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Intro to Chapter & Chatter Café

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In April 1904, St. Louis opened its doors to the world for what was officially called the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, but was widely known as the St. Louis World's Fair. Millions of dollars had been spent to build the 1,200-acre fairgrounds and its nearly 1,500 buildings—a huge scale that ended up delaying the opening by a year. During the eight months the fair stayed open, nearly 20 million people paid a visit.

After the fair closed, nearly all of its structures were demolished within a short time, leaving only a few footprints, ponds, and canals in Forest Park in St. Louis.

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St. Louisans and travelers from across the globe experienced the latest achievements in technology, fine arts, manufacturing, science, civics, foreign policy and education. The Fair boasted extravagant exhibits from fifty foreign countries and forty-three of the then forty-five states. Festival Hall, in the center of the Colonnade of States overlooking the Grand Basin, had a seating capacity of 3,500. Eight principal palaces surrounded Festival Hall.

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Of course, the 1904 World's Fair offered more than lofty, noble ideas; fair-goers had ample opportunity to indulge in popular culture and entertainment on the mile-long arcade known as the Pike. Considered the carnival side of the Fair, Pike visitors could enjoy fifty different amusements, including contortionists, reenactments of the Boer War, babies in incubators, the *Dancing Girls of Madrid*, *Jim Key the Educated Horse*, and *Hagenbeck's Zoological Paradise and Animal Circus*—which featured an elephant water slide.

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Although not on the Pike, the most spectacular concession was the Observation Wheel; from the top of the wheel—265 feet above the Fair—riders enjoyed the best aerial view of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition.

Each of the wheel's 36 cars could hold up to 60 people at a time. More than 3 million people bought tickets to ride the wheel. It was so popular, people even planned to get married on the wheel! One of the cars included a piano to accommodate weddings. The ride took about 15 minutes.

A lot of people want to know what happened to the wheel when the fair ended. The original plan was to dismantle it and ship it to Coney Island in New York. However, those plans fell through because no one wanted to pay the transportation cost.

Since no one wanted it, the wheel was destroyed. However, the problem that remained was the wheel's 70-ton axle, which was the largest piece of steel ever forged in the U.S. at the time.

In 1943, an 82-year-old man who worked on the construction crew claimed the axle was buried on the Forest Park Golf Course. Crews dug in the area but all they could find was large chunks of concrete.

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The story behind the construction of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition is one of human perseverance—a testimony to the energy, investment, and commitment of the citizens of St. Louis. The Fair was a highly orchestrated event, with its designers joining ranks with civic planners and an army of more than 10,000 laborers to transform over 1,200 acres of thickets and swamps in Forest Park and Clayton into a grand landscape filled with classically inspired buildings, waterways, gardens, and avenues.

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People came to the World's Fair for a variety of reasons: to visit and marvel, to work, or to be displayed. The variety of groups created a vast global village, where people's appearances often defined their place within

a presumed hierarchy of civilization. American Indians, Filipinos, and other "primitives" from the Far East and South America were invited to participate as "living displays." They provided fairgoers with a rare, firsthand encounter with peoples from far-off lands.

Although understood today as an expression of the Fair organizers' blatant racism, at the time the Anthropology Department's "living displays" reaffirmed the basic belief in the superiority of industrial civilization, which lay at the core of the Exposition's appeal.

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The landscape of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition was a carefully controlled environment— designed by architects, built by laborers, represented by artists and photographers. Views of the space and architecture of Forest Park were presented as a magnificent picture.

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More than 500 concession stands dotted the fairgrounds where visitors could examine and then purchase products made as new labor-saving devices for their home or business. Companies fought for the best positions at the Fair for selling their wares.

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As part of a growing commercial center, St. Louis companies took advantage of this opportunity. Shoe manufacturers, automotive companies, beverage distributors, and many other local businesses used the Fair to launch new products and embrace the millions of potential customers.

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THE 1904 OLYMPICS

The 1904 World's Fair served as host to the 1904 Olympic Games—the first Olympics to be held in the United States since the ancient event's 1896

revival. The official games took place August 29 through September 3, 1904, predominantly at Francis Field, the stadium on the campus of Washington University.

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Throughout the course of the World's Fair, numerous other athletic events and contests occurred under the guise of the Olympics in order to boost the public's interest and participation. How about this event. The Plunge for Distance. A sport where participants dive into water and float face down for 60 seconds, "without imparting any propulsion to the body from the arms or legs." Their distance is recorded and the person with the farthest distance wins.

It was the first – and last – time the sport was held at the Olympic Games.

Five divers competed in the plunge for distance event at the 1904 Olympics, and all five were Americans.

William Dickey won the gold medal with a distance of 62 feet 6 inches, which was "the best ever made in the west" at the time, according to a 1904 newspaper article from the St. Louis Globe Democrat.

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The St. Louis World's Fair debuted on April 30, 1904. It lasted seven months, ending on Dec. 1.

The fair featured 1,500 buildings that were made from a material called staff, which was a mixture of plaster of Paris and hemp. It was inexpensive and temporary, making it the perfect material to use for the fair's seven-month run.

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There were palaces the size of several city blocks, according to the Missouri History Museum. The Palace of Agriculture was the largest –

covering 23 acres – and included a dairy farm, cider mill and an olive oil factory.

It cost \$15 million to fund the fair.

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Throughout the time it was open, it drew 20 million visitors from all over the world. It was a big success and was the only world's fair around that time to make a profit. Among the visitors were also iconic figures like Helen Keller, Thomas Edison and Theodore Roosevelt.

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When the fair was over, leftover buildings prompted city projects: locals protested to keep the aviary, which became the cornerstone of the St. Louis Zoo, while the Palace of Fine Arts became the city's art museum.

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Earlier we talked about the 1904 Olympics, have you ever wondered if there is someone in your family who may have been competed as an Olympian or played professionally for a team? We invite you to **Discover Your Roots** on **Monday, September 9, 2024, at 9 am** to explore your family's roots with Ancestry and HeritageQuest. You never know who or what you might find.

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We invite parents who have kiddos that aren't enrolled in school yet to participate in our **1,000 Books Before Kindergarten Challenge** starting **September 1, 2024**.

Any book read to your child counts, and yes, for those who have their favorites, you can count these reads more than once. You can even count books that are read to your child at library storytimes, by grandparents, older siblings, audiobooks, caregivers, and more.

Come into any one of our libraries to pick up your first reading log to get started. As you and your child complete the reading logs, return them to the library to earn a brag tag. Once you have completed all 10 levels your child

will receive a Certificate of Achievement and have their picture added to our newly added Bragging Walls! For more information about this program please visit us at www.cclld.us or chat with one of our friendly staff members today.

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Grandparents Day is celebrated nationally on the second Sunday of September each year. We invite grandparents and their grandchildren to join us for a special storytime on **Wednesday, September 4, 2024, at 11 am at the Camden Library**. We will read stories, sing songs, and make a special craft for grandparents and share donuts, juice, and coffee. Please pre-register for this event by calling (573) 346 – 5954, or by visiting our website at www.cclld.us and clicking on the Calendar of Events.

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Local author, Jeanette Pickering will be at the **Stoutland Library on Tuesday, September 17, 2024, at 6:15 pm**. We invite you to come in and meet Jeanette and stay for an informal chat where Jeanette will discuss her life and how it has related to her writing process.

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Life is a journey that begins and ends with family. Don't get caught unprepared! Local attorney, Deirdre O'Donnell will be at the **Camdenton Library on Friday, September 20, 2024, from 4 to 6 pm** to discuss trusts, wills, powers of attorneys, asset inventory, and more.

Deirdre is an estate planning lawyer and has been a lawyer in Camden County for 28 years. She has experience in estate planning, probate, family law, and criminal defense. She and her team at O'Donnell Law Center implement a streamlined estate planning process that helps their clients understand and receive the information they need to start and finish a comprehensive and highly personalized estate plan.

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