

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, September 30, 2013

The Spirit of St. Louis: For no particular reason, St. Louis seems to be my favorite midwestern city, although I have never spent the night there. I always liked the Cardinals (next to the Phillies), the adventurous Lindbergh in the *Spirit of St. Louis*, the stories of the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition as told by my father, and the movie and songs from *Meet Me in St. Louis*. Lewis and Clark began their historic journey from across the Mississippi River in 1804.

My father, his cousin Henry Mitchell, and Earle Bernard went by train to the World's Fair in 1904. In addition to the electrically illuminated buildings and the advanced inventions of the Industrial Revolution, they were especially impressed by George Ferris's huge wheel for pleasure rides, originally erected in Chicago in 1893 and re-erected at St. Louis 11 years later. The granddaddy of all Ferris wheels, it had 60 baskets, each holding 40 people, and stood about 280 feet high. I'm wondering if the idea for the modern Arch was inspired by that first Ferris wheel.

Charles A. Lindbergh, who captured Americans' hearts when he soloed across the Atlantic from New York to Paris in a single-engine plane in 1927, was thought by many to have come from St. Louis. However, he was born and raised in Little Falls, Minnesota, 100 miles north of Minneapolis, but was backed by financiers in St. Louis who named his plane the *Spirit of St. Louis*. To my knowledge, Lindbergh never lived in St. Louis, but he had flown mail in and out of there many times in the years before his historic flight.

I started to follow baseball in the late 1930s, and the mighty New York Yankees won the World Series almost every year. So, in 1942, when the Yankees won the first game and lost the next four to the St. Louis Cardinals, I was highly pleased. Again in 1946, St. Louis won the Series, despite beating the 12-5 odds in favor of the Boston Red Sox and Ted Williams. Harry "the Cat" Brecheen won three games for the Cardinals, who limited Williams to one hit in the series. In 2011, the Phillies won 102 games in the regular season, sweeping the Braves in their final series, which allowed the Cardinals to gain a wild card berth in the play-offs. St. Louis ended up winning the World Series.

Hitchhiking and riding trains back to Oklahoma City from home in March 1945, I got an ATC flight from Midway in Chicago to Lambert Field in St. Louis, then took the *Meteor*, a night train on the Frisco, from Union Station to my destination. Seventeen months later, with discharge from the Army Air Force finally in sight, our eastbound troop train stopped for about two hours in the railroad yard outside the many "Ys" leading to the platform tracks of the station. Walking across this myriad of tracks into the station building for a much-needed shower, steam passenger trains were coming and going everywhere. This one station served 17 railroads.

I first saw the musical *Meet Me in St. Louis*, starring Judy Garland, at the base theater at Roswell Army Air Field in New Mexico in 1944. The story had been written by Sally Benson (Tootie, played by Margaret O'Brien in the movie), describing special events of her childhood growing up in St. Louis in the months preceding the opening of the 1904 World's Fair. I read the book and have viewed the movie many times.

Ruth and I have visited St. Louis twice, the first time on a very hot summer day in 1995. We had just disembarked from the *American Queen* opposite the famous arch, after a down-river six-day cruise from St. Paul. We attempted to visit the arch with its museums, but it was packed with people, so we walked up the street to an air-conditioned hotel and had lunch to escape the heat. That day, we did visit the restored Union Station with its many shops before flying out. The second time was a brief winter visit in 2000 on our way east from a motor trip that had taken us as far as the Grand Canyon. This time with reduced crowds, we did explore the arch and went to the top for the outstanding view.

In 2013, don't rule out the Cardinals.