

Cleaning the Arch Spic n' Span
By Nancy Mann

Of our heritage, the arch is part
St. Louis' huge monument or "art,"
It symbolizes "Opening of the West."
The contest for a top-notch architect was a complex plan –
Five finalists selected from the world's roster –
Commissioners chose the best "man"
(Scandinavian father and son
Would handle seventeen tons of steel
And "get the job done.")
The lines of the structure would be clean
The beauty of the structure grace a grand vista
And mighty Mississippi River scene.

World-famous, taller than the Statue of Liberty;
It was finished in '65 –
With a ceremony of top-hatted men,
A ceremony of pomp and dignity.

The final cost? Well over thirteen million
Though when sunlight hits;
It's inspirational, even thrilling.

In theory, there would be no tarnishing
(Common sense was by the turn-of-the-century
Vanishing.)
Yes, designed to last a thousand years!
No cleaning crews envisioned, no maintenance
Problems to fear.
The inside painted battleship grey –
A suffocating job lasting many days.
The outside's stainless-steel skin
Would stay bright, but forgotten were the bolts –
The rust could creep therein.
At the base, soon would be graffiti!
"Velma was here." Such a pity!
They could've had, simply, guards
To keep vandalism in the city.

The arch, then, 'twas determined, could be cleaned, actually...
With phosphoric acid, found naturally
In fish, chicken, milk, or meat
(An acid found also in Coca-Cola – unchilled
Without ice (bartenders call this 'neat'.)

The new plan for its cleaning –
Did designers show much "IQ?"
No, to think so would be flattering –
Of "smarts," there wasn't a smattering...
Three to five men, arch-clinging, shoulder to shoulder –
The nation had to produce climbers, brave they hoped.
Some were procured and/or trained in Boulder,
Who duly tested, tried out cables and ropes.
They would scrape away the formed grunge
With hand-held, phosphoric-soaked
Scotch-brite kitchen sponges!

To "google" and research this out
May cause the government to surveil me –
I put "Phosphoric acid" on the net.
Readers do not stress, nor too much fret –
Phosphoric acid, the original Spic n' Span
Is illegal...can't be found without sleight-of-hand.
Stored in boxes, bins, or cans –
'Twas once used in bomb-making
By Al Qaeda, I bet.