

December 17

1803 Bernard Pratte Junior was born. Pratte was the first child born in St. Louis after the Louisiana Purchase was approved. He would also become the first St. Louisian to be elected Mayor. He was the tenth mayor of the city, serving from 1844-1846. During his administration, Lucas Market was established in the middle of what is now 12th Street. That's why 12th Street is so wide. The Market was cleared in 1882.

1822 The Missouri General Assembly approved a measure requiring a written ballot for all elections in the city of St. Louis. Under the old system, voters actually told election officials the name of the candidate they preferred.

1861 The 60-day grace period for Missouri voters and elected officials to take an oath of loyalty to the Union ended. Anyone refusing to take the oath could not vote and had to forfeit their office. Some Missourians who would not or could not take the oath became non-citizens for a decade.

1865 The namesake of O'Fallon, Missouri and Illinois died. Colonel John O'Fallon was an Indian fighter, banker, legislator and philanthropist. He became head of the Northern Missouri Railroad, later the Wabash. Nikolas Krekel named the railroad depot after O'Fallon when he laid out the town in St. Charles County.

1875 The most lavish steamboat ever to travel the Mississippi was launched at Carondelet. The 340-foot long "Grand Republic" was the largest steamer ever on any inland waterway. It later burned to the waterline while undergoing repairs here.

1891 The American Association folded. The St. Louis Browns would join the National League for the 1892 season. The team was re-named the "Cardinals" after colorful owner Chris von Der Ahe sold the club for \$33,000 dollars in 1898.

1907 Mayor Rolla Wells signed the long awaited "Free Bridge" bill. The measure removed the last obstacle to construction of a bridge at the foot of Chouteau, now known as the MacArthur Bridge.

1928 A 1.67 mile stretch of road in Illinois between the McKinley Bridge and the Municipal Bridge was completed. U.S. 66 traffic was shifted from the McKinley Bridge to the Municipal Bridge. (Now the MacArthur) The McKinley carried the Optional 66 designation until 1937.

1931 The streetlights were burning and drivers turned on their headlights at high noon. For a third day, St. Louis was smothered with a pall of dense smoke. Airlines using Curtiss-Steinberg Field on the East Side shifted operations to Lambert Field, where the sun was shining brightly.

1949 Brown's president Bill Dewitt announced the Brownies would try a new approach next spring. The club had hired a New York psychiatrist to work with the team. He would

work with the players to try to teach them to relax and overcome tension. The Brownies had drawn just 207,000 fans in 1949 and were selling off players to raise cash.

1953 Educational television was seen here for the first time, but only by a few people. KETC broadcast on a closed circuit to two groups of school administrators and members of the commission on educational television. Commission members said they hoped to have the station on the air by March 1954.

1958 James Bullock was found shot to death in front of the Art Museum. His widow had taken out a \$64,000 insurance policy on him and was still seeing her ex-husband, Doctor Glennon Engleman. Circuit Attorney Thomas Eagleton was criticized for going after the grieving widow and the case remained unsolved. It would be 20 years before it was discovered that the "South Side Dentist" was the city's worst mass murderer.

1958 The Navy choose the McDonnell F-Four-H "Phantom" to be its new all-weather fighter. McDonnell Aircraft officials said the contract would create ten thousand jobs and benefit some 400 contractors and suppliers.

1969 The search was on for two pilots who had flown small planes through the legs of the Arch, just five days apart. The Jefferson Expansion Memorial Association offered a \$500 reward, but no one ever collected.

1979 The *Admiral* left for a New Orleans dry-dock for repairs to its hull. The repairs were expected to take just a few weeks, but it turned out the *Admiral* had made her last cruise. By 1981, it appeared the ship would never return to St. Louis and was doomed to the scrap heap.

1992 A great day for commuters. The new Discovery Bridge carrying Highway 370 across the Missouri north of St. Charles was opened. It replaced the old 115 bridge. Almost immediately, the daily backups headed for the Blanchette Bridge on Highway 70 began to ease.