

April 21

1810 Postmaster Rufus Easton hand wrote the very first St. Louis postmark. Easton was also the Judge of the entire Louisiana Territory. He was elected to Congress after retiring from his postmaster job. In 1818, he founded the town of Alton and named it after his son, Colonel Alton Rufus Easton. Easton Avenue in St. Louis was re-named in honor of Doctor Martin Luther King in 1972.

1856 The first railroad bridge over the Mississippi was completed. It linked Davenport, Iowa with Rock Island, Illinois. Since St. Louis had no bridge, rail traffic was shifted north. In 1856, St. Louis was much larger than Chicago. But the shift in rail traffic spurred Chicago's growth, and it soon surpassed St. Louis.

1870 More than 16 years after construction began, the first train from St. Louis reached Springfield, Missouri. Financial problems and the Civil War delayed construction of the Pacific Railroad's Southwestern Branch, later the Frisco Line.

1882 The Great Mill Creek Sewer, the city's main drainage system and the engineering marvel of the age, collapsed after a heavy rain. 15 city blocks were under as much as five feet of water. Officials feared a typhoid epidemic.

1895 St. Louis Police were red-faced after declaring war on "criminal resorts." They raided the "Winter Garden," "Red Onion" and three other variety theaters. The audience had been tipped off. When the officers arrived, they found everyone dutifully reading hymnbooks.

1905 The operators of the Mississippi ferries were requesting police protection on Sundays. The landings and the boats were crowded with passengers since St. Louis had decided to enforce the Sunday saloon closing laws. Traffic across the Eads Bridge the preceding Sunday had been five times heavier than normal.

1906 St. Louisans had contributed more than \$100,000 in two days to aid the earthquake victims in San Francisco. Virtually every church in the city had pledged to turn over the receipts from Sunday collections.

1910 Samuel Clemens died at the age of 74 in Redding, Connecticut. That's a pretty long life for someone who smoked 40 cigars a day! The man who wrote under the name Mark Twain had grown bitter in his final years. His health began to fail after he was beset by several family tragedies and business failures. He was shattered by the death of his daughter Suzy in 1896. His wife Olivia died in 1904. His youngest daughter, Jean died in 1909.

1921 The first radio station in St. Louis, and the second in the nation, signed on the air. St. Louis University operated WEW, and University President William F. Robison gave the first radio weather forecast that day. Another source credits Brother George S. Rueppel with making the first report. WEW began broadcasting music in July 1921.

1930 The first concrete was poured at the huge Union Electric dam at Bagnell, Missouri. A little over a year later, Bagnell Dam was completed, and the Lake of the Ozarks began forming behind it.

1952 About 450 people turned out to oppose a plan to extend Highway 40 eastward past its current dead end at Brentwood Boulevard and Eager. At a hearing, they heard details of the planned route through Richmond Heights into downtown. The original plan called for the highway to enter the city north of Washington University.

1955 Students at two St. Louis County schools became the first in the immediate area to receive the Salk Polio Vaccine. The first shots were given at Bayless Elementary. The National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis was supplying the vaccine free to all first and second graders.

1956 Work had just begun on the extension of the Daniel Boone Expressway. Workers were busy grading at Eager and Brentwood Blvd. But the highway department had to wait for the purchase of right-of-way at Hanley Road before the actual road construction could begin.

1964 The Board of Aldermen cleared the way for construction of the \$45 million Mansion House Apartments on the riverfront. They agreed to insure loans totalling \$35,641,000. It marked the largest commitment ever by the St. Louis office of the FHA.

1972 Demolition work began on the Pruitt-Igoe Housing Project. When it was built in the 1950's, Pruitt-Igoe was hailed as a milestone. But the vacant and vandalized buildings became a national symbol of the failure of public housing.

1977 Well-known architect Philip Johnson's General American Life Insurance Building opened at Seventh and Market. The design features a square dissected diagonally with one of the resulting triangular sections lifted up. A huge cylinder, the lobby, is stuck in the center. The design is widely criticized today, and ironically sets on a plaza across from the revered Wainwright Building.

1998 In his State Of The City address, Mayor Clarence Harmon said he would issue a demolition permit for the Arena. Harmon said his office was working with a developer on plans for an office park on the site.