

July 4

1763 Cartographer Louis Joliet and Jesuit Father Jacques Marquette became the first Europeans to visit the St. Louis area. Painted on the Mississippi bluffs, they saw “two painted monsters which at first made us afraid and upon which the boldest savages dare not long rest their eyes.” The Indians called the creature “Piasa.” After the Indians informed them that the Mississippi led to the Gulf of Mexico, they returned up the Illinois River. They made a stop near what is now Pere Marquette State Park.

1785 Bernard Farr was born in Virginia. In 1807, he became the first physician and surgeon west of the Mississippi. He performed the first surgery in St. Louis, amputating the leg of a gunshot victim. Farrar killed a man in a duel on Bloody Island. He treated victims of the 1849 cholera epidemic and died of the disease. Farrar Street is named in his honor.

1804 The United States Post Office was established at St. Louis. Rufus Easton was named as the first postmaster.

1804 The Lewis and Clark Expedition marked first Fourth of July ever celebrated west of the Mississippi by firing keelboat’s cannon, drinking extra ration of whiskey, and naming a creek (near what is now Atchinson, Kansas) Independence Creek.

1822 Henry Overstolz was born in Munster, Germany. Overstolz challenged the results after apparently losing a special election for Mayor in 1875. James Britton served nine months of his term before Overstolz was declared the winner. He became the 28th Mayor of St. Louis, and the first elected for a four-year term. During his administration, the city and county separated and the city limits were extended to their current boundaries.

1851 Ground was broken for the first railroad west of the Mississippi. After a grand procession, St. Louis Mayor Arthur Kennett turned the first shovel full of dirt for the Pacific Railroad. When the tracks reached the town of Franklin, 35 miles to the west, the town was renamed Pacific to honor the occasion.

1859 Erastus Wells, president of the Missouri Railway Company, was behind the reins as the first streetcar in St. Louis made its run on Olive Street. The car derailed a few times, due to rocks on the tracks. Wells had started in the transit business back in 1834, with an old horse drawn Army ambulance fished out of the river. His street railway made him a rich man and he built a country estate called “Wellston.”

1862 Ceremonies were held marking the completion of the building we now know as the "old" courthouse. The first courthouse on the site was built in 1828. Expansion was begun in 1839, and the east and west wings were completed. But the dome was not finished until 1862.

1863 About 10,000 people gathered for a celebration and balloon ascension at what is now Hyde Park. Union soldiers from nearby Benton Barracks at Fairgrounds Park

clashed with southern sympathizers. A company of soldiers fired into the crowd. At least two people were killed and several were wounded.

1870 At 11:24 a.m., *Robert E. Lee* arrived in St. Louis a little more than six hours ahead of the *Natchez*. The *Lee* made the run from New Orleans in three days, 18 hours and 14 minutes. Captain John Cannon of the *Lee* stripped his boat for the race and refueled from barges while underway. The *Natchez* stopped when fog draped the river near Cairo. Cannon kept going, with the help of extra pilots. The *Natchez* might have won if Captain T.P. Leathers had refused to carry cargo or passengers as Cannon did.

1871 The first railroad bridge over the Missouri at St. Charles was dedicated. It was jinxed from the beginning. Eighteen men were killed in a construction accident. Three people died when a span collapsed and sent a train plunging into the river in 1871. Five more died in a collapse in 1879.

1874 William T. Sherman drove a golden spike, marking the dedication of the Eads Bridge. James Buchanan Eads was a self-taught engineer who built armored gunboats for the Union at St. Louis during the Civil War. One of those boats, the *Milwaukee*, was scrapped and the steel was used in one of the caissons of the bridge. Eads' radical design was the first in the world to use alloy steel. He had battled railroad monopolies, steamboat and ferry company interests to get it built.

1874 The cornerstone for All Saints Church in St. Peters was laid. The church dominated the landscape on the Booneslick Road approaching the tiny village. The church still stands high on a hill today, standing out amid the suburban clutter.

1876 Carondelet Park was dedicated. It was established by an act of the General Assembly in 1874. The 180-acre park takes its name from the community named for Baron de Carondelet, Governor General of the Louisiana Territory in 1794. It once was the estate of Alexander Lacy Lyle, a Confederate sympathizer who left St. Louis when the war broke out.

1901 Famous saloon-smasher Carrie Nation stopped in St. Louis to change trains at Union Station. She headed across Market to "clean-out" a saloon. The proprietor saw her coming and blew his whistle to send police running in. They arrested her with a valise filled with hatchets. She was released in time to make her train.

1904 July Fourth at the World's Fair was marked with an elaborate military parade and a speech by William Jennings Bryan at Festival Hall. A dramatic recitation of the Declaration of Independence was made next to the Liberty Bell, on display in the Pennsylvania Building.

1904 The first balloon "race" at the fair also took place. Superintendent of Aeronautics Carl E. Myers ascended with his wife. Professor Tracy Tisdell also rose into the sky as a light rain fell. Then it turned into a downpour, weighing down the balloons. Tisdell

landed in East St. Louis while Mr. and Mrs. Myers landed at a farm near Collinsville. It wasn't really a race at all. Fair officials paid the balloonists a fee to attract a crowd.

1943 There were signs of a "Baby Boom" in St. Louis. The *Post-Dispatch* reported that the city was already reporting a record number of births. There were 19,981 in 1942 and just over 16,000 in 1941. The story said that millions of people realize that "in time of war life becomes increasingly hazardous and expendable. They wish to have a child as a symbol of brief, complete happiness."

1951 An eight-inch downpour overcame the efforts of sandbaggers and the Missouri River surged over the top of the final major levee in St. Charles County. Damage was estimated at between four and five million dollars in the St. Louis area.

1970 The replica of the Santa Maria returned to the St. Louis riverfront. The ship was brought here following the 1964 World's Fair in New York. It sank during a violent thunderstorm in 1969. Fox Industries of Madison, Illinois remodeled the Santa Maria and placed it on a barge. But the ship failed as a tourist attraction and was moved away.

1974 Promoters were calling a big rock festival at Berry Park in Wentzville a disaster. The crowds were good, but promoters claimed they lost \$40,000. Some of them said Chuck Berry, who owned the park, had the money from the gate receipts. But Berry claimed he lost \$3,000.

1976 St. Louis observed the Bicentennial with a fireworks display, a concert by the St. Louis Symphony, and an air show on the riverfront. Church bells rang across Missouri and Illinois at 11 a.m. "A Celebration in Sound" projected beams of light on the Old Post Office as electronic music echoed through the streets. At the Muny, *Municipal Opera Salutes '76* featured Burt Bacharach and Anthony Newly.

1981 A torrential thunderstorm sent thousands of people running for cover at the first Veiled Prophet Fair. 75 percent of the fireworks display was destroyed and a concert by Loretta Lynn was washed out.

2003 Hundreds gathered at the state line to mark the re-opening of the Eads Bridge to pedestrian and vehicle traffic. The road deck had been closed since 1991. About 1,000 bicyclists sped across the bridge to begin the ceremonies. A 50 cannon salute also marked the ceremonies.