

June 23

1777 Frederick Bates, the second governor of Missouri, was born in Virginia. He became governor in 1824, but died of pleurisy after just nine months in office. Bates is best remembered for refusing to welcome Lafayette to St. Louis. He claimed state money could not legally be used for the visit. But the truth is that Bates hated the French. He made his home at "Thornhill," in St. Louis County. His estate is now Faust Park, where the home still stands today.

1904 Willie Mae Ford was born in Rolling Fork, Mississippi. She moved to St. Louis in 1917, and sang in the family gospel quartet. Ford was one of the first to perform in the blues-influenced gospel style. She organized the Soloists Bureau of the National Convention of Gospel Choirs and choruses in 1936. Willie Mae Ford Smith was featured in the 1983 film *Say Amen Somebody*.

1907 The appearance of St. Louis brewing magnate Charles Lemp's automobile proved to be the most exciting event in years in the sedate city of St. Charles. A dozen horses bolted, upsetting a wagonload of vegetables and destroying several conveyances. Lemp said from now on, he would walk if he felt the need to take a trip to St. Charles.

1919 Just one week after the first season opened, disaster hit the Muny Opera. The rampaging River Des Peres swamped the stage. The show went on the next night, but the Muny finished the season 30-thousand-dollars in the red. That was the last time the Muny failed to make a profit. The River Des Peres was later placed in a pipe under the park.

1923 The birthday of the Missouri Air National Guard. On this date in 1923, the Army formed the 100th Observation Squadron, 35th Aviation Division, Missouri National Guard. William B. Robertson was named as the first commanding officer.

1929 The last span of the Chain of Rocks Bridge was swung into place. The chief engineer said workers were busy riveting the final section and paving the roadway. He expected the bridge to be open to traffic in about two weeks.

1933 The St. Louis Central Riverfront Improvement Association unveiled plans for a federal park on the riverfront to "honor the men who helped in the winning of the West." The \$90 million plan called for razing all non-historic buildings between the levee, Third, Walnut and Washington. Planners envisioned a huge seawall, parks, boulevards and massive warehouses.

1958 KMOX became the first CBS owned station to broadcast locally originated editorials. The first editorial spoke out against the fluoridation of the St. Louis County water supply.

1959 Mayor Raymond Tucker broke ground for work to remove the elevated railroad tracks on the riverfront. It marked the first step in years towards actual construction on

the Arch. The battle over who would pay to remove the tracks and budget battles in Washington had delayed the project since the buildings were cleared in the 1940's.

For most of the 1950's citizens of St. Louis anxiously awaited progress on the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial. City leaders and leaders within the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial Association had spent the decade lobbying the federal government for the financial support for the project that was promised back in 1930's. The memorial grounds had been cleared of dilapidated buildings by 1942 and for most of the 1950s the area served as a municipal parking lot.

On June 23, 1959 the city of St. Louis finally began to see the light at the end of the tunnel with the ground-breaking ceremony to celebrate the beginning construction of the memorial. Over the previous decade many within the city had begun to criticize the federal government's commitment to the project. Problems with a concern for a lack of parking, coupled with issues concerning the placement of railroad tracks had stalled the project for much of the 1950's. By 1959 plans for an underground parking garage and the relocation of rail lines, along with the financial assistance of the federal government, finally allowed the construction for the foundation of the Saarinen Arch to begin.

1972 Martin McNally hijacked an American Airlines 727 and made the pilot return to Lambert Field. Authorities delivered a \$500,000 ransom and the plane rolled towards takeoff with three crewmen, a stewardess and young hostage on board. Suddenly, a Cadillac driven by David Hanley of Florissant crashed through the fence with emergency vehicles in close pursuit. Hanley smashed his car into the plane's landing gear and was seriously injured. McNally got a new plane. .

1983 Alfonso J. Cervantes died. He served as Mayor of St. Louis from 1965 until 1973. The "Salesman Mayor" worked to bring the ill-fated Spanish Pavilion and replica of the *Santa Maria* to St. Louis. He also campaigned for a second major airport at Columbia-Waterloo, Illinois. It was the controversy over the airport that may have cost him a third term.

1984 One of the greatest Cards-Cubs games ever took place at Wrigley Field. Willie McGee hit for the cycle and drove in six runs. But Ryne Sandberg hit home runs off Bruce Sutter to tie the game in the ninth and again in the 10th. He drove in seven runs in what would be known as the "Sandberg Game." The Cubs won 12-11 in 11 innings, on a bases-loaded single by Dave Owens.

1990 Authorities raided Chuck Berry's compound at Berry Park in Wentzville. They claimed they found pot, hashish, weapons and cash. They also seized pornographic videotapes. The raid followed claims by an employee of Berry's restaurant that she had been videotaped while using the restroom.

1993 More than one-thousand people boarded the *Casino Queen* in East St. Louis for the maiden voyage. The casino would allow East St. Louis to refinance millions of dollars in debts, replace worn out police cars and fire trucks, and give city workers a raise--while cutting property taxes.

1999 Plans were unveiled for the long-awaited downtown convention hotel. The complex would be formed through the renovation of the Gateway and Lennox Hotels and construction of a new tower. Construction was slated to begin in March, 2000.