

## February 28

**1788** Ralph Clayton was born in Virginia. In 1820, he bought about 630 acres of land St. Louis County from John McKnight for \$9 per acre. In 1831, the farmer, tanner and shoemaker married Rosanna McCausland, whose family lived nearby. When the county separated from the city in 1876, Clayton donated 100 acres for the new county seat. His only condition was that the town be named for him.

**1803** Congress appropriated funds for a small U.S. Army unit to explore the Missouri and Columbia Rivers. They were to make a detailed report on the geography, plants and animals and study the Indians. President Thomas Jefferson chose a childhood neighbor, Captain Meriweather Lewis, to command the expedition.

**1846** The St. Charles public school system was incorporated. Classes were taught at the courthouse before being moved to Second and Jefferson, where the first public school in St. Charles had been built in 1822.

**1847** The First Missouri Volunteers, under Colonel Alexander Doniphan, defeated a superior force of Mexican troops at the battle of Sacramento Pass. It marked a crucial turning point in the war with Mexico.

**1851** The Missouri Legislature declared the Booneslick Road from St. Charles through Warrenton and Danville to Jefferson City to be a state road. The road began as an Indian trail, later a pioneer trail, and eventually became the route for U.S. 40 and I-70.

**1870** James B. Eads ordered "jubilant firing of cannon and display of flags" at the site of the east pier of the great bridge. Steamboat whistles added to the din. The solid rock foundation had been reached, 95 feet below the river. The caisson for the west pier was reached bedrock on April 2, 1870, at 77 feet below the surface. The new regulations to prevent "caisson disease" prevented all but one death on the west side. But a total of 15 men had died from what we now know as "The Bends."

**1871** City officials declared the new water works at Bissell's Point ready for operation. St. Louisans could expect to have clear water from taps that had yielded liquid mud for years. But demand quickly outstripped the plant's capacity. It was 1904 before the city water was cleaned up for good.

**1922** A committee of St. Louis African-Americans called upon Mayor Henry Kiel to open recreational facilities and activities in the city to all races. Kiel expressed his sympathy. But the mayor said he feared such an order would lead to racial disturbances.

**1923** Southwestern Bell purchased the Kinloch Telephone Company, ending the rivalry between the two that dated back nearly 50 years. North County residents with a Bell phone couldn't call those with a Kinloch phone and vice-versa. At the time, Kinloch had about 50,000 subscribers, including most of St. Charles. Bell had about 120,000.

**1923** The Missouri Botanical Garden was considering moving away from St. Louis because of the choking smoke. The garden sought court permission to sell some of Henry Shaw's estate to buy land in Gray Summit. The garden planned to move endangered plants to the Arboretum.

**1923** Architect Gyo Obata was born in San Francisco. He narrowly escaped being sent to an internment camp for Japanese-Americans with his parents in the 1940's. He went to Washington University and co-founded Hellmuth, Obata and Kassabaum in 1955. His designs include the Convention Center, Metropolitan Square and One Bell Center. He also designed the National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C.

**1946** Stan Musial was discharged from the Navy. Upon leaving the Bainbridge Naval Separation Center, the 1943 National League batting champion returned to his home in Donora, Pennsylvania.

**1961** The movie *Hoodlum Priest* had its world premiere at Leow's State Theatre here. Don Murray starred as Father Charles Dismas Clark, who opened the first halfway house for convicts in St. Louis in 1959. Keir Dullea starred as an inmate who Clark helped adjust to life on the outside. Dismas House was one of Frank Sinatra's favorite charities. The "Rat Pack" performed at a benefit for the facility on June 20, 1965.

**1966** U.S. astronauts Elliott See and Charles Bassett died when their T-38 jet trainer crashed during an attempted landing at Lambert Field. They were coming here to train in a rendezvous simulator and inspect their Gemini Nine space capsule, under construction at McDonnell-Douglas. Lost in the mist and fog, the plane crashed into the very building they were to have visited. The crash hurt 15 people, but 8,000 scrambled to safety.

**1966** The Des Peres Board of Alderman approved zoning changes clearing the way for Famous Barr's "Regional Shopping Center" at I-244 and Manchester. Plans called for the stores to open into an enclosed "mall."

**1978** Five young St. Louisans were rescued from a cave in Southern Monroe County, Illinois. They had been trapped for two days with no equipment, lights or food.

**1983** The body of a seven to eight year old girl was found in the basement of a vacant building in the 5600 block of Clemens in North St. Louis. She had been sexually assaulted, strangled and decapitated. The crime has never been solved. The victim was never identified.

**1989** Jerry Clinton and Fran Murray announced the formation of the St. Louis NFL Partnership. They said it would be their goal to bring NFL football back to St. Louis.

**1996** The "Great One" became a member of the St. Louis Blues. The Blues acquired Wayne Gretzky from the Los Angeles Kings for Roman Vopat, Craig Johnson and Patrice Tardif. Gretzky didn't stay long. He signed a free agent contract with the New York Rangers after the 1996 season ended.

**1999** The man police said was the "Southside Rapist" was arrested in New Mexico. Dennis Rabbitt was suspected in dozens of rapes across the St. Louis area over the past decade. Police found him in a hotel with a teenaged runaway.

**2005** St. Louis lost another company headquarters, as Federated Department Stores of Cincinnati announced an \$11 billion acquisition of May Department Stores.