

February 19

1821 The cornerstone was laid for St. Ferdinand's Church in Florissant. St. Ferdinand's is the oldest Catholic church still standing between the Mississippi and the Rocky Mountains. Mother Rose Philippine Duchesne helped lay the cornerstone.

1821 Frank P. Blair was born in Tennessee. Blair was a Missouri politician who was very influential in helping Abraham Lincoln win the White House. A staunch unionist, he was one of the state's most important figures of the Civil War. He raised seven regiments and rose to the rank of Major General. He was elected to the House three times and the Senate once.

1859 The village of Illinoistown was incorporated. In 1861, a hotly contested election was held to choose a new name. Most preferred "Illinois City." A railroad construction site nearby employed about 80 men who would only be in town a short time, but could still vote. A group favoring the name East St. Louis spread money and whiskey around the site in return for the votes that won the election.

1877 The Eads Bridge was closed for the first time, due to a fire that levelled a shanty town on the east approach. The fire consumed a 350-foot section of bridge flooring, and threatened the entire bridge floor for a time. The bridge was closed for about a week.

1904 The first building in St. Louis designed specifically for motion pictures opened. At the Washington Picture Theater on Delmar, a private group of 100 saw a film of soldiers projected by a German machine called a biograph. The *Empire Express* had become the first moving picture shown in a theatre here in 1896. At the Century Theatre on Olive, women fainted and screamed at a shot of a locomotive bearing down on the camera.

1906 A joint committee of the Municipal Assembly charged that the World's Fair Company had not fulfilled its pledge to restore Forest Park. Assembly members said the park was "devoid of its former beauty and charm, almost a bleak desert." They suggested that the city seize the company's assets to restore the park.

1910 The village of St. Peters was incorporated. The town trustees laid out a set of ordinances, including a five-miles-per-hour speed limit for automobiles. They also made it a misdemeanor to ride a horse or drive a carriage through town "faster than a moderate trot." The population stood at 269. By 1960, only 404 people lived there. The population now stands at about 55,000.

1927 Ernest Trova was born in St. Louis. The sculptor is best known for his series of abstract figural sculptures, "The Falling Man." The series came about when Famous-Barr asked him to create of series of works to commemorate the city's bicentennial in 1964. In 1975, he donated 40 of his sculptures, which led to the establishment of Laumeier Sculpture Park.

1948 Eero Saarinen was chosen as the winner of a contest to find a design for the proposed riverfront memorial. The Finnish-born architect's design called for a 630-foot-tall arch of steel. Saarinen said he wanted a monument that would "have lasting significance and would be a landmark of our time." Saarinen also designed the GM Technical Center near Detroit, the TWA Terminal in New York City, and the Dulles International Airport near Washington, D.C.

1950 City officials announced plans for a \$160,000 outdoor pool planned for the Tandy Park Community Center. The pool would be the first in the city to be open to "use by people of all races."

1957 In the wake of the deadliest fire in Missouri history, several bills were introduced in the legislature to regulate nursing homes. The fire at the Katie Jane Nursing Home in Warrenton killed 71. A former official for Wesleyan College, which owned the building prior to 1941, said it was "a firetrap from the day it was built."

1958 Federal officials formally approved plans for the redevelopment of the Mill Creek Valley. The entire slum area bounded by Grand, Olive, 20th and the rail yards was cleared. The plans called for industrial and residential development as well as an expansion of the St. Louis University Campus.

1961 Excavation work began on the foundations for the Gateway Arch.

1964 The *Post-Dispatch* reported on a growing problem. Teenaged hot rodders were turning Hall Street into a drag strip. The paper said police were frustrated. The souped up cars often outran them. As soon as they chased the hot rodders off the street, more appeared to take their place.

1966 "The Cheater" by Bob Kuban and the In-Men entered the Billboard Hot 100. It would hit number 12. The band included vocalist Walter Scott, Pat Hixon, Greg Hoeltzel, Mike Krenski, Ray Schulte, Harry Simon and Skip Weisser. The group would put two more 45's in the lower reaches of the chart, "The Teaser" and "Drive My Car." Scott's real name was Walter Notheis. His wife's lover murdered him in 1983.

1974 The Air Force granted approval for full production to begin on the McDonnell-Douglas F-15. Nine planes were to be produced each month. The Air Force approved \$797 million for a total of 72 planes.

1975 A group of downtown banks and businessmen announced the formation of a corporation to oversee development of a nine-block area north of downtown known as "Laclede's Landing." A 1966 effort to redevelop the area had fizzled.

1981 An explosion that levelled a South St. Louis home was under investigation. The man injured in the blast was described as a central figure in the murder-for-hire ring operated by Doctor Glennon Englemann. Authorities said Englemann hired James Thompson to plant the car bomb that killed Sophie Marie Barrera in January 1980.

1999 A landmark day for the St. Louis City Schools. The parties in the 27-year-old school desegregation lawsuit signed a settlement agreement. City voters later approved a sales tax increase to pay for the plan.

2007 One lane on eastbound Highway 40 at Tamm was closed overnight, the first lane closure of the massive three-year \$535 million reconstruction of the highway. Workers began taking soil samples for the new I-170 interchange with I-64/US 40.