

May 1

1849 The steamboat *Highlander* burned to the waterline at the foot of Cherry Street. Some expressed concern that such a fire might one day spread to the buildings crammed along the riverfront. It happened on May 17th. The Great Fire would destroy 15 city blocks and 23 steamboats.

1852 Martha Jane Canary, "Calamity Jane," was born in Princeton, Missouri. Her father became a lay minister in Kirkwood, before he took the family west. Jane's parents died, leaving three kids to fend for themselves in Virginia City. Calamity Jane claimed to have scouted for Custer and killed hundreds of Indians. She also said she had Wild Hickock's baby. Historians doubt it.

1872 Major Charles Clarkson died. Clarkson was a Kentucky native who served in the War of 1812. He then moved to St. Louis County to breed choice livestock. Clarkson Road is named in his honor.

1875 In one of several disasters that befell the Wabash Railroad bridge at St. Charles, the steamboat *St. Luke* struck the bridge. Five people drowned as the left side of the boat was sheered off back to the wheelhouse.

1877 The Brown Stockings played 15 scoreless innings against the Syracuse Stars. A sportswriter called it one of the greatest games ever. By the 15th inning, it became apparent that the game would have to be called because of darkness. The Stars refused to take advantage of the Browns after "Such a manly contest," and asked the umpire to declare the game a draw.

1900 City streetcar workers voted to strike if their demands for a ten-hour day and 20 cents an hour were not met. On May 8th, they would walk off the job. It marked the beginning of the most violent strike in St. Louis history. Several people were killed in the first 55-day strike, and business here ground to a halt.

1904 The grandest of the two dozen hotels built for the world's fair opened. The Jefferson Hotel on 12th Street at Locust cost one-million-dollars. The Hilton Corporation bought the hotel in 1950. It was sold to Sheraton in 1955. The last guest checked out in 1975, and the hotel has been converted into apartments for seniors.

1907 Archbishop John Joseph Cardinal Glennon broke ground for the "New" St. Louis Cathedral on Lindell. It was completed in October 1914. Dedication ceremonies were not held until June 29, 1926.

1919 St. Louis threw another in a series of parades to welcome its soldiers home. The *Post-Dispatch* reported that this parade attracted "The greatest crowds St. Louis ever saw massed in Twelfth Street. St. Louis ranked third among the nation's major cities in recruitment, with about 45,000 enlistments.

1922 Doctor Herbert Roberts died of radiation poisoning. Regarded by some as the most famous resident of Belleville, he studied radium with Madame Curie and wrote a book called "Practical Radium." A set of public health ordinances he wrote was adopted all over the world.

1946 The USO canteen at Union Station closed. The World War Two years saw Union Station handle record numbers of passengers. About 80,000 per day passed through the station early in 1945. In 1943, 22 million people came through.

1950 The Browns beat the Cardinals--in court. A judge ruled that Cardinals lease at Sportsmen's Park was good until 1961. The Browns owned the park and had tried to evict the birds. The Browns claimed the lease had been voided when the club was sold in 1947. At the time, the Cardinals were planning to build a new stadium in midtown.

1955 Chuck Berry signed a contract with Chess Records of Chicago. Owner Leonard Chess was impressed with Berry's performance of the an old country song called "Ida Red." Berry re-worked the lyrics and changed it to "Maybelline." Released in July, 1955, "Maybelline" became Berry's first hit.

1956 The first one-stop through service from St. Louis to Europe was inaugurated by TWA. A Super-G Constellation, dubbed the *1956 Spirit of St. Louis*, made the trip to New York in three hours. Following an 88-minute layover, it took off on the 12-hour flight to Paris.

1958 The last KATY passenger train left Union Station. At that time, about 115 trains per day were using the station. The Cotton Belt also discontinued service in 1958. Several other lines were considering it.

1967 The controversial village of Champ was in the headlines again. The U.S Olympic Committee named Champ as a candidate to host the Pan-American Games in 1971. For years, promoter Bill Bangert had been making headlines with his grandiose plans for the area where Riverport now stands. His dream was for a huge industrial park, and a stadium 7 ½ times the size of the Astrodome.

1971 The government-sponsored Amtrak took over passenger train service. Operations at Union Station were cut back to just four arrivals and departures daily. The day before, such famous trains as *The Wabash Cannonball* and *The Midnight Special* made their final runs.

1979 Utility man and fan favorite Roger Freed hit one of the most dramatic pinch-hit home runs in Cardinal history. The Birds were down by three runs in the bottom of the eleventh inning against Houston. Freed smacked a grand slam off Joe Sambito to give the Cardinals the win.

1982 Sculptor Richard Serra completed his work “Twain” at 10th and Market on the Gateway Mall in downtown St. Louis. The rusting seven 40-foot steel panels and one 50-foot horizontal slab have been ridiculed ever since.

1983 Tornadoes touched down in O'Fallon, Missouri, Wright City, Edwardsville and Lebanon. At least 40 people were hurt. Damage was put at over \$500,000. Meanwhile, hundreds of families were fleeing the rising Meramec in Eureka and Pacific.

1995 The fate of the Coral Court Motel was sealed, as Conrad Properties bought the site for construction of the Oak Knoll Manor Subdivision. The Coral Court was constructed in 1941 along Route 66. It became notorious for its attached garages but was treasured for its beautiful deco moderne design.

1998 The State of Missouri transferred management of the Times Beach dioxin site from the Environmental Quality Division to the State Park Department. The move signified that the old town site was free of dioxin for the first time in 25 years.

1999 Another big shakeup in the local banking industry. First Star of Milwaukee announced it was acquiring Mercantile, the area's largest bank.