

OSAGE & FRENCH TRADING MURAL - FACT SHEET 3-5

Cuba, Missouri has **two large works of public art** to honor the Osage people who once lived in Missouri. What are these two art works, and what can we learn from them?

1. “Meeting in Missouri” Mural



Background Story - on Plaque near “Meeting in Missouri” mural:

In early days, the **Osage** (Wa-zha-zhe) tribe lived the Missouri region. Their villages were along the Osage and other Missouri rivers. French explorers first made contact with the Osage in the 1670s. At that time, the Osage were the most powerful tribe in the region.

The French traded with the Osage from 1780 to 1810. The Osage traded furs for goods from Europe. The **Chouteau** (Show-toe) family were the main French traders. The Osage referred to St. Louis as “Chouteau’s town.”

Trails established by the early Native Americans eventually highways we travel on today.

The **1825 Treaty** removed the Osage from Missouri, and they had to leave this land which had long been their home.

INTERPRETING THE MURAL - “Meeting in Missouri”

What is a “mural”? A large-scale painting that is painted directly on a wall

What is the purpose of a public mural? To be a **memorial** (a way to remember) something

What is the title of the mural? “Meeting in Missouri”

INTERPRETING DETAILS - What can we learn from the details in the mural?

What is the mural's SUBJECT/THEME (main idea)? A trade meeting - trading furs for manufactured goods

Setting: WHEN did they meet? They often traded during years 1780 - 1810

Setting: WHERE did they meet & WHY? Near a river in Missouri because For the French traders, **rivers** were the best form of transportation of goods through the wilderness. They are near hilly **prairie** (open grassland) **and woodlands**. This was the early land of the Osage Indians.

Characters: WHO are the PEOPLE meeting in the scene?

- **(at left) Osage Indians** who have traveled there to do business - trade - with French traders
- **(at right) 3 traders:** These are French traders from the Chouteau trading company in St. Louis. They are shown with French beret (hat), beards, and European clothing mixed with buckskin frontier clothing.
- **(in oval) Auguste & Pierre Chouteau** - owners of the fur trading business between the French and the Osage. Also founders of St. Louis. (See related [LESSON: CHOUTEAUS - BIOGRAPHY](#))

WHAT is on the blanket in the middle? These are the purpose of the meeting: items of trade

- Wrapped large tied bundle - possibly blankets going to the Osage, or furs going from the Osage to the French
- Barrel - filled with European trade goods
- Cast Iron pot and Brass pots - valued by Osage

Also note red blankets being offered.

What are the **colorful strips** interwoven into the landscape?

- This is **Osage ribbonwork** made from French satin ribbon. (See related [LESSON: OSAGE RIBBONWORK](#))

What are the **buildings** in the background on the right?

- These are **Osage Lodges** - Long houses covered with woven reed mats. (See related [LESSON: OSAGE LODGES](#))

What can we learn about the Osage people from how these Osage men look?

Find these in the mural showing the Osage men's appearance.

Find 4 items which involved trade goods from the French.

- Osage men are **clean shaven** (French have beards). The Osage felt the French were not very well-groomed.
- **Roach haircut** - style that leaves a row of hair down center of scalp, with sides of head shaved
- **Roach (Headdress)** - attaches to wearer's head, stiff red hairs with feather on top
- **Single Golden Eagle Tail feather** - in center of headdress
- **Ball & Cone Earrings** - made of German silver, nickel, or tin.
- **Hairpipe bone necklace** - longer necklace
- **Shell Disk Gorget** - large round piece on necklace
- **Otter-fur Turban** - hat
- **German Silver Armbands**
- **Blankets** - made of wool, valued for trade. "Woolen trade blankets were softer and easier to wear than robes made of buffalo hides, or bearskins, so blankets replaced them as wearing apparel. However, since the early trade blankets were solid colors (shown here in red and blue), the Osage eventually began to decorate them" - leading to the ribbon work art form (Bailey & Swan 8). Later after all moved to the reservation (in early 1870's) and on into 1900's, Osage people who were keeping to traditional ways would continue to wear these blankets.
- **Scarf** - Made of silk (probably traded to the French from Asia).