N1: Narrator 1
N2: Narrator 2
The Michael Building/Butterfield Overland Stage

Introduction to tours

N2: Welcome to Tour Number 4: Westward Ho!

St. Louis grew rapidly in the 1840s and 1850s. The city saw a building boom, an influx of immigrants, and new wealth from the Westward Expansion of the United States. The first stop on this tour is located along the west walkway between the Arch Parking Garage and the north leg of the Gateway Arch. You will see that there are actually two parallel walkways. Starting at the garage, place yourself on the westernmost side, closer to the pond. You will come across the first label on one of the lamp posts at a point nearing the north leg of the Gateway Arch. Look for the tour label titled "Westward Ho!" Once you're at the location of the label, you should be able to look towards the Arch and see the concrete plaza surrounding the north leg. Imagine noises all around you, voices, some speaking a language you know, others peppering the air with exuberant expressions from a place far away. In this dynamic city, business and opportunity were the watchwords during the 1850s.

N1: New opportunities included businesses like the one that once stood on this spot. The building was known as the Michael Building, a three-story brick structure built in 1850, after the great fire of the year before.

N2: Like many other buildings at that time, the first floor façade was composed of storefront windows. On the first floor the Michael Building housed the Butterfield Overland Mail Company.

N1: With the addition of Texas and California as states in 1845 and 1850 respectively, the increased demand for transportation gave rise to a number of overland stage services. As the largest city west of the Mississippi River, St. Louis became the natural headquarters for many stagecoach companies. One of the most successful was the Butterfield Overland Mail Company.

N2: John Butterfield was an ambitious young man who grew up on a farm in New York State. By the time he was nineteen years old, Butterfield was a professional coach driver and began saving to start his own livery and coach company. The Butterfield Overland Mail Company served cities in New York and other eastern states.

N1: As his company grew, so did Butterfield's ambitions. In 1850, he joined Henry Wells and William Fargo in combining their separate companies into an express travel service, the American Express Company, with Butterfield serving as director. In 1852, the partners formed another company, Wells, Fargo & Company, to provide banking and express service to California.

N2: In 1857, Butterfield bid on a government contract to provide mail service between St. Louis, Missouri and San Francisco, California. The government awarded the $600,000 contract to Butterfield, who promised to deliver mail to San Francisco in 25 days or less.

N1: The race was on. Butterfield and his son, John Jr., drove the first leg of the initial journey. *New York Herald* correspondent Waterman L. Ormsby accompanied them on the ride:

ORMSBY: "Our road for the first few miles was very fair, coursing through several small prairies…We rode along at a somewhat rapid pace, because John, Jr., was determined that the overland mail should go through his section on time; and, though his father kept calling out, "Be careful, John," he assured him that it was "all right," and drove on."

N2: Over the course of two-and-a-half years, the Overland Mail made two 2,812-mile trips between St. Louis and San Francisco every week. The company employed more than 800 people, operated 139 relay stations, tended 1,800 head of stock and ran about 250 coaches and wagons. Butterfield made every effort and admonished his drivers, "Remember boys, nothing on God's earth must stop the mail!"

N1: Despite Butterfield's success in operating the service, Wells and Fargo were uncomfortable with the increasing amount of debt Butterfield incurred. In 1860, they forced him out of his position as president and took over operation of the business.

N2: Butterfield returned home to Utica, New York, where he helped to found the New York, Albany & Buffalo Telegraph Service, built and operated the Butterfield House hotel and served as mayor. During his short life in St. Louis, he left an indelible mark on the history of the west.

N1: Please proceed to the next stop, the Papin Building. Follow the west walkway towards the Gateway Arch. As you near the Arch, look up the path to the Old Courthouse. There you will find the next "Westward Ho! tour label attached to a lampost. Please pause your player until you reach that stop.

N1: You are now standing on the site of the Papin Building. It wasn't all that imposing a structure. The four story brick structure was built soon after the great fire of 1849. Like many other buildings in the riverfront district, it had three floors of commercial space to rent, and two storefront areas at street level with large windows and doors to attract customers in off the street. The building's claim to fame was the result of an event that took place here in 1854.

N2: In April of 1854, the United States Circuit Court in Missouri, a unit of the federal court system, were turned away from using space in the Old Courthouse, which was fully occupied with courts and offices. As a result, the federal court rented the second floor of the Papin Building to hear cases in St. Louis.

N1: In 1852, the Missouri Supreme Court had overturned a decision made in the Circuit Court of St. Louis. The case formally involved an enslaved family and their owner. The name on the docket: *Dred Scott.*

N2: When the case began in 1846, Dred and his wife Harriet sued their original owner, Irene Emerson, the widow of an army surgeon who had taken them to live in free territory, yet returned them unfreed to a slave state. As the case continued, Irene Emerson remarried, to an abolitionist congressman from Massachusetts, Calvin C. Chaffee. At some point, Irene Emerson Chaffee turned over the ownership of Dred, Harriet, and their daughters Lizzie and Eliza to her brother, John Sanford. Because

Sanford lived in New York, Roswell Field, the lawyer for the Scott family, decided to launch a new lawsuit in federal court.

N1: The members of the Scott family were urban slaves. Unlike many places in the agricultural south, the economy of the St. Louis community was not based on slavery. There were thousands of immigrants willing to take low-end jobs, and they did not require health care, clothing, food and housing as did a slave. Skilled professions were also sewn up, as labor guilds restricted those who could work as carpenters, masons and other trades.

N2: Dred Scott served as a porter at the Barnum Hotel, a luxurious establishment near the Old Cathedral. His wife Harriet worked as a laundress, as listed in the city directory. As slaves who were hired out, they were earning money, some of which they gave directly to their owner (in this case the sheriff until a trial decided their fate). Their two daughters were probably a leading reason why the family decided to act when they did: the eldest daughter Eliza was nearing the age when she would be hired out.

N1: This case was not that unusual for the time. In fact, over 300 similar cases were filed in the St. Louis Courthouse regarding this matter of slavery. In many of the cases, the enslaved person had been freed. The case took some unique turns. As it did, the city began to take notice. In 1847, Missouri lawmakers passed a law that forbade anyone to operate a school or teach reading and writing to any Negro or mulatto. Violation of this law could be punished by a fine of not less than $500 and up to six months in jail. Yet,

oral history tells of many “tallow candle” schools where people of color gathered to learn, and few arrests. The community definitely had mixed emotions.

N2: The Dred Scott case gained prominence, provoking people on both sides of the issue in the community. In 1854, the Federal Circuit Court determined, in a jury decision, that Dred and Harriet Scott were not entitled to their freedom just because they had been taken to free territory. Lawyer Roswell Field immediately took steps to move the case beyond the Papin Building to the highest court in the land.

N1: The U.S. Supreme Court announced its decision on March 6, 1857. It stated that Dred Scott could not sue in the federal courts because he was not a citizen. Further, slavery could not be restricted from any of the U.S. territories. When the decision was announced, people with anti-slavery leanings were angry. It was a major event leading to the Civil War.

N2: More information about this trial and its impacts can be found in the Historic Old Courthouse. A special exhibit runs through March 2008, and the movie *Slavery on Trial* is shown daily.

N1: Please travel to our next stop, the Great Fire of 1849. Follow the path west to Memorial Drive. Upon reaching the sidewalk along Memorial Drive, head south towards the Old Cathedral. At the first intersection of paths you come to, where a Park Service vehicle is temporarily parked, turn left following the path back towards the Gateway Arch. Look for a lamppost on your right with a Westward Ho! label attached to it. Please pause your player until you reach that stop.

N1: Captain Targee [TAR- zshay] and the fire of 1849. This stop, along the berm of the Gateway Arch grounds, is somewhat distant from the river, yet marks the point where the rampaging great fire of 1849 was finally stopped. In that year St. Louis was a thriving metropolis with a population of 77,000. During the late 1840s, the population had been booming due to westward expansion, the river trade, the Santa Fe trade, and the fur trade. With the discovery of gold in 1848 in California and the end of Mexican-American tensions in the west, thousands of people were now traveling across the Great Plains and St. Louis was the outfitter.

N2: This unprecedented growth had spurred the city in commerce and building. New buildings were made often of wood and many had gone up quickly. The construction practices of the day did not have safety codes. A few brick buildings were beginning to be intermingled in the town, when the financier had enough money to do so.

N1: The steamboat trade on the St. Louis riverfront was incredible. At this point, the city had developed approximately one mile of the levee in front of St. Louis. In the late 1840s, over 2500 steamboats docked each year. The steamboats were both side-wheelers and stern-wheelers, bringing goods from points east such as Pittsburgh and Louisville, south such as New Orleans, north from St. Paul, and west from Kansas City.

N2: Sometime on the night of May 17, the steamboat *White Cloud* caught fire. While no one knows exactly how, an 1850 report stated the boat had been painted that day and

sparks from a passing ship may have ignited the fumes from the paint and therefore the boat.

N1: Steamboat fires were not uncommon. The boats were simply pushed out into the middle of the river to burn. This was to be the same for the *White Cloud*. But on this night two things made this a bad decision. First, the *White Cloud* was moored on the north side of the levee, upstream from a mile of other boats moored side by side on the levee. Second, there was an unusual, heavy breeze from the east.

N2: The *Edward Bates*, immediately next to the *White Cloud,* also caught fire. As the *White Cloud* was cut loose, it bounced down the levee, igniting other boats as it passed. Although the current would ordinarily take the boat to the middle of the river, the breeze kept it near the river's western shore. It slowly blew back towards the city, igniting the boats at the south end of the levee.

N1: The levee, with mounds of wooden barrels, tobacco, hemp bales, and other freight recently unloaded, fueled the fire. The breeze, which had brought the *White Cloud* back to the shore, quickly carried sparks from the flames and moved into the downtown area. The water reservoir, which the city had been working on for years, ran dry within two hours.

N2: Some brick buildings were acting as fire breaks, slowing down the fire. People took wet blankets and placed them on roofs. The wind was beginning to shift, but many feared it would not be soon enough to save the city. The volunteer fire department had to do something and soon.

N1: Led by Captain Thomas B. Targee [TAR- zshay] of Missouri No. 5, the volunteers devised a plan to save the rest of the city. In order to save the Cathedral, the firemen decided to create a firebreak by exploding several buildings near 2nd Street. Targee and some other firemen began depositing gunpowder in a row of buildings where you are now standing, then lighting the powder.

N2: At Phillips Music store, the last building to be blown up, Targee was repeating this routine. Unfortunately, someone had already placed powder in this establishment. The building exploded while Targee was emerging. He died instantly. His was the first known death in the line of duty of a volunteer fireman in the United States. Although Targee died, he had accomplished his mission. He had saved the Cathedral.

N1: As the fires finally cooled and left the charred embers of buildings and riverboats, over 15 city blocks, approximately 418 buildings, 23 steamboats, and 3 barges had been destroyed. The estimated losses amounted to 6.1 million dollars. The only recorded deaths were Targee and two other men, although there may have been others. For such a large catastrophe, however, the death toll was very low.

N2: The city was determined to return to glory and did just that very swiftly. Please move to your next stop, a view of the Levee, to learn more about that story. To get there, walk east, going either under or around the Arch, to the top of the Grand Staircase that takes you down to the riverfront. When there, remain at the top of the stairs. Please pause your player and resume when you arrive at a point with a view of the Mississippi River and the riverfront.

N1: The St. Louis Levee – A changing river and a changing railroad

Standing at the top of the Grand Staircase you can get a magnificent view of the St. Louis Levee. Along the banks of the river, an inclined, paved ramp was built extending for over a mile and forming the hub of the port of St. Louis. This allowed a far greater number of steamboats to make landfall than a series of docks or floating barges could do. Imagine what the levee looked like in its heyday during the 1840s and 50s, when it was the third busiest port in America. Steamboats were lined up side by side for the entire length of the levee, with others standing out in the river waiting for a departure so that they could get a berth.

N2: It was on these banks that St. Louis experienced the great fire of 1849. Equally as bad that year was a cholera epidemic, spread by the horrible lack of sanitation in the burgeoning city. After the fire, the city planned to rebuild and to do it quickly. Within months, new buildings, such as the Papin Building, were being erected around downtown. All new buildings were to be of brick, taking note of one important aspect of fire prevention. Additionally, some of the other problems of the city, such as narrow streets and curved roads were remedied during this rebuilding.

N1: On the levee, teeming with steamboats, freight, travelers, carts, and draft animals, the noise level must have been incredible. Whistles blowing, people yelling, and horses neighing punctuated the activity. Originally the levee was built of limestone blocks, but

these were replaced in the early 1880s with the granite paving stones that can still be seen today. These stones were set upright for traction for the carts and wagons used to move goods from one boat to another, or to warehouses on the shore. Steamboats moved cargoes and goods along the Missouri River to the west, the Mississippi to the north and south, and the Ohio River and markets further east. The port was used by overland emigrants bound for the gold fields of California or to seek "free" lands in the Oregon country. Many bought their supplies in St. Louis, including wagons and livestock, and rented cargo space on steamboats bound for Kansas City or Omaha and the head of the overland trails.

N2: Most folks traveled by river transportation. For the few that came overland, the Piggott's Ferry was available to bring them into the city from Illinois. By the 1850s there were rail lines on each side of the river, but no way for trains to get across. On October 15, 1849, the City and County of St. Louis funded a national convention to discuss the construction of telegraph and railroad lines between the west and the east. The future of transportation, many thought, lay not on the rivers, but along rails of steel, and St. Louis needed to be at the forefront of this new technology. The convention, though hosted by St. Louis, did not go exactly as planned. Although Senator Thomas Hart Benton made an impassioned speech, the delegates were not convinced that St. Louis was the only logical site for the terminus of transcontinental rail routes into the West. In the end, the convention suggested three cities: Memphis, Chicago, and St. Louis.

N1: The Missouri Assembly remained hopeful enough with the convention decision to support the future of railroads in Missouri. In 1851, ground-breaking ceremonies were held for the first rails west, leaving St. Louis near 14th Street and going west toward Kirkwood Station. By December of 1852, trains were moving along this part of the tracks.

N2: The citizens of Missouri funded most of this work, while the railroads received millions of dollars in subsidies. The President of the Pacific Railroad even relinquished his post at one point to become a state senator, ensuring the continued state funding of the industry.

N1: However in the 1850's most people were not that farsighted. St. Louis businessmen could see where the money was; on the levee, where business was booming. And until someone could design a bridge to span the river at St. Louis, rail traffic was not as efficient or practical as the river highways. However, the looming Civil War would bring great changes to St. Louis, and especially to the levee.

N2: Thank you for joining us for this episode of *It Happened Here.* We look forward to sharing more information about this National Park Service area, Jefferson National Expansion Memorial.