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Cinema Exhibition In St. Louis, 1920: A Thriving Business

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Cinema Exhibition in St. Louis, 1920: A Thriving Business

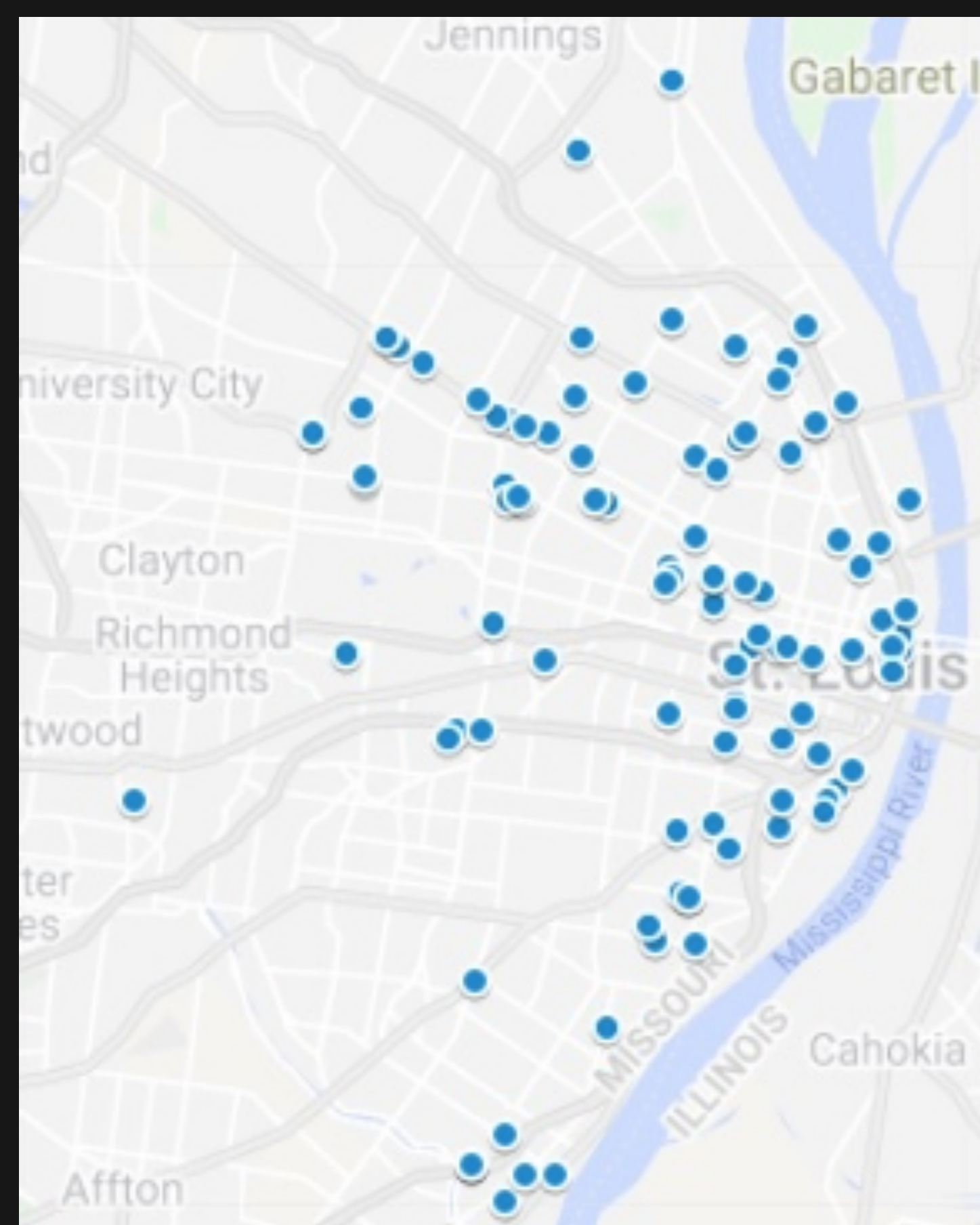
St. Louis in 1920

- 6th largest city in the U.S.
- 91% white; 14.7% foreign-born
- Twice today's population density
- Dense trolley network
- 120 cinemas, 29 film exchanges

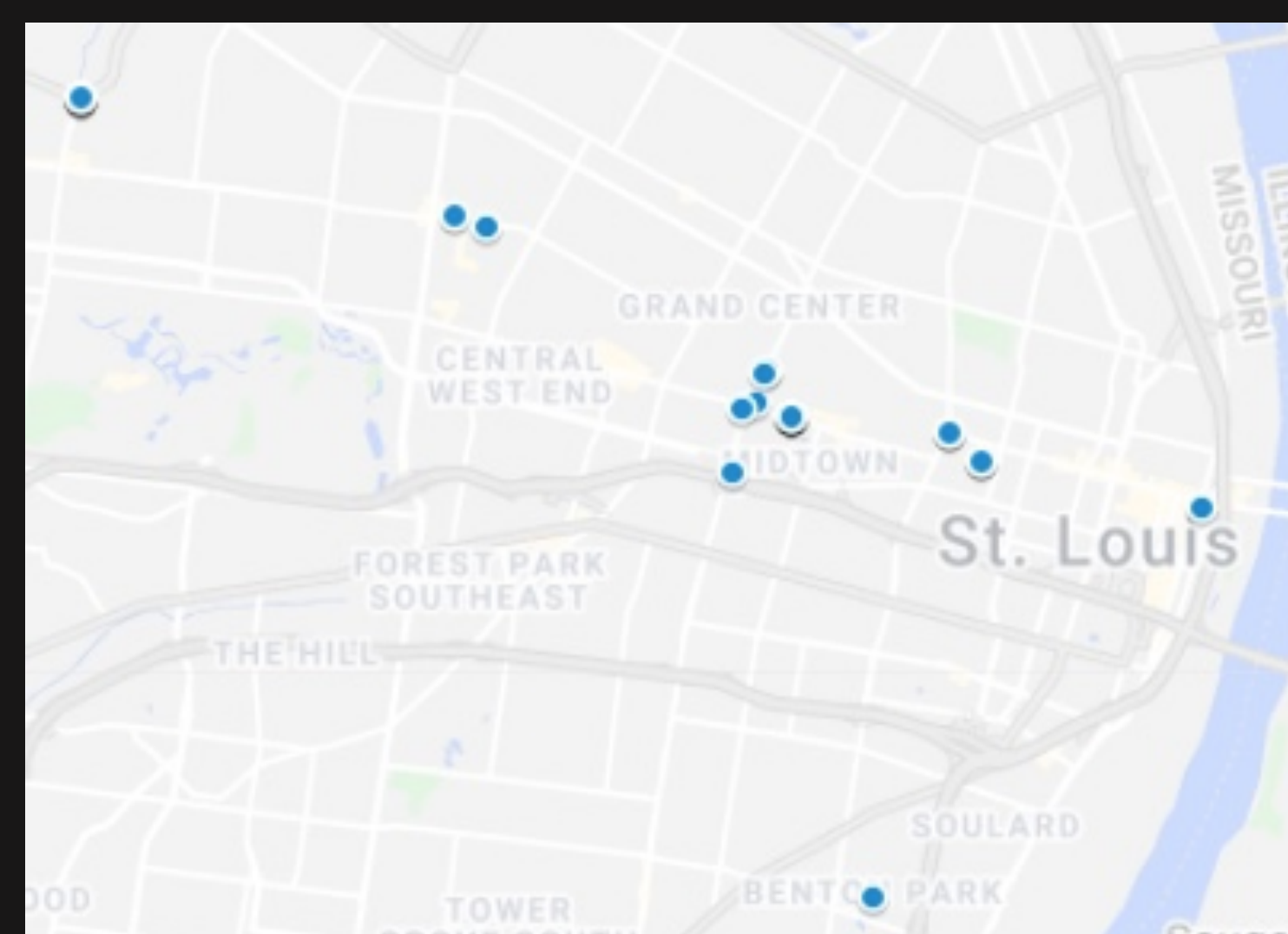
Where were these businesses located?

- **Cinemas:** throughout the city, often on trolley lines
 - Car ownership was rare
 - Movies were popular
- **Exchanges:** central corridor
 - Fire hazard
 - Clustered for business convenience
 - Exception: religious film distributor (South City)

Locations of Cinemas



Locations of Film Exchanges



“Going to the Movies” in 1920: Variety was the Rule

- All films silent, with intertitles, musical accompaniment
- Varied programming to suit different audiences
- Programs often mixed short films, cartoons, features
- Many types of screening facilities, from prestige theatres to airdromes

Source for locations: Gould's St. Louis Directory 1920: A Buyer's Guide and A Complete Classified Business Directory. Polk-Gould Directory Co., 1920.

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