

January 15

1814 The *Missouri Gazette* carried the earliest recorded reference to a public performance in St. Louis. Eugene Leitensdorfer offered a “Spectacle of recreative sports, of Mathematicks and Phisicks” and tricks of slight of hand. In a later ad, Leitensdorfer promised he could “cut the head off a living chicken and restore it to life with its head on.” Now that’s entertainment!

1823 St. Louis newspaper readers saw an ad seeking "Enterprising Young Men . . . to ascend the river Missouri to its source” to be employed as trappers. William Ashley thought of a new system, where he would send these men west and buy their pelts at an annual “rendezvous.” Jedediah Smith, William Sublette and Jim Bridger were among those who signed on.

1844 Thomas Coleman "Cole" Younger was born in Lee's Summit. During the Civil War, Younger rode with Quantrill's infamous guerrillas. After the war Younger and Frank James organized a gang that would eventually be taken over by Jesse James.

1873 Residents near the Fairgrounds Commons in South St. Louis, where cattle grazed contentedly, were furious at a proposal now before the legislature. The measure would bar cattle grazing on public lands and within the city limits.

1898 Bell Telephone completed a new underground system that changed the look of the city. Before a city ordinance requiring that the lines be placed beneath the streets, the sky over St. Louis was a maze of phone wires. The new system also extended long distance service to the entire city.

1902 A St. Louis woman was asking Mayor Rolla Wells for a permit that would allow her to wear trousers. She was a house painter, who claimed the skirts hindered her work. A writer said she was unlikely to win, because "only modesty, tradition and the law against wearing trousers prevented women from competing with men in all fields."

1904 Democratic leaders announced that St. Louis had been chosen as the site for the national convention in the summer. Almost immediately, hotel owners who already expected to be filled during the World’s Fair found themselves swamped with requests for rooms.

1927 David R. Francis died. The city will never forget his work to make St. Louis the location of the World’s Fair in 1904 and his service as president of the fair’s board of directors. He donated the land for Francis Park in 1916 and became ambassador to Russia just before the Revolution. Pistol in hand, he stood off a mob bent on destroying the embassy. He barely escaped Petrograd as German troops closed in.

1928 Fifty extra police officers were on duty at the Federal Courthouse. They were there to prevent any violence at the start of the first trial stemming from the bloody bootlegger

war. Only people who could prove they had legitimate business were allowed inside for the trial of two men charged with gunning down gangster Alphonse Palazzolo.

1929 Jacques Plante was born. The Hall of Fame NHL goalie was the first to wear a mask during games. He played for the Blues late in his career, sharing the Vezina Trophy for best goaltender with teammate Glenn Hall in 1969. Plante died on February 27, 1986.

1930 Lieutenant James Doolittle arrived in St. Louis. The crack Air Service pilot took over as Director of Aviation Activities for the Shell Oil Company. On April 18, 1942, Doolittle led the first U.S. bombing raid on Tokyo. He was awarded the Medal of Honor and promoted to Brigadier General. The Route 66 town of Centreville, Missouri (near Rolla) was re-named Doolittle in his honor.

1933 T.S. Eliot returned to his home town of St. Louis for the first time in 20 years. He gave a lecture on literary criticism at Washington University. Eliot would later become a British citizen.

1947 The last livery stable in St. Louis closed its doors forever. Dave Brown had founded his stables back in 1905, when he was 17. The operation at 2216 Biddle was closed after Brown decided to retire.

1966 County voters approved a \$2 million bond issue to replace the aging and overcrowded county jail in Clayton. Conditions were so bad that defendants would ask judges to sentence them to two years in another prison instead of one year in the county jail.

1969 David R. Wade of Nashville was welcomed as the one-millionth person to visit the Gateway Arch. Wade said he liked the view, but was uncomfortable with his sudden fame.

1970 St. Louis was preparing to host the NHL All-Star game. Canadiens coach Claude Ruel was upset with Arena organist Norm Kramer. Ruell said Kramer stirred up the crowd, resulting in a one goal advantage for the Blues. Complaints from other coaches would result in the NHL allowing music only during stoppages in play.

1981 Cardinals great Bob Gibson was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in his first year of eligibility. He was the only person named to the Hall of Fame that year. Gibson was a five-time 20 game winner with 3,117 career strikeouts. His 1.12 ERA in 1968 was the lowest ever by a Major Leaguer. He fanned 200 or more batters in a season nine times and had two seasons with 13 shutouts.

1988 Big Red owner Bill Bidwell formally announced that the team was moving to Phoenix. During the previous season, Bidwell had made it clear that the team was headed either to Jacksonville, Baltimore or to the desert. During that last season Bidwell was threatened so often that he stopped attending games. Bidwell tearfully described his feelings as "mixed."