

## January 4

**1793** The Spanish Government granted Louis Lorimer broad trading privileges and the power to establish a post at Cape Girardeau. A town grew up around "The Red House" where commandant Lorimer made his headquarters. The area was named after Jean Girardot, a French marine ensign who set up a canoe landing there about 1720.

**1884** The mercury plunged to 26 below zero, the lowest official reading ever recorded here. That terrible night, 26 Sisters of Notre Dame died in a fire at their convent in Belleville. The Old St. Nicholas Hotel, at Fourth and Morgan (now Delmar) burned in a spectacular fire. It had recently been converted to a warehouse, so no lives were lost.

**1900** The World's Fair Planning Committee announced it would ask Congress for \$5 million for the fair. The money would be contingent on a like contribution by the city and another five million to be raised by popular subscription. That goal had already nearly been reached.

**1902** World's Fair officials announced the "Greatest balloon and flying machine tournament ever seen," to be held at the fair. The \$200,000 first prize for the most successful flying machine was expected to draw 100 entries from at least ten countries.

**1906** A list of Christmas presents received by police from the operators of a "bawdy house" was spurring calls for an investigation into graft. The list was found in a saloon where the gifts had apparently been collected. They included "a silk umbrella with a gold handle, diamond cuffs and studs, and a diamond encrusted locket."

**1909** The city excise commissioner ordered all paintings in saloons taken down or covered up. State law prohibited saloons from featuring works of art, music, entertainment or any other special feature that might inspire patrons to linger.

**1919** A pre-dawn fire at the Loretto Academy in Florissant sent the sisters out into the sub-zero cold. The academy was destroyed by the time pumpers arrived from Ferguson and University City. The fire prompted Florissant residents to form a volunteer fire department.

**1926** KMOX began regular programming, ending experimental and practice broadcasts. The station signed on at 9:40 each morning, with grain reports every one-half hour. The "popular noontime organ recitals" by Arthur L. Utt would continue. Between 4 and 5 p.m., the station would present short talks on "problems peculiar to the housewife."

**1926** Thousands jammed Union Station to welcome "The Jack Daniels Special," a train carrying eleven well-known St. Louis area politicians from their trials in Indiana to prison in Leavenworth. A former circuit clerk, deputy sheriff and the Democratic ward leader were among those convicted in a scheme to steal thousands of dollars of pre-prohibition whiskey from the Jack Daniels warehouse here. Most of the convictions against the politicians, including a state senator, were thrown out.

**1937** Grace Bumbry was born in St. Louis. The opera diva attended Sumner High School. Bumbry won a KMOX talent show in 1954 and went on to appear on Arthur Godfrey's *Talent Scouts*. She debuted with the Paris Opera in 1960. Her appearance at the Bayreuth Festival in 1961 marked the first performance given by a black artist there. She also won the Richard Wagner medal.

**1942** Rogers Hornsby was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame. Considered the greatest right handed hitter of all time, Hornsby led the National League in batting from 1920 to 1925 and again in 1928. His lifetime batting average of .358 is the highest in NL history, and second only to Ty Cobb. He managed the World Champion 1926 team and won MVP awards in 1925 and 1929.

**1960** The last Grand Avenue street car made its run. That left just four streetcar lines still in operation. The Public Service Company was still running streetcars on the Wellston, Hodiament, Delmar and University City lines.

**1960** John Michael Stipe, lead singer of REM, was born in Decatur, Georgia. In the early 70's, his family lived in Collinsville for five years while his father was stationed at Scott Air Force Base. Stipe played in a punk band called Bad Habits while at Collinsville High. He graduated in 1978 and moved to Georgia in 1979.

**1961** Governor James T. Blair announced the state had purchased the buildings that had served as the first state capitol in St. Charles. The buildings at 212 South Main, known as "Peck's Row," served as the capitol from 1821 until 1826. The state planned to restore the buildings.

**1965** Thomas Stearns Eliot died in his London apartment. Born in St. Louis, the grandson of the founder of Washington University established himself as a poet with *The Love Song of J. Alfred Pufrock*. He moved to London and became a British citizen in 1927. He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1948.

**2000** A banner day for East St. Louis. The \$15 million Crown Hotel at the Casino Queen opened for business. It was the first major hotel to be built in East St. Louis in over 40 years.