

April 11

1823 A group of two priests, seven novices, and three lay brothers began their journey from Whitemarsh, Maryland to Florissant. They were to establish a Jesuit mission and a school for Indians on Bishop DuBourg's farm north of Florissant. It developed into St. Stanislaus Seminary, where missionary priest Pierre DeSmet received his training. Today, the site is the Gateway College of Evangelism.

1842 Charles Dickens arrived in St. Louis. He later wrote that St. Louis must be an unhealthy place; "it is very hot, lies among great rivers, and has vast tracts of undrained swampy land around it, I leave the reader to form his own opinion." He described Belleville as "a small collection of wooden houses, huddled together in the very heart of the bush and swamp." He felt St. Louis "is not likely ever to vie, in point of elegance or beauty, with Cincinnati."

1858 City leaders met at the Old Courthouse to plan the funeral of Thomas Hart Benton. Benton was one of the most colorful figures in Missouri history. One of our first two Senators, he was re-elected four times. He lost a sixth term because of his anti-slavery stance.

1877 Phelim O'Toole became a St. Louis folk hero. That night, 21 people died in a fire at the Southern Hotel. O'Toole saved a dozen people trapped beyond the reach of his primitive hook and ladder apparatus. He instructed victims to lower bed sheets, tied around the bedposts. He then swung out on a rope, climbed up the sheet and brought them to safety. The citizens of St. Louis awarded him a check for \$500, which he promptly donated to orphans.

1898 The new St. Louis city hall opened. Mayor Henry Ziegenheim led a parade of city employees from the old offices at 11th and Chestnut. The new building had been under construction for years. Much work remained to be done, but the mayor declared the city had waited long enough. The building was not completely finished until 1904.

1921 The nationally notorious leader of a gang of safe-blowers known as "The Shamrocks" was shot in gangland fashion here. Police said it appeared as if the murder was the result of a brawl over the division of loot from a recent heist.

1932 Cards fans were stunned to learn the team had traded away the 1931 National League batting champion. Following a salary dispute, outfielder Chick Hafey was dealt to the Reds for Harvey Hendrick, Benny Frey, and some cash.

1934 A group of civic leaders formed a non-profit corporation to spearhead development of a riverfront memorial. The Jefferson National Expansion Memorial Association chose Luther Ely Smith as its chairman, and immediately began working on acquiring federal status.

1949 Cyrus Crane Willmore died. In 1922, Willmore formed a company to begin developing a 700-acre site in South St. Louis. He planned a neighborhood of tree-lined streets with names reflecting his English heritage, such as Nottingham, Devonshire, and Lansdowne. "St. Louis Hills" was developed in several stages through the 1950's. In 1946, Willmore donated the land for a park named in his honor.

1954 The Cardinals traded longtime star Enos "Country" Slaughter to the Yankees for Bill Virdon, Mel Wright and Emil Telling. The hero of the 1946 World Series broke down in tears when he was told the news. Slaughter said Gussie Busch had told him he would always be a Cardinal. Bill Virdon would win rookie of the year honors in 1955. Slaughter went on to the Baseball Hall of Fame.

1961 The Boston Celtics won their third straight NBA title, and their second in a row. They defeated the St. Louis Hawks, four games to one.

1962 The New York Mets played their first game ever. The first game was played here at old Busch Stadium. It was a portent of things to come, as the Cardinals trounced them, eleven to four.

1967 In the first Opening Day game at Busch Stadium, Bob Gibson struck out 13, including the first five hitters he faced. The Cardinals beat Juan Marichal and the Giants 6-0. A crowd of 38,117 saw it. That compares with a crowd of just 8,219 for the 1966 home opener, at Old Busch Stadium.

1973 As the Cardinals open the season, Busch Stadium has a new look. A second outfield wall has been added 10 feet closer to home plate. Extra bleacher seats were installed in the east end zone during the Big Red season. Those seats were painted green and not used during baseball to ensure a suitable background for hitters.