

## December 31

**1814** The *Missouri Gazette* carried a notice of the first theatrical performance to be held in St. Louis. A group of young men had formed a "dramatic corps." They were planning to present "The School for Authors" and "Budget of Blunders" at the courthouse on January 6th.

**1821** The Legislature passed an act establishing "The City of Jefferson" to become the eventual state capitol. They chose a site known as Howard's Bluff on the Missouri River at the mouth of Wier's Creek for the city. The capitol was moved from St. Charles in 1826.

**1855** The St. Peters post office was established. The population of the village was about 400. That's about where it remained until the 1970's.

**1860** The Missouri General Assembly convened, 11 days after South Carolina seceded. Governor Claiborne Jackson asked lawmakers to decide if Missouri should stay in the Union. The legislature voted to ask the people to elect delegates to a special convention in February 1861 to decide the question. The elected delegates were overwhelmingly pro-union.

**1896** Joseph McCullagh, managing editor of the *Globe-Democrat*, apparently killed himself. He is regarded as one of the true pioneers of modern journalism. The acerbic McCullagh is credited with inventing the interview. He also compiled a code of 48 rules for reporting the news.

**1904** The day after the Iroquois Theatre fire in Chicago killed 582 people, authorities in St. Louis were taking action to keep it from happening here. A bill before the city council would require fire vents over the stage in every theatre.

**1922** The landmark Planter's Hotel closed. The hotel at Fourth and Chestnut had hosted such dignitaries as Charles Dickens, Ulysses Grant, Grover Cleveland, William Howard Taft and Theodore Roosevelt. A bartender named Tom Collins invented the famous Planter's Punch there. Then Collins came up with the drink that still bears his name. The Adam's Mark stands on the site today.

**1923** A crowd of New Year's Eve revelers packed the Chase Hotel. A few minutes after midnight, federal prohibition officers raided the place. Two men were shot, and the agents were driven from the room in the melee that followed. Fashionable diners objecting to the raid hurled chairs, glassware and cutlery at the agents.

**1930** A sensational kidnapping case made headlines here. Adolphus Busch-Orthwein, the great-grandson of the brewery founder, was kidnapped from the family limo while the chauffeur sat in traffic on Lindbergh. The kidnapper, Charles Abernathy, gave the boy up unharmed 26 days later.

**1957** Elvis Presley made his third St. Louis concert appearance. This one was at the Missouri Theatre on Grand.

**1996** Demolition work began on a St. Louis landmark, the 10-story International Fur Exchange Building at Fourth and Market. The neighboring Thomas Jefferson and American Zinc Buildings were also slated to come down. All three were saved, and the Fur Exchange is now the home of the Drury Inn.

**1997** Millionaire-adventurer Steve Fossett took off from Busch Stadium in his balloon the "Solo Spirit." Fossett's second attempt at the first solo around-the-world flight ended in a Russian wheat field a few days later. He did establish a distance record. Washington University served as mission control on the flight, and on subsequent attempts. Fossett finally made it on his sixth try, in June 2002.

**1999** The St. Louis area braced for the worst in case the "Y2K" bug caused havoc. Ninety percent of the city police officers were on duty, along with 24 extra firefighters and six additional ambulances. TWA cut its schedule by 1/3, and hospitals brought in extra workers.