



## Mary Meachum Freedom Crossing

**28 East Grand**  
**St. Louis, Missouri 63147**  
1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District

In the early hours of May 21, 1855, a party of enslaved Africans boarded a skiff on the Mississippi riverfront north of St. Louis. Their goal was freedom; their immediate destination, Illinois, the free state across the river. Newspaper articles published over the next five days indicate that the freedom-seekers were met on the Illinois shore by police officers and owners. Freeman, one of the organizers on the Illinois side, died of the wounds he received that night. Another organizer, Mary Meachum, widow of the pastor of the First African Baptist Church of St. Louis, was arrested. Esther, one of the freedom-seekers, was sold "down river." A bicyclist pausing at the spot today looks out on a scene only slightly altered from that lit by the lanterns that night. To the south, a rusting railway bridge replaces the ferry landing, but the site itself is vacant as it was then, largely untouched by the industrial development the bridge would bring. The site location on the river side of a pedestrian and bicycle trail assures that it will remain insulated from the industrial area that lies behind the levee. The 9-acre site is well-suited for re-enactments or other celebrations of the Freedom Crossing.



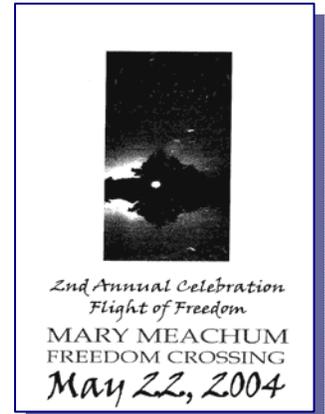
Photos courtesy Douglas L. Eller, Grace Hill Organization



Network to Freedom-NPS



Photos courtesy Douglas L. Eller, Grace Hill Organization



### \$24,955 NTF Grant—

### St. Louis, Missouri: Neighborhood Pride/Mary Meachum Freedom Crossing

- Grant provided partial funding for a planning process aimed at educating community members on the site's UGRR history and issues related to site development.
- Process included major community involvement in decision making regarding future development of the site as a cultural attraction and anchor of pride for the community.

City: St Louis; County: St. Louis; State: Missouri  
Project: Neighborhood Pride  
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UNDERGROUND RAILROAD  
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