as the Mormon War.

Dear Brother

All kinds of produce is very high here at this time and hard to be had without the cash. The inhabitants are coming in here from all quarters of the world. I have not one relative to come to my humble dwelling to sooth my sorrows [Her husband and daughter had passed away.]

I am here perhaps two thousand miles from you, and I am led sometimes to say I cannot stay in this country alone as others do. I give it up and if my heart is with these people I must stay with them for I think them to be the people of God. My home is comfortable for warm weather but not cold. This city is on the open prairie and the winds are very high and cold dreary in the winter season.

Brother John wished me to write to him which I shall direct to Indianapolis as soon as he returns there. Myself and children send love to you all making your peace and prosperity in this life, and that which is to come.

Your Affectionate Sister Clarissa Fosdick

Far West

The town of Far West became an area with many problems as the Mormon migration of 1838 grew larger in 1839. This area was first chosen by the Mormons, as it had been a little-inhabited region. The Mormon leaders soon established their own county, naming it Caldwell, with Far West as the county seat. The population grew rapidly with increasing numbers of Mormons spilling over into adjacent counties, resulting in many incidents, which led to a small civil war between the “Saints” and the “Gentiles,” known as the Mormon War.
The Governor of Missouri called out the state Militia threatening to expel or exterminate the Mormons. However, in the meantime, General Lucas of the militia arrested Joseph Smith and other leaders of the church. They were tried by a court-martial and ordered to be shot for treason in the public square of Far West.

Alexander W. Doniphan, who was to win fame as Colonel of the 1st Regiment of Missouri Volunteers in the Mexican War in 1846, was called upon to execute the condemned, but refused the order. He wrote General Lucas:

> It is cold-blooded murder. I will not obey your order. My brigade shall march for Liberty tomorrow morning at 8 o’clock, and if you execute these men I will hold you responsible before an earthly tribunal, so help me God.

The Governor’s order was never implemented, with the prisoners being released and returning to Illinois. The last of the “Mormon Saints” departed Far West on April 20, 1839. This was only ten days after the postmark on the letter shown in Figure 51.

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**Dear Sir**

You will have the goodness to forward to this place any letters which may now be lying in your office addressed to me. I can get no decent paper to write on here. I am in good health and hope you are so.

_Sincerely yours,_

J Metcalf.

Figure 51. Rimless semi-circle handstamp in red “Far West Mo Apl 10” (1839) with “FREE” handstamp on folded letter from J. Metcalf to Amos Williams, Postmaster, Danville, Vermillion Co., Illinois. One of only five known examples of this marking.
The folded letter of Figure 52 contains a deposition regarding a court case concerning a debt of $35 dollars against Thomas Rowling, defendant. The deposition was taken on the 26th of June, 1839 between the hours of 12 and 5 o’clock in the afternoon at the house of Daniel J. Yoacham in the town of Westport, County of Jackson, in the State of Missouri.

Daniel J. Yoacham was one of the early pioneers in the Westport area and was elected Justice of the Peace in 1834. He built a house and hotel in the town where many important travelers, such as Jim Bridger, Kit Carson, and John C. Fremont, spent time when traveling to the western regions.

Westport

The folded letter of Figure 52 contains a deposition regarding a court case concerning a debt of $35 dollars against Thomas Rowling, defendant. The deposition was taken on the 26th of June, 1839 between the hours of 12 and 5 o’clock in the afternoon at the house of Daniel J. Yoacham in the town of Westport, County of Jackson, in the State of Missouri.
Missouri Statehood, the 1840’s

Weston

Weston was the oldest settlement in the 1836 Platte Purchase area and was, at the time, the farthest western settlement in Missouri. The Lewis and Clark Expedition traveled through the area, camping a few days near where the town was later established.

Weston seems to have acquired its name when a discharged Army Dragoon named Joseph Moore bought some land in the area. He hired First Sergeant Tom Weston of D Company, stationed at Fort Leavenworth, to lay out a town plan. Many important frontier personalities including William “Buffalo Bill” Cody were at one time residents of Weston. The town played an important part in supplying soldiers at Fort Leavenworth, as well as travelers headed west on the Oregon Trail. It was the second largest river port, surpassing Kansas City and St. Joseph in trade. In 1850, more then 265 steamboats docked at the port of Weston with supplies bound for the western settlements.

The town experienced some hard times after 1881, when the Missouri River flooded and shifted to an old river channel some two miles away, leaving Weston isolated.
Friend Hall

I think I promised to write to you last summer if I did, I comply if did not I take the responsibility. I am on the Missouri River 300 miles from its mouth. I am teaching the young military drill and how to fire. I have been here three months and my business has been teaching military arts. I have two classes over in Arrow Rock and one in Boonville.

I look off to the south of me and as far as the eye can reach is one extended Prairie. The state is rapidly settling up and there is an abundance of government land yet for a dollar and a quarter per acre. Yes as good a land as you can wish. I cannot tell yet, but my next move I will make I shall go to Texas.

Respectfully to all inquiring friends

A. C. Marvin
The Westport post office was located at W. M. Chick’s general store, which provided mail service to St. Louis by stage coach.

During May of 1843, Dr. Marcus Whitman led the first large party of one thousand people driving wagons, herding cattle, and horses from Westport to Oregon. The trail had been mapped by Capt. Fremont a year earlier. This great journey helped to established a viable route for thousands of immigrants making the long trek to settle in the Pacific Northwest in the years ahead.

Figure 58. Manuscript postmark “Parkville Mo April 2d” (1846) with “10” manuscript rate marking on folded letter from Asa Wood to Mr. D. G. Wood, Rock Island P.O., Vanburen County, Tennessee.

Dear Father and Mother

You wrote to me to come to Tennessee to get my leg well. If coming would cure it I would come. I spent about four dollars for medicine and it ain’t well yet. Now I am going to try your whetstone as it was marked 80 cent postage and in respects of Bachelors. I think it better to be an old Bachelor that to do what some three or four has done this winter. Expressly the widows. I will say for instance that widow Thomas was married in September to Mr. Forbien and he was a widower and they parted in December.

So no more at present, but I remain yours until death.

Asa Wood
Platte County is one of six counties added to the State of Missouri in the Platte Purchase of 1837. A treaty entered into with the Fox, Iowa, and Sac Indians tribes allowed the state to acquire the land for $7,500. This secured a major advantage with the Missouri River becoming the western border of the state. It is the only case where land was added to a state after it entered the union.

Among the original settlers to the area were Zadock Martin and his sons, who operated ferries across the Platte and Missouri Rivers. Martin built his home on the East Side of the Platte River, naming it Martinsville.

On November 16, 1839, the board of commissioners decided that the Falls of the Platte (later Platte City) would be designated the county seat. The Platte County Court approved the county seat designation on December 4, 1839, officially naming it Platte City. The county courthouse was rebuilt after the original courthouse was destroyed on December 16, 1861, by Colonel James Morgan’s Union soldiers during their razing of the town in the Civil War.
The first announcement of a special new Postmaster Provisional stamp was made on November 5, 1845 in the weekly edition of the Missouri Republican: under the heading of “LETTER STAMPS”: “Mr. Wimer, the postmaster, has prepared a set of special stamps to be applied upon letters, indicating that the postage has been paid.” He copied the idea from the New York City postmaster.

The design for the stamps featured the Missouri Coat of Arms and were issued in five, ten and twenty cent denominations. The stamps were prepared with gum so they could be stuck upon a letter easily. They were a great convenience to merchants, who had many letters to send, saving them the time from having to pay at the post office. They were printed on three different plates with combinations of the five, ten and twenty cent values making up $1.80 total...then sold for $2.00 per sheet to allow 20 cents for printing.

Figure 60. Postmarked “St. Louis Mo. Jan 3” (1846) in red with matching “PAID” on folded letter from A. H. Hackney to Charnley & Whelen, Philadelphia, Penna. The 10 cent “St. Louis Bear” provisional adhesive is on greenish paper, position 4 of the sheet.

St. Louis River Scene in the 1840’s
The town site of Hannibal, in Marion County, was previously occupied by native Indian tribes. It was laid out as a town in 1819 by Moses Bates, and named from Hannibal Creek (now known as Bear Creek). The name is derived from the hero of ancient Carthage. The city initially grew slowly, with a population of only 30 settlers in 1830. But, with good access to the Mississippi River and development of railroad transportation, the town grew to over 2,000 citizens by 1850.

Hannibal had gained "City" status by 1845, and was best known as the boyhood home of author Mark Twain (Samuel L. Clemens). He used the area as the setting for two of his most famous books: *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.
The first pioneers were Stephen and Hannah Cole, who settled in the area in 1810. During skirmishes with local tribes in the War of 1812 they moved to a fort on the north side of the Missouri River known as “Hannah Cole Fort.” The fort subsequently became the first county seat of Howard County. A town was formally laid out in 1817 by Asa Morgan and Charles Lucas. Boonville was named the county seat in 1818.

The town of Boonville derives its name from Nathan and Daniel Morgan Boone, sons of the famed frontiersman Daniel Boone. Boone had established a salt business in the area, delivering the salt to St. Louis. The came to be called "Boone's Lick" and became the favored route (the Boone’s Lick Trail) to St. Charles and St. Louis. The eastern terminus, near Boonville and Franklin, is generally considered the original starting point of the Santa Fe Trail.
Stephen Watts Kearny was born in Newark, New Jersey in 1794. He attended public school, going on to study at Columbia University. Shortly after leaving school, the War of 1812 broke out and he joined the New York Militia as Lieutenant in the infantry. He distinguished himself at the battle of Queenstown Heights and in 1813 was promoted to the rank of Captain.

Soon after the war was over, while serving under General Atkinson, Kearny was sent on an expedition to the western frontier area of the Missouri Territory. His mission was to establish Cantonment Missouri. The post was later renamed Fort Atkinson. He traveled widely in this area with one journey in 1825 up the Missouri River to the mouth of the Yellowstone River in present day Montana. He kept extensive journal about the country and his dealing with the various Indian tribes.

At Jefferson Barracks in the early 1830s, Kearny organized a regiment of dragoons on the lines of a cavalry unit. This was a major advance for the army, as the U.S. Cavalry eventually grew out of this regiment. He received much recognition, and earned the nickname “Father of the United States Cavalry”.

It was only a decade later that Colonel Kearny, at age 52, began his greatest opportunity for service to his country. The general news of the time pointed toward a war with Mexico. When war broke out in the Spring of 1846, President Polk appointed Kearny commander of the “Army of the West” in May of that same year. His command consisted of 300 regular troops of the 1st U.S. Dragoons stationed at Fort Leavenworth, plus an additional group of 1,358 volunteers from state of Missouri.

The volunteer force gathered at Fort Leavenworth where an election was held to select leaders of each unit. The men selected Alexander W. Doniphan as their Colonel of the 1st Regiment of Missouri Volunteers. Also attached to this army were two companies of light artillery from St. Louis, led by Captain Angney and Captain Weightman. There was no direct road from Fort Leavenworth south to the Santa Fe Trail. The main body of the army began marching on June 26th with a projected distance to travel of over 1,000 miles.

The long march to Sante Fe, shown on this Colton map (courtesy of Richard Frajola)
Orders No. 17
Head Quarters 1st Regt. Dragoons
Fort Leavenworth, Mo. June 16th, 46

“Extract”

III. Sergeant John Haley of Company “I”, is hereby appointed Sergeant Major of the Regiment, in the place of John Walker, who has this day tendered his resignation, in consequence of the period of his service being about to expire. - Private Circumstances not admitting of his re-enlisting and the necessity of there being a Sergeant Major on the expedition to Santa Fe now before us.- Sergeant Major Walker is entitled to great credit for the manner in which he has discharged his duties, during the time he has held that office. He will be reported in Company “F".

S. W. Kearny
Col. 1st Drgs
After a long tiring march more then 600 miles, Kearny and his troops arrived at Bents Fort on the Arkansas River on July 26, 1846. It was at Bents Fort that Kearny received notice he had been promoted to Brigadier General by President Polk. The time at Bents Fort was spent for rest, repairs, and taking on supplies. The next segment of the journey took them to Santa Fe, arriving on the afternoon of August 18, 1846. Kearny occupied Santa Fe without firing a shot and was greeted by Lieutenant Governor Vigil. Kearny took over the old palace on the town square. Here, he gave a short speech telling the people about their new government. The American flag was raised and a thirteen-gun salute given.

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, signed on February 2, 1848, brought the Mexican War to a close. After the treaty, Kearny went to Mexico and served for a brief period as civil governor at Veracruz and Mexico City.

The treaty gave the United States the Rio Grande River as a boundary for state of Texas, full ownership of California, and a large area comprising New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, and parts of Wyoming and Colorado. Mexicans in those annexed areas were given a choice of relocating south of the new boundaries into Mexico or being granted American citizenship with full civil rights.

Kearny’s health was severely weakened by yellow fever he had contracted in Veracruz, and soon fell ill after returning to St. Louis. He died there on October 13, 1848 at age 54. He was a gallant soldier with many great accomplishments for his country.

Alexander W. Doniphan was born near the town of Maysville, Kentucky along the Ohio River in 1808. He was the youngest of ten children. His father had been a friend of Daniel Boone, and both of his grandfathers had served in the army during the American Revolutionary War.

Doniphan attended Augusta College, graduating in 1824, and, after studying law, he was admitted to the Missouri bar. He settled in Lexington, Missouri but he soon moved to Liberty, which offered more opportunities. His legal skills served him well as a defense attorney, and he was noted for his oratorical skills which helped him to win many cases. In 1836, he was elected to state legislature, representing the Whig Party.

In the mid-1830s, he served as a Brigadier General in the Missouri State Guard. During this time, many problems occurred between the local citizens and the incoming Mormon migration to Missouri from Illinois. Joseph Smith, the leader of the Mormon church, petitioned the governor for protection, but little was offered. This led to Doniphan and his law partner Atchison aiding Joseph Smith in creating their own county named Caldwell, with its capitol of Far West, all within the borders of the state.

In time, this led to what was known as the “Mormon War”. The whole northern part of the state was disturbed and violence broke out causing the entire Mormon community to leave the state, returning to Illinois.
The most important event in Doniphan’s life was his leadership as Colonel of the Missouri Volunteers during the Mexican War. The governor’s call in 1846 for volunteers led to a large regiment of more than 1,300 men being formed. Doniphan was elected Colonel by a large majority of the men. He led the First Regiment of Missouri Mounted Volunteers with term of enlistment of one year or until the end of the war.

Doniphan served under the leadership of Brig. General Kearny throughout the war. One of his many duties was to subdue and bring peace among the Mexicans and native Navajo tribes of western New Mexico Territory.

As the war progressed, his orders took him south to El Paso and Chihuahua City to link up with General Wool. During the journey from Santa Fe to meet General Wool, Col. Doniphan’s army fought two battles—one at Brazito north of El Paso, and then further south at Sacramento, defeating over 3,000 Mexican troops. Doniphan’s regiment won both battles decisively against heavy odds with loss of only a few men. It was shortly after these two engagements that the Mexican government agreed to end the war and a peace treaty was signed. Doniphan led his troops on the long journey home by way of southeastern Mexico to the Gulf of Mexico port of Matamoras, where they took the steamer Republic to New Orleans. The men were discharged and received a full year’s pay, later arriving home to St. Louis to a hero’s welcome.

Doniphan later reopened his law office, this time in Richmond, Missouri. He died in Richmond at the age of 79 and was buried in Liberty. He left no family. Doniphan had married Elizabeth Thornton in 1837, on her 17th birthday. They had two sons, born in 1838 and 1840, both of whom died in their teenage years, one by drowning in a river and the other from an accidental poisoning. His wife also predeceased him, dying in New York City in 1873.

The Doniphan monument is at the courthouse in Liberty, Clay County, Missouri. The inscription reads:

Colonel Commanding the United States Troops at the Battles of Sacramento and Brazito in the Mexican War

A Member of the Peace Congress of 1861 from Missouri

A lawyer for Over Fifty Years, and a Life Without Reproach

Figure 65. Handstamp postmark “Liberty Mo. Feb 5” (1850) with manuscript “5” rate notation on folded letter from Colonel Alexander W. Doniphan to Mr. Jno Doniphan, Weston, Mo. Franked “Col A W Doniphan” at top.
Figure 66. Folded letter from A. G. Wilson datelined December 4, 1846 at Santa Fe, carried by military courier up the Santa Fe trail, entering the mail with handstamp postmark “Independence Mo. Feb 12” (1847) and manuscript “5” rate to A. P. Goff, Esq, Weston, Mo.

A. G. Wilson served at the Sutler for the Army of the West stationed in Santa Fe. His letter to his business partner, Mr. Goff, tells of excellent opportunities, and he wishes to liquidate all his holdings in Weston, Missouri, and invest the funds in business in Santa Fe. Mr. Wilson’s hopes were dashed when he died in the influenza epidemic of January 1847.

Figure 67. Handstamp postmark “Fort Leavenworth Mo. Mar 14” (1848) with “10” rate notation on folded letter datelined Santa Fe, January 10, 1848, from Huling Major to Mr. John Snyder, Belleville, St. Clair County, Illinois. Manuscript notation at top “From The Army of the West”.

Private Huling Major writes of: roomer that 900 Mexican soldiers are on the way here to attack us. We are fixing for them so that if they come we will be ready for them. If they come we will show them we are not to be fooled with. I heard talking to one of the Mexican’s all hope that they may come and do come. We will show them no quarter there is the men here to handle them.

Tell my brother to write me. I am well. Huling Major
Sterling Price was born in Virginia in 1809, into a family of Welsh origin. The family is known to have settled in the earliest days of the Virginia Colony. As a young man he attended Hampden-Sydney College, where he studied law and worked at the local courthouse. He was admitted to the Virginia bar and established a law practice. The Price family had relatives living in the Boone’s Lick area of Missouri. And, in 1830, hearing news of good prospect in Missouri, the Price family moved to Keytesville in Chariton County.

Price took up his law practice, and in time was appointed Brigadier-General of the State Militia. He was a staunch Democrat, as were many people in that area at the time. His political career developed rapidly, being elected to the state Legislature in 1836, and reelected in 1840 and 1842. During his last year in office, he served as speaker of the house. In 1844, he ran for and was elected to the U.S. Congress. He became an ardent supporter of President Polk in the days before the Mexican War.

Governor Edwards received another request from President Polk to call up a second regiment of volunteers. Soon after, Colonel Price was put in charge of raising the Second Regiment of Missouri Mounted Volunteers. They were mustered into service at Fort Leavenworth. The troops marched over 800 miles, taking the Cimarron Cutoff, arriving at Santa Fe on September 28, 1846, three days after General Kearny had departed for California.

Colonel Price soon faced a major rebellion that broke out in Taos on the 20th of January 1847, spreading to several other small towns. He had some advance warning about a plot, but had little time to prepare for what was to come. He soon mustered his troops and headed north to Taos, where Governor Bent and several friends had been murdered. The battalion fought several small engagements, one at La Canada and another at El Embudo. After arriving in Taos with his troops, the bloody revolt was soon ended.

As a result of his brave leadership, he was awarded the military commission of Brigadier General in July of 1847. He returned home to Missouri a hero and soon picked up an interest in politics. Friends encouraged him to run for governor, and he was elected for one term, from 1853 to 1857. Price had much sympathy with the Southern cause, and served as a General in the Confederate army in Missouri. He suffered several military defeats at the hands of the Federal army in Missouri during the Civil War. His health failed after the war was over and he died in St. Louis on September 29, 1867.
Fort Leavenworth July the 9th 1847

Dear Mother. I now take my pen in hand to inform you that I am well at this time & sincerely hoping these few lines may find you enjoying the same blessing. We left Alton the 22 of June & landed at this place the 28 the boys are all well that you are acquainted with, with the exception of Woodson Meredith who has just got over the measles.

Two of our Companies belonging to this regiment left for Santa Fe a few days ago, but it is not known when we will leave however it will not be long. I want you to write to me as soon you can and as often as you can direct your letters to Company B. first regiment Illinois volunteers on the rout to Santa Fe. Preston Finley is a volunteer in the Clinton Company in this regiment. Fort Leavenworth is pleasantly and handsomely situated on the west bank of the Missouri river nearly 500 miles from its mouth.

On the other side you will see a plot of the Fort town & encampment. I have seen many Indian in this place the Squaws ride exactly like the men. Give my best respects to all enquiring friends especially to the girls not that I care. So no more at present but remain your affectionate Son till death.

Uriah Thomas  To Mrs. Nancy Thomas  Florence, Pike County, Illinois

Figure 68. Postmarked “Fort Leavenworth Mo. Jul 10” (1847) with manuscript “10” rate notation on folded letter from Pvt. Uriah Thomas to his mother, Nancy Thomas in Florence, Illinois. Private Uriah Thomas was a member of the 1st Regiment of Illinois Volunteers and arrived to Fort Leavenworth on June 28, 1847. He took the time to draw the detailed map of Fort Leavenworth, outlining all the facilities of the fort (reduced in size to fit to page).
The town of Sibley was officially platted by Archibald Gamble in 1836. Gamble was the brother-in-law of George Sibley, the factor at Fort Osage in the early days. Gamble named the town after Sibley. They planned on using the Fort Osage landing and developing a ferry operation. Gamble and Sibley envisioned a town made prosperous from river trade, steamboat outfitting, and providing goods and service for overland trail travelers.

Sibley

The town did experience a modest amount of prosperity in the late 1830s and early 1840s. Sibley never grew into more than a small village as the economic center of Jackson County was Independence. The town suffered a series of tragic events, with the flood of 1844 destroying many of the businesses located at the base of the bluff. It was late June of 1863 when Federal forces destroyed the town again, because Sibley was a refuge for Confederate guerillas led by Charles Quantrill during the Civil War.

Figure 69. Manuscript postmark “Sibley Mo Apl 1” (1848) with “10” rate marking on folded letter datelined March 1, Hempland (Lafayette County) Missouri from John H. Swearingen to James S. Markell, Shepherds Town, Jefferson Co., Va.
Arrow Rock

The Arrow Rock Bluff in Saline County was a significant landmark on the Missouri River for local Indian tribes and early westward travelers. The tall limestone bluff first appeared on a 1732 French map as “Pierre a Fleche,” which translates to “Rock of Arrows.” Archaeological evidence shows that for nearly 12,000 years native cultures worked at Arrow Rock bluff, manufacturing flint tools and weapons.

After the War of 1812, peace treaties with the Indians were signed in 1815. This allowed more immigrants from Kentucky and Tennessee into the fertile “Boone's Lick Country,” named for the salt springs in the area. The early 1820’s saw the beginning of westward development of trade with Mexico. William Becknell was the first traveler on what became known as the Santa Fe Trail. The route crossed the Missouri river at the Arrow Rock ferry, where Becknell and his men filled their water barrels at “Big Spring” before heading west. In 1829, the town of Arrow Rock was relocated on the bluff above the ferry crossing, after massive flooding destroyed the earlier location.
Figure 71. Handstamp integral rate postmark “St. Louis Mo. 10, Oct 9” (1848) in red with matching grid killers on a vertical pair of five cent 1847 issue (Scott #1) on folded letter to Messrs Lindsay & Blackiston Publishing, Philadelphia, Penna.

St. Louis Levee in the 1840’s
Dear Brother

I write to inform you about the tragic story of Colonel Fremont and his party who were bound for California and caught in January blizzard crossing La Veta Pass at 9,000 foot elevation.

Colonel Fremont and men were here a few days since en route for California. They were compelled to put into Taos for succor, having lost all their mules and ten men from famine & cold and besides nearly all else they possessed. They suffered greatly and appeared like shadows of natural men, but in time American spirit, meek, submissive & determined.

There is a great spirit here of emigration to the west, numbers have already gone & many more, probably to the number of 100 will emigrate from Santa Fe to the west this spring bound for western California.

Your loving brother.

E. B. Bateman

Dr. Bateman departed for the California Gold Rush on April 26, 1849
On August 31, 1849 Clinton Gardner tells his brother Capt. Frank Gardner about the new post called Camp Riley.

We arrived here on the 14th of July after 20 days sail from Panama. It was a most disagreeable trip on the steamer California. We landed south of the town which is only 50 to 100 houses, our camp is 10 miles south of this place. It seems I cannot get the fleas to let me alone long enough to write this short letter. There are Rattlesnakes, Tarantulas, Scorpions and all kinds of poisonous animals, and what they call coyotes make anything but pleasant noise after nightfall. I will write again soon, but you must not fail to reply.

Your affectionate brother

G. Clinton Gardner
Gentry Court House

The county of Gentry, named for General Richard Gentry, was organized in February 1845 in the northwestern part of the state. Isaac Cameron was voted first commissioner in 1845 and sponsored the building the first courthouse. This was a hewn-log, two story building, 24x20 feet in dimension with brick chimney and two fireplaces.

The post office at this location only served the area for few years with service moved to the town of Albany.

Mr. Howell inquires about land warrants for two friends who earned them for service during the Mexican War. He also tells Capt. Denver:

*my brother William serving under Capt Simonds died of Typhoid on the way to Santa Fe in August 1847.*

Respectfully yours

E. P. Howell

Figure 74, Manuscript postmark “Gentry C H Mo Mar 28” (1849) with “Paid 10” rate marking on folded cover from Elijah P. Howell to Capt J. W. Denver, U.S. Army, Wilmington, Ohio.
Missouri Statehood, the 1850’s

Jones Tan Yard

Jones Tan Yard, on appearances, would seem to be a business; however, it is much more. Huge tanning vats there attracted a lot of business. According to records, Jones Tan Yard was listed as having a post office from 1828 through 1874. In records found from 1828 and 1830, the postmaster was John Jones. The village was located on the original old Indian trace. As early as 1764, the first part of the road was expanded by trappers through St. Louis County. Then, part of the road became known as the St. Charles Rock Road. Later, the road was expanded by brothers Daniel, Morgan, and Nathaniel Boone in part to gain easy access to salt springs near present day town of New Franklin, Missouri.

![Figure 75. Manuscript postmark “Jones Tan Yard Mo Dec 23” (1850) with “40” rate marking on letter from Mrs. E. M. Grove to her husband, N. K. Grove Esqr, (to the care of Jas. H. Baskin Esq) Stockton, Upper California. “Advertised” in blue oval (applied at Stockton) for a “4” cent fee, in red manuscript.]

Callaway County, Missouri December 22, 1850

My Dear Husband,

I rec’d your kind letter from the 29th September and glad to hear you are in good health after not hearing from you for four months. I am sorry to hear your mining has turned out so badly after so much hard labor, but I hope you will be paid for all your labor.

We have heard the Cholera very bad in Sacramento City and San Francisco. I am willing to go to Oregon if you prefer living there to Missouri, or will go any where you want to go if you will only come home this winter. I think it best for you to come home as soon as you get this letter or send for me if you can’t come.

Oh what would I give for you at home. Your poor broken hearted wife.

E. M. Grove
Bellair  Feb. 11\textsuperscript{th} 1851

Dear Sir:

I received you letter on the 7\textsuperscript{th} inst. and as you may be on the road home tell Sam that his father’s family is all well. Tell him I sold all his gold dust when in St. Louis at 17.00 dollars per ounce and after the sand was taken out is was only worth $15.50. I have the sand yet to show him.

I was only offered $16.25 per ounce in New Orleans. You should be very careful to get clean dust to bring home. Tell all the Cooper [County] friends that there family and friends are all well.

Your friend

R. Allison

Missouri Farm
Little Blue River  June 1st 1851

My dear Brother
I received your letters which gave me much pleasure in reading them.  I must tell you father lost his race got “dis” [dysentery].  I have a Note on Doc. Wm Wilkerson in Mexico or California.  I want you to inquire and I will send the note.  It is for fifty dollars due Oct 49 with ten percent interest.  If he is in your country you can collect it and receipt him.  Barsheba with children sends her love and receive the best wish of your brother

H. W. Younger
The town of Savannah, organized in 1841, is within one of the six counties in the Platte Purchase Territory that was annexed to Missouri in 1837. The first settlers to the Savannah area, who arrived in the mid 1830’s, were pioneers from Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky and Tennessee.

Savannah

Figure 79. Manuscript postmark “Savannah Mo Nov 15.” (1850) with “Paid 5 cts” rate marking on folded cover to Capt. J. W. Denver, Weston, Mo.

Figure 80. Handstamp postmark “Savannah Mo. Aug 27” (1850’s) with grid killer on three cent 1857 issue adhesive (Scott #26) on letter to E. S. Castle Esq, Saint Joseph, Mo.
St. Louis March 4, 1851

Dr Sir

A Telegraphic dispatch has this day been received by Col. Hinds from Washington City directing him to not make any arrangement for transportation to [Forts] Kearny or Laramie and the inference drawn from this is that both posts will be abandoned in consequence of congress having reduced the appropriation so low as to prevent either post being kept up.

This news is of so much importance that I have concluded both to write you by the Steamer Isabel and by mail and it will be necessary for us to determine on what course we will pursue in regard to the remainder of the stock of goods at Laramie and Kearney - it will be too soon to determine now until we hear official instructions but I think no time is to be lost in you coming to St Louis to determine on our course.

In the mean time I will make arrangement to send out goods to either post but it may be well for you to write Tutt [John S. Tutt, Sutler at Fort Laramie] and let him know so that he may trade off his goods and also that he might possibly arrange to come down - I wish you would at once come down.

Written in haste,

Robert Campbell.
Figure 82. Handstamp postmark “Saint Louis, Mo. Sep 19” (circa 1851-1853) with “Paid 3” in red oval on letter to M. Hubbard, Cohoes, Albany County, N.Y. This large type handstamp was in use from September 1851 to October 1853.

Figure 83. Handstamp postmark “St-Louis Nov 9” (1853) with red “20” rate marking on folded letter to Lucerne, Switzerland. The “PAID PART” marking indicates that the “20” only paid the rate to the French border. The French transit charge was 65 decimes plus 90 rappen Swiss postage due. Written on October 11th, the letter finally arrived to its destination on December 8, 1853.
My dear Mary

...I believe it was on Wednesday, the 25th ult., while journeying upon the Plains under an Unit of Dragoons, commanded by Major Carleton, that I sent you my last letter, by a returning party where we met. I had written this letter, a day or two before & left it unsealed, to enable me to add a post script afterwards, when sooner a chance opportunity should offer of sending it to Missouri & I availed myself (of this returning party of whom old Mr. Sheet’s was on) to dispatch this letter.

Traveling on these desolate plains, can be seen, many miles off & to the inexperienced eye when 5 or 6 miles distant, so it appears to be half the distance from you. There it was the party was deceived. The post-settler allowed & the letter sealed & given to Major Carleton, to be conveyed to one of the officers for long before I had laid down, in bed, in the Ambulance...

...It is about 100 miles, to St. Fe from this place, with stations, all the way. The [trip?] is therefore, merely a matter of parade, - seems to be one to my station, like the salute of 15 Guns, upon my arrival at any Military post...

...An Express mailed here yesterday, with the information, that a cavalcade from St. Fe, would be in waiting for me, 10 miles this side of that town. On that day they escort me to “The Palace” and from that day will set my path to act as Gov. of this distant Territory...

...when I reach “Sta Fe, I will commence a treatment to eradicate the Disease as fast as it can be done...

Most affectionately your Wm Carr Lane

Fort Union, N. Mexico Sep 2, 1852
The town of Forsyth, located in Taney County in south central Missouri, was officially organized in 1837 with the town’s first business being held in private homes. The area grew rapidly, needing a courthouse. But, controversy arose over where it should be located. The larger population center was on Swan Creek; however, many residents thought the courthouse should be built at the mouth of Bull Creek, which was the geographical center of the county. Log cabins were constructed at both Swan Creek and Forsyth. But, in 1845, the courthouse was officially located in Forsyth. In 1855, the county received permission from the state to erect a three-story brick courthouse on a site which is presently situated in Shadow Rock Park. The courthouse was built by Larkin W. Selsor for $3,600 and was 500 feet square.

Forsyth was an important river town in the Ozarks prior to the Civil War. It was the main port for navigation of steamboats on the White River. It was the point where cargo was reloaded on smaller boats to go further up river, or onto wagons traveling overland. By 1861, most of the inhabitants were farmers coming from eastern states.
Fort Scott was established on May 30, 1842 and built along the Military Road, four miles west of the Missouri state line in what is now Kansas. This was considered the permanent Indian frontier at the time. It served as intermediate post on the military road that connected frontier forts from Fort Snelling to Fort Jessup.

The main role of Fort Scott was to enforce peace between the Osage Indians and settlers traveling west. Troops of dragoons gave support to Colonel Kearny and his “Army of the West” during the Mexican War in 1846. The post was abandoned in April 1853, but reopened during the Civil War in March 1862.

Both Fort Scott and Fort Leavenworth were originally located in the Unorganized Territory, just west of the Missouri state border. The Post Office Department attached both forts to Missouri for administrative purposes. Fort Scott used only a manuscript postmark, never receiving a proper regular handstamp device.

Fort Scott, circa 1845
Iron Mountain

The Iron Mountain area was featured in a St. Louis newspaper in the year 1843. The paper published the following description of Iron Mountain:

*It is about a mile broad at the base, 400 feet high and three miles long; and has the appearance of being composed of masses of iron ore. It is literally a mountain of ore so pure that it yields 70 to 80 percent under the ordinary process of converting it into malleable iron. At the base the ore lies in pieces from a pound weigh upward, which increases in size as you ascend, until they assume the appearance of huge rocks, which would remind the beholder of those fragments of an earlier world.*

Records of the Missouri Board of Land Commissioners show that, on June 25, 1833, the board recommended that the grant or claim to Iron Mountain ought to be confirmed to Joseph Pratte or to his legal representatives: Francis Valle, Charles C. Valle, Robert T. Brown, and Catherine Brown (his wife), Walter Wilkerson, and Emily Wilkerson, George Bullet, and Celeste M. Allen.

The land records disclose that the title remained in the Pratte heir’s family for several years until John Livingston van Doren of Washington County, Missouri became interested in the property. He began to acquire the interests of the various heirs in order to develop the mine. In their conveyance, the property was referred to and known as the Iron Mountain tract. In December 1836, the Missouri Iron Company was incorporated by a special act of the Missouri legislature.
The Pony Express

The pony express is one of America’s most famous and well-known pioneer ventures in mail delivery. The idea was first developed by William Russell, who encouraged his two partners, Alexander Majors and William Waddell to provide a ten-day fast mail delivery service over the Plains and Rocky Mountains to California.

The three partners owned the Central Overland California & Pikes Peak Express Company. This practical new method of fast mail delivery was a great success (except from a financial standpoint!) with the first trip starting on April 3, 1860. The schedule from San Francisco departed twice a week on Wednesday and Saturday taking 10 to 15 days to make the journey.

The Pony Express operated for only about 19 months, yet delivered approximately 35,000 letters in this fast mail service between St. Joseph, Missouri, and Sacramento, California. This proved that the central and northern route for mail transportation across the country was viable. However, when the time came for the government to issue a mail contract, Russell, Majors and Waddell failed to gain that contract. The company had no need for so many stations in the west and sold out to Ben Holladay known as the “Stagecoach King”. Jeremy Dehut had recently taken over the Butterfield Overland Stage Line, and he was awarded the mail contract for the northern route.

The contract had been awarded only a short time before the Civil War broke out in April 1861. This put the southern route in jeopardy, causing the stage line to cease operation. The completion of the telegraph line to Salt Lake City connected Omaha, Nebraska with Sacramento, California. The company announced its closure on October 26, 1861 just a few days after the completion of transcontinental telegraph. In time, other telegraph lines connected more cities and towns on the east and west coasts.
Figure 89. Carried by Pony Express from San Francisco May 18 (1860) to St. Joseph with their running pony handstamp used as a receiving mark “Pony Express St. Joseph. Jun 1”. Entered the mails with “Saint Joseph, Mo. Jun 2 1860” blue postmark for delivery to Boston. This cover is from the first rate period ($5.00 per half ounce) of private ownership by Russell, Majors and Waddell (April 3 to August 14, 1860). Docketed as received on June 6th.

Figure 90. Cover from San Francisco to Washington, D. C. addressed to Hon. A. B. Greenwood, Commissioner of Indian Affairs. “The Central Overland California & Pikes Peak Express Company, St. Joseph, Mo. Sep 13” marking was used as the pony express receiving mark. Used during the second rate period ($2.50 pony express fee per quarter ounce) in effect from August 15, 1860 to April 13, 1861, even though the manuscript “1/2” at upper left indicates one-half ounce. The ten cent green 1857 issue adhesive paid the US Post Office rate from “Saint Joseph Mo. Sep 14 1860” to Washington, D. C.
This story ends in the early 1860’s, just before the outbreak of the Civil War. Missouri had entered the Union as slave state. However, much sympathy was with the abolitionist anti-slavery groups, leading to a long running guerrilla war, fought all over the western part of the state. Then, in April 1865, the Confederate forces were defeated and further development of the state proceeded. A railroad network was constructed in the 1870’s which, along with expanded steamboat river traffic on both the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers, continued the state’s development.

**Bibliography**

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