

March 8

1804 The last day that the Spanish flag flew over St. Louis. Almost the entire village of 925 turned out to watch as the flag was lowered. The French flag, symbolizing the return of the territory to France, replaced it. The French flag came down 24 hours later and the American flag was raised.

1808 Meriweather Lewis arrived in St. Louis to take over as governor of the Louisiana Territory. As a reward for Lewis' service, Thomas Jefferson appointed him to replace General James Wilkinson. Wilkinson was not only unpopular, he was suspected of treason as well. Lewis died under mysterious circumstances on the Natchez Trace in 1809. His death was ruled a suicide.

1836 Wilson Eidson, a burglar from Greene County, became the first inmate at the Missouri State Penitentiary in Jefferson City. Three years later, the prison was made self-supporting. It was leased to contractors who used the inmates for labor. The system was a failure, and conditions were terrible when the state took over again in 1854.

1871 A tornado touched down at the east end of the Eads Bridge construction site. It did considerable damage before slamming into East St. Louis. At least 20 people were killed. It was the worst tornado here until 1896. The falsework for the bridge was destroyed, and several steamboats were damaged.

1879 Five people were killed, and six buildings were destroyed, in an arson fire in East St. Louis. Three men were arrested, including the owner of the blacksmith and wagon shop where the fire started. Also under arrest were the watchman he hired, and the estranged husband of one of the victims.

1887 James Buchanan Eads, died at Nassau, in the Bahama Islands at the age of 66. Eads was not content to rest on his laurels after the great bridge at St. Louis was completed in 1874. He developed a system of jetties where the Mississippi empties into the Gulf of Mexico. The jetties cause the natural flow of the river to keep the channel clear of silt. He also promoted a railway across the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, in Mexico, as an alternative to the proposed Panama Canal.

1901 The cornerstone was laid for the new St. Charles County Courthouse. The building at the top of "Clerk's Hill" was completed in 1903.

1904 A group of Eastern automobile enthusiasts announced plans for a big motor tour to the world's fair. Three groups of drivers would leave from Boston, New York and Baltimore. The plan called for them to assemble in Alton on August 8th for a grand parade to the fairgrounds.

1927 Federal agents conducting a war on stills on islands in St. Charles County found a big one on a deserted island. The raid seized 6,000 gallons of mash. St. Charles County was called the most still-infested county in the state.

1931 The new \$1 million St. Louis County hospital in Clayton was reported to be completed. But the doors would remain locked, because the county couldn't afford the \$135,000 it would take to run the hospital each year.

1937 Workers at the Emerson Electric plant on Washington Avenue took over the building. Their sit-down strike lasted 53-days, the second longest in U.S. history. Emerson gained a reputation as one of the most anti-union corporations in the country and was pushed to the brink of bankruptcy. Stuart Symington took over as president of Emerson in 1938. He saved the firm and began his rise to the U.S. Senate.

1946 John Cardinal Glennon lapsed into a coma. He came down with pneumonia while staying at the home of President Sean O'Kelly of Ireland. Glennon was visiting his native country while returning to St. Louis after being elevated to the College of Cardinals in Rome.

1958 The Department of Public Welfare announced the five municipal bath houses would now be open for only six hours each day from Tuesday to Saturday. They said the use of the public bathhouses was declining, because most people had access to bathing facilities in their own homes.

1968 Construction of the controversial Meramec Park Reservoir near Sullivan moved a step closer to reality. The Corps of Engineers approved master plans for the recreational development of the reservoir. The plan called for 9,800 additional acres to be bought for public access.

1971 Two bombs blasted the ROTC Building on Forest Park Boulevard. 14 police officers and firefighters were inside investigating the first explosion when the second bomb went off. Seven policemen and three firefighters were hurt. A few hours earlier, a bomb had shattered the Civilian Personnel Records Center in St. Louis.

1977 State Senator James Conway defeated former Mayor AJ Cervantes to win the Democratic nomination for mayor, ensuring his election.

1978 Nine inches of snow gave St. Louis a total of 64.4 inches for the season. That was the most since the winter of 1911-1912. The months of January, February and March 1978 had been the coldest on record here.

1989 Ceremonies marked the start of construction on the new Discovery Bridge between St. Charles and St. Louis Counties. It was built to replace the aging Highway 115 Bridge, which had been constructed just in time for the World's Fair in 1904.