

## **December 22**

**1804** One month after leaving St. Louis, the last boats carrying Spanish soldiers and officers left Missouri on their way to New Orleans, marking the end of the Spanish presence here. Spain officially turned over what is now Missouri to the French one day before the Louisiana Purchase was made official in April 1804. The French flag flew over St. Louis for 24 hours, before the Americans took over.

**1860** The Pacific Railroad reached Rolla. Financial problems had delayed completion of the line southwest from Franklin (now Pacific) since 1855.

**1861** About 1300 rebel prisoners packed into 36 train cars arrived in St. Louis and were marched to the Gratiot Street Prison. A crowd followed and occasionally cheered the prisoners. The prison at 8<sup>th</sup> and Gratiot was a medical college confiscated by the federal government from an eccentric southern sympathizer, Doctor Joseph McDowell. He was a respected surgeon, but was also a grave robber. McDowell performed bizarre experiments on cadavers, including those of his own family members.

**1875** Ceremonies marked the dedication of one of the lost architectural treasures of St. Louis. The Merchant's Exchange was located at Third and Pine. Its 235 by 98-foot main hall was the largest permanently built room in the country at the time. It was torn down in 1953 to make room for what is now Interstate 70.

**1875** The Municipal Assembly was considering an ordinance banning spitting in public places. The Civic Improvement League lobbied for the measure, saying there had been a continuous demand from citizens that something be done to stop the notorious spitting nuisance.

**1919** General John J. "Blackjack" Pershing arrived in his native Missouri for the first time since the end of the war. He inspected Jefferson Barracks, and was driven through downtown St. Louis for a huge welcoming parade. Crowds thronged the streets despite the bitter cold.

**1935** President Franklin Roosevelt signed an executive order designating the proposed riverfront memorial as part of the National Park Service.

**1941** Over 14,000 residents of St. Louis city and county signed up on the first day of enrollment for Civil Defense work. Officials were hoping for a total of 77,000 over the next few days.

**1944** Steven Norman Carlton was born in Miami. "Lefty" came up with Cardinals in 1965. He was a key part of the 1967 and 1968 pennant winners and posted a 2.17 ERA in 1969. But Gussie Busch ordered him traded to Philadelphia following a contract dispute in 1971. The Cardinals picked up Rick Wise, and Carlton went on win four Cy Young Awards. He was elected to the Hall of Fame in 1996.

**1945** The busiest day in Union Station history. The station was jammed with servicemen returning home. Incoming trains ran four to eight hours late. The railroads tried to give preference to military personnel. But many soldiers and civilians were left behind when the trains pulled out crammed to the aisles.

**1972** Civil rights activist Gena Scott stunned the city when she unmasked the Veiled Prophet. It turned out to be Tom Smith, a Monsanto Executive, but the papers did not report it. The Veiled Prophet Ball had been the most important social event for the city's elite since 1878. But it was under fire for using tax dollars to subsidize a gala for rich whites. In 1980, the organization decided to instead present the V.P Fair.

**1979** Gary Unger's record-breaking games-played streak came to an end as coach Al McNeil of the Calgary Flames benched him. Unger established a new NHL "Iron Man" mark of 914 consecutive games, including 662 with the Blues. Doug Jarvis of Hartford broke the record in 1987.

**1988** Six children were killed in a fire at a home located in the 4500 block of Market Street. The blaze was blamed on a faulty kerosene heater.

**1989** It was 16 below zero in St. Louis. Three days of record cold was blamed for five deaths in the metro area.

**1993** Missouri defeated Illinois 108 to 107 in triple overtime. Many consider it one of the greatest basketball games ever played at the Arena.

**1995** William DeWitt, Frederick Hanser and Andrew Baur announced they had purchased the St. Louis Cardinals from Anheuser-Busch. The new owners had attended Country Day School together. DeWitt's father owned the Browns from 1949 to 1951, and Bill served as batboy. The diminutive Eddie Gaedel wore Bill's batboy uniform when he made his famous plate appearance on August 19, 1951.

**1996** Brett Hull became the 24th player in NHL history to score 500 goals, notching a hat trick in a game here against the Los Angeles Kings. Brett and his father Bobby became the first father and son to join the 500-goal club.

**1996** The Rams announced they were firing coach Rich Brooks after his second season behind the bench. Dick Vermeil would be hired to take over the coaching duties.

**2000** President George W. Bush nominated former Missouri Governor and Senator John Ashcroft to become attorney general of the U.S. Ashcroft had just lost a bitter Senate campaign to the late Mel Carnahan, who was killed in a plane crash just before the election. Ashcroft sparked controversy as the force behind the Patriot Act. He resigned in November 2004.