



## National Archives to Offer Free Friday Summer Fun Tours

This summer, National Archives public affairs staff will offer Free Friday Summer Fun Tours of the facility and *We the People* exhibit. *We the People* highlights the millions of records that give insight into the lives of ordinary people. The 90-minute tour will provide visitors with an overview about records housed at the Archives.

Tour participants will also learn the history of the Adams-Express Building, which houses the National Archives at Kansas City, along with other features within the building. Tours will be offered on the following dates and times:



- Friday, July 12 at 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.
- Friday, July 26 at 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.

Group tours must be scheduled 72 hours in advance and are limited to no more than 10 people per group. Tours require walking or standing for approximately 90-minutes. More information about group tours can be found [here](#).

**Reservations are required;** call 816-268-8072 or email [kansascity.educate@nara.gov](mailto:kansascity.educate@nara.gov).

## Red Summer Remembered at the National World War I Museum and Memorial

On **Tuesday, July 30 at 6:30 p.m.**, the National Archives in partnership with the National World War I Museum and Memorial will present an evening lecture titled ***We Return Fighting: Red Summer Remembered*** with **Dr. Saje Mathieu** and **Cameron McWhirter**. This program will take place at the National World War I Museum and Memorial in the J.C. Nichols Auditorium, 2 Memorial Drive, Kansas City, MO. [Reservations](#) are requested for this **free program**.

Black soldiers returned from World War I with a newfound sense of pride and determination for full citizenship and equality. These veterans, however, came home to a country actively plagued by racial violence, discrimination and inequality. Their patriotic service aggravated racial tensions, catalyzing in the “Red Summer.” From May through September 1919, 25 riots targeting African Americans broke out in major cities across the U.S. from D.C. to Houston to East St. Louis, killing and injuring hundreds. On the centennial of this critical period in American history, Mathieu and McWhirter will examine the legacies of the Red Summer.



Dr. Saje Mathieu is the author of the upcoming *The Glory of Their Deeds: A Global History of Black Soldiers and the Great War Era* and Cameron McWhirter is a *Wall Street Journal* reporter and author of *Red Summer: The Summer of 1919* and the *Awakening of Black America*. This program is presented in partnership with the National World War I Museum and Memorial and the Greater Kansas City Black History Study Group.

# Hidden Treasures from the Stack

## A Troubled Bridge over Water

The St. Charles Bridge (also known as the Wabash Bridge) was constructed by the St. Charles Bridge Company, begun in August 1868 and completed in May 1871. It was the first bridge in St. Charles, Missouri, and the second to span the Missouri River. From its very beginnings, the bridge was troubled. In 1870, during construction, a 15-foot steel column collapsed, and 18 bridge workers were killed.

The bridge consisted of seven steel spans and two iron viaduct approaches, making the total length of the bridge 6,570 feet. The main spans were noted as being the “longest in the United States at the time of construction with the exception of [the] bridge at Louisville, which had twenty-six 300 foot spans and one 400-foot span.” The bridge was built to support a weight of 20,000 tons.

On November 8, 1879, the bridge failed. The *Missouri Republican*, a St. Louis newspaper, reported the event: “A span of the St. Charles Bridge gives away. A frightful disaster accompanied by loss of human life and vast destruction of property occurred at the bridge of the Kansas City Northern Railroad, which crosses the Missouri River at St. Charles, Missouri.” Apparently, “the west span of the bridge gave away under the pressure of a heavy train of cars (extra engine No. 107) at half past eight o’clock last evening, and precipitated the freight train into the river.” The train of 19 cars was loaded with cattle and hogs. Not only did 17 train cars fall into the river, a span of the bridge fell. Fortunately, “the Engineer heard the crash and pulled the throttle wide open, and broke the coupling, landing the engine and one car on the east span, saving the engine and crew.” However, there were still casualties. Three men died immediately, and two died shortly afterward, along with “two hundred cattle and two hundred hogs” lost.

The cause of the collapse was immediately investigated. The *Republican* contacted C. Schaler Smith, the original builder of the bridge, who explained rather unconvincingly: “The accident could not be attributed to defects in span as [the] Railroad Company had just placed new ties and would have detected any poor material. The indications are that a car jumped the track. . . The span gave way at both ends at the same time, showing there was a pull at the center. . .” He also commented that “the damage to the bridge will be about \$70,000” and would take “three to four weeks to put in a temporary span” and “several months for a permanent span. . . The immense pile of debris has completely blocked the western channel.” Not all agreed with his theory that a car jumped the track. The *Republican* reported, “J.S. Burlingham, in charge of the bridge, does not think derailment caused [the] wreck. . .but that a strong wind at 5:30 p.m. may have affected the structure.”

Numerous experts were called in to examine the fallen structure. Their conclusion was that “a derailment caused the wreck.” Steps were taken to prevent any reoccurrence, including making the floor system “the most modern, including double iron shod guard rails.”

The repairs were made, and the bridge re-opened to traffic again on December 10, 1879, just four weeks after the failure. Numerous officials were on hand to view the first freight train pass over the bridge.

Unfortunately, nearly two years to the date of the bridge re-opening, disaster struck again. On December 8, 1881, the St. Charles Bridge collapsed while a freight train crossed. The *Missouri Republican* again provided the details. A “train drawn by Engine No. 12, hauling 32 cars, had just cleared the trestle and got well onto the eastern span when there was a crash as the span parted from its fastenings and with train and all on it went into the river.” Jack Kirby, the engineer, was killed. Others, including the conductor and two stockmen, “jumped off the caboose onto the bridge and watched the train disappear, one car at a time.” The *Annual Report of the Railroad and Warehouse Commissioners* called it “the most serious accident” of the year. After the commissioners visited the scene, they sent a letter to John C. Gault, the Manager of the Wabash, St. Louis & Pacific Railway. The letter stated that “we therefore declare the centre through span of the bridge at St. Charles to be in the words of the Statute (Section 843, Revised Statutes of Missouri, 1879), ‘unfit for the transportation of passengers with safety.’ We also require in order to place the bridge in a reasonably safe condition, that the centre and eastern through spans be replaced with spans of the most approved design and construction, built entirely of wrought iron or steel, and proportioned to carry with proper margins of safety the heaviest locomotives and trains.” The commissioners also noted that once the improvements were made, “we are satisfied your road will become as good a one as can be made into St. Louis from the north side of the Missouri River, and that thereby the public interests will be as well served as is possible.” In addition, they noted “your line would

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regain not only its prestige, but also the millions in earnings which unquestionably have been lost by reason of the two disasters at St. Charles.”

In 1884, an accident of a different sort occurred as the steamboat *Montana* collided with the bridge. The wreckage of the boat remains and is visible today when the river is low. The troubled bridge was finally demolished in 1936 when a replacement bridge was completed to the north.

Records relating to the St. Charles (Wabash) bridge disasters and other bridges may be found in Record Group 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, also known as the Army Corps of Engineers. One of the essential missions of the Corps is “to provide safe, reliable, efficient, and environmentally sustainable waterborne transportation systems (channels, harbors, and waterways) for movement of commerce, national security needs, and recreation.” More information about Army Corps of Engineers can be found in the [National Archives Catalog](#).



Left: Photograph of Wreck of the Wabash Bridge, St. Charles, Missouri; Bridges, Obstructions to Navigation, Photos of Wabash Bridge Disaster, 1879, St. Charles, Missouri; General Records, 1844 – 1954; RG 77, Department of Defense. Department of the Army. Office of the Chief of Engineers. Lower Mississippi Valley Division. St. Louis District; National Archives at Kansas City.

Right: Photograph of the removal of the wreck of Wabash Bridge at St. Charles, Missouri; Bridges, Obstructions to Navigation, Photos of Wabash Bridge Disaster, 1879, St. Charles, Missouri; General Records, 1844 – 1954; RG 77, Department of Defense. Department of the Army. Office of the Chief of Engineers. Lower Mississippi Valley Division. St. Louis District; National Archives at Kansas City.



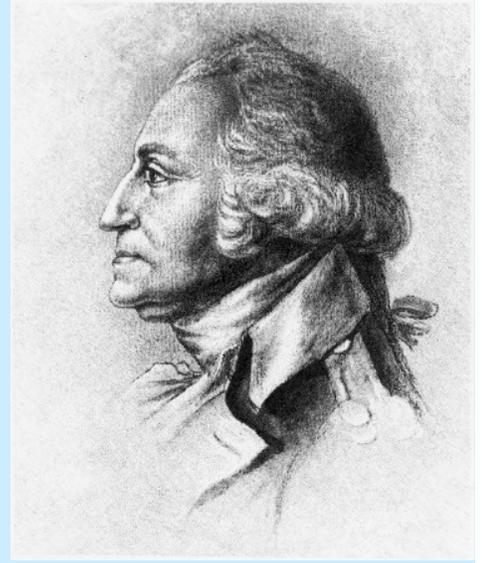
# Free Professional Development Opportunities for Educators

## **One Day Seminar - *The Presidency of George Washington* sponsored by MO Humanities Council**

**Wednesday, August 21 from 8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.**

**Location: National Archives at Kansas City, 400 West Pershing Road, Kansas City, MO**

Join teachers from across Missouri at the first seminar in a partner series between Teaching American History and the Missouri Humanities Council. This workshop will focus on the presidency of George Washington and how our first president established the office, dealt with challenges of governance and growing political parties, and set precedents that have lasted into current times. Lunch will be provided; a certificate for continuing education will be provided to all who attend; and a printed copy of the documents reader will be sent to all registrants in advance of the program. Please register at least three weeks in advance in order to ensure that you have a packet mailed to you. [Registration](#) is required.



Above: Original caption: Portrait of George Washington by Charles Saint Memin. This is the last portrait of Washington done from life and was taken by means of physiognotrace. RG 148, Records of the Commissions of the Legislative Branch, 1928-2007. NAID 100310859

## **Webinar - *Penpals from the Past: American Indian Schools in the United States***

**Wednesday, September 25 at 7:00 p.m. - Eastern Daylight Time**

Schools for Native American children and youth have existed since before the Revolutionary War. Although encouraged by the U.S. Government, schools between 1776 and 1879, were run primarily by religious institutions and, as a result, are not usually represented in National Archives holdings. In this webinar, we will learn about Indian Boarding and Day School records created primarily after 1879 by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and see some examples of class schedules and student work from then until today.

*This webinar is part of our Native American professional development series. Each program features new resources for locating and using Federal records related to American Indians and Alaska Natives.* [Registration](#) is required.



**NATIONAL  
ARCHIVES**

KANSAS CITY

**GENERAL INFORMATION:** The National Archives is open Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Closed on weekends and Federal holidays. Hours are subject to change due to special programs and weather.

The National Archives is located at 400 West Pershing Road, Kansas City, Missouri, 64108. The National Archives at Kansas City is home to historical records dating from the 1820s to the 1990s created or received by Federal agencies in Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota. For more information, call 816-268-8000, email [kansascity.educate@nara.gov](mailto:kansascity.educate@nara.gov) or visit [www.archives.gov/kansas-city](http://www.archives.gov/kansas-city). Tweet us @KCArchives or #KCArchives. Find and follow us on Instagram at: [kansascity.archives](https://www.instagram.com/kansascity.archives). Find us on Facebook [www.facebook.com/nationalarchiveskansascity](https://www.facebook.com/nationalarchiveskansascity).