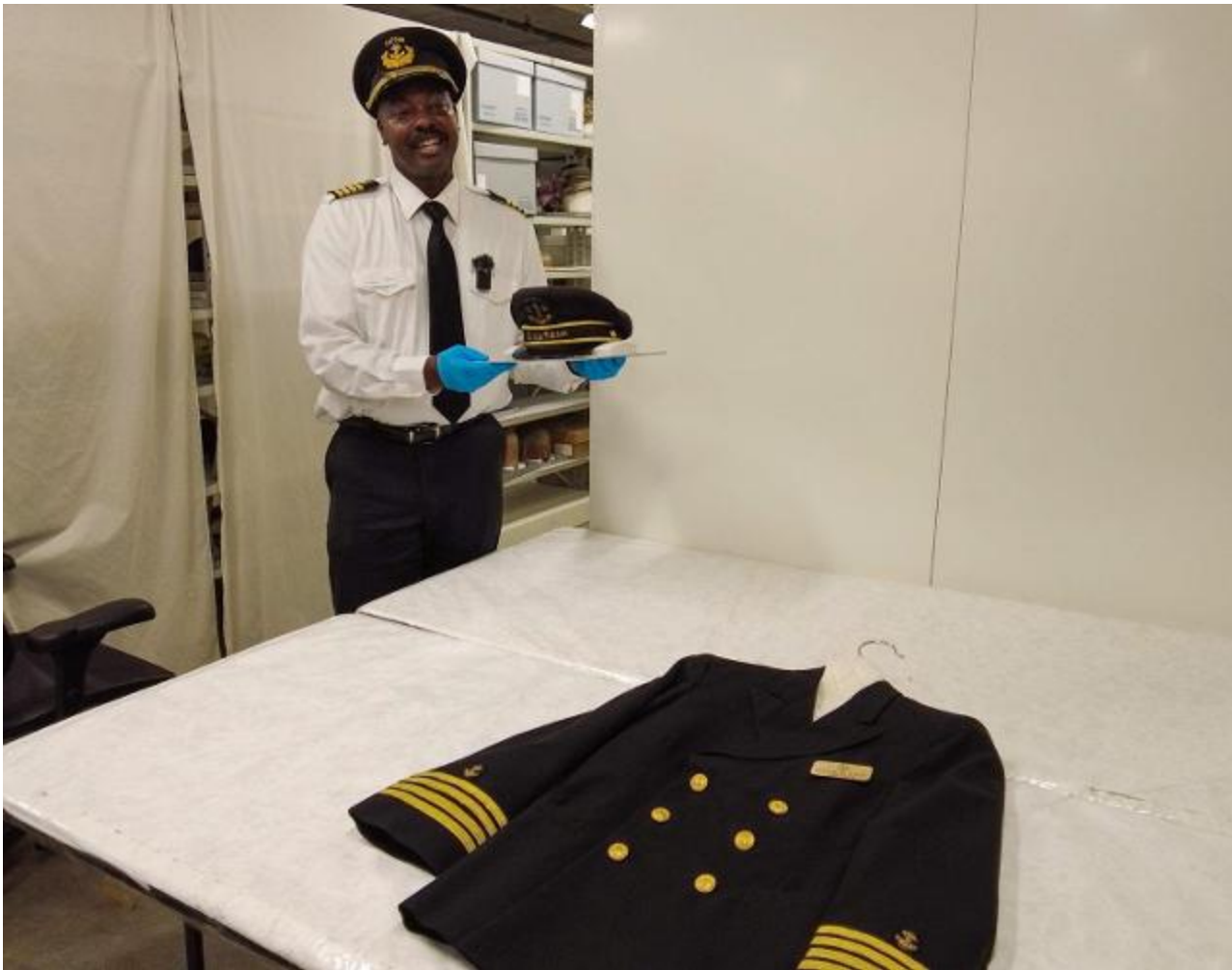


Riverboat Captain Made History When He Led Ship In 1992

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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(Photos by Riverboats at the Gateway Arch)

ST. LOUIS - The 2023 Riverboats at the Gateway Arch cruise season kicks off this Friday, March 3, 2023, and one of the three captains at the helm will be Kevin East. This year marks Captain East's 31st year as a riverboat captain. In February 1992, East was the first African American in the state of Missouri to obtain his license to navigate a vessel.



East's captain hat and jacket from his early days are now in the collections of the Missouri Historical Society.

"I grew up in North St. Louis, and starting when I was 8 years old, my mother would take me down to the river to look at the boats and go on the Admiral," East said. "I got intrigued with the whole thing and started working down there in the summers when I was 18." East became a riverboat captain when he was only 23 years old. He recently saw his hat and jacket at the Missouri Historical Society and it brought back great memories of cruising, he said. "I received my license in 1992, but it still seems like the first day when I see the hat and jacket collection," he explained. "Basically, the hard work I did to become a captain paid off. I worked very hard and after I received the license, I was told I was the first African American in the state of Missouri to navigate a cruise ship as captain. That made it even more outstanding for me and I realized it was a big accomplishment. This also brings back memories of being on TV shows and having a lot of people talk to me about it. This makes me feel great seeing this again. I thank the History Museum for displaying my jacket, hat, and nametag and it is such an honor to see it again." The Riverboats at the Gateway Arch officially open for the 2023 season on Friday, March 3 with daily St. Louis Riverfront Cruises. Narrated by the boat captain or a National Park Service ranger, the one-hour riverfront cruise explores the history of downtown St. Louis, from its landmarks and architecture to the river's role both past and present. **For more information and a cruise schedule:** Visit gatewayarch.com/riverboats or call 877-982-1410. The Riverboats at the Gateway Arch will provide any additional operational updates through traditional media, as well as online at gatewayarch.com and on Facebook and Instagram ([@riverboatsSTL](https://www.facebook.com/riverboatsSTL)).