

## April 2

**1838** The first public school in St. Louis opened. The Missouri Legislature had organized a school board and set in motion plans for two schoolhouses in 1837. The first one to open was the Laclede Primary School at Fourth and Spruce. While the first school was public, it was not free.

**1892** Robert A. Barnes died. The wealthy merchant, banker and philanthropist left his fortune for the establishment of a hospital to treat people "without the distinction of creed." Barnes Hospital opened in 1914.

**1896** The city of Webster Groves was incorporated. The promoters of the subdivision of Webster Park touted their development as "The Queen of Suburbs." The nickname endures to this day. The town began as five separate communities along adjacent rail lines.

**1907** City voters approved a yearly real estate tax of two cents per \$100 assessed valuation for "The establishment maintenance and extension of a museum of art." The act specified that the museum "Shall be forever free" as long as the tax would remain in place. A 1909 ordinance designated the former Palace of Fine Arts from the World's Fair as the City Art Museum.

**1908** Christian Ludolf Ebsen Junior was born in Belleville. He rose to fame as "Buddy Ebsen." Ebsen was originally cast as the tin man in the film *The Wizard of Oz*. But an allergic reaction to the silver paint dust in the make up nearly killed him. His most famous role is that of Jed Clampett in *The Beverly Hillbillies*. He also starred as Georgie Russell in *Davey Crockett* and as *Barnaby Jones*.

**1920** The *Globe-Democrat* and local movie house pioneers, the Skouras Brothers, were slated to begin filming the first local news. The first local newsreel featured the Browns breaking spring training camp.

**1923** The Egan Gang made off with \$260,000 in the robbery of an armored mail truck at Fourth and Locust. Several weeks later, they pulled off another mail robbery in Staunton. Gang member Ray Renard ratted the others out, and eight were convicted. The convictions ended the war between the Hogans and the Egans that took 23 lives between 1921 and 1923.

**1928** City officials here credited a \$3 million building boom to the worldwide publicity stemming from Charles Lindbergh's epic flight. Construction was slumping in nearly every other city nationwide at the time.

**1932** The Lindbergh baby kidnaping case reached a critical turning point. Colonel Lindbergh turned over the \$500,000 ransom to an unidentified man in a Bronx cemetery. Police would later find some of the ransom bills at the home of Bruno Richard Hauptman. The baby was found dead on May 12th.

**1947** Demolition work began on the 118-year-old Jean Baptiste Roy House, 617 South Second Street. It was the oldest remaining home in St. Louis. The house was famous for as the birthplace of the hot dog. A plaque on the home said sausage peddler A.L. Feuchtwanger began selling frankfurters on a split bun at his shop there in 1883.

**1951** Luther Ely Smith died, eleven years before construction would begin on his dream. Smith was a St. Louis attorney, a civil activist and reformer. While serving on a commission that placed a monument to George Rogers Clark in Vincennes, Smith decided a monument to westward expansion should be built in St. Louis. He brought his idea to Mayor Bernard Dickmann in 1933.

**1953** A huge fire that attracted thousands of spectators destroyed the historic Pacific Hotel at Seventh and Poplar along with three other adjacent buildings. The hotel was built as The Clarendon, but the name was changed after 21 people died in a fire there in February 1858.

**1953** The first Channel Nine pledge drive got underway. The St. Louis Educational Television Commission announced a fund-raising plan to put educational television on the air here. The commission said it needed to raise an additional \$490,000 to get Channel Nine signed on.

**1960** McDonnell-Douglas was delivering the first of 20 Project Mercury space capsules to be built here for NASA. The first nine-foot capsule was a test model, to be used to check out the escape system. It was being carried by plane to Wallops Station, Virginia.

**1962** R. Marlin Perkins, director of the Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago, was named as the new director of the St. Louis Zoo. He had served as curator of reptiles here from 1926 until 1938. Perkins replaced the retiring George Vierheller.

**1973** Over 3,300 people in the St. Louis area were homeless because of flooding on the Missouri and Mississippi here. Governor Christopher Bond said he would ask President Nixon to declare Missouri a disaster area. It would prove to be just the first stage of the worst flood ever up to that time.

**1976** A huge "firestorm" engulfed several buildings just west of downtown. More than 200 firemen fought the blaze in the area bounded by Washington, Olive, 20th and 22nd streets. The flames raged over a six-block area of many multi story buildings. Eight firemen were injured and a pumper was destroyed.

**1979** Rams owner Carol Rosenbloom died. His widow, Georgia Frontiere, became majority owner.

**1979** A fire killed 25 people at the Wayside Inn, a home for the mentally impaired and handicapped in Farmington.

**2005** Pope John Paul II died at 1:37 p.m. St. Louis time. Church bells rang out across St. Louis, where many people of all faiths revered John Paul II for his visit here in January 1999. Archbishop Justin Burke called him “A man of such greatness that the legacy cannot be described.” Karol Wojtyla first visited St. Louis in 1969, when he was still the Archbishop of Krakow.