



Missouri Day

JEFFERSON CITY — This week, the state will celebrate a day that maybe most of you haven't heard of: Missouri Day. The legislature in 1915 set the third Wednesday of October of each year as "a day commemorative of Missouri history to be observed by the teachers and pupils of schools with the appropriate exercises." The enacting statute further says people should consider "the achievements of the sons and daughters of Missouri in commerce, literature, statesmanship, science and art, and in other departments of activity in which the state has rendered service to mankind." Our state's accomplishments are many, and I'd like to take a few moments to highlight some of those here.

The idea of Missouri Day came from a certified student of history, Anna Lee Brosius Korn, a native Missourian born in 1869 in Hamilton, Missouri, to a family that also included an ambassador to Russia and department store chair founder J.C. Penney. She recognized the need for people, especially children, to know and understand the history of this state.

Our state has been at the cutting edge of this American society right from the beginning. From the earliest explorers, Father Jacques Marquette and Louis Joliet trekking up the Mississippi River in 1673, becoming the first Europeans to set foot on Missouri soil... to the establishment of Missouri as the 24th state with the landmark Missouri Compromise... to modern politicians such as President Harry S Truman and former U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft rising to some of the highest offices in the land... Missouri has been a land of innovation and change.

While most people know that the current State Capitol is in Jefferson City, for the first few years of statehood the capitol was just down the road from the 2nd Senatorial District in St. Charles. Up in Lincoln County, the City of Troy is home to Woods Fort, an outpost of the Missouri Territory built to protect the settlers of the area in the early 1800s. In fact, Zachary Taylor, who would go on to become the 12th President of the United States, was stationed at Woods Fort during the War of 1812 when settlers in Lincoln County were in a state of siege. Today, a historic log cabin and the well stones from that time stand on the site.

Further from home, we can enjoy the historic sites of the start of the Pony Express in St. Joseph in Northwest Missouri or look at dinosaur fossils at the Bollinger County Museum of Natural History in Marble Hill in Southeast Missouri.

There are the famous and infamous Missourians who have left their mark on American and world history including famed World War I General John "Black Jack" Pershing from Laclede or noted outlaw Jesse James from Clay County. They, just as everyone one of you, are part of the fabric that we know as Missouri.

So as we celebrate Missouri Day this Wednesday, I'd like each and every one of you to find historical facts and stories from your town or county or even your own family. Maybe it's a unique building that sits just down the block from your house. Maybe it's the natural bend of a river with fossils waiting to be discovered. Maybe it's the stories of your parents or grandparents and their stories of making it through the Great Depression and World War II. Whatever the case, these are the things that have made Missouri what it is today and what it will become in the future. I think Anna Lee Brosius Korn would be proud.

If you have comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by phone at (866) 271-2844.