

## **May 21**

**1542** Spanish explorer Hernando DeSoto died while searching for treasure along the Mississippi River in what is now Arkansas. DeSoto had set out from Spain to conquer Florida and search for gold in April of 1539. Of the 600 men who left Spain, only 332 returned. DeSoto was buried in the mud at the bottom of the great river he had discovered.

**1804** At 3:30 p.m., The Lewis and Clark Expedition headed west from St. Charles as villagers gathered on the riverbank and cheered. Because of rain and head winds, the Corps of Discovery made only three miles that first day out. They are believed to have camped on an island opposite the mouth of Bonhomme Creek.

**1829** Joel Musick filed a petition with the County Court to have the village of St. Ferdinand incorporated. The Spanish had dubbed the town "San Fernando," but the locals called it by its French name, Florissant. For years, the highway signs read St. Ferdinand. Confused motorists in the early days would ask locals where Florissant was, only to be told they were already there.

**1844** The first stage of the worst flood in St. Louis history began to recede. The water had reached the houses and stores on the riverfront, but the worst was still to come. Beginning on June 3rd, it would rain for ten straight days. All of Illinoistown, as East St. Louis was known then, was swamped. The business section of St. Louis was flooded as far west as Broadway. The river was ten miles wide near Columbia, Illinois.

**1853** Fireman Owen Foy died in shootout between two volunteer fire companies. Nine men were seriously injured. The volunteer companies were powerful and proud social groups. Rival companies raced each other to fires and resorted to violence to get "first water" on a blaze. Some of the old volunteers harassed firefighters and vandalized equipment for years after the paid department took over in 1858.

**1861** Brigadier General William Harney and General Sterling Price, commander of the Missouri State Guard, met in St. Louis and made a last minute deal to keep Missouri neutral. But Harney's enemies pressured Lincoln to remove him. When Nathaniel Lyon assumed command, Missouri moved closer to war.

**1877** Commissioners met to hear proposals for the site of the St. Louis County seat. The city and county had officially separated just a few months before. They chose a site on Olive west of Warson but they later changed their minds.

**1903** It was announced that the new hotel going up at 12th and Locust would be named the "Hotel Jefferson." Workmen were toiling in double shifts to get the lavish structure ready in time for the fair.

**1927** The "Spirit of St. Louis" landed at Le Bourget in Paris, 2 and ½ hours ahead of schedule. Charles Lindbergh had made the trip in 33 hours, 30 minutes and 29.8 seconds.

He had not slept in 55 hours. The Browns were playing the Red Sox at Sportsmen's Park when the news was announced to the cheering crowd. Major Albert Bond Lambert, one of the flight's backers, said the "Spirit of St. Louis" would be returned here for exhibition at the airport.

**1947** Jackie Robinson played his first game at Sportsmen's Park. Robinson scored the winning run in the 10<sup>th</sup> inning. On May 6, Enos Slaughter reportedly tried to organize a strike to protest having to play with Robinson in Brooklyn. NL President Ford Frick threatened the players with suspension. Slaughter denied the story but would apparently intentionally spike Robinson in an August 1947 game. Today, Robinson's #42 is displayed along with the retired Cardinal numbers at Busch Stadium.

**1951** The first parking meters were installed in the city of St. Louis. A nickel bought you one hour. The first parking meters in the area were put up in Maplewood in October 1947. St. Louis had been slow to adopt the idea introduced in 1935 in Oklahoma City because officials questioned whether it was legal to charge someone for parking on a public street. But congestion downtown made the meters necessary.

**1955** Chuck Berry recorded his first hit. "Maybelline" was an adaptation of the country song, "Ida Red." WINS New York disc jockey Alan Freed played the song for two hours straight on his "Rock and Roll Party" show, which may explain why he is listed as a co-author on the record label. At the time, rewarding disc jockeys for playing records was a common practice.

**1956** The St. Louis Hawks signed former St. Louis University star "Easy" Ed MacCauley. MacCauley was acquired from the Boston Celtics in exchange for the Hawk's first draft choice, Bill Russell of San Francisco.

**1964** The Junior College District bought the 22-acre site of the old Forest Park Highlands Amusement Park. Fire destroyed most of the park in July 1963. The new Forest Park Community College Campus was expected to open by September 1966.

**1966** Car 1628 of the Hodiament Line made its final run, and the streetcar disappeared from the streets of St. Louis. The last day of the line drew more than 2500 riders. That compares to the 927,000 that rode the streetcars on the day the World's Fair opened in 1904.

**1968** Muhammed Ali was in St. Louis. The papers here referred to him by his given name, Cassius Clay, instead of the name he took after converting to Islam in 1964. Ali attended a fundraiser for the militant Black Muslims and a jazz concert at the Riviera Nightclub. Clay preached in favor of separation of the races. He had been deposed as boxing champion in May of 1967 for violating the Selective Service Act.

**1974** Bob Boone of the Phillies threw out Lou Brock attempting to steal second in a game at Busch Stadium. Lou had stolen 28 bases in a row, the longest streak of his career. It was three shy of the all-time record, set by Max Carey.