

July 3

1837 The first real theater in St. Louis opened its doors. The St. Louis Theater at Third and Olive could seat about 16-hundred people. The Merchant's Exchange later occupied the site, which now lies beneath Interstate 70.

1838 St. Louis got its first evening paper, as the *Evening Gazetteer* began publication. The paper eventually evolved into the *Evening Post*. In December 1878, Joseph Pulitzer bought the bankrupt *Dispatch* and merged it with the *Post*.

1849 The death toll from the cholera was climbing towards 700 per week. The city set up a quarantine station on Duncan's Island south of the city. A health inspector set up a few miles further downstream to check passengers on all incoming boats.

1861 John C. Fremont was named commander of the Western Department of the Army, headquartered here. The "Pathfinder," was a famed Western explorer. Fremont placed the entire state under martial law and ordered the slaves of rebel sympathizers freed, even though he had no authority to do so. President Lincoln rescinded the order and removed Fremont from command in November 1861. Fremont called Lincoln an "imbecile."

1869 The first bridge over the Missouri River opened. It was a railroad bridge at Kansas City. It would be 1871 before a railroad bridge crossed the river at St. Charles.

1904 Over 20 people died in the fiery wreck of the Wabash Limited near Litchfield, Illinois. Many prominent people traveling from Chicago to St. Louis for the World's Fair and the National Democratic Convention were on board when the train slammed into an open switch and the locomotive exploded. Many of the injured were horribly burned.

1934 The bankrupt Arena and the Forest Park Highlands were sold for \$848,000 to a reorganization firm at a foreclosure auction. The Arena opened in 1929, just months before the stock market crash wiped out the promoters. For a time, the building was in danger of being torn down.

1940 Fontella Bass was born in St. Louis. Her mother was a gospel singer in a group that toured with the Reverend C.L. Franklin, Aretha Franklin's father. Fontella started out singing gospel, and began performing with Oliver Sain. Little Milton persuaded her to join his band in the early 1960's. In 1965, she reached the top five with "Rescue Me." The record label controlled most of the royalties until 1990, when Fontella sued over the use of the song in an American Express commercial.

1958 East St. Louis boss Frank "Buster" Wortman took the Fifth Amendment 91 times in testimony before a Senate rackets committee. Committee counsel Robert Kennedy charged that Wortman took payoffs to maintain labor "peace." He said Wortman had connections with jukebox, gambling, racetrack news and trucking interests.

1959 McDonnell Aircraft unveiled its newest fighter, the F-Four "Phantom." The sensitive radar gear in the plane's nose was protected by aluminum. The dignitaries failed to break a bottle of champagne over the nose three times. They gave up and poured the champagne over the plane.

1967 Police were called in to break up a brawl between the Reds and Cardinals at Busch Stadium. Tony Perez stormed the mound after Bob Gibson threw an inside pitch in the fifth inning. The benches emptied, but things didn't get out of hand until Bob Lee and the Reds bullpen ran out. It took police 12 minutes to break it up.

1981 The first V.P. Fair opened on the Arch grounds. More than 1.5 million people attended "America's Biggest Birthday Party." In a sign of things to come, a torrential downpour would turn the grounds into a sea of mud.

1989 The United States Supreme Court ruled in the case of "Webster vs. Reproductive Health Services." The court upheld Missouri's strict anti-abortion statutes.

1989 Rose Phillipine Duchesne was canonized. In 1818, the pioneer French missionary founded the Academy of the Sacred Heart in St. Charles. It became the first free school west of the Mississippi. Duchesne was instrumental in establishing over 40 schools in the West. In her 70's she was still ministering to the Indians in Kansas. She died in November 1852 and rests today in St. Charles.

1993 The Missouri River at St. Charles rose over flood stage for the second time in 1993. Residents of Northern St. Charles County and in Grafton, Illinois began moving out. The V.P. Fair opened on the St. Louis riverfront with some of the attractions moved to make room for the rising Mississippi.

1997 A week after the controversial dioxin incinerator shut down, the state announced the Times Beach site would be reborn as Route 66 State Park.

1997 Three workers died in a fireworks accident on the Alton riverfront. A faulty shell fell back onto the barge, setting off a spectacular explosion. At least two of the workers drowned when they jumped from the barge.

1998 The Brett Hull era officially came to an end in St. Louis. Hull signed as a free agent with the Dallas Stars. In 1999, he would help lead the Stars to the Stanley Cup. Hull signed with the Detroit Red Wings in 2001, and they won the cup in 2002. Hull still holds the Blues team record for goals with 527.

1998 A violent thunderstorm devastated Fair St. Louis. Winds sent booths toppling onto Interstate 70. Two people were injured when a vat of hot grease overturned. The storm forced the cancellation of the Chaka Khan concert that night.