

# Generations of Missouri

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## The 24th State Chapter One

Annie, age 12 | 1821

Annie stood on the edge of the market, looking at the river. The Mississippi's current was strong today, constantly flowing. Fur traders were pulling their boats up onto the muddy shore to unload goods for market. The thick Missouri humidity rose from the river that August day with a chorus of cicadas pulsing from the treetops. Annie was glad her mother had made her a dress in the new fashion with a hemline that reached her calves rather than her ankles. The shorter dress was a welcome relief.

"Ready, Annie?" her father said, approaching her side.

"Yes, sir!" she said, eager to accompany her father on errands.

Annie and her father watched the Missouri Fur Company traders unload the thick, shiny beaver pelts. Their grizzled beards and rough clothing showed they were ready for the adventure of moving up and down the river, trading with various tribes. The traders' lives seemed a long way off from hers, the daughter of a business manager, living in a sturdy house.

They started off for the market with Annie skipping along behind her father.

There was an electricity in the marketplace; it felt different, like people were celebrating. The usual

sights surrounded her: people bustling to and fro with baskets, a butcher draining blood from a pig, black slaves doing the bidding of their white owners. Annie's family didn't have slaves, but she knew they were a part of St. Louis. Slaves accounted for nearly 2,000 people in her almost 10,000-person town. She was used to seeing all this, but today did feel different.

"It's a big day, Annie," her father said as if reading her mind. "Today, we no longer live in the Missouri Territory. Today we live in the State of Missouri."

"Is that why everyone is excited?" Annie asked. She knew that Missouri had been hoping to become a state, but it seemed to her as if everyone had spent years talking about it. And now it had actually happened?

"Yes indeed!" her father chuckled. "It's official now, Missouri is the 24th state! We first asked to be a state in 1818."

"That long ago?" Annie asked, doing the math. She was only nine in 1818, practically a baby. "Why did it take so long?"

"Well," he told her. "It all came down to the Missouri Compromise. If Missouri had joined the Union in 1818 as a slave state," he said, nodding to the slaves around the marketplace, "it would have thrown off the balance between free and slave states in the Union. So, it was decided to separate Maine from Massachusetts. With Maine as a free state and Missouri as a slave state, it's still an even balance," he explained.

Annie began to understand the machinations that allowed Missouri to attain statehood and she thought, Missouri, finally a state!

### NEWSPAPER CONNECTIONS

**Look for stories that use the word Bicentennial and create a list of these.**

