

May 8

1541 Spanish explorer Hernando DeSoto discovered the Mississippi River. He came across the river in the northern part of the present-day state of Mississippi, somewhere between the mouths of the St. Francis and Arkansas Rivers.

1810 John M. Wimer was born in Amherst County, Virginia. He served as the ninth mayor of St. Louis from 1843-1844 and as the 19th mayor from 1857 to 1858. Wimer was a former volunteer firefighter, and helped establish the paid city department in 1857. During the Civil War, he fought for the Confederacy, and was killed at Harstville, Missouri in 1863.

1839 The cornerstone of Concordia Seminary was laid in Altenburg, Perry County, Missouri. The seminary was taken over by the Evangelical Synod (Lutheran) in 1847. It was moved to St. Louis in 1849, after the St. Louis congregations offered two acres of land and two thousand dollars for a new building.

1844 A steamboat designed by “Billy” King set a record for the run between New Orleans and St. Louis that stood for 36 years. Even the race between the *Robert E. Lee* and the *Natchez* did not equal the record of three days 23 hours and nine minutes. (The *Natchez* did break the record on another run in June 1870) King designed the *JM White* with the paddle wheel placed at the stern about 25 feet back from the center. The design made the boat pick up speed as it rode the swells.

1867 The women's suffrage movement in Missouri was born with the establishment of the Women's Suffrage Association in St. Louis. It was the first organization in the world with women's suffrage as its sole object.

1884 Harry S Truman was born in Lamar, Missouri. The family could not decide which grandfather to name Harry after, Anderson Shippe Truman or Solomon Young. So they gave him the letter “S” instead of a middle name. As president, Truman made some of the most critical decisions in history. He approved the use of the atomic bomb against Japan and ordered the Berlin Airlift. He also kept the Korean conflict from developing into an all-out war with Russia and China.

1891 Archbishop Peter Kenrick deeded St. Stanislaus Kostka Church to a corporation of parishioners, “its successors and assigna forever.” The church became the cultural and religious center of the Polish community. In 2004, Archbishop Raymond Burke demanded that the parishioners turn the property over to the archdiocese. Burke denied sacraments to the board members when they defied him.

1896 The Browns fired manager Harry Diddlebock for drunkenness. Owner Chris Von der Ahe, who knew nothing about baseball, managed a couple of games himself before picking Roger O’Connor as skipper. Von der Ahe used six managers in one season. He once complained to an owners meeting that the league had scheduled too many of his home games on days when it rained.

1898 George P. Dorris founded the St. Louis Motorcar Company, the first automobile manufacturer here. Dorris and his partner, John French, built the first automobile seen in St. Louis. It made its first run down Vandeventer on Thanksgiving Day, 1898. The Dorris was one of over 200 makes of automobiles made in St. Louis between 1890 and 1930.

1900 Street car workers walked off the job, beginning the most violent strike in St. Louis history. At least 14 people were killed and 200 injured in the 55-day walkout. The elite of the city formed an armed posse of 1,600 citizens to keep order. Crowds pelted the replacement operators with rocks, cut power lines and obstructed the tracks. Business ground to a halt. Most of the strikers were replaced, but the episode is a major turning point in St. Louis labor history.

1919 The American Legion was founded at a national caucus in St. Louis. The meetings took place at the old Schubert Theatre at 12th and Locust. Theodore Roosevelt Junior had called for a caucus of U.S. veterans to adopt a constitution and a system in which all vets could have a voice in issues concerning them.

1922 Sam Breadon, a poor boy that struck it rich as a mechanic and a car salesman, bought controlling interest in the Cardinals. With Branch Rickey as vice-president and general manager, he turned the Cardinals into a powerhouse.

1932 Sonny Liston was born in Arkansas, one of 25 brothers and sisters on a modern-day plantation. His family moved here when he was a child. At the age of 18, Sonny robbed a gas station. He learned boxing at the Missouri State Penitentiary. He won the heavyweight title in 1962, knocking out Floyd Patterson. He lost the title to Cassius Clay in 1964. Liston died of a drug overdose in 1970.

1945 VE day was observed rather than celebrated in St. Louis. Vital war industries continued their routine. Whistles blew at 8:40 a.m. upon a signal given by city authorities following President Harry Truman's address. About 5,000 gathered at Memorial Plaza to hear speakers remind them that a fanatical enemy still remained. The *Post* reported that 1246 St. Louisans had died in Europe and another 621 were missing.

1947 Cards owner Sam Breadon made an appearance in the Cardinal clubhouse to head off a move by players to protest having to play against Jackie Robinson. Breadon denied that the meeting ever took place.

1953 The \$40 million Chain of Rocks Canal was dedicated. A flower-bedecked barge carrying Veiled Prophet Queen Sally Baker Shepley led a parade of 150 vessels. The canal bypassed the treacherous "Chain of Rocks" stretching across the river below the bridge that also bears that name.

1955 Harry Truman celebrated his 71st birthday by breaking ground for the Harry S. Truman Library in his hometown of Independence.

1956 City voters put the job of writing a new city charter in the hands of a blue-ribbon citizen's slate of freeholders. Mayor Tucker had led the fight to get rid of the outmoded charter.

1963 Stan Musial's home run against the Dodgers marked his 1,357th extra base hit of his career. That broke the record for total bases held by Babe Ruth.

1966 The Cardinals played their last game at Old Busch Stadium, losing to the Giants, 10-5. Willie Mays hit the final home run in the old ballpark. Alex Johnson hit into a double play to end it. August Busch Junior presented the deed to Richard Amberg, president of the Herbert Hoover Boys Club. Retired groundskeeper Bill Stocksick struggled to dig up home plate. He had installed the original plate in 1906. The plate was put aboard a helicopter, and flown to new Busch Stadium.

1966 The Cardinals made a controversial trade. The Birds swapped pitcher Ray Sadecki to the San Francisco Giants for Orlando Cepeda. Cepeda would go on to win MVP honors in 1967, while leading the Cardinals to a world championship.

1966 CBS Television followed up its controversial documentary *16 in Webster Groves* with *Webster Groves Revisited*.

1969 The Winston Churchill Memorial and Library in Fulton was dedicated. The ceremonies were held at the restored Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Aldermanbury. The church was brought from London to be the focal point of the memorial.

1998 Mark McGwire hit his 400th career home run. He reached 400 in his 4,726th at bat, fewer at bats than any other player. The homer off Rick Reed at Shea Stadium made Big Mac the 26th player to reach 400.