

April 18

1866 A subcommittee of the St. Louis Merchant's Exchange adopted a design by James B Eads for the proposed Mississippi River Bridge. Missouri Senator Benjamin Gratz Brown quickly secured authorization from Congress. Construction would begin on August 21, 1867.

1873 Construction began on the "new" post office and customs house downtown. Alfred B. Mullett, Supervising Architect of Federal Building, designed the complex. It was dedicated on March 15, 1884. Several buildings designed by Mullett still stand today, including the State, War and Navy Building in Washington, D.C. That building is now known as the Old Executive Office Building.

1875 Florissant was in the grips of a crime wave. Valuables had been stolen from four or five homes and a saloonkeeper's till had been robbed of \$27. There was talk of forming a vigilante committee, but Mayor Castello planned to ask St. Louis to lend Florissant a few policemen.

1880 A tornado killed 87 people and devastated Marshfield, Missouri. Over 150 families were left homeless. Damage was put at \$350,000. Twisters that damaged property in Miller, Morgan, Moniteau and Callaway Counties also killed several people.

1898 The *Post-Dispatch* opened the sensational expose of the "boodle" ring in St. Louis city government. The *Post* charged bribery in the awarding of city streetcar franchises, even naming names and amounts. The ring denied it, and the reputation of the *Post* took a beating. But four years later, Circuit Attorney Joseph Folk re-opened the case and put many officials behind bars.

1904 A celebration marked the completion of the Japanese exhibit at the world's fair. Japan was the first nation to complete its exhibit at the fair. The Japanese exhibit was larger than most, because they took space formerly set aside for Russia. Russia decided not to take part in the fair, because it was at war with Japan.

1904 The first trolley car rolled across the new "Electric Bridge" at St. Charles. The new trolley and highway bridge was built to carry traffic to the World's Fair. Regular passenger trolley service began in May 1904.

1906 City officials demanded that all police officers pay their way into baseball games. Owners were advised to hire private watchmen to provide security. It was reported that as many as 85 policemen at a time had attended some games last year, many of whom were supposed to be on patrol somewhere else.

1912 The first eyewitness accounts of the Titanic disaster reached St. Louis. S-W Silverthorne, a buyer for Nugent's Dry Goods, said he was unaware the ship was in danger at first. He was ordered into one of the lifeboats because there were not enough women nearby to fill the first few. Charles Hayes, former vice president of the Wabash

Railroad, was now reported to be dead. Initial reports had listed him among the survivors.

1916 Chicago millionaire movie maker W.M. Selig arrived to begin filming *The Crisis*. He promised the dramatization of William Churchill's novel of Civil War era St. Louis would star some of the biggest names in Hollywood and would be one of the largest productions ever. Selig said the film would be nine reels long, three times the length of the average "photoplay."

1942 Colonel James Doolittle and a squadron of B-25's provided a great morale boost for America. "Doolittle's Raiders" made the first bombing raid on Tokyo. Doolittle headed the aviation department of the Shell Oil Corporation in St. Louis in the 1930's. He flew for the Missouri Air National Guard before joining the Air Corps in 1940. Lieutenant Charles Lee McClure of University City also took part in the raid.

1945 According to one source, this is the date that the first pizza parlor in St. Louis opened. Italian immigrant Amadeo Fiore is credited with operating the first pizzeria at 204 North Sarah.

1945 The Brown's legendary one-armed outfielder, Pete Gray, made his major league debut. Gray singled once off Les Mueller of the Detroit Tigers in four at bats. He did not handle any chances in the outfield. Gray was called up as many of the players were serving in the war. He finished the season with a .218 average, and was sent to the minors when players began returning from overseas.

1949 Joseph Darst took office as mayor following one of the wildest inaugurations in city history. Republicans tried to keep newly elected Aldermen A.J. Cervantes and Raymond Egan from taking office. They claimed they violated the residency rules. Police had to break up a fistfight.

1949 The incident that inspired the movie *The Exorcist* ended in St. Louis. The Reverend William Bowdern of St. Francis Xavier performed the exorcism on a 13-year-old Maryland boy over several weeks at the old church rectory and old Alexian Brothers Hospital. An account of the horrifying and violent afflictions suffered by the boy and the ordeal of the priests was recovered from a sealed room just before Alexian Brothers was demolished in 1978. The child recovered.

1950 A crowd of 20,871 saw the first Cardinal home opener under the lights at Sportsman's Park. Gerry Staley threw a six-hitter as the Cardinals defeated Pittsburgh 4-2.

1987 The Cardinals were trailing the Mets 5-0 on Seat Cover Night at Busch Stadium. Tommy Herr doubled in the sixth to give the Cardinals the lead, but the hated Mets tied it. Herr came up again in the tenth and hit a grand slam off Jesse Orosco. Thousands of seat cushions rained down on the field.

1991 Bulldozers began tearing down what was left of the town of Times Beach. The government bought out the residents of the town after discovering the town was contaminated by dioxin. For years, nothing remained to mark the site. Now, the cleaned-up site is reborn as Route 66 State Park.