GATEWAY TO THE WEST
Jefferson National Expansion Memorial

Jefferson National Expansion Memorial commemorates the westward growth of the United States from the Mississippi to the Pacific between 1803 and 1890. The dramatic story began with the Louisiana Purchase and reached a climax in 1890 when the Census Bureau found that western settlement finally had eliminated the "frontier line" created when the first permanent English settlement was made in 1607.

Fittingly, 91 acres on the St. Louis riverfront—site of Pierre Laclede's 1764 trading post—were chosen for the memorial. Laclede's isolated outpost became both the entryway for explorers, fur traders, homeseeking pioneers, miners, and soldiers passing westward, and a mighty emporium for the natural wealth they found in the West. St. Louis well deserved its title, "Gateway to the West". To many, the towering Gateway Arch also symbolizes the proud role of St. Louis in western settlement.
King Louis IX of France – Saint Louis.
History of Saint Louis

St. Louis was founded as a fur trade center in 1764 by Frenchman Pierre Laclede. For the next 39 years the little French and Spanish outpost grew slowly. Then, in 1803 with United States acquisition of the Louisiana Territory, St. Louis became the gateway for the American Nation’s westward expansion. In his classic, The American Fur Trade of the Far West, Hiram M. Chittenden wrote:

It is doubtful if history affords the example of another city which has been the exclusive mart for so vast an extent of country as that which was tributary to St. Louis...Every route of trade or adventure to the remote regions of the West centered in St. Louis...Following the lines of trade, all travel to the Far West, whether for pleasure or for scientific research, all exploring expeditions, all military movements, all intercourse with the Indians, and even the enterprises of the missionaries in that country, made St. Louis their starting point and base of operations.

It is this epic story of the Nation’s westward advance from the Mississippi to the Pacific Ocean that Jefferson National Expansion Memorial was created to commemorate and retell; and St. Louis’ proud role in that drama, as gateway to the West, is symbolized by the Memorial’s towering Gateway Arch.
Dreams of a Bold Undertaking

The Memorial owes its existence to the vision and unrelenting determination of a group of St. Louis civic leaders known as the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial Association. But for their efforts, this area might be nothing more today than it was when the Memorial idea was conceived—40 blocks of old business buildings, largely untenanted and decaying.

Luther Ely Smith first suggested the idea to St. Louis Mayor Bernard Dickmann in the fall of 1933. It was a bold thought in the depth of the Great Depression to tear out a large chunk of downtown St. Louis for a memorial to Thomas Jefferson, the Louisiana Purchase, and the opening of the trans-Mississippi West, in which the city had played such an important role.

Mr. Smith’s idea drew an enthusiastic response from St. Louis Civic leaders. In April, 1934, Mr. Smith became chairman of the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial Association, chartered by the State of Missouri as a non-profit corporation.

Seeing the proposed memorial as a national undertaking, JNEMA planned a joint project in which the Federal Government would aid the City by supplying three-fourths of the estimated $30 million required. First, the Association petitioned Congress to establish a United States Territorial Expansion Memorial Commission to plan the Memorial. The resolution, passed by Congress and signed by President Roosevelt on June 19, 1934, set up a commission of three Presidential appointees, three representatives, and six members of JNEMA.

St. Louis voters approved a bond issue for the City’s share, and President Roosevelt signed an executive order on December 22, 1935, designating the area a unit of the National Park System. It was christened “Jefferson National Expansion Memorial National Historic Site”, but popular usage omits the last three words of this cumbersome title.

JNEMA has worked continually to keep the project alive: securing the successive Congressional appropriations to bring the Federal share up to its authorized total; monitoring the City’s land purchases, clearing of the area, and the construction program for the Memorial; stimulating local interest by a continuing information program; and helping the National Park Service acquire some of the rare items of Americana needed for the Museum of Westward Expansion.

But—next to securing its establishment the Association’s most valuable contribution was its sponsorship of a nationwide architectural competition in 1947 to find the most appropriate possible design for the Memorial. The majestic Gateway Arch is the inspired result. An enduring monument to an epic of American history, the Arch also reminds us of the vision of those who made the Memorial a reality.
Jefferson National Expansion Memorial was established by an executive order signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on December 22, 1935. The order designated the National Park Service as the executive agency to acquire and develop the Memorial, with an allocation of $6,750,000 of Federal funds, to be matched by $2,250,000 from the City. On June 22, 1936, the National Park Service established an office in St. Louis for development of the Memorial.

Land acquisition began in June, 1937. Within 13 months the Government filed 40 petitions for land condemnation—one for each block within the proposed boundaries of the Memorial. Title to most of the Memorial area was vested in the United States on June 14, 1939, though the last condemnation suit was not settled until 1944.

Building demolition began on October 10, 1939. By the time it was complete, World War II had brought development to a halt. The cleared area became a temporary civic parking lot.

A major development problem was what to do about the unsightly elevated railroad tracks along the riverfront in the Memorial area. Obviously, they must be removed—but how, at what cost, and at whose expense? The solution, reached by conference among the interested parties in 1958, was a series of open and covered cuts which effectively blended the tracks into the Memorial development plan.
EERO SAARINEN
Although the theme and purpose of the Memorial were fixed from the beginning, development plans were revised several times between 1933 and 1948.

The first plan called for seven groups of buildings and statuary, the largest commemorating Jefferson and the Louisiana Purchase. A second plan provided for a huge statue of Jefferson facing the Mississippi, three museums, and tall obelisks surrounded by statuary at the north and south ends of the Memorial. A third plan reduced the number of buildings to two.

The final design for the Memorial resulted from the nationwide architectural competition which JNEMA sponsored in 1947. In a two year campaign beginning in 1945, the Association raised $225,000. Offering five semi-final prizes of $10,000 each and a grand prize of $50,000, the competition drew 172 entries from leading American architects. The winner announced on January 19, 1948, was Eero Saarinen, a young architect of Finnish descent. The essentials of the Saarinen design—the two river overlooks and the Gateway Arch—have been retained but the winning plan has been otherwise modified. It called for a campfire theatre, a pioneer village, a court of restored St. Louis buildings around the Old Cathedral, two ground level museums, two restaurants, and a long arcade with sculptures and paintings of historic personages and scenes. As construction plans were advanced, the museums were combined in the underground Visitor Center, and other modifications were made.

The Old Courthouse was added to the Memorial in May, 1940, when President Roosevelt approved its acceptance from the City of St. Louis. Extensive restoration of the building enabled the National Park Service to establish headquarters there on December 1, 1941.

Interpretive planning began soon after establishment of the Memorial, and exhibits were opened to the public in the Old Courthouse on October 20, 1942. Accelerated planning for the Museum of Westward Expansion in the underground Visitor Center began early in 1960.
The Museum of Westward Expansion
By Ellis Richard, Park Ranger, JNEM

In the early days of planning for the Gateway Arch Memorial, a large rectangular room next to the visitor center was reserved for a future museum. The floor space exceeded the area of a football field. Heavy concrete pillars supported the ground level ceiling. Like the rest of the visitor center, the museum would be entirely underground.

The theme or title, "The Museum of Westward Expansion", was not a simple one. Within this single space, the entire story of Man's presence in the West would be on display.

In 1970, responsibility for designing the museum went to a Washington, D.C. architectural firm, the Potomac Group. Under the direction of Aram Mardirosian, architects, historians, designers, and artists developed a radically different kind of museum. The original square room was completely altered. The new basic shape is now more like an amphitheater. Exhibits were installed in a series of broad circular areas. Dates visible in the ceiling mark off each of these areas into ten-year periods.

The museum begins with the year 1800, just outside the reach of the life-size bronze statue of Thomas Jefferson, America's third president. Jefferson's vision of a continental America was at the heart of...
the westward movement. In the opening years of the 19th century, Jefferson succeeded in buying the French colonial possessions in North America. The Louisiana Purchase included all lands west of the Mississippi River and east of the Rocky Mountains. It cost the young nation twenty-three million dollars, about 15¢ an acre, and doubled the size of the country. With the middle third of the continent in American hands, the way was open for a drive to the Pacific.

That drive can be followed in the museum by moving toward the back wall. Each circular area contains exhibits from the decade it represents. Major themes of westward expansion take form through photographs, great paintings, quotations, and actual objects: such as boots, hats, guns, knives, beads and tobacco.

Through the pictures, quotations, and objects, the museum becomes an archive. Through its organization, it becomes a computer. The museum, as a whole, is put together to show the way people lived, what they walked in, what they ate, what they said, and even the music they heard. The museum shows when people lived, how they lived, and where they lived. Labels and descriptions are unnecessary as the exhibits suggest their own story. Each is designed to tell a part of America’s western epic.

Along the back wall are photographs of the American landscape as it appeared the day Lewis and Clark wrote of it in their diaries. The Lewis and Clark expedition did more than survey the lands bought with American tax dollars. They left their Wood River, Illinois camp in 1804, with instructions from Thomas Jefferson to observe, collect, measure, and write about the unknown lands west of St. Louis. (Spanish officials and hostile Indians were to be avoided). When they finally returned two years later, their official reports helped launch the first wave
The American buffalo once roamed from Alaska to the Carolinas. This one weighed 1700 pounds when he was brought from North Dakota. A fully matured adult could reach 2000 pounds.

Ursa the horrible: The grizzly bear is a well-known and widely respected symbol of the Old West. Captain William Clark stated that he would rather fight two Indians than a grizzly.

of Americans on history's greatest recorded migration.

The elegant hats worn by fashionable gentlemen in Europe and the eastern states were made from felt exquisitely coated with fine beaver fur. After Lewis and Clark's "Corps of Discovery" returned from its successful penetration of the wilderness, the era of the fur trapper began. Lewis and Clark reported large numbers of beaver, enough to make more than one fortune. Fur trappers like Jim Bridger and Jedediah Smith became the famous pathfinders of the new country.

The fur trapper/mountain man display in the museum reveals more history than is at first apparent. One side is a large picture of a beaver. The tail touches inside the 1820's decade while the nose pokes just short of 1845. The fur trade, although it begins earlier, became significant in the 1820's. By the 1840's, the
The Bronco Buster— one of Frederick Remington’s first attempts at sculpture resulted in this famous figure. The bronze cast, an exhibit in the museum, was made from the original clay finished in 1895.

The appaloosa made the Indian one of the great horse peoples of the world. This five year old appaloosa closely resembles the 19th century mount bred by Nez Perce Indians in Idaho.

Yearly harvest of beaver pelts throughout the West was fast declining. About the same time silk was introduced and became popular in the hat industry. The fur trade collapsed. On both sides of the column, pictures, paintings, and quotes express something of the mind and attitude of the trapper. Between the sections of the column are the actual objects of life associated with the fur trade. A flintlock musket, a beaver trap, a skinning knife, a capote or hooded coat made from a wool blanket, and a beaver hide stretched on a wooden hoop make up part of the typical kit carried by every successful mountain man. This one display expresses the object of the fur trade, the life style of the trapper, his tools and possessions, his picture, his words, and his time.

Lewis and Clark were trespassers on lands occupied everywhere by American Indians. For the most part, the mountain men reached a general understanding with the Indian. Neither threatened the vital interests of the other. In fact, there was a good deal of exchange between the two. In many ways, especially with the French traders, it was the white man who adopted the Indian way, not the other way around.

But as fur trappers gained in experience, and as their source of income became scarce, they became the guides for that second wave, the homesteader. The emigrant going west went with the intention of fencing, clearing, and farming. They represented a direct threat to the Indian way of life. The land would not support them both.

The first trickle of emigrants began in the 1830’s. These were men and women with no wealth except for their own labor. Everyone dreamed of the paradise at the end of the trail somewhere in a land called Oregon, or California. By the 1840’s, the trickle was cutting through solid stone of the Rocky Mountains. Their ruts are still in the rock; as deep as any commandment.

The covered wagon in the museum is typical of some used on the march west.
Solidly made with a few nails, some wooden pegs, and iron-rimmed wheels for good mileage, it was pulled by mules or oxen. Few wagons had seats. Most folks heading west walked the two thousand miles to the "promised land". Within a few years, the Oregon Trail and California Cutoff were littered with the provisions of wagons too heavily loaded. The truth of the hard road convinced many that what seemed a necessity in the beginning, was after all, a burden not worth the effort. If the burden was heavy on the white man, the next few decades would be crushing to the Indian.

History turned on the great steering wheels of the steamship, but life depended just as much on the details of living. The great events and the small habits of daily routine are side by side in the museum.
Early in the 1600's, the Indian of the Plains and Southwest found unexpected profit in stealing horses from Spanish outposts and, later, from each other. Within a few years, the Indians of the Plains developed into one of the two or three greatest horse peoples in the world. Mounted on his small swift horse, the Indian outrode and outfought the U. S. Army for nearly fifty years. Only after the lands were scorched, the bison gone, and the villages reduced, did the tribes break. The coming of the white man ended a way of living centuries old.

The Indian tepee in the museum is made of buffalo hides tanned with animal brains. The tepee is typical of a tribe originally called Sioux by early French traders. Most tribes simply called themselves, "The People". Inside, the Indian mistress arranged the living quarters, paying attention to traditional detail. It was her responsibility to raise the tepee (which she could do in a few minutes), and when the camp moved, she took it down. She made the bedding the way her husband preferred and placed his possessions exactly where he liked them. Her riding saddle is on the right. She also owned some pots and pans, shrewdly bartered for a few common beaver pelts. The exhibit displayed inside the tepee and on the wall, shows the intricate relationships and dependence on the living world of the Indian environment. Most obvious is the Bison. From the tepee hide, to glue for making and mending their tools, the Indian found the buffalo essential for life on the Plains.

In the early 1800's, millions of American bison grazed the western prairies. When the herds moved, thunder rose from their hooves. By 1892, the last herds perished under the gun sights of buffalo hunters and sportsmen. In 1900, the last known herd was a group of about 39 animals roaming magnificently in Yellowstone National Park, unaware that their once uncountable companions were all but exterminated. Today about 900 buffalo inhabit that park with a few thousand scattered over the rest of the country.

Standing on prairie pasture within the museum, a 1700 pound bison symbolizes a West long since gone. His long shaggy hair was prized by Indians for comfort against a long winter's night. They fashioned eating utensils out of the horns, thread from sinew, glue from hooves, and meat from the muscle and fat. Nothing was wasted. Like an image on a Greek urn, the museum's buffalo reminds us of what once was, what still is, and what can never be again.

On a near-by column, the buffalo hunters are found in the 1870's. A 45-60 caliber buffalo rifle, a saddle, a knife, and pictures of the important kill sites show the life of a hunter. Established near the outskirts of towns, these camps became important trade centers. One picture shows a pile of 40,000 hides waiting to be shipped to eastern markets. Buffalo tongues hang on racks to dry in the open air; the great carcasses left to rot in the hot Texas sun.

When railroads came, civilization came too. Fine manufactured tools, eating utensils, and shoes, cloth and yarn replaced the crude homespun of the frontier. The wilderness was disappearing and the nation was being bound to itself.
An explorer's life combined frontier buckskin and powder with the careful art of recording his experiences.

The annihilation of the great bison herds opened the vast prairies for livestock. Cattle, sheep, and the cowboy multiplied upon the land. And, despite the skill of the Indian warrior, his way of life could not survive without the bountiful bison. Without a doubt, the buffalo hunter caused the Indian the most lasting damage.

The U. S. Army provided the umbrella under which the hunters worked. For a foot soldier, life was more than bitter plains warfare. Far from his home, there was little consolation for a loneliness as wide as the land. A few dated letters, perhaps a small picture of a dimly remembered wife, and a harmonica were all there was. The Indian’s way of life was not the only one that changed.

During these busy years, it was normal to see San Francisco Bay filled with ships bound for foreign ports. In 1849, clipper ships lined the wharves, abandoned. The crews, like so many other adventurers, had left in haste for the gold fields of the famous Mother Lode, a golden El Dorado in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada. Most would come out with little to show except for a few used picks and shovels and a debt to the general store. Even those that struck the rich vein failed to make it a foundation of permanent wealth. Most of the riches ended up in the big banks and investment houses. Still it was a great dream. Gold-feverish men piled into California by the thousands, then on to the Black Hills of Dakota, back again to Colorado, and finally into the vast Yukon Territory for one last chance to get rich.
St. Louis, on the Mississippi levee, was a major crossroads for families going west.

The overland wagon carried the possessions of thousands of travelers going west. There was little room for passengers, so nearly everyone walked.
Just inside the museum entrance the history wall focuses on the major and minor events of the western movement from 1800 to 1900.

The gold miners' column in the museum is leafed with real gold. Attached are a gold pan, a pick, and a shovel. The legendary burro is pictured above the possessions of some grizzled prospector. The picture of John Marshall, the man who made the first strike, does not show the glow of a man of wealth and fortune. Instead, it is a man haunted by his first famous discovery. He eventually came to believe he owned all the gold in California. In the end, Marshall was driven from the mining camps, a broken, penniless man.

There are many additional elements within the Museum of Westward Expansion. The Charetta, a Mexican ox cart (actually a rather small one) was dragged around

The bronze of a Fifth Infantry bugler was cast in Florence, Italy, for the Museum of Westward Expansion.
by six to eight oxen. Nearby is a bull boat, a very temporary boat made from a buffalo hide and small branches that could get men and their supplies across a deep body of water.

Dramatic pictures and paintings are found throughout the museum making the way it was visible to everyone. An entire wall of screens project a sequence of American history, while across the museum another wall records year by year the passage of events in the West.

The country was captured mostly by men and women eager to begin a life of their own. Whether in the lush Willamette Valley of Oregon or in the former "great American desert", of eastern Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, and Oklahoma, these families formed the skeleton of society that fleshed out the new America.

The frontier officially came to an end around 1900. But the effects of the migration extend to the present. Americans achieved a personal stature unmatched anywhere in the world. Only Americans like Orville and Wilbur Wright could declare war obsolete after the first airplane flew at Kill Devil Hill. A pensive Einstein would say basically the same thing about the atomic bomb.
Year by year, the past becomes the present. But the Museum of Westward Expansion was not meant to drown us in the experiences of the past. Always there are reminders of the present, the atomic bomb blast, Armstrong on the moon, and your own reflection in the mirrored surfaces. The present reminds us that we can never go back to a golden age, whenever we think it existed. There never was one. Our ancestors had no choice but to press on to someone else's future. The Museum of Westward Expansion does not make decisions about who was right and who was wrong. That question always seems irrelevant in history. The Museum does show us how we used the land. It does expose the truth of our presence in the West.

Standing again near the statue of Thomas Jefferson, the entire story of the West appears in one vast sweeping vision. It almost seems possible to capture the entire history in this one view of the Museum. But to see the details, or the reality, you must descend and approach each part separately. The complete vision becomes lost. Gone is the hope of seeing all the detail forming the larger truth that was the American West.

If there is a basic truth found in the Museum, then it must be that history does not belong to the historian, but to the way it really was. This Museum attempts to show that way through the words of those who lived it, in the boots they wore, the world they saw, and the land they paid for with the only currency they could respect.

In the Museum, these people are woven into a cloth that shows the pattern for a great adventure that was Westward Expansion.
The Old Courthouse

This tall domed structure with four wings located high above the river was the center of community activity when St. Louis was indeed the "Gateway to the West". Through its doors passed people of many races whose varied interests led them beyond the frontier. It was a public forum as well as a courthouse; used first by St. Louis County and then by the City of St. Louis. Begun in 1839 and completed in 1862, the building was officially opened in 1845.

The Old Courthouse, part of the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial since 1940, now contains restored courtrooms, museum exhibits on local and national history, and the Memorial's headquarters.

Dred Scott began his fight for freedom in a no longer existing courtroom of the Old Courthouse. His case resulted in a United States Supreme Court decision that helped spark the Civil War.

Visit the Weaving Room and see a loom over 100 years old in operation. Volunteers make rag rugs while rangers invite you to step back into time and share the life work of the pioneer.

St. Louis began as a fur trading post in 1764. Furs were shipped from here to eastern and European markets. Exhibited here are samples of furs, provisions, equipment, and Indian trade goods.

The interior of the dome which towers 190 feet over the city is decorated with historical lunettes/murals by Carl Wimar and allegorical figures by Ettore Miragoli.
Men with the aid of derricks, struts, nets, elevators and other tools formed concrete and steel into a massive monument.
Construction

Actual construction of the Memorial began on June 23, 1959, when groundbreaking ceremonies were held for relocation of the railroad tracks. The first train passed over the relocated tracks on November 21, 1961.

The second phase of construction which began on February 11, 1961, involved excavation for the Visitor Center and the foundations of the Gateway Arch, as well as redevelopment of the levee along the east side of the Memorial. This work was completed late in 1963.

In March of 1962 a contract for nearly $11.5 million dollars was awarded to the MacDonald Construction Company of St. Louis to build a Gateway Arch and the underground Visitor Center. Two months later the National Park Service signed a cooperative agreement with the Bi-State Development Agency to construct and operate the Arch transportation system.

The concrete shell of the Visitor Center was substantially completed during 1962, and the first stainless steel section of the Arch was placed on the south leg on February 12, 1963. The section, an equilateral triangle 12 feet high and 54 feet on a side, weighed 101,500 pounds.

When they undertook construction of the Arch, the MacDonald Construction Company and its subcontractor for the Arch Shell, the Pittsburgh—Des Moines Steel Company, found themselves faced with a problem unique in building history. Nothing just like the Arch had ever been constructed before. The intricate engineering calculations and the actual stainless steel construction were carried out by PDM under supervision of the National Park Service and Eero Saarinen Associates.

The Arch is what is known among engineers as an inverted, weighted catenary curve. A catenary curve is the shape assumed by a chain hanging freely between two points of support. Inverted means the curve is projected upward to form an arch. Weighted means that the lower portion of the legs are larger than the upper sections. In the catenary, structurally the soundest of all arches, the

Gateway Arch from east bank of the Mississippi River.
thrust passes through the legs and is absorbed in the foundation.

It demanded extremely sophisticated engineering. A deviation of any magnitude between the bases could result in the legs of the Arch failing to meet perfectly when they reached the top. Added to the construction problem extreme care had to be exercised to protect the gleaming surface of the stainless steel composing the Arch outer skin.

The solution came in what was called a creeper derrick, an 80-ton assembly which was, essentially, a tiltable platform mounted on tracks fastened to the Arch itself and supporting a stiff-legged derrick. This rig climbed the Arch to sit at predetermined stations and then lifted the sections with the derrick and put them in place. The derrick also had to be leveled each time it was raised.

The first six sections of each leg, to a height of 72 feet, were put in place with conventional cranes. Then the creeper derricks took over. The platforms for the derricks were 43 feet by 32 feet and each had its own tool shed, a heated shack for the workmen, sanitary facilities and communications equipment.

The Arch has a span between the two legs equal to its height, 630 feet. In cross section each leg is a double steel-walled equilateral triangle, each side measuring 54 feet at the base and 17 feet at the top. The double walls are 3 feet apart at the bottom, diminishing to 7 1/2 inches in the
upper sections, leaving a hollow core 48 feet wide at the base and tapering to 15½ feet at the top.

The stainless steel panels on the outside of the Arch diminish in size, as it goes up, from 6 x 18 feet to 4 x 5½ feet, each ¼ of an inch thick. To complete the Arch required 900 tons of stainless steel. The interior walls are composed of approximately 2200 tons of carbon steel plate,½ inch thick with 1¾ inch plates at the corners.

As the legs of the Arch went up independently, they were additionally strengthened by pre-stressed steel rods embedded in concrete up to the 300 foot level. Above that height steel stiffeners were used between the skins in lieu of concrete.

Despite the Arch's great height and comparatively small size at the top, extreme wind pressures will be hardly noticeable to visitors at the top. It is designed to withstand a wind load of 55 pounds per square foot, the equivalent of a wind with the velocity of 150 miles per hour. And even under this unlikely pressure the Arch would deflect in an east and west direction only 18 inches.

One of the most interesting operations was that involved in setting the last section of the Arch in place. This occurred after the creeper derricks had climbed to the 610 foot level, by which time they were working on a near horizontal plane.

An 80 ton stabilizing strut was installed between the two legs at the 530 foot level to support them until they could be joined.

After the next-to-last section was placed, only a 2 foot gap remained. Then jacks mounted on the top opened the gap to 8 feet to allow the last section to be inserted. When this was done and the jack pressure released, the natural thrust of the legs clamped the section in place. Once it was welded, the jacks and stabilizer strut were removed, and the creeper derricks lowered themselves down the tracks. As they went down, the derrick tracking was removed, the bolt holes repaired, and the stainless steel surfaces were polished.
The completion of the outside of the Arch was celebrated on October 28, 1965, but work continued inside and under the Arch. The underground visitor center, a Museum of Westward Expansion, and the two transportation systems which would carry visitors to the top still remained unfinished.

The Memorial was an inspiring sight as it rose slowly from the St. Louis riverfront. And it is today, as its graceful, majestic lines soar above the earth elevating the mind’s eye to recall the people of the 19th century it memorializes and to the inspiration of its Arch designers and the ingenuity of its builders. ...the Gateway Arch—truly an ageless memorial.
The two transporter systems, or trams, which carry visitors to the observation area, 620 feet above the ground, are not simply vertical elevator lifts. The legs of the Arch are vertical only part way up. They are nearly horizontal at the top and access at the bottom is also horizontal. This transportation problem was solved with a tram-train of eight 5-passenger capsules in each leg. The tram leaves the bottom suspended from rails and cables. In four minutes it moves from horizontal to vertical and back to horizontal--upside down. Each tram capsule rotates as the system moves to keep passengers upright.

A traditional service elevator for emergency and maintenance use can operate in the lower half of the Arch legs. There are 1,064 steps in a spiral staircase leading from top to bottom.

The first visitor rode the north tram on July 24, 1967. Work proceeded on the south tram for another eight months.

But, at last, the Arch is completed. On May 25, 1968, almost 20 years after the Saarinen Arch won the competition as the best design to commemorate a part of our national heritage, Vice-President Hubert Humphrey addressed the dedication of this great monument--a Monument to a dream, a Memorial to the Time of the West.
The great Arch dwarfs visitors at its base where its legs form triangles 54 feet on a side.

The Gateway Arch is the newest and tallest of America's great monuments. The Arch, the Statue of Liberty and the Washington Monument are all features of the National Park System.
The final stage of the development of Jefferson National Expansion Memorial is the grounds landscaping, pedestrian overpasses between the Arch and Luther Ely Smith Square, and a subsurface parking garage. This artist's rendering gives an indication of the final appearance of this National Historic Site.
Historic Companions of the Gateway Arch

The Old Cathedral, in the very shadow of the Gateway Arch, has served as a house of worship since 1834.

The Old Courthouse, now a museum, dominated the riverfront a century ago when trappers, traders, and settlers passed through Saint Louis on their way West.