

April 15

1875 A crowd at a packed public meeting demanded the city do something about the deplorable condition of the streets. They were either a sea of mud or a torrent of swirling dust. Among the suggestions was a proposal to run pipes the length of the street, suspended 20 feet high. The pipes would be used to water down the streets as needed.

1889 Thomas Hart Benton was born in Neosho. His realistic works of famous and infamous figures in Missouri history won him acclaim and criticism. His best-known murals adorn the capitol rotunda in Jefferson City. His granduncle was the great U.S. Senator from Missouri, Thomas Hart Benton.

1891 Wallace Reid was born in St. Louis. A screen idol of the silent era, his big break came in D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*. In 1922, he appeared on screen without the detachable stiff collar favored by men at the time. He was popular enough to put the collar companies out of business. His career was overshadowed by a morphine addiction that led to his death in 1923.

1899 This could be considered as the birthday of the Cardinals. The new St. Louis team opened its season with a ten-one win before 18,000 at League Park. The new owners of the Browns also owned the Cleveland team. During the off-season, they sent the hapless Browns players to Cleveland and sent the Cleveland players here. The new team was called the "Perfectos." By 1900, the "Cardinals" had caught on as the new nickname.

1907 The first issue of the St. Louis *Star* hit the streets. Later the *Star-Times*, the afternoon paper boasted an initial total circulation of 46,022 paid subscribers. The paper folded in 1953.

1912 The *Post-Dispatch* listed seven St. Louisans believed to be aboard the Titanic. Among them was 15-year-old Georgette Madill, one of the richest heiresses in St. Louis. By a court order a year earlier, she was to have a "pin money" allowance of \$7500 per year for clothing and her education until she turned 18. Former St. Louisan Charles Hayes, now president of the Grand Trunk Railroad, was also on board. The papers here were reporting that most of the passengers had been saved.

1926 Robertson Aircraft Company began flying the mail between Chicago and St. Louis. Chief pilot Charles Lindbergh flew a plane christened the "St. Louis" by the daughter of Major Albert Bond Lambert. Lindbergh narrowly escaped death twice while flying the mail. Other pilots referred to him as "Lucky" Lindy. The firm founded by Bill and Frank Robertson grew into today's American Airlines.

1932 Cuckoo Gang gunman Tommy Hayes was found with 12 bullets in his back in Madison. The death of Hayes brought about the end of the gang as a major force in the St. Louis underworld. He had been double-crossed by East Side rackets leader Carl Shelton. The Cuckoos had helped Shelton's in their war with the Birger Gang, but then Shelton tried to kick them out of the East Side.

1947 Jackie Robinson broke the major league color barrier as he made his debut with the Brooklyn Dodgers. One of the sadder chapters in the story was a potential protest by the Cardinals as their first game against the Dodgers approached on May 8th. According to league president Ford Frick, only a last-minute plea by Card's owner Sam Breadon prevented trouble.

1956 The \$6,400,000 Cardinal Glennon Memorial Hospital for Children was dedicated. John Cardinal D'Alton, the Archbishop of Armagh and the Catholic leader of all Ireland, came to St. Louis for the ceremony honoring his late good friend.

1957 The state highway commission announced plans to eliminate the dangerous curves on the notorious "Dead Man's Stretch" of Lindbergh, between Dorsett and Olive. The plans called for a cloverleaf interchange at Page. A December 1956 article in the *Globe-Democrat* pointed out that eleven people had died and 63 people had been injured there that year.

1959 Bob Gibson made his major league debut. He got a rude welcome after coming in to relieve Larry Jackson. Jim Barnes of the Dodgers was the first batter to face Gibson. He smacked a home run. Barnes would just play one season. Gibson would get his first start in July 1959 and end up in the Hall of Fame.

1967 The Anheuser-Busch Brewery became the first brewery to be listed on the national register of historic places. Three buildings, the Administration Building, the Brew House and the stables were marked as historic.

1968 The National Hockey League fined Blues coach Scotty Bowman and 13 Blues players a total of \$1,850 for a brawl during a playoff game against Philadelphia. The Flyers won the game. But the Blues would go on to win the Western Division series.

1970 St. Louisans joined the world in prayer for the astronauts aboard the crippled Apollo 13. Special prayers were said at a noon mass at the Old Cathedral. Special masses would be said for the next two days. Pastor John Long said he hoped the final one would be a mass of thanksgiving.

1970 Over 100 rock-throwing Washington University students clashed with police following a rally at which one of the "Chicago Seven" spoke. A county police detective was injured in the melee, which centered on the controversial ROTC building.

1972 Ernie Hays made his debut behind the organ at Busch Stadium. A roaming Dixieland group had provided music at the ballpark until that time. A crowd of just 7,808 turned out for the home opener, which was delayed by eight days due to the players strike.

1977 In anticipation of the country going metric, the distances on the outfield wall at Busch Stadium were painted in feet and meters on opening day. Busch was 101 meters

(330 ft) down the lines, 118 meters (386) in the power alleys and 126 (414) in straightaway center field. The Cards also added pretty ball girls to help out the batboys.

1998 Dozens of people were hurt in the largest traffic accident in Missouri history. At least 98 cars piled into each other on a rain-slickened stretch of eastbound I-70 west of Highway 79. Amazingly, there were no fatalities.