

December 16

1811 The great New Madrid earthquake rocked nearly half of the continent. The Mississippi flowed backward, islands appeared and disappeared, and Reelfoot lake was formed by a change in the river's course. The quake was clearly felt in St. Louis and rang church bells as far away as Philadelphia. But there were few deaths because the area was sparsely populated. Hundreds of aftershocks rattled the area all winter long, and another massive quake struck in February.

1811 Eliza Bryan of New Madrid wrote, "The screams of the affrighted inhabitants running to and fro, not knowing where to go, or what to do - the cries of the fowls and beasts of every species - the cracking of trees falling, and the roaring of the Mississippi - the current of which was retrograde for a few minutes... formed a scene truly horrible." Henry Schoolcraft wrote, "the rivers they boiled like a pot over coals. And mortals fell prostrate, and prayed for their souls."

1818 Henry Clay presented a petition to the House from the Missouri Legislature, requesting statehood. It was not the first such request. But this one touched off a political battle that would end with the Missouri Compromise in 1820. Missouri was finally admitted to the Union in 1821.

1820 The first play written in St. Louis was performed in a makeshift theatre on Main between Locust and Olive. *The Pedlar* was billed as "a highly original farce in three acts. Major Alphonso Whitmore wrote the play. He was serving as paymaster at Jefferson Barracks.

1836 Charlton Tandy was born in Lexington, Kentucky. He came to St. Louis in 1857, and formed a militia made up of black volunteers during the Civil War. In the 1870's, Tandy took part in civil disobedience to protest segregation on the streetcars. Tandy was a pioneer in the black education effort and one of the backers of Lincoln Institute in Jefferson City. Tandy Park is named in his honor.

1875 The city council declared Henry Overstolz the winner in a recount of votes from the special mayoral election held last May. Democrat James H. Britton had originally been declared the winner by 848 votes and had taken office. But because of widespread fraud, city politics had been in turmoil ever since. Overstolz supporters demanded the recount.

1899 It was beginning to sink in that St. Louis would host a world's fair. The planning committee chairman, former governor David Francis, reported he had received a bid of \$1 million for the concessions and amusements at the fair. He also said the city had nearly reached its goal of raising \$5 million for the fair by popular subscription.

1904 An official with The Chicago House Wrecking Company, in charge of demolishing the buildings at the fair, said it expected to have little trouble unloading most of the items. The company said it was saddled with one white elephant, the 264-foot-tall Ferris wheel.

They offered it free for the taking to anyone who could remove the 42 tons of metal. Plans to move the wheel to the Forest Park Highlands fell through, and dynamite was used to bring it down in 1906.

1905 The Board of the St. Louis Fine Arts Museum announced an effort to try to obtain the Fine Arts Building from the World's Fair of 1904. The Board said it would turn the building into one of the finest art centers in the world.

1925 KMOX began testing its transmitter, preparing for a planned Christmas Eve sign on. The test was heard as far away as Auckland, New Zealand.

1932 The Missouri Supreme Court ruled that the Old Courthouse was the property of the city. J.B.C. Lucas and Auguste Chouteau had donated the site in 1822, with the stipulation that it be forever used as a courthouse. Their heirs sued after the last courts in the building moved out in 1930.

1946 The East Side was stunned as East St. Louis Mayor John T. Connors, three city council members, a former councilman and a former county sheriff were indicted in connection with an alleged multi-million dollar illegal gambling ring. Gambling had been prevalent on the East Side for years. But authorities mostly ignored it.

1948 The city acquired the final parcel of land for the proposed second airport at Columbia Bottoms. The city had spent \$1,209,000 for the 4,300-acre site. The site recently was turned into a conservation area.

1960 Archbishop Joseph E. Ritter was named to the College of Cardinals by Pope John the 23rd. Ritter became the second Cardinal in St. Louis history.

1963 Work resumed on the Arch after a two month delay because of structural problems. Engineers decided to add reinforcing concrete above the 300-foot level, where the original plans had called for the structure to bear its own weight.

1972 Veteran Cardinal safety Larry Wilson played his final game. He was the only player to remain with the Big Red through their first 13 seasons in St. Louis. After the game, Bob Holloway was fired as the coach of the Cardinals.

1983 The Newhouse chain, under pressure from the Justice Department to find a buyer for the *Globe-Democrat*, announced they were negotiating with Jeffrey Gluck. Gluck was a magazine publisher from Columbia.

1992 The old 115 bridge was closed to traffic. The bridge had served since 1904. The new 370 "Discovery" bridge opened to traffic the next day. The 115 Bridge was blasted into the river in the fall of 1997.

1993 A Buick rolled off the assembly line at the General Motors Plant in Wentzville, the last automobile produced in St. Louis. St. Louis was once the second largest

manufacturer of automobiles in the country. The GM plant began producing min-vans in 1995. Chrysler and Ford had already converted their plants to mini-van or truck production.

2004 In Skidmore, Missouri, Lisa Montgomery strangled 23-year-old Bobbie Jo Stinnett. Stinnett was eight months pregnant, and Montgomery cut the unborn child from her womb. The child was found in good health 23 hours later with Montgomery in Melvern, Kansas. Skidmore was in the headlines in 1981, when the town bully, Ken Rex McElroy was gunned down in broad daylight. The murder inspired two books and two movies.

2005 St. Louis Archbishop Raymond Burke excommunicated six members of the board of directors of St. Stanislaus Kostka church and a priest hired by the board. Burke was demanding that church property be turned over to the archdiocese. The church had been governed by a lay board since 1891.

2005 Management of KTRS (550 AM) fired almost the entire on air staff. McGraw Milhaven, Bill Wilkerson and Wendy Wiese were among those axed. KTRS had recently won the rights to broadcast Cardinal games beginning in 2006.