

December 8

1698 The Reverend Francois Ste. Cosme and two other missionary priests celebrated mass on the banks of the Mississippi at Cahokia. Five months later, they established Holy Family Church. Mass has been celebrated regularly at Cahokia longer than any place in the United States. The first church burned in 1783. But the one built on the same foundation in 1799 still stands today.

1818 The birthday of Jefferson County. Jefferson and 17 other counties were organized by an act of territory. Herculaneum served as the first county seat. It was moved to Hillsboro in 1839.

1855 The General Assembly approved an act incorporating the Southern Hotel Company of St. Louis. When it opened in 1865, the hotel was the finest in the west. It covered an entire city block between Walnut, Fourth, Fifth and Elm, where the Stadium East Garage stands today. On April 11, 1877, at least 21 people were killed when the hotel burned. A new fireproof hotel opened in 1881.

1879 Archer Alexander died in St. Louis. He escaped from St. Charles County in 1863, but would become the last Missouri slave captured under the Fugitive Slave Law. Alexander was the model for a sculpture by Thomas Ball, "The Freedman." The statue of a slave holding broken chains kneeling before Abraham Lincoln stands on the capitol grounds in Washington.

1881 Disaster struck the St. Charles railroad bridge for a third time. A span collapsed, sending a 31-car freight train plunging into the river. One person was killed. A similar accident two years earlier had killed five people. Nineteen men had died in a construction accident in November 1870.

1894 Elzie Crisler Segar was born in Chester, Illinois. In 1919, Segar created the comic strip "Thimble Theater." Many of the characters were based on people Segar knew back in his hometown. The stars of the strip were Ham Gravy and his girlfriend Olive Oyl. In 1929, Segar introduced a sailor named Popeye to the strip. In 1933, animator Max Fleischer made Popeye the star of a series of cartoon shorts.

1896 City police launched an assault on "Hop Alley," raiding the opium dens that packed an area bounded by Seventh, Ninth, Market and Walnut. Police said the fumes that normally overwhelmed the area were "conspicuous by their absence."

1904 Plans to save "The Pike" and make it a permanent amusement park were abandoned in the face of opposition by officials at Washington University. Concessionaires reluctantly agreed to remove everything at the world's fair amusement area within 60 days as originally agreed.

1907 Actor Frank Faylen was born in St. Louis. His parents were vaudeville performers. He appeared in several movies, including a memorable performance in *The Lost*

Weekend. But he is best known for his role as Herbert T. Gillis, the father on TV's *Dobie Gillis* from 1959 to 1963.

1939 Red Berenson was born in Regina, Saskatchewan. The Blues star tied an NHL record with six goals in one game against the Philadelphia Flyers on November 7, 1968. The "Red Baron" played in six NHL All-Star games. He was traded to Detroit in 1972, probably because of his involvement in the NHL Players Association.

1941 Nervous guards at Jefferson Barracks opened fire on a milk truck that failed to obey a command to halt at four in the morning. No one was hurt. Police rounded up 22 Germans and one Italian alien deemed "dangerous to the welfare of the city." Over 600 men swarmed the Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard recruiting stations in the Federal Building.

1945 St. Louis officials were on their way to London with a bid for St. Louis to become the "World Capitol." They were headed for the meeting of the United Nations Preparatory Committee with a proposal to headquarter the U-N at the site of the old T-N-T plant at Weldon Spring.

1948 The first "all-Negro" platoon in the history of the St. Louis Police Department went on duty. Sergeant James Taylor commanded the men of the First Precinct, Lucas Avenue District. Police Board President H. Sam Priest called it "a progressive move by the board to give better service to an area heavily populated by Negroes."

1957 The Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan St. Louis endorsed the Corps of Engineers plan for three dams in the Meramec Basin, igniting a 20 year controversy. Chamber officials said the Meramec Basin represented "one of the major areas for future expansion of metropolitan St. Louis."

1965 Officials created the East-West Gateway Coordinating Council, the first comprehensive planning body for the entire area. St. Louis County Supervisor Lawrence K. Roos was named as the first chairman. The agency would be in charge of planning transportation projects for the region.

1966 Roger Maris became a Cardinal. The Birds traded third baseman Charley Smith to the Yanks for the slugger who broke Babe Ruth's single-season home run record in 1961. Maris later said his years in St. Louis were the best of his career.

1970 The body of eight-year-old Kim Gaines was found in one of the vacant buildings at the notorious Pruitt-Igoe housing project. Just a few weeks earlier, the city had ordered the housing authority to secure or demolish 12 vacant buildings.

1971 A public hearing was underway in Frontenac on a proposed \$14 million high fashion shopping center at Clayton Road and Lindbergh. The site had been the center of controversy for years. Several developers were interested, but many residents wanted the area to remain zoned residential.

1972 Ground was broken for DePaul Health Center in Bridgeton.

1977 The Cardinals traded pitcher Al Hrabosky to the Royals for Mark Littel and Buck Martinez. The "Mad Hungarian" whipped Cardinal fans into a frenzy with his Fu Manchu mustache and stalking routine behind the mound. Hrabosky clashed with new manager Vern Rapp, who had banned facial hair.

1980 The Cardinals swapped catchers Terry Kennedy, and Steve Swisher, infielder Mike Phillips, and pitchers John Littlefield, John Urrea, Kim Seamon and Al Olmstead to the Padres. The Cardinals picked up pitchers Rollie Fingers and Bob Shirley, along with catchers Gene Tenace and Bob Green. The next day, the Birds shipped Ken Reitz and Leon Durham to the Cubs for reliever Bruce Sutter.

2005 At 12:24 a.m., a wrecking ball brought down the final section of Busch Stadium. A handful of fans braved the freezing temperatures to watch the demolition, which was marked by a brief fireworks display.