



A turn-of-the-century women's apparel and hat store lives again in Chillicothe in the same downtown location as its original storefront, thanks to [Main Street Chillicothe](#) and local artist [Kelly Poling](#).

[MISSOURI ARTS COUNCIL](#) • SEPTEMBER 2015

Wondrous Walls: Missouri's Mural Cities

by *Barbara MacRobie*

People have been painting on walls ever since that was the only canvas they had. Today, people throughout the world are finding that paintings on walls, especially outside walls, can engage and empower their communities. Public murals revitalize streetscapes, encourage business development, and attract tourism. "Bus tours come to Chillicothe," Main Street Chillicothe director Micah Landes told us, "especially to see our murals." Murals make the streets "welcoming and walkable," said St. Louis muralist Grace McCammond, "and they make you want to go there." Murals are so effective that some communities, like Chillicothe, have even created formal programs to make more of them. Several cities in Missouri are especially rich in outdoor murals. Come walk with us along their walls.

Cape Girardeau

The city

On the banks of the Mississippi River, with about 38,000 people, Cape Girardeau is the hub of Missouri's southeast. The city got its start in the 1730s as a French trading post and boomed in the 19th century as a steamboat port. The downtown is now thriving under the impetus of the nonprofit [Old Town Cape](#), which was honored in 2015 with the National Trust for Historic Preservation's [Great American Main Street Award](#). [The Arts Council of Southeast Missouri](#) spearheads events such as [First Friday With the Arts](#) gallery walks and an annually changing [exhibit of sculptures](#) along Broadway. Cape Girardeau is a vibrant college town, especially as the home of Southeast Missouri State University, whose [River Campus](#) is entirely devoted to visual and performing arts.



City side of the floodwall, *Mississippi River Tales* by [Thomas Melvin](#): *The Big Flood* – [photo](#) by Larry J. Summary / [CC BY-SA 3.0](#)

The murals

The tally of Cape Girardeau's many murals has been steadily ticking upward since 1973, when Southeast Missouri State University art professor Jake Wells completed a massive work for the university's Kent Library portraying the region's industries of agriculture, timber, mining, and river.

The river is the reason for the city's most spectacular murals. The Mississippi had always been Cape Girardeau's lifeblood, but it also regularly spewed water deep into downtown. In 1964, the Army Corps of Engineers completed a 15-foot-high floodwall. But the protective wall also cut the city's life off from the river. In 1987, the River Heritage Mural Association got together to solve that problem by using art.

Their first step was in 1991 with *Welcome to Cape Girardeau*, a full city block on the river side of the floodwall with scenes of local history and landmarks by graphic artist and former Cape resident Fred Lincoln. The river side was further transformed in 1995 by local artist Margaret Randol Derwent's *Missouri Wall of Fame*. Over 500 feet, the wall honors 47 people who were born in Missouri or won renown while living here, from frontierswoman Calamity Jane to ballplayer Yogi Berra.

Then in 2005 came the murals that more than any other have come to define Cape Girardeau: *Mississippi River Tales*. Unfolding across 1,500 feet on the city side of the wall, 24 panels and images in between them tell the city's story from Native American settlements in the 900s to the building of the Bill Emerson Memorial Bridge in 2003. Chicago murals specialist [Thomas Melvin](#) designed *Mississippi River Tales* and painted the murals with the help of assistants including many local artists. Each panel's story is told on interpretive boards in front of the wall. The scenes burst through painted arches that give the illusion that the wall is opening onto the action. A steam engine hurtles toward you in "The Coming of the Railroad." Huge blocks of river ice spill out onto the grass in "The Big Freeze."

Mississippi River Tales "have become part of the fabric of our city," [commented](#) the *Southeast Missourian* when the murals celebrated their 10th anniversary this summer. "The murals are not just impressive from

an artistic point of view—indeed they are very creative and skillfully done—they tell a story, inform and preserve our culture.... What was once a drab, gray concrete wall that separated people from the river, the murals now offer an invitation to know more....The murals were worth every penny.”



River side of the floodwall, *Welcome to Cape Girardeau* by Fred Lincoln – photo by Missouri Division of Tourism

More about the city

- [Arts Council of Southeast Missouri](#)
- [Cape Girardeau Convention & Visitors Bureau](#)
- [Old Town Cape](#) (the River Heritage Mural Association merged with this downtown-boosting nonprofit in 2009)
- [City of Cape Girardeau](#) municipal website
- [Cape Girardeau Chamber of Commerce](#)

More about the murals

- [Public Art of Cape Girardeau](#) – *Mississippi River Tales*, the *Missouri Wall of Fame*, and 10 other murals downtown plus more than a dozen sculptures. The last link on this page of the Arts Council's website takes you to the PDF.
- [Visitors Guide](#) – Pages 16-19 of the CVB's guidebook label the city's murals with numbers that enable you to find them on the map on pages 30-31.
- [Cape Girardeau Murals](#) Flickr album – A panoramic view of *Welcome to Cape Girardeau*, close-ups of the *Wall of Fame*, and several other downtown murals are featured in a personal album.
- [A city of murals](#), *Southeast Missourian* – timeline and artists of the city's murals before *Mississippi River Tales*
- [Artist "in touch" with people](#), *Southeast Missourian* – interview with artist Jake Wells about his mural that started the whole ball rolling back in 1973 at the Kent Library
- *Creating Mississippi River Tales* – "One of our [artist] interviews was with a small and gentle man from Chicago who wore a funny looking red hat...." Two original mural committee members tell their inside stories: [in 2005](#) when the murals were completed, and [looking back](#) from the 10th anniversary.

Chillicothe

The city

Nearly 9,000 people live at the crossroads of U.S. Routes 65 and 36 in the rolling farmlands of northwest central Missouri in the county seat and largest city in Livingston County. Founded in 1837, Chillicothe boomed after the Civil War. Many of the buildings constructed at that time are still in use today, housing

businesses, shops, and restaurants in the two downtown historic districts. In 1928, Chillicothe made international industrial history when the Chillicothe Baking Company took a chance on a newly invented bread-slicing machine. The city has been “[the home of sliced bread](#)” ever since. Chillicothe has a lot of fun playing with the slogan with events like the [Sliced Bread Jam Bluegrass Festival](#) held every June.



Kelly Poling’s scene of Locust Street in 1900 is next to the Livingston County Courthouse. – [photo](#) by Americasroof / [CC BY-SA 3.0](#)

The murals

A turn-of-the-century steam engine, a scrapbook of Victorian children, a street scene from the 1940s—Chillicothe’s past lives again in 19 murals on downtown buildings. The first mural came about in 1998 when the Chillicothe Development Corporation (CDC) decided to use murals to transform the streetscape and invigorate commerce and tourism. With additional funding from the City and the Rotary Foundation, the CDC commissioned Karl Marxhausen, an artist from nearby Carrollton, to depict the old Chillicothe Business College. All the murals since then (including a new version of the College mural, which had faded) have been painted by one artist, Chillicothe’s own [Kelly William Poling](#).

“He amazes me with every one of them,” said Micah Landes, executive director of Main Street Chillicothe, the downtown nonprofit formed in 2000 as an offshoot of the CDC. “The newest may be my favorite—it looks like you could walk right into the painting.” Completed in May 2015, the new mural shows Locust Street in the 1940s, highlighted by dairy trucks making their rounds. At 20 feet high by 114 feet long, it is the largest mural Kelly Poling has yet painted for Chillicothe.

All the murals portray Livingston County history. “People talk to Kelly about their ideas, and he’ll come up with a mock-up. That then goes through our design committee, our board, and the CDC board for final approval,” Micah said. “We’re always looking for murals that can have murals on them. We hope to create our 20th mural this fall.”

Main Street Chillicothe diligently maintains the murals. “We go around to all of them every spring and fall, and check for fading and chipping so we can catch any problems early.”

Main Street Chillicothe’s website includes a printable [brochure](#) with a map. You can also pick up a printed copy at Main Street Chillicothe’s office at 514 Washington Street during business hours Monday-Friday or in the information kiosk west of the Livingston County Courthouse. And for an in-person guided tour of the murals—even with the artist himself when he’s available—call Main Street Chillicothe at 660-646-4071.

“Come to Chillicothe and you’ll find lots of historical buildings and architecture, shops and restaurants, a hometown feel and friendly faces,” Micah said. “We’re a small rural community, and we’re very welcoming.”



Silver Moon Plaza, spearheaded by Main Street Chillicothe in 2007, plays host to festivals, concerts, and other events year-round. The plaza is named for Silver Moon flour, one of the products of Millbank Mills, Chillicothe's oldest existing business. Founded in 1867, Millbank Mills is run today by the fourth generation of the family who started the company. Kelly Poling's mural shows the mill in 1910. In the background can be glimpsed his *Railroad Boom* mural. Another mural creates the plaza's third side.

More about the city

- [Chillicothe Area Arts Council](#)
- [Greater Chillicothe Visitors Region](#) (Convention & Visitors Bureau)
- [Main Street Chillicothe](#)
- [City of Chillicothe](#) municipal website
- [Chillicothe Chamber of Commerce](#)

More about the murals

- [Main Street Chillicothe: Main Street Murals](#) – detailed resource with walking tour, printable map, and “meet the artist”
- [City of Chillicothe: Murals](#) – page in the City website's Local Recreation section with information about several murals
- [He enjoys “painting the town.” Discover Mid-America](#) – Kelly Poling talks about his materials and techniques.
- [New mural adds “slice” of history to downtown, Chillicothe News](#) – the latest mural so far
- [Sliced Bread mural taking shape](#) – work-in-progress photos of the mural that celebrates the city's slogan

Cuba

The city

The story goes that in 1857 when the Pacific Railroad was set to come through southeast central Missouri, citizens of a new town decided to name it “Cuba” to show sympathy for the islanders' struggles for independence from Spain. Missouri's Cuba flourished as a railroad port for agriculture and industry. Cuba got another boost in 1931 when Route 66 arrived. The city of 4,300 people continues to be an attraction along the historic Route 66 route. Along with the downtown murals that earned Cuba the designation of “Route 66 Mural City” from the Missouri legislature, other “Mother Road” attractions include the [Wagon Wheel Motel](#), serving travelers with its restored 1935 tourist cabins. A few miles west of town, the [Fanning US 66 Outpost and General Store](#) features its own mural of Route 66 in the '50s plus the Guinness Book of World Records-certified World's Largest Rocking Chair, both designed by local artist John Bland.



Amelia Earhart's emergency landing in Cuba in 1928, by [Julie Balogh Brand](#) and [Shelly Smith Steiger](#)
– photo by Missouri Division of Tourism

The murals

Cuba sports 12 murals in the center of town that showcase the golden age of Route 66 and other local history including the Civil War. A family plays on the Huzzah River. Senator Harry Truman campaigns at the local Homecoming Fair. Bette Davis is snapped by a local newspaper photographer while stopping on Route 66 to eat dinner at a Cuba hotel. There's a filling station, a shoe store, a lumber company. Along one 140-foot wall is a series about when the troops of Confederate general Sterling Price and Union general Thomas Ewing, Jr. clashed nearby in September 1864.

Also, as the murals have continued to spark restoration and growth in the town's historic corridor, local businesses have turned to the artists who painted the original 12 to add [even more murals](#) inside and out.

Peoples Bank kickstarted Cuba into becoming a mural city by commissioning a mural in 2001 to celebrate their 100th anniversary. The mural was so popular that the city's nonprofit beautification organization, Viva Cuba, decided to complete 11 more murals by 2007 when the city would turn 150. Viva Cuba continues to raise funds to maintain the murals and to create other civic projects. A team of artists inspects the murals and cleans, repaints, and repairs them as needed every year.

[A variety of local and national artists](#) painted the murals. Cuba artist [Shelly Smith Steiger](#) assisted Canadian murals specialist [Michelle Loughery](#) on the Peoples Bank mural and subsequently painted four more, some by herself and some with another local artist, ceramicist [Julie Balogh Brand](#). [Don Gray](#) from Oregon painted the Civil War set. Other murals are by [Ray Harvey](#) from nearby New Haven, Chillicothe's mural man Kelly Poling, and St. Louisans Jay Ferger, the Whitesitt Group, and Julie Nixon Krovicka (who has Cuba roots). Also, Viva Cuba enlisted father-and-son team [Glen and Curtis Tutterrow](#), who run the local sporting goods and taxidermy business, to sculpt a 3D mural of an 1873 steam train for the Viva Cuba Garden at the intersection of Highway 19 and Route 66.



Main Street Bakery and Café on Main Street in Cuba, by Julie Nixon Krovicka – [photo](#) by [Jennifer L. Stovanski](#) / CC BY-NC 2.0

More about the city

- [City of Cuba Chamber of Commerce](#) - The Chamber also acts as the area's CVB and maintains a [Visitors Center](#) crammed with maps, brochures, and helpful staff.

More about the murals

- [Picture Yourself in Cuba, Missouri](#) – Viva Cuba's website, [cubamomurals.com](#), is the premier source for information about the murals and the city. It includes links to many media stories about the murals, a downloadable brochure, and details about other public art, the artists, things to see and do, and upcoming events including the Cuba Days festival the third weekend of every October, which always features free guided trolley bus tours of the murals.

Joplin

The city

The 50,000-people city of Joplin, the 2012 Creative Community of the Missouri Arts Awards, is a major center of the Four States region where Missouri, Arkansas, Kansas, and Oklahoma touch. Joplin was settled in 1839 and really took off in the 1870s from the wealth that poured into the area from local lead and zinc mines. By the turn of the century, Joplin was the zinc capital of the world. In the 1930s, Route 66 cut a prosperous zig-zag through the center of town. Over the past four years, the city has determinedly been rebuilding from the impact of the devastating tornado that struck on May 22, 2011. The spirit of renewal following the tornado has made Joplin one of Missouri's mural cities.

The murals

"Take a drive down Main Street and you'll see them. Vibrant images enliven old brick building facades, capturing the dynamic energy of our town as its transformation continues," So [writes](#) Christine Smith in her blog, *Joplin MO Life*. "These murals remind us of our strength, and inspire us to test our new wings as we soar towards a promising future."



For Arts Feeds' *I am Joplin* mural, more than 500 Joplin residents had their photos snapped while holding signs on which they had completed the sentence "I am...." The photos were then printed onto aluminum panels and [assembled](#). – photos by [Christine Smith](#)

After the tornado, temporary works of art began popping up around the city. There were carvings in tree stumps, mosaics, photography—and murals. Inspired by how people were turning to art to help them heal, the Joplin Area Chamber of Commerce's Cultural Affairs Committee decided to commission their own mural. They chose the wall of Dixie Printing halfway between downtown and the center of the tornado's destruction. Professional muralist [David Loewenstein](#) of Lawrence, Kansas worked with a team of more than 300 community volunteers, including more than 200 local children who submitted drawings and 15 local artists who joined him in painting *The Butterfly Effect: Dreams Take Flight*.



The Butterfly Effect: Dreams Take Flight by David Loewenstein – photo by City of Joplin

Since then, murals have been accumulating, created in many different styles by many different artists and organizations. One of the post-tornado "pop-up" murals, *Wall of Hope*, is still there. [The TANK](#), a collaborative public arts group, has painted four abstract geometric murals. [Art Feeds](#), which provides therapeutic art and creative education programs for children, assembled *I am Joplin* by collaging 318 photos of area residents printed on aluminum panels. [Phoenix Fired Art](#), a community clay studio, mounted a 3D ceramic mural on the outside of their building showing the process of bringing clay from its wet state to finished artwork. All in all, both inside and out, there are now at least 25 murals in Joplin.

More about the city

- [Connect2Culture](#) – Joplin's community arts agency
- [Joplin Convention & Visitors Bureau](#)
- [Downtown Joplin Alliance](#)
- [City of Joplin](#) municipal website
- [Joplin Area Chamber of Commerce](#)

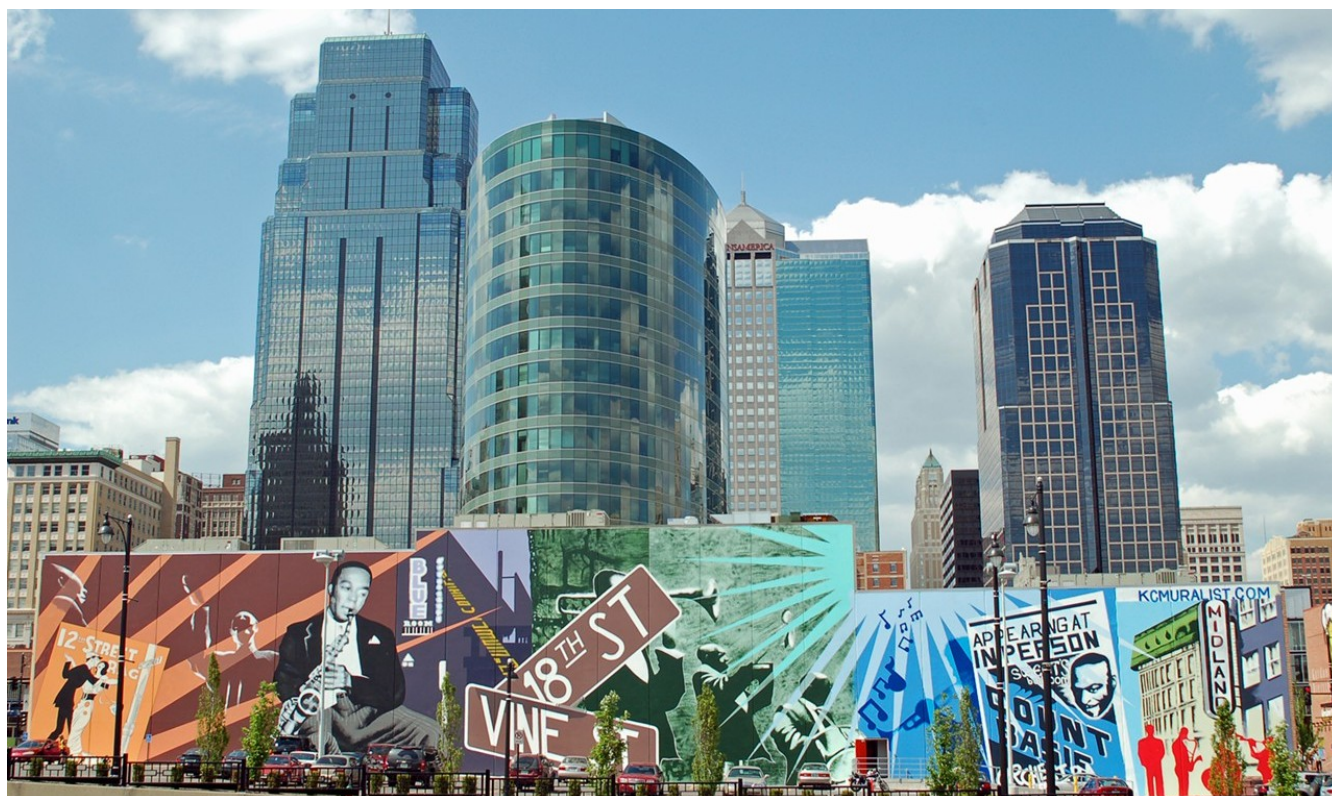
More about the murals

- [Connect2Culture/Joplin Arts Directory/Public Art](#) – artworks past and present in chronological order of completion— clicking on the photos brings up details about each artwork and links to articles about it.
- [Joplin Convention & Visitors Bureau: Murals](#) – descriptions including locations of 14 interior and exterior murals
- [City of Joplin: Public Art](#) – Here you can click on huge high-resolution images of *The Butterfly Effect* and the two stunning murals inside City Hall: *Joplin at the Turn of the Century, 1896–1906* by Neosho native and Regionalist painting legend Thomas Hart Benton, and *Route 66, Joplin, Missouri* by his grandson [Anthony Benton Gude](#).
- [JoplinMoLife.com: Murals in Joplin](#) – blog post with stories and links to more information including an interactive map

Kansas City

Spread throughout the region, Kansas City’s murals are an eclectic mix of styles, sizes, artists, and reasons for being. They range from Alexander Austin’s 18,000-square-foot mural of Kansas City baseball players and jazz musicians in the downtown Power & Light District, to [street art](#) tucked down an alleyway in the Crossroads Arts District.

- [A Mural Guide to Kansas City](#) – No one has yet catalogued all the murals in the city, but KCUR-FM 89.3 public radio reporter Tomeka Weatherspoon collected information on some of the most prominent ones. Her 2011 post about her murals quest includes an interactive map with photos of 16 indoor and outdoor murals in the metro area, plus [video interviews](#) with artists [Alexander Austin](#), [José Faus](#), graffiti master “[Gear](#),” and [Donald “Scribe” Ross](#).
- [Visit KC](#) – the region’s CVB
- Alexander Austin: in-depth [profile](#), [story](#) and [photo](#) of the Power & Light mural; his [restoration](#) of his own Martin Luther King, Jr. mural; his Negro Leagues [mural at the Paseo YMCA](#)
- [A Kansas City graffiti writer’s work](#) – KCUR adds photos to their audio interview with Gear.
- [Kansas City 1850](#) by José Faus at the River Market
- [Angry Zebra](#) – 50-foot mural downtown by local artist [Phil “Sike Style” Shafer](#), completed in September 2014
- [Kansas City Graffiti](#) – Flickr group with more than 1,200 photos



The music section of Alexander Austin’s mural in Kansas City’s Power & Light District – photo by [Chuck France](#)

Louisiana

The city

The Missouri Department of Natural Resources says this northeastern city of nearly 4,000 people founded in 1817, has “the most intact Victorian Streetscape in the state of Missouri.” From the days that Louisiana was a major port and railroad crossing on the Mississippi survive dozens of 19th-century homes and commercial buildings. Louisiana along with Hannibal and Clarksville forms the [50 Miles of Art](#) corridor along Route 79. These three historic towns along a scenic 50-mile stretch of the Mississippi-parallel highway are home to many artists, who [open their home studios](#) to visitors on two special occasions every March and November (the next event is November 7-8). Another annual highlight is the [Louisiana Country Colorfest](#) in October (17-18 in 2015), Pike County’s largest festival.



The steamship *Delta Queen* approaches the Highway 54 bridge, by [John Stoeckley](#) – photo by [Jackie McGuinness](#)

The murals

On the walls of buildings throughout the town are 24 murals depicting people and scenes from local history. In a nicely meta touch, some of the murals show views in previous years of the buildings on which they are painted. Most of the artists were local, like [John Stoeckley](#). He painted two murals, one of the [Stark Bro's Nursery and Orchard](#) (still in business since 1816) and a mural of himself painting a “framed” picture of the *Delta Queen*. [Jon D. Moran](#) painted a Model T and a tractor as [3D cutouts on an old car dealership](#) where he had already recreated a 1930s sign and “windows.” The Clopton High School Art Club painted a business that flourished in the 1920s, the [Buffum Tool Company](#). All the murals were created between 2000 and 2006 as a beautification and tourism-boosting project by the Louisiana Mural Organization.

More about the city

- [City of Louisiana](#) CVB, Chamber of Commerce, and municipal website

More about the murals

- [City of Louisiana](#) - The Louisiana Mural Organization is defunct, but the CVB has brochures about the murals at their office “which I am glad to pass along in whichever media people prefer,” CVB director Chris Koettters told us. Located at 221 Mansion Street, the CVB is open 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday-Friday and can be reached at 888-642-3800 and

lamo chamber@gmail.com. The CVB is also revamping its website and will have more information about the murals.

- [Great River Road: Murals of Louisiana](#) – The website devoted to the attractions of the Mississippi River Valley from Iowa through Tennessee lists the murals with locations and artists.
- [Small town, big art](#), *St. Louis Beacon* – Artists tell the lore behind the murals, along with a three-minute musical slide show of 18 murals.

Newton County and Southwest Missouri

Newton County is just one county up from Missouri's southwesternmost corner. It's a region of small farms and (other than Neosho and Joplin) small towns, nestled in the waterways and gentle hills of the western border of the Ozarks.

In 2003, the Newton County Tourism Council formed to advance the area's attractions. The Council receives some funding from the County, but relies mostly on donations and grants. Everyone who serves on it is a volunteer. These tireless advocates have over the years raised \$175,000 to create murals throughout the region that promote its beauty and history. For their ingenuity, the Missouri Division of Tourism [honored the Council](#) in 2014 with the Innovator Award at the 46th annual Governor's Conference on Tourism. The award is presented, says Tourism, "to smaller tourism entities that achieve great results."

To date, the Council has commissioned 18 murals in a cluster of communities in Newton County: [Diamond](#) ("gem city of the Ozarks"), [Granby](#) ("oldest mining town in the Southwest"), [Neosho](#) ("city of springs" and the county seat), [Seneca](#), the little villages of Newtonia and Stella, and Joplin (which straddles Newton and Jasper County). The artists are from southwest Missouri or bordering states. They have illustrated a great variety of scenes from the region's heritage. Sherry Pettey of Carthage shows Stella residents learning how to use the telephone in her [Stella Gets Wired](#). [Jeffrey Jones](#) of Joplin shows an 1880s fish hatchery attendant scooping trout eggs from a pond as a train waits nearby in [Fish Train: Pathway to the Present](#).

More about the murals

The Newton County Tourism Council's [website](#) provides a variety of ways to enjoy the murals both online and in person. The resources include not only the murals that the Council has commissioned, but other murals in the region:

- interactive online tour with photos of and audio commentary about 25 murals
- walking tour of downtown Neosho featuring six murals and other attractions
- two driving tours through a total of 36 murals in Newton and Jasper Counties



The mural designed by [Dan McWilliams](#) of Jasper for the [Miners Museum](#) in Granby goes from the ground to the roof. It was painted from the top down in 10 days in 2007 by a team of seven art students from Crowder College in Neosho and four other volunteers.

– photos are part of the complete work-in-progress [series](#) by the [Granby Economic Development Committee](#)

St. Louis

St. Louis is packed with indoor and outdoor murals. They are mostly scattered throughout the region, but two city neighborhoods, Carondelet and The Grove, have made concerted efforts to enhance their walls.

Carondelet

This riverside neighborhood south of downtown started out just like the City of St. Louis itself, as a French trading post. Now Carondelet boasts some of the city's oldest homes and a 180-acre lake-strewn park. In 2010, the Carondelet Community Betterment Federation embarked on a project to create permanent murals along the neighborhood's "Main Street," South Broadway. The first mural was dedicated in August 2011, and as of August 2015, the committee that evaluates artists' submissions is already working on Mural #7.

The murals are gigantic, spreading up and across entire walls. They come in a dizzying array of styles, from a pop-art bouquet of flowers and vegetables for the wall of a community garden, to an impressionistic view of Carondelet in 1769, to two giant eyes on the corrugated metal wall of the Southern Metals Processing Plant. The artists are all local to the St. Louis area: Richard "Indy" Bowers, Carondelet resident [Vesna Delevska](#), Joseph Schaeffer, [Carey Seven](#), [Matthew Skinner](#), and [Peat Wollaeger](#).

- [Carondelet Community Betterment Federation](#) – includes an online [tour](#) of the murals
- Explore Carondelet – neighborhood [profile](#) and a blog [post](#) by the St. Louis CVB
- [Murals on Broadway kicks off in Carondelet](#), *Riverfront Times* – spotlight on the first mural and artist Vesna Delevska



The mural made of giant metal puzzle pieces on the side of O.W. Rathbone Hardware, by Richard "Indy" Bowers – photo by [Debbie Monterrey/CBS Radio St. Louis](#)

The Grove

The Grove business district along Manchester Avenue on the city's southeastern side is a strip of more than 60 restaurants, music venues, bars, galleries, hair salons, tattoo parlors, bookstores, and shops—a locus for grooviness and, as the district's proclaims, "a thriving center for the LGBT, artist, and cycling communities in the St. Louis area." Murals have been pistons in the engine of the neighborhood's rebirth ever since the action revved up.

In 2004, Boldt Brothers Building and Maintenance commissioned local artist [Grace McCammond](#) to paint a scene of two men washing windows. The mural was so popular that other businesses also began commissioning her to transform their walls. There are now scenes, designs, and commercial signs on every block of the district—jazz musicians, two-story-tall martini glasses, a Chinese dragon, a cowgirl riding a rocket. The murals have been commissioned by a variety of local businesses and nonprofit organizations such as the Greater St. Louis Boys and Girls Club.

As well as painting most of The Grove's commissioned murals, Grace McCammond started The Grove's "paint by numbers" tradition that enables anyone of any age to join in creating a mural. She designed the first of these community murals in 2005 for the first Grove Fest, the Community Improvement District's annual showcase street festival. Every year, she designs a new mural, and in the autumn days before the festival, paints the outline on the chosen wall. At Grove Fest, hundreds of community residents and visitors fill in the colors. "I've had kids come back who've worked on Grove Fest murals seven, eight years ago," she [told](#) St. Louis Public Radio, "and they still know what scale they painted on the dragon."

- [The Grove Community Improvement District](#) – includes a printable [brochure](#) about the murals and other public art in The Grove, and information about [Grove Fest](#), coming up in 2015 on October 3
- [FPSE Public Art](#) – public art throughout the entire Forest Park Southeast neighborhood that surrounds The Grove, in a brochure by the [Washington University Medical Center Redevelopment Corporation](#)
- [The mural of Grove Fest 5](#) – video interview with Grace McCammond and in-progress photos of the paint-by-numbers mural inspired by 1950s postcards
- ["Allowing the choir to paint"](#) – St. Louis Public Radio interview in sound, text, and pictures with Grace about her murals with the Greater St. Louis Boys and Girls Club



Paint-by-numbers mural by [Grace McCammond](#) for Grove Fest 5 in 2010
– photo by [Washington University Medical Center Redevelopment Corporation](#)

More St. Louis murals

No comprehensive guide exists that will take you to every St. Louis mural. Following these links, however, will take you a long way.

- [Explore St. Louis](#) – the region’s CVB
- [Searchable Public Art Guide](#), Regional Arts Commission – 33 artworks come up from “Mural” in “select a category.”
- [66 Reasons to Love St. Louis](#) – the newest mural, dedicated on September 11, 2015 in the Grand Center arts district
- [10 St. Louis murals you have to see](#) – personal picks by the longtime editor of St. Louis’ *Where Magazine*
- [How murals help define, strengthen St. Louis and the people who live here](#) by St. Louis Public Radio
- [Interactive mural](#) – video of the “augmented reality” mural in the Grand Center arts district
- [The eternal debate: graf as art](#) – reflections, interviews, and videos of several St. Louis graffiti artists
- [Project Mural STL spreads the love in Ferguson](#) – the “One Love” community murals project
- [Faring Purth’s Cherokee Street mural](#) – the 100-foot woman by a California street artist in a southside arts district
- [Migrate](#) – transformation-in-progress of the abandoned Cotton Belt Freight Depot into a 750-foot mural
- [Reflecting on a River](#) – Plants and animals of the Mississippi River cavort [along the floodwall](#) in downtown St. Louis in a 240-foot ceramic mural by local sculptor Catherine Magel.

Other notable mural sites

Murals are such community-enhancing, accessible, and flat-out delightful works of art that it is increasingly unusual to find a town in Missouri that doesn’t have at least one.

A terrific resource for finding outdoor Missouri murals is [dalejtravis.com](#), a website by rural-architecture enthusiast Dale J. Travis of Decatur, Illinois. “It started with round barns because I love those old structures,” he told us. He soon expanded to include covered bridges and outdoor murals. “Once people discovered my website, they started sending me pictures from all over the country.” He is constantly updating the site. From the [homepage](#), follow “Pictures on Barns” for state-by-state lists of [six different kinds](#) of outdoor art. There are Missouri murals—literally hundreds of them in 64 cities—not only in “Pictures on Buildings” but in “Flags” and “Signs.” Each listing of an individual mural includes a photo and the mural’s location via street address and GPS coordinates (as well as sometimes a link to a Google map).

Another way to find both indoor and outdoor Missouri murals is to search “mural” on the Missouri Division of Tourism’s [VisitMO.com](#). Twenty-two listings, most of which yield information on multiple murals, pop up.

These two websites drew us to several more cities that, though they do not have the sort of detailed information available for the other cities we’ve featured, boast sizable clusters of murals.



The Osage Wyota village that flourished at Lebanon before European settlement is honored at the Skate Corral in this mural [designed and painted](#) by Lebanon High School students. – photo by [Elizabeth Bauer-Barker](#), Lebanon High School head of visual arts

Lebanon

This city of 14,500 in south central Missouri along Route 66 is festooned, according to dalejtravis.com, with 38 outdoor murals. The images include [a ballerina](#), [haunted house](#), [African landscape](#), [basketball game](#), [giant lips](#)—no two scenes are alike. The city's most recent mural, completed in June 2015, is an [Osage Wyota village](#) painted by Lebanon High School students on the entire front wall of a new roller rink.

- [City of Lebanon](#) municipal website
- [Lebanon Area Chamber of Commerce](#)

Liberty

Settled in 1822, now a city of 29,000 and a suburb of Kansas City, Liberty is the county seat of Clay County. The county's history is depicted in a series of ceramic tile murals on the outside of public buildings on the courthouse square. A block away are [murals](#) celebrating the [Lewis and Clark](#) bicentennial, painted by local artist [David McLain](#), who also created historical murals inside the courthouse.

- [Historic Downtown Liberty](#)
- [City of Liberty](#) municipal website
- [City of Liberty Chamber of Commerce](#)
- [Historic Walking Tour](#) brochure – This self-guided tour through downtown Liberty and surrounding neighborhoods includes the murals in Courthouse Square and the Lewis and Clark murals.

Nevada

On Missouri's western border midway between Kansas City and Arkansas, this 8,200-person city has a dramatic Civil War history that is honored every June in the community festival [Bushwhacker Days](#). The war is also among the local history highlighted by Nevada's [nine murals](#), including a huge painting by [Michael McClure](#) of Willow Springs. The county seat of Vernon County, Nevada is a hub for recreation and industry, including a manufacturer of tin ceilings still using original equipment in a turn-of-the-century factory.

- [Vernon County Arts Council](#)
- [Experience Nevada MO](#) – independent civic booster
- [City of Nevada](#) municipal website
- [Nevada/Vernon County Chamber of Commerce](#)



Part of *Vernon County's Southern Heritage* by [Michael McClure](#). Among the four panels are (left) local heroine [Eliza Gabbert](#) and the burning of the city—a center for pro-Southern guerrilla warfare—by Union troops on May 23, 1863. – photo from [Waymarking.com](#)

Springfield

On the Ozark Plateau in Missouri's southwest, Springfield is the county seat of Greene County and, with 160,000 people, our state's third largest city. Springfield is home to business, health care, manufacturing, tourism, universities, a bustling arts scene, and at least 20 murals. The most comprehensive resource for the murals is the [Public Art Brochure](#) that was [compiled](#) by the Springfield Regional Arts Council in 2006. Springfield has gained many new artworks since then, and a brochure update is planned. Mostly by local artists, the murals range from a [street scene](#) by [Robert E. Smith](#), to a [tile mosaic of a garden](#) by Jennifer and Nathan Falter of [Springfield Pottery](#), to a [380-foot herd of wild horses](#) by [Suzanne Sommer-Luarca](#).

- [Springfield Regional Arts Council](#)
- [Springfield Convention & Visitors Bureau](#)
- [It's All Downtown](#) – coalition of three downtown organizations
- [City of Springfield](#) municipal website
- [Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce](#)

Images are by the artists, organizations, and communities featured unless otherwise indicated.

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