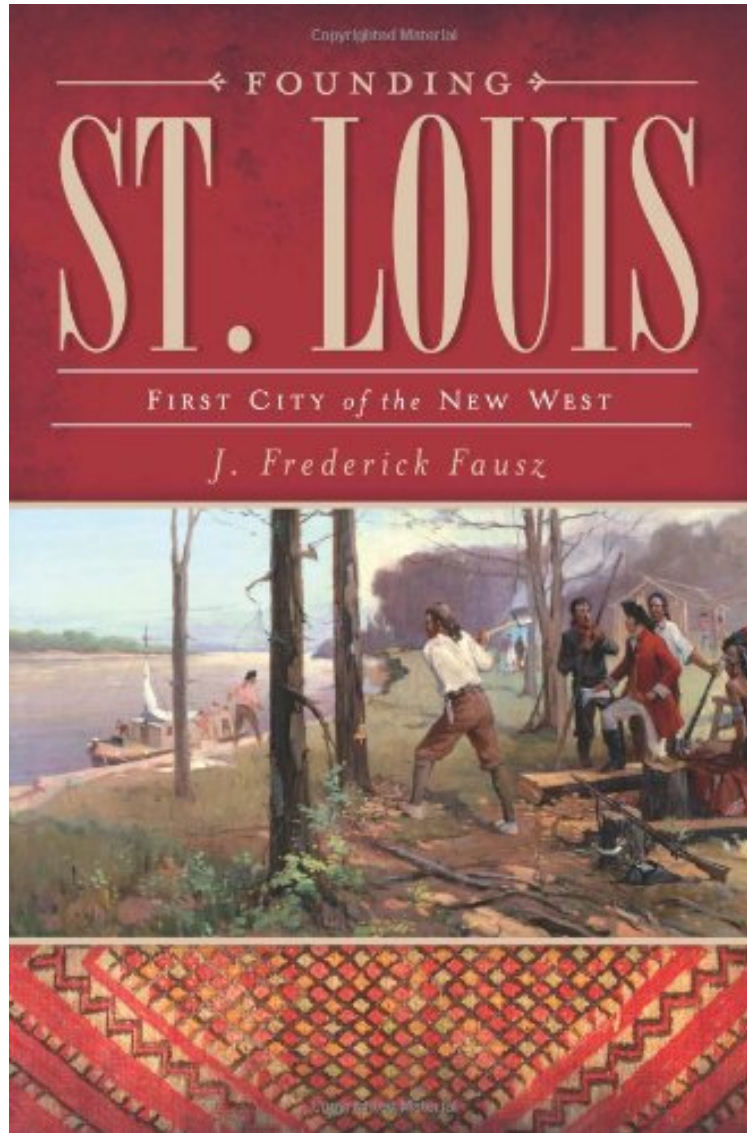


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Founding St. Louis: First City of the New West

J. Frederick Fausz

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J. Frederick Fausz : Founding St. Louis: First City of the New West before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Founding St. Louis: First City of the New West:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. View the American Frontier from West to EastBy Stephen E. Williams"Founding St. Louis, First City of the New West" is both way more and way less that an early history of St. Louis.* It is much more than a history of St. Louis because it provides a view of history unfamiliar to most Americans, even those relatively well educated in history. Americans tend to view the old "American frontier" as the edge of the

expanding agricultural lands settled by English speaking people. The areas just to the east of lands still occupied by the various American Indian nations. This well written, easy to read, book Provides a view of a French-American culture with a well established agricultural society in Illinois and an even larger fur trading empire extending from the St. Laurence to New Orleans. The French worked with numerous Indian nations guiding them in conflicts with the English colonies. This view from the perspective of an established European culture well west of the Frontier, as usually viewed by Anglo-Americans, is a very interesting one. The various Indian nations are also well described, particularly the Illini and the Osage, both tribes of major importance that tend to be overlooked when native Americans are described in popular works. French Illinois and St. Louis are keys to understanding the development of the West between the 1670s and 1820s. This book does a good job of telling their story.* It is much less than a history of St. Louis because it concentrates on the Laclède and Chouteau families to such an extent that it could be accurately titled "The House of Laclède and Chouteau". This is not entirely a bad thing. Laclède and the Chouteaus tend to be overlooked in most histories of the American West just like the Illini and the Osage are, and they deserve far more attention than they typically get. Even in St. Louis most residents think of Laclède and Chouteau primarily as names of streets. Much of the book is a detailed biography of Pierre de Laclède, Auguste Chouteau (Laclède's informally adopted son) and the Chouteau descendants including Laclède's illegitimate sons with Marie Chouteau. Since these men and their allies were the major power brokers in Upper Louisiana during the founding and growth of early St. Louis it is also a very good early history of St. Louis. Fausz makes clear the key role of the Osage nation and their alliance with Laclède and the Chouteaus in making a fur trading and governmental center near the confluence of the Missouri and Mississippi rivers viable. I am sure that there must be errors in this book as there are in any such work but as someone who has informally studied the subjects covered for some time I do not see any that jump out at me. The book is well written and well referenced with endnotes but it has a sometimes polemical tone that seemed out of place in a book of this type. I got the impression from reading it that the author felt he was fighting the establishment. He covers much of the good bad and ugly that the French, English, Americans and Indians did but he still presents the English and Americans as bad guys and French and Osages as good guys in a somewhat bias way. These polemics detract from the book. Despite this I still rate it 5 stars. For those interested in a book with more details on some topics and a slightly different viewpoint I recommend Frederick A. Hodes book *Beyond the Frontier: A History of St. Louis to 1821*. 2004. The Patrice Press, Tucson AZ. 666 pp. 14 of 14 people found the following review helpful. Excellent History of St. Louis Early Development By Bob Laclède As a long time follower of St. Louis history, I found this is an excellent and very in depth review of the founders of St. Louis. Fred Fausz talks about the motivation that led the founders (Laclède and Chouteau) from the mountains in France to the shores of the Mississippi River and what drove their thoughts and enabled their personal success, and the success of the early days of the entire City of St. Louis. This book is extremely well researched and ties together many of the complex issues of the time (like Thomas Jefferson's policies towards the Native American Indians) that I have never seen discussed before. Plus the book is an easy and entertaining read for anyone who wants to learn more about St. Louis, and the development of the early American Mississippi River Valley. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Very Informative By Mark Sutter In-depth research and a knack for telling the story made this an enjoyable book to read. It is impressive that the early settlers were able to accomplish so much while enduring some pretty primitive times. I was surprised to learn how the entire success of early St. Louis can be attributed to the French traders and the huge contribution of their trading partners -- the Osage Indians. I was also somewhat dismayed to learn how the Jefferson administration greatly mistreated the Osage Indians and literally forced them out of their Missouri homeland. If you enjoy this book you might also consider *American Confluence - The Missouri Frontier from Borderland to Border State* by Stephen Aron.

The animal wealth of the western "wilderness" provided by talented "savages" encouraged French-Americans from Illinois, Canada and Louisiana to found a cosmopolitan center of international commerce that was a model of multicultural harmony. Historian J. Frederick Fausz offers a fresh interpretation of Saint Louis from 1764 to 1804, explaining how Pierre Laclède, the early Chouteaus, Saint Ange de Bellerive and the Osage Indians established a "gateway" to an enlightened, alternative frontier of peace and prosperity before Lewis and Clark were even born. Historians, genealogists and general readers will appreciate the well-researched perspectives in this engaging story about a novel French West long ignored in American History.

"Combining vivid storytelling with meticulous research, Fausz helps readers see St. Louis in an entirely new way, as a multicultural city. He brings to life its fascinating French, Osage Indian, and other peoples, as well as its natural and urban landscape and the central importance of international commerce. In doing so, he shows us a future that could have been, a frontier based on economically fruitful cooperation rather than violence and expulsion." --Kathleen DuVal, author of *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* "Correcting numerous errors that have burrowed into the historical record, *Founding St. Louis* digs deep to offer the most impressive history yet written of the city's French founders, of the old world they came from and the new one they created. An absolutely essential book for historians of St. Louis, of colonial Louisiana, of the Early Atlantic World, and of American

history." --Stephen Aron, author of *American Confluence: The Missouri Frontier from Borderland to Border State*"The details will fascinate, and every reader will learn something new, even those well-versed in the city's history. The story of the founding of St. Louis now has the solid foundation it has deserved." --Jay Gitlin, author of *The Bourgeois Frontier: French Towns, French Traders, and American Expansion*

About the Author Fred Fausz is a history professor and former dean of the Pierre Laclède Honors College at the University of Missouri, St. Louis, specializing in the ethnohistory of Indian-European relations in colonial America. He received an AB degree in European history from Thomas More College in his native Kentucky; earned his PhD in early American history from the College of William and Mary, with Phi Beta Kappa honors; and was a fellow of the D'Arcy McNickle Center for the History of the American Indian at the Newberry Library, Chicago. Three of his many publications have won "best of the year" awards from historical societies in Missouri, Virginia and Maryland, and in May 2007, Time magazine cited his research on early Jamestown. Committed to sharing historical knowledge with the general public, he was a consultant on Kevin Costner's eight-hour Indian documentary, *500 Nations*, and has exhibited his extensive collection of fur trade artifacts in major museums and at other sites in seven midwestern states. In 2006, he was the lead organizer and program chair for the Ninth North American Fur Trade Conference in St. Louis and received the 2007 Missouri Governor's Award in the Humanities for Enhancing Community Heritage.