

2-9-2006

## Missouri and Presidents

Gleaves Whitney  
*Grand Valley State University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/ask\\_gleaves](https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/ask_gleaves)

---

### ScholarWorks Citation

Whitney, Gleaves, "Missouri and Presidents" (2006). *Ask Gleaves*. 23.  
[https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/ask\\_gleaves/23](https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/ask_gleaves/23)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Hauenstein Center for Presidential Studies at ScholarWorks@GVSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Ask Gleaves by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@GVSU. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@gvsu.edu](mailto:scholarworks@gvsu.edu).

## Missouri and Presidents

Which presidents had ties to the state of Missouri?

Any proud Missourian could probably think of more than a half dozen presidents with ties to the Show-Me state. <sup>[1]</sup> You would have to start with **Thomas Jefferson**. The third president made the Louisiana Purchase possible in 1803, and Missouri would be carved out of Louisiana within two decades. The very name of the state capital, Jefferson City ("Jeff City," as locals call it), is a tribute to the third president. So is the stunning Gateway Arch, located in the *Jefferson* National Expansion Memorial. Indeed, Missouri has the most significant memorials to Thomas Jefferson outside of Virginia, Philadelphia, and Washington, DC.



You should also look to our fifth president, **James Monroe**, since it was during his administration that Missouri's admittance into the Union was fiercely debated; it eventually became a state in 1820, under the terms of the Missouri Compromise.

Our 18th president, **Ulysses S. Grant**, no doubt had fond memories of a Missouri connection. He married his wife, Julia Boggs Dent, at her home in St. Louis. (Thanks to Web visitor Jack Sauer for this information.)

Democrats held their national conventions in Missouri five times -- on four occasions in St. Louis and once in Kansas City. It proved not to be a fortuitous place for four of the Democratic nominees, as they would go on to lose the following November. Incumbent **Grover Cleveland** was one of the losers, in 1888. Only once did a Missouri convention launch a successful Democratic candidate, and that was incumbent **Woodrow Wilson**, in St. Louis, in 1916.

Republicans held their national conventions in Missouri three times, with somewhat more success. In 1896 the Republican National Convention in St. Louis launched **William McKinley** on his successful bid for the White House. In 1928, the convention in Kansas City sent **Herbert Hoover** off on his successful race for the White House. However, in 1976, in a particularly dramatic convention (by modern-day standards) that pitted incumbent **Gerald R. Ford** against Ronald Reagan, Ford came away the wounded victor; he narrowly lost to Jimmy Carter the following November.

That's eight presidents with some tie to the Show-Me state.

Oh -- did I forget to mention **Harry S. Truman**?  
(*Question from Victoria M. of St. Louis, MO*)

---

<sup>[1]</sup> By the way, the sobriquet "Show-Me state" has political if not exactly presidential origins. The archivist's office in Jefferson City points out that its origins can be found during William McKinley administration, right after Theodore Roosevelt's tenure as assistant secretary of the Navy: "The slogan is not official, but is common throughout the state and is used on Missouri license plates. The most widely known legend attributes the phrase to Missouri's U.S. Congressman Willard Duncan Vandiver, who served in the United States House of Representatives from 1897 to 1903. While a member of the U.S. House Committee on Naval Affairs, Vandiver attended an 1899 naval banquet in Philadelphia. In a speech there, he declared, 'I come from a state that raises corn and cotton and cockleburs and Democrats, and frothy eloquence neither convinces nor satisfies me. I am from Missouri. You have got to show me.' Regardless of whether Vandiver coined the phrase, it is certain that his speech helped to popularize the saying." [Source: <http://sos.mo.gov/archives/history/slogan.asp>]