



Famous Missourians

From author Mark Twain to scientist George Washington Carver, Missouri is home to many people who have made lasting contributions to not only the Show-Me State, but the world. Listed are some of Missouri's most-famous citizens, (including a couple who were born elsewhere but called Missouri home).

- **Harry S. Truman**, the 33rd president of the United States, is Missouri's most famous native son. Born in Lamar in 1884, Truman was a Jackson County judge, a U.S. senator, vice president of the United States, and president (1945-1953). Truman's boyhood homes, the summer White House, his first courtroom, the Truman Presidential Library and Museum, and his gravesite are in the Independence area. Truman's birthplace in Lamar is preserved as a state historic site.
- **Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain)** grew up in Hannibal, watching riverboats on the Mississippi. It was from riverboat jargon that he took his pen name, Mark Twain. His love for the river and for his Missouri boyhood is best reflected in his stories of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn. Twain's home and museum can be visited in Hannibal. In nearby Florida, his birthplace is preserved as a state historic site.
- **George Washington Carver** was born a slave near Diamond; the exact day and year are unknown, but probably before slavery was abolished in Missouri in January, 1864. He was a scientist, a botanist, an educator and an inventor, best remembered for his practical research, helping farmers make a better living from marginal soil. Much of Carver's fame centers on his research into peanuts and sweet potatoes. The most popular of his 44 practical bulletins for farmers contained 105 food recipes that used peanuts. He created nearly 100 products made from peanuts, including cosmetics, dyes, paints, plastics, gasoline, and nitroglycerin. Visitors to the George Washington Carver National Monument, near Diamond, see his birthplace cabin site, a statue of Carver as a boy, the Moses Carver house and the rock-walled family cemetery.
- **General John J. "Black Jack" Pershing**, born Sept. 13, 1860, near Laclede, became one of America's most distinguished military leaders. After graduation

- from West Point, his career included service in the Spanish American War and the campaign against Mexican bandit Pancho Villa. In 1919, in recognition of his distinguished service during World War I, the U.S. Congress authorized the president to promote Pershing to "General of the Armies of the United States," the highest rank possible for any member of the United States armed forces, which was created especially for him. Pershing's boyhood home in Laclede, restored with period furnishings, is a state historic site.
- **Jesse James**, Missouri's most infamous outlaw, was born near the site of present day Kearney, on Sept. 5, 1847. The farm home where Jesse and his brother, Frank, were raised is in Kearney. The home where Jesse was shot and killed by Robert Ford in 1882 is a museum on the grounds of the Patee House Museum, in St. Joseph. Moved from its original site, the small frame home has been preserved much as it was when Jesse James lived and died there as "Mr. Howard."
 - **Daniel Boone** was truly a legend in his own time. He was a pioneer, scout and Indian fighter. Boone came to Missouri in 1799 as governor of the Spanish-ruled Missouri territory. From a home in Defiance, which he built with his son Nathan, Daniel served as a judge. He explored much of the state and is remembered at places such as Boonville, Boone Cave and Boone's Lick. The stone home in Defiance, where Boone died in 1820, has been restored and is open for tours.
 - **Laura Ingalls Wilder** won international fame as the author of "Little House on the Prairie" and seven other "Little House" books for children. Born in Wisconsin, she came to live at Mansfield, in the Missouri Ozarks, in 1894. She was 65 in 1932 when she wrote her first book, "Little House in the Big Woods." She died in 1957. The simple frame house in which she wrote all of her books is open to visitors, along with an adjacent museum containing her manuscripts and Wilder family mementos.
 - **Thomas Hart Benton**, renowned artist, was born in Neosho in 1889. Two of Benton's best works are a mural in the State Capitol in Jefferson City, and one in the Harry S. Truman Library in Independence. The Capitol mural is a panorama of Missouri history; the Truman Library mural depicts Independence's role in the opening of the West. The Kansas City home where Benton lived and painted from 1937 until his death in 1975 is a state historic site.
 - **General Omar N. Bradley**, born near Moberly in 1893, commanded the Twelfth Army Group in World War II. The 12th Army, consisting of 1.3 million troops, was the largest American force ever united under one man's command. After the war, on Aug. 11, 1949, President Harry S. Truman appointed Bradley the first Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. On Sept. 22, 1950, he was promoted to the five-star rank of General of the Army. Bradley served 69 years on active duty, longer than any other soldier in U.S. history. He died in 1981.
 - **George Caleb Bingham**, considered by many to be the greatest American born artist, lived most of his life in Missouri. He is well known for his portraits and his paintings of life on the Missouri frontier. He had a long career of

- public service, including election to the Missouri legislature, service as state treasurer and as adjutant general. A restored home in Arrow Rock, where Bingham lived (1837-45), is part of a state historic site.
- **David Rice Atchison** was president for a day - maybe. In October 1843, Atchison was appointed to the U.S. Senate to fill the vacancy left by the death of Lewis F. Linn. He thus became the first senator from western Missouri. In 1849, Atchison held the office of President of the United States—for one day. The terms of President James K. Polk and Vice President George Dallas officially expired at noon on Sunday, March 4. However, president-elect Zachary Taylor, a very religious man, refused to take the oath of office on a Sunday. Therefore, Senator Atchison, president pro tem of the Senate, became president from noon March 4, until 11:30 a.m., March 5. Whether he “officially” was president is the subject of debate still today. Still, a monument stands in Plattsburg, honoring Missouri's “President for a Day.”
 - **Scott Joplin** spent most of his life in Missouri. The son of a former slave, Joplin possessed a talent for musical innovation that led him to become known as the “king of ragtime.” Living and working in Sedalia and St. Louis, he composed such well known works as “The Maple Leaf Rag” and “The Entertainer.” Sedalia honors Scott Joplin's memory each June with the Scott Joplin Ragtime Festival, featuring internationally famed performers. The apartment where Joplin lived while in St. Louis is a state historic site.

Other notable Missouri residents: **Walter Cronkite**, TV newscaster, born in St. Joseph; **Edwin Hubble**, astronomer, invented the Hubble Telescope, born in Marshfield; **Marlin Perkins**, TV host, zoo director, born in Carthage; **Josephine Baker**, singer/dancer/actress, born in St. Louis; **Walt Disney** animator, film producer, creator of Disneyland, born in Illinois, raised in Missouri; **Chuck Berry**, rock musician, St. Louis; **Sheryl Crow**, singer, born in Kennett; **Rush Limbaugh**, radio personality, born in Cape Girardeau; **J.C. Penney**, businessman and entrepreneur, born in Hamilton; **Dale Carnegie**, motivational speaker, Maryville; **Brad Pitt**, actor, born in Oklahoma, raised in Springfield; **Jon Hamm**, actor, born in St. Louis; **Cedric the Entertainer**, actor/comedian, born in Caruthersville.