

Special Section

Missouri's People

You have read about Missouri's history, its geography, its resources, and its economy. But perhaps the best thing about Missouri is its people. In this special section, you will learn about some well-known people who were either born in Missouri or who made Missouri their home at one time and can be called Missourians.

Thomas Akers, Linda Godwin, and Janet Kavandi

Missouri has played an important role in the exploration of space, not only in building spacecraft, but also in providing astronauts for the space shuttle program. Thomas Akers

grew up in Eminence and graduated from the University of Missouri in Rolla. He became a test pilot in the Air Force and was selected an astronaut. He has made four flights into space, and on one of them he made a walk in space.

Linda Godwin was born in Jackson and graduated from Southeast Missouri State University in Cape Girardeau and the University of Missouri in Columbia. After college, she joined the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and became an astronaut. She has made three space flights and has also walked in space.

Janet Kavandi was born in Springfield and grew up in Carthage. She went to college at Missouri Southern College in Joplin, the University of Missouri in Rolla, and the University of Washington in Seattle. After college, she went to work for Boeing. Kavandi has flown in space twice.



Maya Angelou

In 1993, Dr. Maya Angelou became only the second poet to read a poem at a presidential inauguration. She was born in St. Louis in 1928. Growing up was hard for her because of the Great Depression, her parents' divorce, and abusive relatives—all of which she wrote about in her best-selling book *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*.

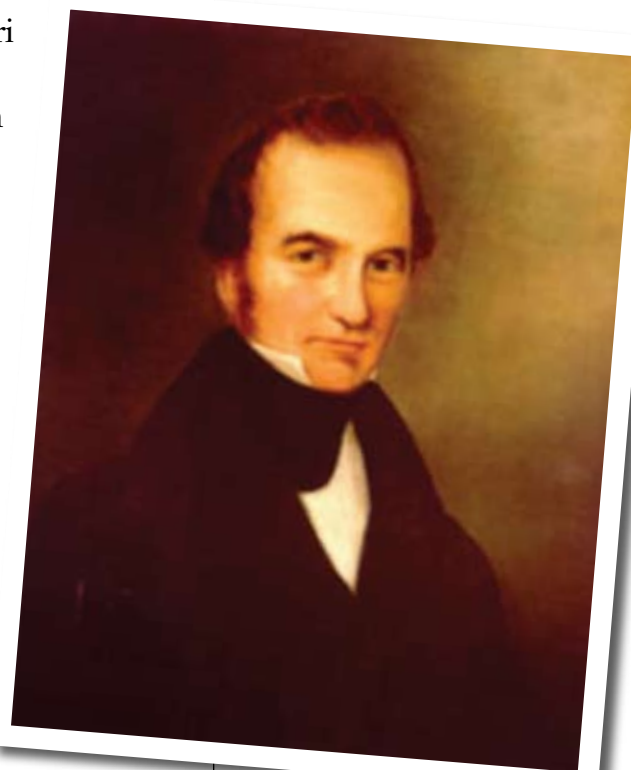
Dr. Angelou did not let her hard childhood hold her back. She moved to San Francisco and became a streetcar conductor. But her real desire was to be an actor, writer, and poet. She has done all of those things and won honors for each. In 2000, she received the Presidential Medal of Arts for combined work as an actor in films, on stage, and on television; as a writer of novels, short stories, and plays; and as a composer of poems.



Stephen Austin

Stephen Austin is one of two Missourians for whom a state capital is named. (The other is Christopher “Kit” Carson.) Austin was five when his family moved from Virginia to Missouri. After college, Austin was a businessman and a member of the territorial legislature in Missouri working for statehood.

Austin followed his father to the northern Mexican province of Tejas (which the Americans pronounced “Texas”) where Americans were trying to start a colony of farmers. He tried to convince the Mexicans to allow the American farmers to have their own Mexican state. When that failed, he joined the other Americans in fighting for an independent Texas republic. Texas won its independence in 1835. Austin became its secretary of state, trying to convince the United States to **annex** (to add on) Texas. He died in 1836 and was remembered as the “Father of Texas.” The Texas capital, Austin, was named in his memory.





Josephine Baker

Josephine Baker was born in St. Louis in 1901. As a little girl, she danced and sang on the sidewalk outside a theater for nickels and dimes so she could buy food and stay warm. It was not long before she was singing and dancing inside the theater. Her talent took her to New York, where she became a star, and then to Paris, where she became an even bigger star. Baker became a French citizen in 1937. During World War II, she was a French spy working against the Germans.

After the war, she worked to improve relations between the races, and she and her husband adopted 12 children of different races. She often came back to the United States and St. Louis to speak out for civil rights. She was on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., when he delivered his “I Have a Dream” speech in 1963. She died in 1975 and was given a hero’s funeral in France.



Count Basie

William Basie was born in New Jersey in 1904. He learned to play the piano and became a jazz musician, picking up the nickname “Count.” In 1928, he came to Kansas City and joined Bennie Moten’s Kansas City Orchestra, one of the leading jazz bands in the county. At the time, Kansas City attracted the country’s best jazz musicians. The music they created was called “the Kansas City Sound.”

In 1936, Basie formed his own band, the Count Basie Orchestra. It quickly became one of the most popular bands in the country, sold thousands of records, and appeared in several movies. After the band broke up, Basie continued to play and appeared on television specials. He also played at the White House for the President and the Queen of England. In 1981, he received a Kennedy Center Honor, one of the highest honors that can be given a performer in this country. Basie died in 1984.



James P. Beckwourth

James P. Beckwourth was brought to Missouri as a slave when he was ten years old. His owner allowed him to go to school and later freed him. He joined a group of fur traders going west to explore the Rocky Mountains and then became a mountain man. He was known as one of the best trail guides for wagon trains heading to Oregon and California. For a



while, Beckwourth lived with the Crow Indians and was made an honorary chief. He later ran a trading post and a hotel. In the end, he returned to live with the Crow and died in a Crow village in 1866.

Thomas Hart Benton

There have been two famous Thomas Hart Bentons in Missouri history. The first was born in North Carolina and came to Missouri in 1814. He was the editor of a newspaper and worked to make Missouri a state. When that happened in 1821, Benton was elected one of its first two U.S. senators. As a senator, he worked to make it easier for farmers and small business owners to buy land to help settle the American frontier. He opposed slavery and that led to his defeat for reelection in 1851. He later served one term as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives. Benton, the politician, died in 1858.

The second Thomas Hart Benton was the grandnephew of the first. He was born in Neosho in 1889 and began studying art as a teenager. He worked as a *draftsman*, a person who draws plans for buildings. At the same time, he began painting scenes from Missouri and American history. He became famous for his murals and was asked to paint one for the lobby of the House of Representatives in the Capitol in Jefferson City. Finished in 1936, “The Social History of Missouri” shows various scenes of life and historic events in the state—good and bad. When it was unveiled, it shocked and angered some people, but today it is considered a masterpiece and one of the Capitol’s most popular attractions. Benton, the artist, died in 1975.

Charles (Chuck) Berry

One of the first persons to be inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame when it opened in 1986 was Charles (Chuck) Berry. Born in St. Louis in 1926, Berry is considered a pioneer of rock-and-roll music as a guitar player, singer, and songwriter. He had many hit songs that he performed himself and many more that he wrote for other musicians. His music and guitar-playing style influenced many of the superstars of rock music. He received a Kennedy Center Honor in 2000, one of the highest honors a performer can receive in the United States. Berry still plays at his nightclub in St. Louis.



George Caleb Bingham

George Caleb Bingham began drawing as a boy, about the time his family moved from Virginia to Franklin, Missouri. When floods washed Franklin away, the Bingham family moved up river to Arrow Rock. Many of the pioneers, traders, and fur trappers leaving for the West started their adventures in Arrow Rock, which was a busy river port at the time.

As a young man, Bingham made his living painting portraits of people, but after traveling to Philadelphia and seeing an exhibit of paintings showing scenes of colonial life, he decided to start painting scenes of frontier Missouri. His paintings of riverboat men, speech-making politicians, fur traders, and Daniel Boone made him famous.

Bingham was also involved in politics, serving in the General Assembly before the Civil War and as state treasurer after the war. He was also the first chief of police of Kansas City and later taught art at the University of Missouri. He died in 1879.



Susan Blow

Susan Blow was born in St. Louis in 1843. A schoolteacher, she made a trip with her family to Germany. There, she visited several private schools and saw a program the Germans called *kindergarten*, meaning “children’s garden.” The program was intended to help little children get used to going to school while teaching them simple things like shapes and colors and the alphabet.

Upon returning to St. Louis in 1873, she convinced William Harris, the superintendent of schools in St. Louis to allow her to open the first public kindergarten in the United States. This was very important for the many children of immigrants who had just arrived in St. Louis and did not speak English. Blow and her helpers made the kindergarten a happy place, with flowers, lots of light and color, and music.

There were 38 children enrolled the first year. Before long, St. Louis had 30 kindergartens. Teachers and school officials from all around the country came to see the Missouri kindergartens. Soon the idea spread across the United States. Blow even started a school to train kindergarten teachers.



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Lucille Bluford

Even though she was a graduate of the University of Kansas and the managing editor of a newspaper—quite a feat for an African American woman in 1939—Lucille Bluford could not enroll in the journalism school at the University of Missouri. She was told the university was not open to African Americans.

So she sued the state to allow her into the journalism school. This was a brave act. The civil rights movement was just beginning and not very strong in Missouri, where schools were segregated. The court ruled that the state did not have to admit her to the program at the University, but it did have to start a separate journalism school for African Americans at Lincoln University, then an all-black school. Bluford enrolled in that program and was one of its first graduates.

She went on to become a famous journalist and was the editor of the African American newspaper in Kansas City, *The Call*. Under her editorship, *The Call* was a leader in the civil rights movement in Missouri. Bluford was one of the first appointees to the Missouri Human Rights Commission in 1957. In 1989, she finally received a degree from the University of Missouri—an honorary doctorate degree, the university's highest honor, for her work in journalism and civil rights. Bluford was born in Kansas City in 1911 and died in her hometown in 2003.



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Daniel and Nathan Boone

Daniel Boone was a famous frontiersman who helped to settle Kentucky. His two sons often came to Missouri to hunt and trade for furs with the Native Americans. One of his sons, Nathan, moved to Missouri in 1798 and settled near the present-day town of Defiance in St. Charles County. Nathan and his brother, Daniel Morgan Boone, started a salt business using a salt spring in Howard County called Boone's Lick. Mules carried the salt to St. Charles on the Booneslick Road, one of the first major roads in Missouri.

Daniel visited his sons often. He later moved into a house near Nathan's. At the time, Missouri was part of Spain's New World colonies. The elder Daniel was so famous that the Spanish governor made him a judge. He would often sit under a giant oak tree outside his house and hear court cases. Daniel died in 1820 and was buried in a family cemetery near Marthasville in a grave near his wife, Rebecca.



Nathan became famous as leader of a militia unit that defended the Missouri Territory from the British in the War of 1812. He was later sent to the frontier in present-day Kansas and Oklahoma to survey state boundaries and to keep the peace between white settlers and the Native Americans who had been forced to move there. Nathan served as territorial governor of both Texas and New Mexico at one time. In the meantime, he had moved his wife, Olive, and their 14 children to Ash Grove in Greene County. The house they built is now a state historic site. Nathan died in 1856, and Olive died a few years later. They are buried near their home.

Christopher “Kit” Carson

Christopher Carson, or “Kit” as he was called all his life, moved with his family from Kentucky to Missouri in 1809 when he was two years old. They lived in the river town of Franklin, where he heard the tales of pioneers, trappers, traders, mountain men, Indians, and explorers. When he was 16, he ran away and joined a wagon train on the Santa Fe Trail and headed west. Carson later became a fur trapper and a famous guide for groups exploring the West. He joined the army during the Civil War but fought against Native Americans, not Confederates. He and his soldiers killed many Native Americans and forced others off their lands. After the war, he left the army and died in 1868. The capital of Nevada was named Carson City in his memory.



George Washington Carver

George Washington Carver was born a slave in 1864 near Diamond, in the southwest corner of Missouri. After his parents died (and after slavery had been abolished), the people who had owned his family, Moses and Susan Carver, brought George up as their own son. His boyhood home is now a National Historic Site.

Carver learned to read and write and was fascinated by nature. He worked many jobs to save the money needed to go to school and college. He earned a master's degree in agriculture. In 1896, he became a teacher at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, a famous school for African Americans started by Booker T. Washington.

Carver was interested in how crops were being grown in the South and how the soil was being destroyed. That was partly because farmers grew cotton in the same fields year after year. Carver knew that if farmers rotated their cotton crop every other year with a peanut crop, the peanut plants would replace the nutrients taken from the soil by the cotton. But farmers could not make much money growing peanuts, since most people only ate them right out of the shell.

Carver began experimenting to find more uses for the peanut. By the time he died in 1943, he had developed 300 products made from peanuts, including face powder, printer's ink, soap, and a milk substitute. The most famous product, though, was peanut butter. Carver's work is credited with saving southern farmers from ruin.

Sheryl Crow

Sheryl Crow was born in Kennett in 1962. After graduating from the University of Missouri in Columbia she taught music at an elementary school in Fenton while singing in a band on the weekends. She began singing advertising jingles, the songs you hear in radio and television ads, including one for McDonald's restaurants. She was also a back-up singer for Michael Jackson.

Crow released her first album of songs in 1993, and many of them were hits on the radio. At the 1994 Grammy Awards, she was named Best Female Vocal Performer and Best New Artist. More hit songs followed and so did more awards. She has won nine Grammy Awards and three American Music Awards. She writes many of her own songs.

Crow is a breast cancer survivor and uses her musical talents to raise money for cancer research and efforts to protect the environment. She continues to write and record songs and appear in concerts. You can still hear her music in movies and ads.

Walt Disney

Walt Disney was born in Chicago in 1901, but he spent much of his boyhood on a farm near Marcelline in northwest Missouri. He started drawing at a young age and was selling his drawings to neighbors at age seven. Legend has it he drew his first cartoon mouse on the side of a neighbor's barn using a tar brush.



As a young man, Disney moved to Kansas City to go to art school and had an art studio in the house he rented. That house is now a state historic site. In his studio, he started drawing animated (moving) cartoons. However, he knew, that if he wanted to become famous, he had to open a studio in Hollywood. In 1928, he created Mickey Mouse, one of the most famous cartoon characters in the world. The Walt Disney Studios went on to become famous for full-length animation features such as *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and *The Lion King* and movies such as *Mary Poppins* and *High School Musical*.

In 1955, Disney realized another dream with the opening of the Disneyland amusement park in California. Disney died in 1966, but his studio and the company he started continue to produce television shows, movies, and animated cartoons. It also has a television network and parks in Florida, France, and Japan.

Rose Philippine Duchesne

In 1818, Rose Philippine Duchesne, a Roman Catholic nun, came to St. Charles from France with four other nuns. They planned to start a school for girls. At the time, there were no public schools in Missouri, which was still a territory. Only wealthy families could afford to send their children to the few private schools. Mother Duchesne's school was different because it allowed poor girls to attend for free—the first free school west of the Mississippi River. The school is still in operation today.

Mother Duchesne later traveled all through the Missouri and Kansas territories. She started more than 40 schools—not only for white children, but also for black children and Indian children. She even lived among the Indians in Kansas for a while. But poor health forced her to return to St. Charles.

Mother Duchesne died in 1852. In 1988, the Roman Catholic Church said that she had done so much good for others that she should be declared a saint. St. Rose Philippine Duchesne was only the fifth American and is the first, and so far only, Missourian to be so honored.



Mary Engelbreit

One of the most popular greeting card artists in the United States is Mary Engelbreit. She started drawing at age 11 with an art studio in her bedroom closet in her home in St. Louis. After high school, she started drawing pictures for people, but what she really wanted to do was illustrate children's books. Instead, a book publisher suggested she do the artwork for greeting cards. Before long, she had her own greeting card company selling millions of cards, calendars, notebooks, and other objects with her cute figures and witty sayings. She also started a magazine about home decorating and a store to sell her artwork. In 2001, she finally realized her dream of illustrating a children's book.

Eugene Field

Have you ever recited the nursery rhymes “Winken, Bynken, and Nod” or “Little Boy Blue”? Then you have recited poetry by Eugene Field, who was born in St. Louis in 1850. His father was the attorney for Dred and Harriet Scott. Field went to the University of Missouri in Columbia and became a reporter and later editor of a newspaper in St. Joseph. He also worked for newspapers in St. Louis, Kansas City, Denver, and Chicago. While living in St. Louis, he began writing poetry and became famous for his children's poems. He died in 1895. His house in St. Louis is now a toy museum. Many elementary schools in the Midwest are named for Field.



Isadore “Friz” Freleng

Isadore “Friz” Freleng was born in Kansas City in 1906. He went to work as an artist at a Kansas City film company, where he met Walt Disney. When Disney moved to California to start a movie studio to make animated features, he invited a number of Kansas City artists to join him, including Freleng. Freleng later joined another studio, Warner Brothers, to work on cartoons to be shown with its movies. Called *Looney Tunes*, the cartoons featured Bugs Bunny, Porky Pig, Tweety Bird, Sylvester, Yosemite Sam, and Speedy Gonzales—all created by Freleng. The *Looney Tunes* cartoons won four Academy Awards. He also helped to create the Pink Panther cartoons. He died in 1995.



Cornell Haynes, Jr. (Nelly)

Known to rap music fans as Nelly, Cornell Haynes, Jr., was born in Texas but grew up in the St. Louis suburb of University City. He formed a rap group called St. Lunatics and recorded an album called “Country Grammar” that was a number-one best seller in 2001, selling more than 40 million copies. The album made Nelly famous and introduced the country to the St. Louis style of rap music. Nelly has since appeared in movies, written music for car commercials, started a clothing company and a soft drink company, and is a part-owner of a professional basketball team.

Langston Hughes

Langston Hughes was born in 1902 in Joplin. He was mostly reared by his grandmother, who instilled in him a love for language and storytelling by telling him stories about his ancestors. He began writing short stories, plays, and poems while in high school. Hughes worked at various jobs, including as a sailor on a cargo ship to Africa, and he also earned a college degree. He eventually moved to Harlem, a famous black neighborhood in New York City. He became famous for his plays, novels, and poetry, including *The Negro Speaks of Rivers* and *A Dream Deferred*. Hughes was active in politics and the struggle for civil rights. He died in 1967.

Rush Limbaugh

Rush Limbaugh, Jr., is one of the most-listened-to radio entertainers in the United States. His radio show blending political opinions and entertainment is heard on more than 600 radio stations from coast to coast, including several in Missouri.

He was born and grew up in Cape Girardeau in a family of lawyers. Rush, however, followed an early dream to be on the radio. He worked on a local station while still in high school. After high school, he worked as a disc jockey, playing music on several stations. In 1979, he went to work for the Kansas City Royals, promoting the baseball team.

Limbaugh returned to radio in 1984 in California as host of a talk show about politics. That led to his own show on a New York City radio station in 1988. The show became very popular and was soon syndicated (sold for use) on stations across the country.



Charles A. Lindbergh

In 1927, just flying across the state without stopping was a big deal. That is why it was hard to imagine someone flying solo (all alone) across the ocean to France. But 25-year-old Charles A. Lindbergh imagined it.

Lindbergh was an airmail pilot who flew a regular route into and out of St. Louis. His many close calls flying the mail through bad weather had earned him the nickname “Lucky Lindy.” He was always looking for faster and better airplanes and ways to make the public excited about flying, so he entered a contest to be the first to fly across the Atlantic Ocean.

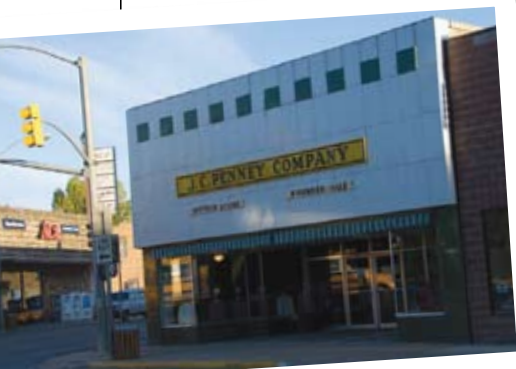
A group of St. Louis businessmen helped pay for his new airplane, which Lindbergh called the *Spirit of St. Louis*. On May 20, 1927, he took off from an airfield on Long Island, New York. To save weight for extra fuel, he had no radio and no parachute. He wasn't sure his compass was working. He had to guess that he was going in the right direction. Just as night fell on the second day, he saw the lights of Paris ahead of him. He landed at 10 p.m., having flown 3,600 miles in 33 hours and 30 minutes. The large crowd carried him away on their shoulders. When he returned to the United States, he was treated like a hero.



John Berry and Mary Meachum

John Berry Meachum was born a slave and worked in a mine to earn enough money to purchase his freedom. He moved to Indiana and married a woman named Mary who was still a slave. When her owner took her to St. Louis in 1815, John followed. A skilled craftsman, John was able to earn enough money to purchase Mary and their children from Mary's owner. During his lifetime, John purchased the freedom of many more slaves.

John became a minister and was named pastor of the First African Baptist Church in 1827. John and Mary began a school to teach African American children, but people who did not want slaves to be educated closed it down. When the Missouri legislature outlawed the teaching of African Americans in 1847, John bought a riverboat and anchored it in the Mississippi River, where the Missouri law did not apply. African Americans rowed out to the boat to attend classes at the “Freedom School.”



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When John died in 1854, Mary continued their struggle against slavery. The Meachum house became a stop on the Underground Railroad from which runaway slaves were ferried across the Mississippi to the free state of Illinois. The spot where the slaves crossed is now a National Historic Site.

James Cash Penney

James Cash (J. C.) Penney was born in Hamilton in 1875. After high school, he moved to Colorado and went to work for the owners of three Golden Rule stores. They sold him the stores in 1907, and he began opening more stores. He changed the name of the stores to J. C. Penney. By 1930, there were 1,400 J. C. Penney stores all around the country, including one in his hometown of Hamilton. Penney died in 1971, but the company he started still bears his name and still has stores all over the country.

Sacred Sun and Big Soldier

Sacred Sun and Big Soldier were Osage Indians who lived for a time in Missouri. Sacred Sun was known by her people as Mohongo. She was born around 1809 in an Osage village along the Missouri River in Saline County. Big Soldier's Osage name was Mo'n Sho'n A-ki-Da Tonkah. He was born around 1773 in the Osage village along the Little Osage River in western Missouri.

Big Soldier was a tribal leader who met with the leaders of the new United States and helped to negotiate treaties that were supposed to protect the Osage lands in Missouri. He traveled to Washington, D.C., and met with President Thomas Jefferson. Fur traders frequently visited Sacred Sun's village on the Missouri River, and she became well known to the trappers and traders. That is one of the reasons she was selected to go on a trip to France in 1827. Big Soldier was also one of the six Osage to make the trip.

In France, the Osage met the king and were seen by many people who were curious about the Native Americans. But when the sponsors of the trip ran out of money, the Osage were left to wander around Europe trying to find a way home. In the meantime, Sacred Sun gave birth to twin daughters. Eventually, the Marquis de Lafayette, who had helped the Americans in the Revolution, helped the Osage return to the United States.

Sacred Sun returned to St. Louis in 1830 and then rejoined her tribe, which by this time had been moved to a reservation in Oklahoma. She died around 1836. Big Soldier returned to his people, now in Oklahoma, and remained there the rest of his life. He died in 1844.

Helen Stephens

Imagine being just 18 years old and the “fastest woman on Earth.” That is what people called Helen Stephens. She was born in Fulton in 1918 and grew up on a nearby farm. In high school, she was only 15 when she tied the world records for the 50-yard dash and the long jump. People started calling her the “Fulton Flash.” In 1936, while a student at William Woods College, Stephens set a world record in the 100-meter dash and won gold medals in the 100-meter and 400-meter dashes at the Olympics. Her record in the 100-meter dash stood until 1960. After the Olympics, Stephens played professional basketball and put on track and field demonstrations.

She served in the Marine Corps in World War II. Then she went to work for the federal government until she retired. She did not let retirement slow her down, though. She competed in the Senior Olympics and became a spokesperson for the Show Me State Games. Helen Stephens died in 1994.

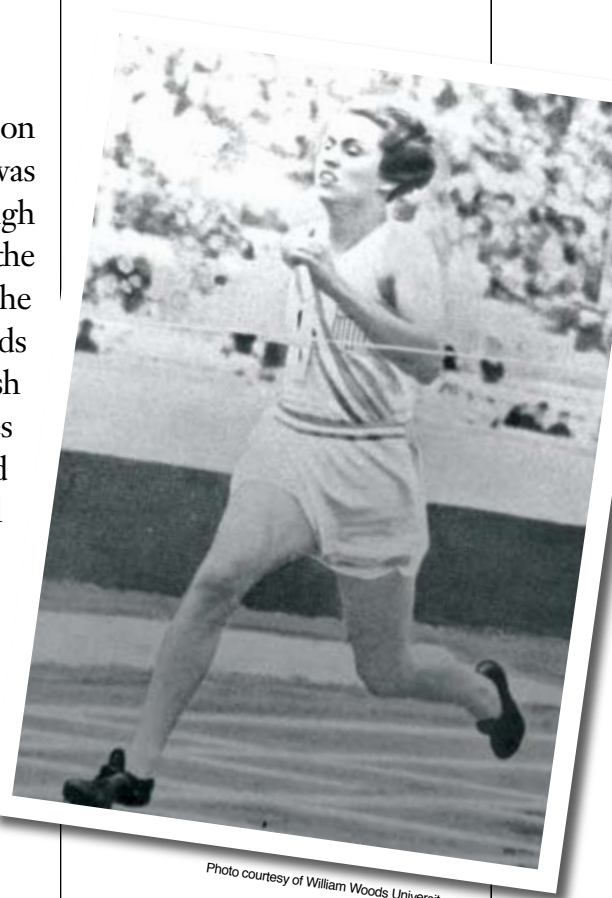


Photo courtesy of William Woods University

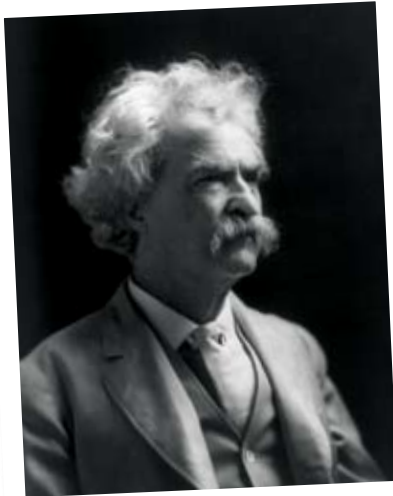
James Milton Turner

James Milton Turner was born a slave in St. Louis around 1839. His father was a skilled horse doctor who was able to purchase the family’s freedom in 1843. Turner attended Oberlin College in Ohio for a year before he had to return to St. Louis to help support his family after his father died. He went to work as a butler for a man whose brother-in-law became governor of Missouri after the Civil War.

The governor appointed Turner assistant state superintendent of schools in charge of establishing schools for freed blacks. He was able to start schools in many of the state’s counties and to obtain financing for Lincoln Institute (now Lincoln University), a college started by black Civil War veterans to train teachers for black schools. He also helped to start the Missouri Equal Rights League, the first African American political organization in the state.



President Ulysses Grant appointed Turner ambassador to Liberia, a country in Africa settled by former slaves from the United States. He was the first African American appointed to a diplomatic post. Later, he worked as a lawyer to help freed slaves resettle in Kansas and Oklahoma, and he fought for the rights of Native Americans in those states. He died in 1915.



Mark Twain

Samuel Clemens was born in 1835 in the small northeast Missouri village of Florida. He grew up in nearby Hannibal, watching riverboats go up and down the Mississippi. He became a riverboat pilot and later, when he became an author, he remembered the riverboat crew's call of "mark twain" to signal that the river was deep enough for the boat to pass. He used it as his *pen name*—another name an author uses instead of her or his real name.

As Mark Twain the author, he wrote many books about growing up along the river. His books told of the adventures of a group of friends—Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn, Becky Thatcher, and a runaway slave named Jim. Perhaps Twain's most famous book is *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, which told of Jim and Huck's trip down the Mississippi on a raft. It was written in 1884 and was one of the first American novels to use language just as it was spoken—incorrect grammar, slang, and local sayings.

Twain also wrote about his adventures as a miner and a newspaper writer in the West and in Hawaii, about his travels to Europe, and many other subjects. His stories were usually humorous and poked fun at the silly things humans often do. His books are famous around the world. Twain is considered one of our country's greatest writers. He died in 1910.

Samuel M. Walton

Samuel (Sam) Walton was a hard worker even when young. He was born in Oklahoma in 1918 but moved to Missouri with his family as a young boy. While in the eighth grade in Shelbina, he became an Eagle Scout in the Boy Scouts, one of the youngest boys to ever earn that honor. In high school in Columbia, he played football and was on the student council. He still found time to work at odd jobs to help support his family during the Great Depression.



After high school, Walton went to the University of Missouri in Columbia and studied business. He went to work for the J. C. Penney Company after graduation, but he left to join the Army during World War II. After the war, he bought several variety stores in Missouri, Arkansas, and Kansas that were very successful and taught him new ways to attract customers. He opened his first Wal-Mart store in 1962.

Wal-Mart is now one of the biggest retailing companies in the world with stores around the globe. The success of the stores made Walton one of the richest men in the country. In 1992, he received the Presidential Medal of Freedom shortly before he died.

Laura and Rose Wilder

When Laura Ingalls was a little girl, her family moved from a cabin in the woods of Wisconsin to the prairies of Kansas and then to Minnesota and finally to South Dakota. In South Dakota, Laura met Almanzo Wilder. They were married and had a baby they named Rose. Drought and hard times made the family move from South Dakota twice. The second time, in 1894, they moved to southwest Missouri to a dairy and fruit farm near the town of Mansfield. They called the farm Rocky Ridge.

Laura began writing stories about pioneer life for newspapers and magazines. Her daughter convinced her to write books based on her adventures as a little girl. Laura wrote the books, and Rose edited them. Laura's first book, *Little House in the Big Woods*, was published in 1932. It was very popular. In 1935, she wrote *Little House on the Prairie*, about her family's adventures in Kansas and South Dakota. It also became a best seller and was later made into a television series. Laura wrote several more books about life on the prairie and in small towns. She died in 1957; Almanzo had died in 1949.

Rose Wilder grew up to be a famous newspaperwoman, editor, and author and was very active in politics. She died in 1968 and is buried near her mother and father in Mansfield. You can visit Rocky Ridge and a museum about the mother and daughter authors.

