

February 20

1789 William Lindsay Long was born in Virginia. In 1818, he bought 400 acres along the Meramec River for \$1,200 and began his first real estate venture. He laid out a town named "Fenton," after his Welsh grandmother, Elizabeth Fenton Bennett.

1828 A meeting of 105 citizens in Lebanon, Illinois organized Lebanon Seminary. The name was later changed to McKendree College. This Methodist institution received its charter from the state in 1834, making it the oldest university in Illinois.

1858 A fire at the Pacific Hotel killed 21 people. It may be the worst crime in St. Louis history. It was widely believed that notorious thief "Hawkeye Bill" set the fire. The hotel was across from the Missouri Pacific Depot, and was mostly used by transients. The hotel was located at 6th and Poplar, a site now occupied by Busch Stadium.

1865 The state granted the town charter of Kirkwood. An association of businessmen who wanted to escape the crowded city ravaged by fire and cholera founded the city. In 1853, They bought up land along the proposed Pacific railroad and began promoting their development, the first planned suburb in the United States.

1896 James Fitzgerald was hanged at the old city jail for murdering his sweetheart. The rope broke as he plunged through the trap door. The doctors did all they could, but Fitzgerald lay writhing in agony for over one hour while another rope was procured. The rope held the second time.

1908 The *Globe-Democrat* reported that the fire department's first automobile equipment came to grief on its first run. The fire engine hit a curb while rounding a turn at 50 miles per hour. Seven firemen were thrown off, but no one was seriously hurt.

1909 The wife of a Clayton constable took matters into her own hands when accosted by a "masher" in downtown St. Louis. Mrs. John Bode said the man followed her and called her "honey" and "sweetheart." She struck him in the face with both hands. The *Globe* reported that the cad made his escape on a swift moving Olive Street car before onlookers could give chase.

1912 The second-worst snowstorm in city history dumped 15.5 inches of the white stuff. The great blizzard of 1890 holds the record, with 20.9 inches. Officially, the 1982 storm is third. Lambert Field reported 13.9 inches, but some areas got as much as 22 inches.

1920 The first Chevrolet rolled off the assembly line at the General Motors assembly plant on Natural Bridge. The plant built 13,873,983 vehicles over the next 67 years. During World War Two, the plant made army trucks and amphibious "ducks." The Fisher Body plant made airplane parts. Today, the site is an industrial park.

1940 McDonnell Aircraft announced the purchase of the old Ryan Monocoupe factory at Lambert Field. President J.S. McDonnell said the firm planned to expand and

manufacture both military and civilian aircraft. The firm had 24 employees, working in a small building rented from American Airlines.

1941 The State Supreme Court ordered the Missouri Speaker of the House to declare Forrest Donnell the duly elected governor. Democrats had tried to "steal" the November 1940 election by seeking a committee to investigate the election and count the ballots.

1942 Lieutenant Edward O'Hare saved the aircraft carrier *Lexington* by fighting off nine Japanese planes single-handedly, downing five of them. O'Hare was born in St. Louis, the son of a businessman and attorney who was killed by the Capone Gang in 1939. O'Hare died over Tarawa on November 27, 1943. Chicago's Orchard Field was re-named to honor O'Hare in 1949.

1952 The St. Louis University Billikens won the Mississippi Valley Conference title for the first time in five years. The Bills would become the first team that season to accept bids to both major tournaments, the NIT and the NCAA.

1953 Anheuser-Busch bought the Cardinals from Fred Saigh. Saigh turned down offers of more money from out of town interests. Browns owner Bill Veeck had planned to stay in St. Louis, but decided to leave when he heard the news. The purchase boosted Anheuser-Busch, which was only the third largest brewery at the time. Griesedieck Brothers lost rights to the Cards baseball broadcasts, and soon went out of business.

1964 Union Electric announced its bicentennial gift to the city. UE would spend 40-thousand-dollars to buy the DeMenil mansion at 3352 South 13th and turn it over to the Landmarks Association. The 115-year-old mansion had served as a landmark for steamboat pilots. It had been slated for demolition to make room for I-55.

1965 Amid growing concerns over crime, Gaslight Square business owners announced plans for improved lighting and neighborhood rehabilitation. Joe Bayou, owner of the Grecian Terrace, said Gaslight Square was showing growing pains, but had not reached its peak.

1966 Burlington's Old 4960 pulled out of Union Station, hauling 12 cars filled with railway buffs on an excursion to Hannibal. It was the last steam engine train to leave Union Station.

1968 Aviation industry observers said McDonnell-Douglas was in on the ground floor of development on a plane that could become the biggest seller in aviation history. American Air Lines had announced it was ordering 25 of the new luxury DC-10 planes. It was the largest single order in commercial aviation history.

1980 The President of Streckfuss Steamers announced that the *Admiral's* 1980 season would be cancelled. Captain William Carroll doubted whether the *Admiral* would ever return to St. Louis. The boat was in a New Orleans dry dock. The Coast Guard said the entire hull would have to be replaced.

1993 Former St. Louis Circuit Attorney George Peach was sentenced to three years in prison, but the judge suspended the sentence and placed him on probation. Peach had crusaded against prostitution and pornography while leading a double life. Using the Alias Larry Johnson, Peach hired prostitutes and paid for them with money stolen from a city fund. Peach has since lived in several states, selling insurance.

2004 Albert Pujols signed the richest contract in Cardinal history. Albert signed a seven-year deal worth 100 million dollars. In 2002, Pujols had become the NL's second youngest batting champion ever. He also became the only player in ML history to hit .300, slug 30 home runs, score 100 runs and drive in 100 in his first three seasons.