



# Birth of Alton

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It was from the Alton area, in 1783, that Lewis and Clark began their expedition to the Northwest. In 1814, Rufus Easton, a land speculator from St. Louis, began acquiring land for a settlement on the Illinois bank of the Mississippi. The life of official Alton began in 1818 when Easton platted the community and named it for one of his seven sons. In designing the town, he named streets for his daughter, Alby, and sons Alton, George, Henry, and Langdon. The drawing assigned an area for a boat landing and sites for squares, commons, schools, and churches.

Although he gave birth to the community, Easton never lived in Alton. He failed to attract sufficient buyers and his plans disintegrated with the national bank failure in 1819. Eventually, his properties went to other speculators. Alton was incorporated in 1837.

Industrialization began in the Alton area in 1831 and expanded rapidly throughout the latter part of the 19th century. At one point, the city boasted of more millionaires (per capita) than any city in the nation.