

African American Heritage Driving Tour of The Confluence

The following sites in The Confluence are suggested for exploring African American Heritage in The Confluence. The sites can be visited in any order.

Stop 1: Historic Old Courthouse

For more than 150 years, the Old Courthouse has been one of St. Louis' most prominent historical and architectural landmarks. Thirteen courtrooms, used from 1845 to 1930, were the scenes of some of America's most famous trials. The first two trials of the Dred Scott case (1847 and 1850) were held here. Scott, a slave, pleaded with the court to grant him his freedom at this site. Exhibits trace the history of the City of St. Louis from its founding as a French colonial outpost to the present day.

Address: 11 N. 4th Street, St. Louis, MO 63102

Driving Directions: *Two blocks west of the Gateway Arch, on 4th Street between Chestnut and Market Streets.*

Contact: 314/655-1700 or visit www.nps.gov/jeff

Participating Confluence Organization: National Park Service

Stop 2: Mary Meachum Freedom Crossing

Missouri's first nationally recognized Underground Railroad site is located along the St. Louis Riverfront Trail, three miles north of the Gateway Arch. It commemorates an attempted escape in 1855 by a group of fugitive slaves, led by Mary Meachum, a free woman of color and widow of the African American abolitionist preacher, John Berry Meachum. This event is remarkably different because the group was apprehended and, since the slaves belonged to the prominent St. Louisan Henry Shaw a detailed story of the escape was covered in local newspapers. Thus was preserved for posterity a rare example, with exact location, of an Underground Railroad event in Missouri – in fact, the first documented site in the state.

Features: a rest stop and native plant nursery are housed nearby in a former Coast Guard boat facility. The building features a spacious deck overlooking the river. It is staffed seasonally by the Grace Hill AmeriCorps Trail Rangers, who provide directions, general and mechanical assistance.

Driving Directions: Take I-70 north and exit at Adelaide. Go east on Adelaide (right) to Hall St (stoplight). Go south (right) on Hall Street to Prairie Street. Turn left at Prairie and enter the floodwall opening near the ADM grain elevators. At the trail turn right (south) and follow the trail to the historic marker and parking.

Bicycling Directions: The nine-acre site on the St. Louis Riverfront Trail is easily accessed by bicycle, three miles north of downtown St. Louis and just north of the Merchant's Bridge via the Riverfront Trail.

Contact: Doug Eller, Grace Hill Settlement House at 314/602-4808

Participating Confluence Organizations:

The Great Rivers Greenway District

Grace Hill Settlement House

Missouri Department of Natural Resources Office of Historic Preservation

National Park Service Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program

Trailnet - hosts weekly Tuesday Night Bicycle Rides along the Riverfront

Trail, May through August. The bike rides include a rest stop at the

Meachum Site. For more information visit www.trailnet.org.

Stop 3: Calvary Cemetery

This 447-acre Catholic cemetery, established in 1857, is the final resting place of many noted persons identified with the early history of St. Louis. Notable citizens interred at Calvary include: Dred Scott, the slave whose landmark suits for freedom contributed to the eventual Civil War and Madame Pelagie Aillotte Rutgers, a free woman of color and one of the early city's wealthiest property owners, and her husband Louis.

Address: 5239 West Florissant Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63115

Driving Directions: *From downtown St. Louis, take I-70 west to the West Florissant exit, #245B. Merge onto West Florissant and proceed 9/10-mile.*

Contact: Calvary Cemetery at 314/381-1313

Stop 4: Scott Joplin House

The second-floor apartment, now a National Historic Landmark, where ragtime legend Scott Joplin lived from 1900-1903 has been restored and furnished with period pieces to provide visitors a glimpse into the life of this African American composer. The site features exhibits on Joplin's life and St. Louis during the ragtime era. The Rosebud Café, a recreated Ragtime performance venue adjacent to the historic home, hosts concerts periodically. The third Sunday of each month the Friends of Scott Joplin host an open piano, 2:00 – 5:00 p.m. for fans, musicians and students of ragtime.

Address: 2658 Delmar Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63103

Driving Directions: *From I-40, take the Jefferson Avenue exit and proceed north through downtown St. Louis to Delmar Blvd. Turn west (left) and proceed one block.*

Contact: Victoria Love, Site Administrator at 314/340-5790

Participating Confluence Organization: Missouri Department of Natural Resources

Stop 5: Black World History Wax Museum: This multimedia educational and cultural center interprets Missouri's rich African American

heritage. The Museum's centerpiece is a restored log cabin, built as a slave family home in the 1830's. The Museum's collection includes wax figures of famous people (Dred and Harriet Scott, George Washington Carver, Josephine Baker, John Berry Meachum Madame C.J. Walker and Miles David), a scale model section of a salve ship and Beyond York, a living history interpretation of this African American explorer's participation in the Lewis and Clark expedition.

Address: 2505 St. Louis Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63106

Driving Directions: From I-40 or I-44 in St. Louis, exit at Jefferson Avenue and proceed north to St. Louis Avenue. Turn east (right) and proceed one block.

Contact: 314/241-7057

Stop 6: Missouri History Museum

The Missouri Historical Society's main building was dedicated in 1913 as America's first monument to Thomas Jefferson, architect of both the Louisiana Purchase and the Lewis and Clark Exhibition. The Society holds extensive collections in regional history and westward expansion, as well as significant collections of African American and Native American artifacts.

Address: Lindell & DeBaliviere, St. Louis, MO 63110

Driving Directions: *From I-40/64, exit at Kingshighway North. Go north to West Pine, turn left onto Lindell Blvd and proceed west to DeBaliviere. The Museum is immediately left of the intersection.*

MetroLink: *Exit the light rail system at the Forest Park stop and walk south two blocks along DeBaliviere.*

Contact: 314/454-3124 or visit www.mohistory.org

Participating Confluence Organization: Missouri Historical Society

Stop 7: East St. Louis Heritage Trail

East St. Louis was established in the mid-19th century as an industrial suburb of St. Louis, attracting a broad mix of industries that fueled the east side's rapid growth around the small site initially known as "Illinois town." This melting pot of cultural traditions, from a variety of European immigrant groups and the migration of African Americans from the southern states, led to growing racial and economic tensions that culminated in the East St. Louis riots of 1917. Angry white mobs rampaged through black neighborhoods: the total number of deaths from this period has never been established. During this time the subsequent industrial decline of East St. Louis was traced to simple economics: companies were initially lured to the community by generous tax incentives, which maximized revenues. When these enhancements eventually disappeared, profits fell, ultimately leading to decisions to close or relocate.

The Heritage Trail is a ¾-mile paved multi-use trail that connects the East St. Louis MetroLink station at 5th and Missouri Avenues to the East St.

Louis Higher Education Center campus and to the 8th Street neighborhood (via a "Y" trail formation).

Driving Directions: *From Downtown St. Louis take Eads Bridge east across the Mississippi River (the Bridge lanes become renamed as Riverpark Drive and then Broadway) to 5th Street. Park at the MetroLink lot or turn south (right) on 8th Street and park at the Higher Education Center campus.*

MetroLink: *Take the light rail system system east to the 5th and Missouri stop.*

Contact: 618/566-4451 or visit

www.swircd.org/swircd/projects/proj_archives.htm

Participating Confluence Organization: Southwestern Illinois Resource Conservation & Development, Inc. (SWIRCD)

Stop 8: Katherine Dunham Dynamic Museum

Katherine Dunham created renowned works of modern dance from her anthropological studies of traditional black Caribbean dance and culture. This museum documents her influential career as an artist, teacher, and choreographer using folk and contemporary art objects, musical instruments, ceremonial costumes, and artifacts from all phases of her career.

Address: 532 N. 10th Street, East St. Louis, IL 62201

Driving Directions: *From downtown St. Louis cross the Poplar Street Bridge and continue on I-55/70 east to the 4th Street exit, which touches down on Broadway. Turn right and proceed to 10th Street. Turn left onto 10th and proceed north about four blocks to Collage; here 10th Street is renamed Katherine Dunham Place. Continue another two blocks on Dunham Place to Pennsylvania Avenue; the museum is on the corner. Turn right onto Pennsylvania and left into the parking lot behind the building.*

Contact: 618/271-3367 or visit www.eslarp.uiuc.edu/kdunham

The museum is operated by the Katherine Dunham Center for Arts and Humanities.