

## **March 18**

**1826** The first governor of Missouri, Alexander McNair, died of influenza at the age of 50. Before defeating Territorial Governor William Clark in the first state election, he served as a St. Louis town trustee and as county sheriff.

**1851** The first big concert in St. Louis history took place. Jenny Lind, "The Swedish Nightingale" played the first of five shows in St. Louis, promoted by P.T. Barnum. Tickets were sold at auction for up to \$150. Huge crowds stood outside Wayman's Hall on Market Street, and the windows were opened so they could hear. Barnum also brought General Tom Thumb to town, charging admission to talk to the world's smallest man.

**1875** The Missouri House was debating a bill to grant amnesty to the James and Younger Brothers for their guerilla activities during the Civil War. Proponents said the boys were good and courageous, that they had been driven to a life of crime because of their war record. It was noted that if they had been on the Union side, they would have been hailed as heroes.

**1876** A proposal to annex St. Louis into the State of Illinois was introduced in that state's legislature. Several businessmen here expressed support for the measure. They were upset over interference by the Missouri Legislature in business affairs. They got the idea from a group of Kansas City citizens who were leading a movement for their city to become part of Kansas.

**1889** Joseph M. Darst was born in St. Louis. He became the 41<sup>st</sup> Mayor of St. Louis in 1949. Slum clearance and public housing projects dominated his administration. During his four-year term, 704 public housing units were completed; construction was underway on 17,000 and 4,000 more were on the drawing board.

**1890** The second bridge across the Mississippi River was completed. The members of the St. Louis Merchant's Exchange built the bridge to break the monopoly of the Terminal Railroad Association, which owned the Eads Bridge. The new span was dubbed the Merchant's Bridge.

**1904** The Globe reported that St. Louis showman Zack Mull's Wild West Exhibition and Congress of American Indians at the world's fair would feature 750 Indians representing 51 tribes. 30 "rough riders" would also be featured. Among the Indians participating would be Geronimo, the aged leader of the Apache. Joseph of the Nez Pierce and Lone Wolf of the Kiowas were also expected to appear.

**1906** Testimony was underway in a suit by Missouri Attorney General Herbert Hadley to oust Standard Oil and two subsidiary companies from the state. Hadley said Standard had secured a monopoly by buying up most of the stock in the smaller companies.

**1909** Spurred by the fire that destroyed the Loretto Academy on January 4th, the residents of Florissant founded a volunteer fire department.

**1925** The deadliest tornado in US history killed 695 people along a 219-mile path from Ellington, Missouri to Princeton, Indiana. Over 100 people were dead in Murphysboro, Illinois.

**1947** The familiar St. Louis County Library "Bookmobile" made its first run. The first stop was in Florissant Valley. The library founders felt that bookmobiles were the only way to reach the 400-square miles of St. Louis County, which was mostly still rural.

**1948** The St. Louis University Billikens beat New York University to win the NIT Championship. At that time, the NIT was the premiere tournament in college basketball.

**1952** At a meeting at Clayton High School, 500 residents of Clayton, University City and other areas jeered plans to extend Highway 40 from its dead end at Brentwood Blvd. Plans called for the highway to enter St. Louis north of Washington University. The Mayor of Brentwood was upset that his city would be by-passed.

**1961** Mayor Tucker was hailing passage of the "most important piece of legislation in municipal history." The new building code did away with the outmoded old one and cleared the way for the biggest building boom in city history.

**1966** St. Louis was a step closer to gaining a franchise in the National Hockey League. A group headed by Sidney Salomon Junior announced they had reached an agreement to buy the Arena. The \$4 million purchase price was contingent on the awarding of the franchise.

**1992** St. Louis homebuilders Harold and Allan Lieberman fled to Chile to escape indictment from fraud stemming from the collapse of their firm. Alan returned to the US in 1997, and was sentenced to ten years. Harold jumped to his death from a balcony at his Santiago apartment just before he was to be expelled in February 1998.

**1999** A St. Louis landmark came back to life. 90 display apartments were unveiled and the famous Zodiac and Starlight Rooms were re-opened at the renovated Chase-Park Plaza. The Chase was the center of the city's nightlife until it closed in 1989.