

December 24

1774 Work began on the first church in St. Louis. The small log church was built on the same site where the Old Cathedral stands today. Father Valentin blessed the first church bell on Christmas Eve in front of the assembled inhabitants of the village.

1809 Christopher "Kit" Carson was born in Madison County, Kentucky. His family brought him to the Boone's Lick district of Missouri in 1811. In 1826, Kit ran away to join an expedition to Santa Fe. He rose to national fame as a trapper, Indian agent, soldier and a guide on John Fremont's expeditions.

1872 The coldest Christmas Eve on record in St. Louis. The temperature dipped to 17 below. That's also the coldest date on record here during the month of December.

1883 One of the worst fires in many years caused \$500,000 damage on Christmas Eve. It started in Samuel Cupple's Broom Factory on Elm between Third and Fourth Streets and spread to several businesses. Two firemen were killed when a wall collapsed.

1892 William Danforth opened a small feed store. In January 1894, he incorporated as the Robinson-Danforth Company. After the 1896 tornado wiped out the store, he put up a new building on Gratiot. In 1902, the company name was changed to Ralston-Purina. Danforth fondly remembered the checkerboard gingham shirts he saw as a youth and chose the checkerboard to symbolize his firm. He often used a checkerboard to illustrate his belief that a man must balance his physical, mental, social and religious lives.

1898 Jordan Chambers was born in Nashville. Chambers was a powerful politician and civil rights activist in St. Louis, organizing the black vote and pushing for more opportunities for blacks at City Hall. In the 1940's and 50's "The Negro Mayor of St. Louis" operated the Club Riviera on Delmar. The integrated club featured performers such as Louis Armstrong, Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Nat King Cole and Josephine Baker.

1916 W.N. Selig's film version of Winston Churchill's novel, *The Crisis*, premiered at the New Grand Central Theatre. Selig was the millionaire head of the Polyscope Company of Chicago. He filmed much of the movie here. St. Louis was a major movie center in the teens, before Hollywood was developed. Orrin T. Crawford made dozens of films from his lot at Jefferson and Gravois.

1922 KSD radio broadcast from the Old Cathedral. It was the first midnight Mass ever broadcast on the radio. It was made possible by special permission from the Vatican.

1924 The Concordia Seminary radio station, KFUO, was dedicated.

1925 At 7 p.m. KMOX signed on the air with a word from announcer Nate Caldwell. That was followed by a performance of the national anthem and "Hail to the Chief" by the Little Symphony Orchestra, an address by Mayor Victor Miller and speeches by the

businessmen who founded the station to promote the city. At the time, KMOX broadcast from the Mayfair Hotel at 1070.

1954 The longest gasoline price war in St. Louis ended. Stations were selling gas for 26.9 cents per gallon. That was up from 18.9 cents at the height of the war. It started in September at a handful of stations, and soon spread area wide.

1965 Workers and civic leaders watched as the last bucket of concrete was poured on the roof of the new stadium, marking the completion of the basic structure. Plenty of work remained to be done to get the field ready for Opening Day 1966.

1969 McDonnell-Douglas was celebrating. Mac had won a huge contract from the Pentagon. The \$7.5 billion deal cleared the way for Mac to develop and build the new F-15 fighter. Executives said the 749 F-15's would give the U.S. air superiority over the Russians until at least the mid 80's.

1969 Curt Flood wrote a letter to Commissioner Bowie Kuhn, saying he was "not a piece of property to be bought and sold." Flood was refusing to report to the Phillies after the Cardinals traded him. He sued to overturn baseball's reserve clause and fought all the way to the US Supreme Court. The court ruled against Flood on June 19, 1972. But his courageous battle had opened the door to today's free agency.

1974 *The Sporting News* named Lou Brock as its "Sportsman of the Year."

1988 A Shell Oil Pipeline under the Gasconade River ruptured, sending oil pouring into what had been a crystal-clear Ozark stream. The cleanup came under fire when the workers soiled bags and coveralls were found buried along the river. The Anheuser-Busch brewery shut down for a time after oil was detected in its water.

2000 The Rams squeaked into the playoffs. A Rams win over the Saints, coupled with a Bears win on a last second field goal, allowed the Rams to play the Saints again in the first round.