

## **December 2**

**1823** Erastus Wells was born in New York. Orphaned at 14, he arrived in St. Louis with just \$140 to his name. He became a congressman and leader in western settlement. But he is best remembered as the founder of the St. Louis streetcar system. He also founded the narrow gauge railroad between St. Louis and Florissant, which ran past his country estate, "Wellston."

**1904** Demolition work was in full swing on the World's Fair grounds. Persons were still admitted to the grounds at a reduced price, so they could watch the demolition work. The Palace of Art was the only building at the fair constructed in stone, and would be the only one to remain. At first, it was proposed that "The Pike" remain as an amusement park, but Washington University officials killed the plan.

**1904** An arsonist saved workers the trouble of tearing down some of the major exhibits on "The Pike" at the world's fair. Numerous priceless antiques and art objects were lost in the general-alarm fire that swept the amusement area. The blaze destroyed "Ancient Rome" and badly damaged "Quo Vadis," "On the Bowery," and "Old St. Louis." An employee of "The Hereafter" was arrested in connection with the fire.

**1913** Mayor Henry Kiel signed an ordinance setting aside 77 acres in Forest Park for a zoo. Park Commissioner Dwight Davis objected, because park employees would have to cut the grass. Kiel told Davis that "What the people want is a lot of elephants, lions, tigers, and monkeys and they don't care how the grass is cut." A modest collection of animals had been housed at Forest Park since 1891.

**1924** Officials were once again calling for something to be done about the smoke that choked St. Louis. The poor visibility was blamed for two deaths. A driver hit the railing of the Free Bridge (now McCarthur) and was thrown into the river. Thieves took advantage of the gloom to commit 616 holdups.

**1928** "Sunny Jim" Bottomley of the Cardinals was named as the National League's Most Valuable Player. Bottomley batted .325 led the league in RBI's and tied with Hack Wilson for the home run lead, with 31.

**1942** Physicists Enrico Fermi and a group of scientists created the first self-sustaining nuclear reaction, working underneath the stands at the University of Chicago's Stagg Field. The 40-tons of purified uranium used in the tests was processed at Mallinckrodt in St. Louis.

**1945** Work began on an \$11,990,000 canal to carry barge traffic around the treacherous Chain of Rocks on the Mississippi River north of St. Louis. The canal was completed in 1953.

**1946** Nearly 15,000 veterans and their families jammed the opening of the "Veteran's Store" at 8900 South Broadway. Only veterans were allowed to browse through the

three-million-dollars worth of hard to find items. The merchandise was surplus goods furnished by the War Assets Administration.

**1946** Mayor Kaufman announced his "House a Veteran by Christmas" drive. The mayor said more than 10,000 vets in St. Louis were in need of housing. One thousand of them were living in unheated garages, attics, and shacks on the riverfront.

**1948** Stan Musial was named as the National League Most Valuable Player. Musial led the league with a .365 average and 131 RBIs. His 39 home runs put him just one behind league leaders Johnny Mize and Ralph Kiner.

**1957** Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King Junior addressed the National Council of Churches convention in St. Louis. He said advances had been made in civil rights here, but segregation was still a reality.

**1959** Police were investigating one of the biggest jewelry heists in recent memory here. Two bandits posing as police officers tied up a jeweler and his wife in their office at the Chemical Building downtown. The bandits got away with \$90,000 worth of diamonds.

**1964** An ex-convict employed as a laborer on the Poplar Street Bridge was murdered as he left work. Construction was delayed by a violent power struggle within Laborer's Local 42. On December 13th, carpenters walked out to protest "hoodlum tactics" by the laborers.

**1966** Reports were surfacing of a possible merger between McDonnell Aircraft of St. Louis and Douglas Aircraft of Long Beach, California. The reports said Mac stockholders had acquired enough stock to gain control of the giant California aerospace firm and defense contractor.

**1966** The Board of Aldermen passed a measure renaming the Poplar Street Bridge in honor of Bernard Dickmann. Dickmann was the Mayor of St. Louis from 1933 until 1941. Dickmann fought to secure funds for the Jefferson Expansion Memorial and won an order from President Roosevelt making the Old Courthouse and Old Cathedral part of the Memorial. He also fought for an ordinance that cleaned up the smoke-filled air.

**1979** Harriet Callanan, the wife of Pipefitter's union official Thomas Callanan, was injured when a bomb exploded as she opened her van on a toy store parking lot in Black Jack. Police said the bomb was intended for her husband. Thomas Callanan had lost both legs and parts of his hands in a June 1973 car bombing.

**1982** The first of four days of violent storms swept the area. A killer tornado struck New Baden, Illinois. 39 people were injured when straight-line winds hit a St. Charles trailer park. Officials warned that the rivers, especially the Meramec, were rapidly climbing above flood stage.

**2003** Raymond Leo Burke was named as the new Archbishop of St. Louis. The former Bishop of LacCrosse, Wisconsin replaced Archbishop Justin Rigali. Rigali was appointed Archbishop of Philadelphia in July 2003. Archbishop Burke would be installed on January 26, 2004, the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Pope John Paul II's visit to St. Louis.

**2004** John Danforth resigned as U.N. Ambassador.

**2006** Workers were trying to restore power to some 500,000 customers in the St. Louis area after a massive ice storm was followed by temperatures plunging into the teens. Snow fell on top of the ice, with parts of Mid-Missouri getting a foot of snow. Many of the affected residents had also suffered outages from two severe storms July of 2006.