

December 18

1818 The Reverend John Mason Peck and James E. Welch organized the First Baptist Church of St. Louis. The congregation had just eleven members. They began building the first Protestant house of worship in St. Louis at Third and Market.

1865 Mayor James Thomas approved the present house numbering system in the city. North and South blocks were numbered from Market. East and West Streets were numbered from the wharf. Each block represented 100 numbers.

1873 The final gap in the Eads Bridge was closed. A reporter noted that the only one who did not seem excited that day was James B. Eads. He said he wasn't as surprised as others, having had full confidence in the project all along. Eads had devised an innovative system using threaded iron plugs to join the spans.

1877 The first long-distance phone line in Missouri went into operation. The line connected Cape Girardeau with Jackson. Lines between St. Louis and Hannibal and Columbia and Rocheport were established in 1878.

1890 Richard Henry Jesse was named as curator of the University of Missouri. He helped establish the school of journalism, and the school of education. He was also responsible for many of the fine buildings on campus.

1897 A group of St. Louis businessmen announced they had offered Chris von Der Ahe \$85,000 for the St. Louis Browns. Among the group of potential buyers was G. Taylor Spink, publisher of *The Sporting News*.

1901 The police board held a public meeting to gather input on "the desirability of establishing at some place in the city, a district for the segregation of women of ill repute." The plan was hastily endorsed as part of the effort to clean the city up for the world's fair. Another meeting was planned to decide where the district should be.

1904 The *Globe-Democrat* reported that government officials had given St. Louis first dibs on the huge bird cage from the world's fair. Several other cities, including Washington, D.C., were interested in the cage. It had been erected in Forest Park as part of the U.S. Government exhibits.

1916 Ruth Elizabeth Grable was born in St. Louis. Her mother was determined to get her daughter into show business, and brought her to Hollywood in 1929. At 13, Betty lied about her age and appeared in a blackface chorus line in *Let's Go Places*. She went on to appear in more than 40 films and became the most popular of all the pin-up girls during World War Two. In 1943, Lloyds of London insured her legs for \$1 million.

1925 State Senator Michael Kinney and Democratic Boss Michael Whalen, were among 23 people convicted of conspiracy in connection with the disappearance of thousands of gallons of pre-prohibition whiskey stored under government orders at the Jack Daniels

Distillery here. The convictions against most of the politicians were eventually thrown out.

1936 The Eugene Field home at 634 South Broadway, opened as a children's museum. The home was once part of a row of 12. It was barely saved from the wrecking ball by two St. Louis businessmen.

1947 The chairman of the state committee for the proposed 1953 World's Fair announced they had selected a site. Postmaster Bernard Dickmann proposed that the fair be held on the "Kingshighway-Oakland Site," which included 300 acres in Forest Park.

1949 The Rams won their first NFL division title since moving to LA. But they lost the championship game to the Philadelphia Eagles, 14-0. The game was played in a downpour.

1953 A few minutes after midnight, Carl Austin Hall and Bonnie Heady died together for the kidnapping and murder of Bobby Greenlease. They exchanged a final kiss before entering the gas chamber. Hall was pronounced dead at 12:12 a.m. and Heady was pronounced dead 20 seconds later. Heady was the only woman to ever be executed in the gas chamber. That same day, a grand jury investigating the disappearance of half the ransom indicted St. Louis patrolman Elmer Dolan for perjury.

1955 The Municipal Judges Association of Greater St. Louis ordered a study of the relationship between "lewd and scurrilous comic books and similar literature" to violent crime in the area. The judges said comics inspired some offenses committed by juveniles.

1957 Twelve people were killed and 100 hurt as tornadoes swept across Eastern Missouri and Southern Illinois. Eight people were killed in Murphysboro. Twenty homes were damaged in Florissant.

1957 Dan Devine signed a three-year deal to coach the Missouri Tigers. The former Arizona State coach announced he was bringing three of his coaches with him, including Al Onofrio. Devine replaced Frank Broyles, who left to take the head-coaching job at Arkansas.

1981 A total of 111 people were killed in the collapse of two skywalks in the lobby of the Kansas City Hyatt Regency Hotel. A vice-president of Boatmen's Bank of St. Louis and his wife were among the victims.

2004 The Cardinals acquired lefty pitcher Mark Mulder from Oakland in exchange for pitchers Dan Haren, Kiko Calero and top prospect Daric Barton. Mulder was 17-8 in 2004, and had won 72 games over the past four seasons.