

## **March 19**

**1687** The French explorer Robert Cavalier Sieur De LaSalle was murdered by mutineers in present day Texas. Lasalle was the first European to navigate the length of the Mississippi, claiming its entire basin for France. He is credited with opening Missouri to exploration.

**1865** Charles Marion Russell was born in St. Louis. He left school at 16 and moved to Montana to pursue his dream of becoming a cowboy. One of his most famous works was created while he worked as a wrangler during a disastrous winter. "The Last of the Five Thousand" showed a starving steer surrounded by wolves. He was soon one of the best-known artists of the West.

**1870** James Riley died of a mysterious ailment seen among those working in the caissons 100 feet below the river at the Eads Bridge construction site. He was the first American to die of "caisson's disease." The condition we now know as The Bends claimed 14 lives during construction of the Eads Bridge.

**1903** The city chemist was being hailed for a landmark experiment. Doctor Armana Ravold countered Chicago's claim that a canal carrying sewage into the Mississippi posed no threat to St. Louis. Ravold dumped harmless bacilli, entirely foreign to U.S. waters into the canal. The bacilli turned up in tap water at St. Louis city hall. St. Louis was battling Chicago in the Supreme Court over the canal.

**1920** Elsa Lemp killed herself at her St. Louis home. There were some mysterious circumstances surrounding the death of the city's wealthiest heiress. But her brother, William Lemp Junior, simply commented "That's the Lemps for you." Her father, brewery magnate William Lemp Senior, had killed himself in 1904. William Junior would take his own life in 1922. Their brother, Charles, committed suicide in 1929. Those three suicides all took place at the Lemp Mansion.

**1925** Trains filled with doctors and nurses were speeding from Union Station to Southern Illinois, devastated by the worst twister in US history. 689 people had been killed along the twister's path from Southern Missouri across Illinois into Indiana. Over 100 people were dead in Murphysboro, Illinois.

**1948** Cleanup was underway after tornadoes swept across Missouri and Illinois. 50 people were dead and 300 injured within a 60-mile radius of St. Louis. Hardest hit was the town of Bunker Hill, Illinois. 19 people were dead and 80 percent of the buildings in town were leveled.

**1957** Authorities were concerned about a mysterious structure rising near Collinsville. The home reportedly being built for hoodlum Frank "Buster" Wortman was surrounded by a moat. St. Clair and Madison County officials were worried that Wortman planned to move his gambling operations to the building.

**1964** Donald Gunn, President of the Board of Aldermen, was touting a plan to give Union Station a new lease on life. He called for the station to be turned into a cultural center, complete with a concert hall, two theaters, a museum and restaurants. Gunn said it had been "an idea in search of a home" since 1962.

**1969** Bi-State bus drivers voted to accept a 60-cent-an-hour pay increase and return to work. The vote ended the longest transit strike here since the violent 1901 walkout. Bi-State drivers had walked out 19 days earlier. Bi-State warned that fares would rise and some services would have to be cut to pay for the new contract.

**1982** Workers were putting the finishing touches on Richard Serra's \$250,000 sculpture on the Gateway Mall downtown. The sculpture consists of eight, ten-by-40-foot structural steel panels. They were designed to rust with age. Serra said he expected initial public reaction to his work to be negative. But he predicted people would soon be entranced.

**1988** Bernie Federko became the first Blue, and the 22nd player in NHL history to score 1,000 points in his career.

**1994** The screen at the 66 Park-In Theater on Watson Road in Crestwood was torn down to make room for a National Supermarket. The landmark opened in 1948 along what was then Route 66.

**2007** Officials gathered at the corner of Everett Avenue and Linden Avenue in Richmond Heights for the official groundbreaking ceremonies for the \$535 million I-64 reconstruction project. Work had already begun. The project to rebuild the Interstate from Spoede in west St. Louis County into the city was expected to take three years to complete and cause lane closures and other headaches for commuters.