

April 19

1807 Manuel Lisa led 42 men up the Missouri River from St. Louis. He had been granted a monopoly on the fur trade with the Osage Indians. Lisa would found Fort Raymond at the junction of the big Horn and Yellowstone Rivers. It was the first American fort on the upper Missouri.

1812 James Sidney Rollins, "The Father of the University of Missouri," was born in Kentucky. As a state legislator in 1839, he led the push for a bill to establish the university and locate it in Columbia.

1846 The Mercantile Library opened, the first public library west of the Mississippi. The library started out with just three cases of books and a handful of newspapers.

1878 George Freeland Durant opened the first telephone exchange in St. Louis in the Third National Bank Building at 417 Olive. Influential judge and financier George Madill was the first of the original 12 subscribers to the St. Louis Telephonic Exchange. He agreed to become a subscriber if Durant could sign up other law firms. A subscription cost \$300 for three years.

1878 Ground breaking ceremonies were held for the new courthouse and jail for St. Louis County. The county had just been separated from the city. The new site was to be named Clayton, after the man who donated most of the land for the courthouse.

1904 A baby Negrito girl was born in the Filipino Village at the World's Fair. The parents, Eihinang and Sayas, would barely look at the child. It was considered a bad omen for the first child of a Negrito couple to be a girl. When the child died a few days later, even the parents showed little emotion.

1904 The Cascades at the world's fair were lit for the first time. The cascades were the focal point of the fair. Colored lights illuminated the falling waters as they cascaded down what is now Art Hill to the Grand Basin.

1912 The *Post-Dispatch* scooped the world with the first eyewitness accounts of the *Titanic* disaster. Reporter Carlos Hurd was returning from a vacation aboard the *Carpathia* when it steamed to the aid of survivors. The captain of the *Carpathia* ordered all passengers to remain in their rooms, but Hurd managed to shoot pictures and gather accounts from survivors. Hurd would later win acclaim for his graphic reports on the 1917 race riot in East St. Louis.

1913 Voters in Clayton overwhelmingly approved the incorporation of their town. At the time, the population was about 3,000.

1913 A fire destroyed most of the town of Fenton. The fire burned 14 businesses to the ground. Only two buildings and two churches remained standing.

1915 Lee Meadows made his major league debut for the Cardinals. “Specs” was the first ballplayer since 1886 to wear glasses. Batters said they were afraid to face a pitcher who needed glasses to see the plate. Meadows went on to a successful 13-season career.

1923 Police and post office inspectors arrested nine members of the notorious Egan Gang for an April 2nd mail truck robbery. Over \$2 million worth of securities were recovered. Six gang members were arrested at the Clayton courthouse, where they were attending the trial of two of their cohorts for a safe robbery.

1925 The first radio commercial ever aired in St. Louis was beamed out over KSD. It was a program called the *Eight in Line Quartet*, sponsored by the Gardner Motor Company each Monday at 9 p.m.

1928 Notorious gangster Charley Birger became the last man to be publicly hanged in Illinois. He was executed in Benton for the murder of the mayor of West City. Birger’s gang terrorized Southern Illinois during the 20’s and 30’s.

1955 Demolition work began on the city's number one eyesore to make room for a parkway and the Plaza Square Apartments. The \$15 million project called for tearing down 87 dilapidated buildings between Chestnut and Olive.

1983 It appeared as if only a miracle would keep the Blues in St. Louis. The Vice-President of Ralston-Purina signed papers selling the team to a group from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. The deal still required approval from the league.