

## February 15

**1764** Auguste Chouteau and his group of 30 men began the actual construction of a trading post south of the confluence of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers. Pierre Laclede chose the site the year before. Laclede predicted the site would one day become a great city.

**1871** The *Globe-Democrat* reported that President Grant had nominated James Milton Turner, prominent St. Louis Negro politician, to become ambassador to Liberia. He became just the second African-American diplomat. Turner was born into slavery in St. Louis County, and was educated in secret schools for blacks. After the Civil War, he worked with the Freedmen's Bureau and the State Department of Education to establish schools for blacks, including Lincoln University.

**1875** The United States Supreme Court took up the case of Virginia Minor of St. Louis. She was suing state officials who refused to allow her to vote. She claimed the 14th Amendment gave all citizens the right to vote. The court eventually ruled against her.

**1901** A proposal to build a water filtration plant at the world's fair was coming under fire. Fair officials were concerned that our notoriously muddy water would leave them with brown fountains and endanger visitors. Detractors said that if the water was unfit for visitors, it was unfit for the general population.

**1904** Politics came to the World's Fair. The Russian government announced that it would not sponsor an exhibit. They said they needed all their funds for the war with Japan. The Japanese immediately applied for every inch of space the Russians gave up. The Japanese were thus assured of becoming one of the dominant foreign presences at the fair.

**1921** Governor Arthur Hyde was urging the state legislature to get moving on bills dealing with public school reform, election fraud and social services. Lawmakers were deadlocked over whether the daisy or the red haw should be designated as the state flower.

**1927** Congress approved a charter for a toll bridge across the Mississippi River at the Chain of Rocks. The bridge cost \$1.5 million dollars. The Corps of Engineers ordered the famous bend in the middle, to keep the bridge from hindering navigation.

**1930** A bill before the Board of Aldermen would create a board of censors to oversee movies, vaudeville and stage plays. Alderman Samuel Wimer said shows could have "a certain amount of spice." But he added "motion pictures today are getting too raw in their suggestiveness."

**1934** August A. Busch Senior was buried in Sunset Cemetery, within sight of Grants Farm. Ill and in intense pain, he shot himself to death two days earlier at his hunting lodge near St. Peters.

**1953** Police were investigating a bomb that wrecked the offices of Lawrence Callahan, the powerful business manager and undisputed boss of the Steamfitter's Union. The blast came just ten days after a bomb damaged the home of his brother, Thomas. Thomas Callahan was the former sheriff, who had just been appointed head of the union welfare and education fund.

**1956** It was a field day for bargain hunters, as the Highway Department auctioned off homes in the path of the Mark Twain Expressway. Some of the homes went for a little as \$30. The new owners had until August 1st to move or wreck the houses.

**1959** Demolition began on the first residences cleared in the Mill Creek Valley redevelopment. Running from 20th Street to Grand, and from Olive to the railroad yards on the south, the valley was home to a large African American population. About 5,000 families would be displaced.

**1959** Police said drivers on the Express Highway were causing a hazard by stopping to take pictures of the tornado damage at and around the Arena. Officials said sightseers were causing "chaos" in the devastated area around Boyle and Olive.

**1960** Grand Boulevard was closed between Chouteau and Forest Park Boulevard, as demolition work began on the landmark Grand Avenue viaduct over the Mill Creek railyards. The closing of the 71-year-old structure also meant the end of the line for the Grand Avenue streetcars.

**1960** The St. Louis Planning Commission was urging home builders to develop a master development plan for St. Louis County. The population of the county was expected to skyrocket beyond \$1 million by 1980. In 1940, it stood at 260,000. It hit 640,000 in 1960.

**1976** Demolition work began on the 12-story Union Electric Building on 12th Street. Many St. Louisans remember the neon "Reddy Killowatt" that stood atop the building from 1952 to 1968. The building was constructed on the site of the old Schubert Theater, where the American Legion was founded in 1919. A bank stands on the site today.

**1977** One of the worst traffic jams in St. Louis history occurred when a propane tanker overturned on the ramp from northbound 55 to the Poplar Street Bridge. Fearing an explosion, police shut down both the east and westbound lanes at the height of the evening rush. Downtown traffic was grid locked until 10 p.m.

**1978** St. Louisan Leon Spinks won the heavyweight title in a split decision over Muhammad Ali. Ali regained the title in September. His brother Michael would win the title in 1983, making the Spinks the only brothers to hold world titles. Leon would make headlines more for his frequent traffic violations and lavish lifestyle than for his boxing. He filed for bankruptcy in 1986 and ended up with a job cleaning the glass at the Savvis Center.

**1989** Civil rights activist and organizer Ivory Perry was stabbed to death as he tried to prevent his son from committing suicide. After decades of fighting for equal rights, Perry was making his first attempt at gaining a political office. He died just a few weeks before the election for the St. Louis Board of Aldermen.

**1990** Brett Hull established a new Blues team record with his 55<sup>th</sup> goal of th season. The goal that broke Wayne Babych's record came in a 9-2 win over Quebec at the Arena. Hull would score 72 goals that season, setting a new NHL record for goals by a right-winger.

**2000** Former Metro East resident Darva Conger made headlines when she married Rick Rockwell on the Fox Television show *Who Wants to Marry a Millionaire*. They cut the honeymoon short, and returned separately. Conger learned that her new hubby had a former fiancée who filed a restraining order against him in 1991. She posed nude in the August 2000 issue of *Playboy*.

**2003** The Renaissance Grand Hotel on Washington Avenue opened. The 918-room hotel is located across from America's Center. The four-year \$270 million project combined new construction with the renovation of the historic Gateway/Statler and Lennox Hotels.

**2003** The oldest restaurant in the area still operating in its original location closed its doors. Busch's Grove on Clayton Road opened in September 1891. A restaurant had been on the site since the 1850's. Busch's Grove entertained such notables as Theodore Roosevelt and Will Rogers.