

April 24

1875 After just eight days in office, the new mayor of St. Louis died at the age of 40 of a mysterious malady attributed to ulcers. Doctors tried everything, even leeches, to save Arthur Barrett. A special election to choose his successor was tainted by fraud. For a time, the city had two mayors while the legal battle raged.

1900 A group of 50 prominent men representing all of the states of the Louisiana Purchase left for Washington D-C. Former Missouri Governor David R. Francis led the group, which included many governors. Congress was holding hearings on whether to provide \$5 million for the exposition.

1902 The American League St. Louis Browns played their first game and the first American League game ever played in St. Louis. They beat Cleveland, 5-2. The National League had sued to stop the games, charging that several Cardinal players had violated their contracts to sign with the Browns.

1903 Three robbers who blew the safe at the Ferguson Post Office left the office destroyed, but they fled without any loot. The night manager and the car repairer at the Wabash Station heard the explosion and opened fire on the gang.

1904 The first attraction on "The Pike" at the world's fair opened. The Old St. Louis Restaurant and Garden was to be part of the Old St. Louis Village on the Pike, the amusement area at the fair.

1906 Adolphus Busch pledged \$100,000 for San Francisco earthquake relief. He declared that the citizens of St. Louis must contribute \$1 million or be considered "stingy." Busch had experienced the terror of the quake firsthand. Upon his arrival back in St. Louis, his first order was to inspect and reinforce cornices and chimneys on the brewery buildings.

1921 Evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson opened a three-week revival at the Moolah Temple. The *Globe-Democrat* described the audience as "A heaving mass of sighs and cries." Posters screamed, "Hundreds are being healed."

1931 Governor Henry Caulfield signed a bill into law creating the Missouri State Highway Patrol. The patrol began protecting Missouri motorists on November 24, 1931.

1942 C.H. Laessig died. Early in 1905, he opened the first gas station in the United States at 418 South Theresa. Laessig and his partner Harry Grenner ran a garden hose from a tank to fill up the cars. Prior to that time, most motorists brought a can to the hardware store for gasoline. Laessig and Grenner ended up with a chain of 40 stations across St. Louis.

1947 The state announced it was purchasing 700 acres of the former Weldon Springs Ordinance Works. The money was donated by the widow of August A. Busch. The land

was to be developed into an eleven-square-mile wildlife refuge, recreation and wildlife area as a memorial to Busch.

1950 The NBA bought the troubled St. Louis Bombers for \$30,000 and suspended the St. Louis franchise for three years. Among the players snatched up by other teams was "Easy" Ed McCauley. The Celtics picked him up.

1953 About 100 policemen shot it out with daring bandits from Chicago at the Southwest Bank on Kingshighway. Robber Frank Vito shot himself to death. Police wounded John Frederick and William Scholl. Officer Robert Heitz was wounded. In 1958, directors Charles Guggenheim and John Stix re-staged the hold up for the United Artists Movie *The Great St. Louis Bank Robbery*. Steve McQueen played the getaway driver. Many of the customers and officers involved were featured in the film.

1956 The Weatherball atop the General American building downtown flashed its first forecast. The giant neon ball glowed red if the weather was to be warmer, blue for cooler weather. It flashed if precipitation was in the forecast. The giant framework for the Weatherball is still there. A developer plans to incorporate it into the design when the building is converted to loft condominiums.

1959 Virgil Akins of St. Louis fought a rematch against welterweight champion Don Jordan at Kiel Auditorium. A crowd of 8,000 saw what would prove to be the last welterweight title fight in St. Louis until Cory Spinks and Zab Judah met in 2005. Jordan won a unanimous decision in 15 rounds.

1965 The Army announced that Army Reserve record keeping would be transferred to the Records Center in Overland. The move would mean about a thousand jobs for the area.

1968 The city of Clayton purchased the Hanley house. Martin Hanley built it in 1856. The city planned to restore the home and use it as a museum.

1969 The Blues clinched a trip to the Stanley Cup finals for the second year in a row as they swept the LA Kings in the semi-finals. It would be the last Blues sweep in a playoff series until they turned the trick against the Blackhawks in 1993.

1970 Winter Brothers Construction donated 50 acres along the Meramec River to St. Louis County. The park would be named in honor of George Winter Senior.

1973 Over 3,000 people were evacuating from the area north of St. Charles. Volunteers were frantically working to save the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railroad levee from the rising waters.

1994 The Blues played their final game at the old Arena. They lost 2-1 to the Dallas Stars in the first round of the playoffs. The Arena had hosted 1,256 Blues games. Over the years, 17,702,336 fans attended Blues games there.

2002 August Busch the Third announced that he would step down as president and CEO of Anheuser-Busch. Patrick Stokes would take over on July 1, becoming the first non-family member to head the St. Louis based brewing giant.