

## **April 16**

**1855** The cornerstone was laid for B'Nai El Temple at Sixth and Cerre Streets. B'Nai El is the oldest Reform Jewish Congregation west of the Mississippi. The temple is now located off Highway 40 in Town and Country.

**1858** Thomas Hart Benton was buried in Bellefontaine Cemetery. 40,000 people lined the streets for the funeral procession. Benton was a renowned statesman, one of the original two Senators from Missouri.

**1876** A huge crowd gathered on the riverfront to witness the maiden voyage of the grandest of all the Mississippi steamboats. The "Grand Republic" was 350-feet long and lavishly furnished. It burned to the waterline a year later while undergoing repairs here.

**1880** The *Globe-Democrat* reported that Jesse James and two of his gang were passengers between Kansas City and Odessa on a St. Louis bound train. They ate in the dining car with cocked revolvers on the table. Passengers were instructed not to react, so no one would be hurt. No one objected when the desperados left without paying their bill.

**1898** With 6,000 on hand to see the Browns and the Cubs, fire raced through the stands at Sportsmen's Park. The grandstand and the left field bleachers were destroyed and 40 people were injured in the panic. The players helped clear away debris so the game could be played the next day. The exhausted Brownies committed eleven errors and lost 14-1. The fire and resulting lawsuits bankrupted owner Chris Von der Ahe. He was forced to sell the team at a sheriff's auction in March 1899.

**1904** The buildings at the world's fairgrounds were lit for the first time for the public. The lights had been tested back on the 9th. Meanwhile, the Igorrote tribe at the Filipino Village were preparing for their first dog feast. Five dogs provided by the city pound were being fattened up for the occasion.

**1905** Street car and foot traffic across the Eads Bridge was five times the normal volume. St. Louis hotels and bars observed Excise Commissioner Thomas Mulvihill's demand that the Sunday closing laws be observed. A few operators who "tried to take the back door racket" were arrested.

**1906** Springfield, Missouri was under martial law. Governor Joseph Folk ordered the militia to prevent a race riot. A mob of 5,000 men and boys had stormed the jail and lynched three black prisoners. Much of the black population was fleeing the city.

**1912** The *Globe-Democrat* reported that all of the seven St. Louisans on board the Titanic had been saved. Theodore Papin Junior was initially reported to be on board, but it turned out he had been unable to sail with the doomed liner.

**1917** Construction began on a permanent outdoor theatre in Forest Park. The site had been chosen earlier in the year for a presentation of *As You Like It*, marking the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of William Shakespeare. The St. Louis Advertising Club put up half the money for the permanent theatre, to host a presentation of *Aida* for the Convention of Advertising Clubs of the World. The future "Muny" was completed in just 49 days, and the curtain went up on *Aida* on June 5, 1917.

**1938** The Cardinals sent the great Dizzy Dean to the Cubs for pitchers Curt Davis and Clyde Shoun along with outfielder Tuck Stainback and \$185,000. Dizzy had been ineffective since he was hit in the foot by a drive off the bat of Earl Averill in the 1937 All-Star Game. Dean later said "Jeez \$185,000...If I'd a had a good arm I wonder what I'd a brought."

**1953** The first win for Gussie, as the Cardinals beat the cubs 3-0 on opening day. It was the first game for the Cardinals under the ownership of Anheuser-Busch.

**1954** Lieutenant Louis Shoulders was sentenced to two years for perjury. Shoulders and patrolman Elmer Dolan testified that they brought the Greenlease ransom money to the Newstead Street Station the night Carl Austin Hall was arrested. The cab driver that brought Hall to the Coral Court Motel had tipped off his boss, gangster Joe Costello. Costello was a friend of Shoulders. No one knows if they conspired to steal the remaining half of the \$600,000 ransom.

**1955** Sears announced plans for a new store on U.S. 66 in Crestwood. The store was to be part of the proposed Crestwood Plaza Shopping Center. Completion of the 31-acre complex at Watson and Sappington was set for mid-1956.

**1956** A massive building boom was transforming Florissant. City Clerk Henry Koch had estimated that there were 4500 homes currently under construction. He said Florissant's population would reach 27,000 by 1957. That was 23,600 more than the population in the 1950 census.

**1963** The new Planetarium in Forest Park formally opened. The first show was called "New Skies for St. Louis." The decision to build the Planetarium on the site of the old mounted police academy caused a controversy over the use of the park for new buildings.

**1971** For the fourth time since it was built, a daredevil pilot flew through the legs of the Arch. Later that month, some witnesses reported seeing another pilot turn the trick. But that sighting was never confirmed.

**1978** Bob Forsch pitched the first no-hitter in St. Louis in 54 years, blanking the Phillies 5-0. It was the first no-hitter ever in Busch Stadium but was not without controversy. The official scorer charged Ken Reitz with an error on a hard liner by Gary Maddox in the 8<sup>th</sup> inning that went off Reitz's glove. Forsch would throw another no-hitter at Busch on September 26, 1983. This time, there was no doubt.

**2000** Fire gutted a landmark restaurant on "The Hill." Police said the fire at Rigazzi's appeared to be intentionally set. The restaurant had been a landmark for 43-years, famous for its "fishbowl" beer mugs. Rigazzi's re-opened in December 2001.

**2002** Hans Vonck announced he was stepping down as the musical director of the St. Louis Symphony. Vonck was suffering from a neurological disease that was forcing him to reduce his workload.

**2004** Blues player Mike Danton was arrested and charged with conspiracy in an alleged murder-for-hire plot. The FBI said Danton and 19-year-old Katie Wolfmeyer of Florissant tried to hire a hit man to kill Danton's controversial agent and mentor David Frost. Danton pleaded guilty in July and was sentenced to 7 ½ years in prison. Wolfmeyer was acquitted.