



Old Courthouse and Gateway Arch to Host Black History Month Events

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As the U.S. celebrates Black History Month this February, the Old Courthouse and the Gateway Arch in downtown St. Louis will present a variety of programs and films chronicling the rich heritage of African-Americans and honoring their many contributions to our nation.

As the site of the first two trials of the pivotal Dred Scott slavery case in 1847 and 1850, the Old Courthouse is nationally significant in African-American history. While the structure was the site of hundreds of suits for freedom, it was the Dred Scott case that helped plunge our country into Civil War. The case was first brought to trial in 1847, but was thrown out because of hearsay evidence. During a second trial in 1850, Dred Scott and his wife sued for, and were granted, their freedom. After many appeals, the case wasn't finally decided until the Supreme Court ruled that slaves were property and had no right to sue. During Black History Month, the Old Courthouse will host reenactments of this landmark case, giving members of the public the chance to act out scenes from Dred Scott's 1850 trial. The reenactments are free and open to the public, and will take place at 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. each Saturday and Sunday during February.

Throughout February, the Courthouse will also host a film series saluting other great African-American historical figures. From Feb. 1-7, members of the public can view the film "Frederick Douglass: An American Life," highlighting the story of the social reformer, orator, writer, and abolitionist leader. During the week of Feb. 8-14, visitors can see the film "Booker T. Washington: Looking to Learn," a piece highlighting the story of educator, author, orator, and advisor to Republican presidents. Booker T. Washington also represents the last generation of black American leaders born into slavery. From Feb. 15-21, the film "Carver: Man of Vision," highlighting the life of scientist, botanist, educator, and inventor George Washington Carver, will be presented. Carver was born into slavery in Missouri in 1864. The film series will wrap up Feb. 22-

28, with a viewing of "Never Lose Sight of Freedom," a film highlighting the civil rights battle in the south. The films will run from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. each day, and will begin every hour at half-past the hour.

At the Gateway Arch's Museum of Westward Expansion, a special program called "Blacks in the West" will be presented at 1:15 p.m. and 3:15 p.m. each Saturday and Sunday during February. Covering a different topic each week, the program will chronicle the black experience in the American West and tell the tales of the Westward Expansion from an African-American perspective.

The Museum of Westward Expansion's special exhibits gallery will also host a film series during February starting Feb. 1-7 with "The Martin Luther King National Historic Site," a film highlighting the MLK site in Atlanta, Ga. From Feb. 8-14, guests can view the film "Underground Railroad," which provides a historic overview of the Underground Railroad. During the week of Feb. 15-21, the museum will show a biographical film highlighting the life and times of Maggie Walker, an African-American teacher and businesswoman who became the first female bank president and the first woman to charter a bank in the United States. The museum's film series will wrap up Feb. 22-28 with a showing of "Dred Scott: Freedom on Trial," a film chronicling the Dred Scott slavery case.

"With the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial playing such an important role in African-American history, we're excited to celebrate Black History Month with this lineup of programs and films," said Ann Honious, Chief, Museum Services and Interpretation, Jefferson National Expansion Memorial. "Throughout February, we encourage area residents, young and old, to come visit the Old Courthouse and the Gateway Arch to learn more about the incredible contributions of African-Americans to our nation."

The Old Courthouse and the Gateway Arch are part of the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, located on the riverfront in downtown St. Louis. The Old Courthouse is open daily from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., with the exception of Thanksgiving, Christmas Day and New Year's Day. During the winter months, the Arch's Museum of Westward Expansion is open daily from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., with the exception of Thanksgiving, Christmas Day and New Year's Day. The Gateway Arch partners include the National Park Service; its cooperating association, Jefferson National Parks Association; and Metro Business Enterprises, who work together with their downtown neighbors to make the visitor experience even better.