

## **December 26**

**1790** Father Sebastian Louis Meurin was born in Champagne, France. In 1765, he became the only priest in the entire Mississippi Valley. Meurin performed the first baptisms and weddings in Missouri. He endured hardship and sacrifice for the settlers and the Indians. Meurin founded the first church in St. Louis, dedicated on June 24, 1770.

**1855** The first steam fire engine arrived in St. Louis. The river was frozen over, so the "Union Number Two" was dragged across the ice by a team of horses.

**1864** Major James Morgan Utz of Bridgeton was hanged as a spy. Wearing a federal uniform, Utz, Paul Fusz (ancestor of the auto dealership family) and five others were arrested at Clayton and Ballas in September 1864. They were carrying correspondence and supplies to rebel forces outside St. Louis. President Lincoln pardoned Utz, but the order arrived a few minutes too late. President Lincoln paroled Fusz.

**1905** St. Louis School Superintendent F. Louis Soldan denounced efforts to unionize teachers. He pointed out that St. Louis teachers earned \$700 per year--more than twice the national average.

**1921** The war between the Egan and Hogan Gangs continued. Egan followers Joe and Everett Summers were shot to death in University City and their bodies dumped on a lonely county road. The Hogans were retaliating for the murder of the lawyer and "The Brains" of the outfit, Jacob Mackler. Over a two-year period, the warfare claimed at least 23 lives.

**1931** In the first professional hockey game played at the Arena, the St. Louis Flyers tied the Chicago Shamrocks 1-1 in overtime. Shrimp McPherson of the Flyers scored the first goal in the Arena. (He would become the equipment manager for the Blues in their first season)

**1932** The Arena was the site of the only recorded professional hockey game played on natural ice. The Arena investors couldn't pay the electric bill. So, the management of the St. Louis Flyers opened the doors and windows so the ice would freeze.

**1939** W.C. Handy of Memphis, TN one of the legendary blues composers of all time, recorded the classic "St. Louis Blues". W.C. and his band recorded in New York for Varsity Records. Handy was one of the first to use the flat third and seventh notes in his compositions, known in the music world as 'blue' notes.

**1951** Senator Hubert H. Humphrey called for a congressional investigation into the disaster at the Orient Number Two Mine in West Frankfort, Illinois. 119 men died in the explosion and fire.

**1954** Osborne Earl Smith was born in Mobile, Alabama. Ozzie made his big league debut with the San Diego Padres. He came to St. Louis in a trade for Garry Templeton in 1982. "The Wizard" won 13 Gold Glove awards and set six defensive records for shortstops. He racked up 2,460 career hits, stole 580 bases and was named to 15 All-Star Teams. His only career home run batting left handed (out of 3,009 at bats) won Game Five of the 1985 National League Championship Series.

**1969** A four-alarm fire swept the historic Musical Arts Building at Boyle and Olive, in the heart of what had once been Gaslight Square. Built in 1904, it was once one of the most famous buildings in the city, the center of music and the arts. It survived two tornadoes, and a five alarm-fire in 1962.

**1972** Former President Harry S. Truman died at the age of 88. After leaving the White House in 1953, he retired to his home in Independence. Truman penned his memoirs, and a book detailing his experiences in the White House called *Mr. Citizen*. In 1955, he broke ground for the Truman Library, which opened two years later. Truman was laid to rest in the courtyard of the library on December 28, 1972.

**1973** Bi-State officials met to try to prevent more bus hijackings. A few days earlier, two gunmen hijacked a Bi-State bus on I-55. They forced the driver to exit, and then robbed 18 passengers. Police Chief Eugene Camp said police officers would be encouraged to ride for free on the busses.

**1982** Seven people were killed in a house fire at 224 North 75th Street in Centreville. Five of the victims were children.

**1989** A lawsuit accused Chuck Berry of videotaping women as they used the restroom at his Wentzville restaurant. Former cook Hosana Huck filed the lawsuit in St. Charles County Circuit Court. About 200 more women would make similar charges in a class-action suit. At the same time, *High Society* Magazine printed eight stolen pictures of a nude Chuck Berry with nude women.

**1990** Nancy Cruzan died in a southwestern Missouri Hospital. Cruzan spent nearly eight years in a vegetative condition after an auto accident. Her parents fought for permission to remove her feeding tube. Her case prompted national debate, and led to the Supreme Court decision affirming the right to die.

**1996** Icy roads were blamed for a crash that left five people dead on Illinois Route 13 near Marissa. Four members of the Threen family were killed, along with a two-year-old girl they were babysitting.