

## February 7

**1812** Another great earthquake shook the area along the New Madrid fault in Southeastern Missouri. This was the latest in a series that followed the great quake on December 16, 1811. Most of the settlers in what are now New Madrid and Pemiscott Counties fled the area. The quakes changed the course of the river, leaving many holding worthless swampland.

**1853** The first high school west of the Mississippi opened. Seventy-two students were enrolled at the St. Louis Public High School, located in the old Benton School at 6<sup>th</sup> and Locust. Students had to pass a stringent exam to be admitted. The first actual high school building in St. Louis opened at 15<sup>th</sup> and Olive in 1856. It was one of the first co-ed high schools in the U.S.

**1867** Laura Ingalls Wilder was born in the “Big Woods” of Wisconsin. The family faced frontier hardships after moving to the Oklahoma Indian Territory, Minnesota and Dakota. In 1893, she moved to Mansfield, Missouri. It was at her beloved Rocky Ridge Farm where she began writing the famous *Little House on the Prairie* books. They told of her childhood experiences on the frontier.

**1870** James B. Eads hosted a champagne party for the press in his underwater "air chamber" beneath one of the piers under construction for his bridge. The reporters, except for a few who had a change of heart at the last minute, descended to the bottom to watch Eads hook up a telegraph for communications with the surface.

**1897** City Health Commissioner Max Starkloff was promising an investigation into the polluted River des Peres. He pledged to bring a bill before the Legislature to improve the pesky and foul smelling stream. Nothing was done until 1923, when a bond issue paved the way for the river to be channeled and buried in a tunnel.

**1898** Flamboyant Browns owner Chris Von der Ahe had been kidnapped and hauled off to a jail cell in Pittsburgh. Detectives forced him onto a train in St. Louis. It all stemmed from a lawsuit by pitcher Mark Baldwin. Baldwin was awarded \$2700 after Von der Ahe had him tossed in jail for recruiting a Browns player. The president of the Browns had to raise \$4,000 to spring “Der Boss” from jail.

**1899** World's fair chairman David R. Francis named a commission of 200 prominent St. Louisans to be charged with planning "the greatest fair in history" to be held here in 1903. (The date was later pushed back)

**1924** Calls were increasing for police to do something about the gang warfare that held St. Louis in its grip. A war hero and saloon proprietor was the latest victim. He was shot dead by a known gangster and the son of a powerful politician. The Police Board was looking into possible police indifference.

**1928** The city agreed to the generous offer by Albert Bond Lambert to sell the airfield he had developed at his own cost. He sold the airport for \$68,000, a fraction of its market value. The purchase was contingent on the passage of a bond issue to pay for improvements.

**1932** The *Globe-Democrat* reported that the world's largest radio organ was being installed in the KMOX studios in the Mart Building. The organ was described as a new four-manual concert type.

**1950** Mayor Darst's plans for a World's Fair here in 1953 appeared to be very much alive, despite a lack of interest among the business community. The latest proposal called for a joint St. Louis-New Orleans venture. The plan called for a fair here in the summer, which would move to New Orleans after Labor Day.

**1954** Some of the tens and 20's from the Greenlease ransom money turned up in Mexico. The find fueled speculation that the money had been sold for 30 to 50 cents on the dollar to the underworld and shipped out of the country. Half of the \$600,000 ransom turned up missing when the kidnappers were arrested here

**1972** New procedures aimed at preventing sky jacking went into effect at Lambert Field. The FAA ordered steps such as the installation of metal detectors. Eleven airliners had been commandeered in 26 hijacking attempts nationwide since 1971.

**1973** Boatmen's Bank announced plans to finance a 22-story, \$20, million office tower. The plans called for the building to go up on the block bounded by Broadway, Chestnut, Pine and Fourth Streets.

**1988** A general alarm fire destroyed the Royal Paper Company Warehouse on South Vandeventer. It took fire departments from all over the city and most of St. Louis County to bring it under control.

**1992** The Blues traded Adam Oates to Boston for Craig Janney and Stephane Quintal.

**1994** A new beginning for the Pruitt-Igoe site. Ground was broken for the Gateway Elementary and Gateway Middle School on the former site of the notorious housing project. It marked the first new school in St. Louis in 24 years. The last of the 33 high rises on the site were torn down in 1976.