

FOR THE RECORDS

St. Louis and the Ferris Wheel

When you think of St. Louis and Ferris wheels, your mind likely goes to the giant wheel that currently sits near Union Station. You may not know, however, that St. Louis once played host to the world's first Ferris wheel (Figure 1). Brought to St. Louis for the 1904 World's Fair, the original Ferris wheel became an integral part of the World's Fair experience and continued to be central to people's memories of the fair decades after the actual event. What may surprise you is that while the wheel has significance in St. Louis history, it may also be significant to your personal family history.

Early "Pleasure Wheels" in Europe and America

The Ferris wheel has its origins in a ride first documented in the 17th century called the "pleasure wheel." Believed to have originated in Eastern Europe, pleasure wheels were first documented in 1620 by an Englishman named Peter Mundy. While traveling through Bulgaria, Mundy stopped at a local festival and described in his diary a large wheel in which children sat on swings hung from it that moved up and down as the wheel turned. When publishing his diaries decades later, Mundy included an illustration depicting the festival that included this wheel, looking very much like a simpler form of a modern Ferris wheel (Figure 2). Later in the century, pleasure wheels began appearing at English fairs. Also referred to as "ups-and-downs," "swings," and "whirligigs," they were made of wood and rotated by a man turning a crank, and did not always resemble the wheel design recorded by Mundy (Figure 3).

In the United States, pleasure wheels became staples of state and county fairs in the second half of the 19th century. By this time, pleasure wheels had become taller and a greater emphasis was put on the view a pleasure wheel could provide. For instance, a 50-foot wheel was created for the 1849 New York State Fair that "was carefully counterbalanced, carrying passengers 'comfortably' and safely around the circle of the wheel, enabling the riders to obtain a marvelous view of the newly-chartered city and its suburbs" (Anderson 24). Resort cities like Coney Island and Atlantic City also



Figure 1: The first Ferris wheel where it sat for the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis. Source: Images of America: St. Louis: The 1904 World's Fair.

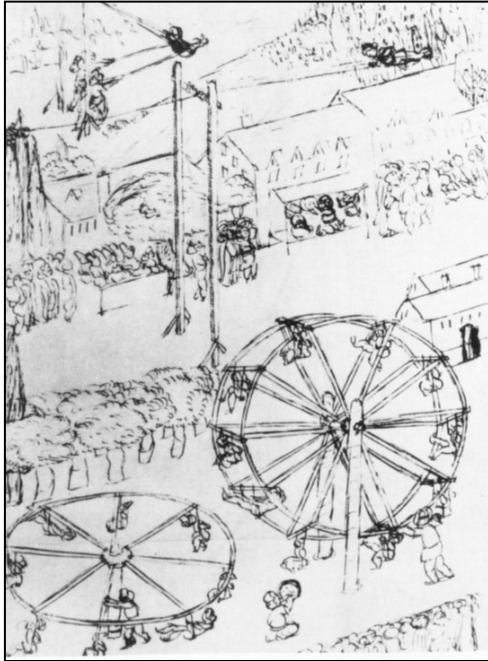


Figure 2: The illustration of the festival Peter Mundy published with his diaries. Source: *Ferris Wheels: An Illustrated History*.

rose to prominence during this time, and amusement rides like pleasure wheels sprang up to entice visitors. In 1867, I.N. Forrester acquired the first patent for an engine-powered pleasure wheel he called a “rotary swing.” Another inventor, William Somers, submitted a patent for another engine-powered wheel in 1891 called the “Observation Roundabout.” Both rides were eventually built in Atlantic City, and Somers’ wheel proved so successful he built more of them at other resort cities (Figure 4).

The Columbia Exposition of 1893 and the First Ferris Wheel

At the same time Somers’s observation wheels were being enjoyed at resorts along the east coast, the World’s Columbian Exposition Company in Chicago was busy planning the first world’s fair in the United States since Paris set the standard for them in 1889. Set to begin in the spring of 1893, the company needed the fair to outdo the grandeur of the Paris Exposition in order to cement America’s place on the world stage. To do this, the company needed an attraction to surpass the Paris Exposition’s crowning achievement, the Eiffel Tower. At 984 feet tall, it was by far the tallest manmade structure in the world. The Company heard several proposals from engineers to build similar towers– Gustave Eiffel himself even offered to build a tower significantly taller than the one he built in Paris–but rejected all of them. If the

Columbia Exposition was to have something to “out-Eiffel Eiffel,” it had to be something of a unique design.

It was under these circumstances that Pittsburgh-based civil engineer George W. G. Ferris proposed his idea, a pleasure wheel on a massive scale: 250 feet in diameter, with 36 cars, each capable of carrying 60 people (Figure 5). The Company initially rejected Ferris’s proposal on the grounds of such a structure being “too fragile.” After Ferris had provided documentation of tests that ensured the safety of riders, he was finally granted a commission to build his wheel on December 16, 1892. To oversee the wheel’s construction and day-to-day operations at the fair, Ferris contacted his friend Luther V. Rice, a civil engineer who had previously worked with Ferris as a surveyor in the construction of the Central Bridge in Cincinnati. When he received Ferris’s offer, Rice was living in St. Louis, employed as assistant engineer for the Union Depot & Tunnel Company. Construction on the wheel began in January 1893 and continued into June, one month after the Columbia Exposition had opened, and dedication for the finished structure took place June 21, 1893. The wheel had already garnered a significant amount of excitement, however. After the wheel’s first test run on June 11, Rice messaged Ferris, “People are wild to ride on wheel and extra force of guards is required to keep them out.” Despite the late start, Ferris’s wheel proved a massive success at the Columbia Expositi-



Figure 3: An early pleasure wheel with a different design at an English fair. Source: *Ferris Wheels: An Illustrated History*.

tion, taking in \$726,805.50 by the fair’s close on October 30, against a construction cost of \$380,000. The wheel was considered an engineering marvel to surpass the Eiffel Tower and cemented the reputation of American engineering in the international community (Figure 6). From then on, pleasure wheels began to be referred to as “Ferris wheels.”

The Wheel Comes to St. Louis

As popular as the Ferris wheel was at the Columbia Exposition, it sadly did not prove to be profitable for Ferris in the years following the Exposition. The wheel continued to operate after the close of the fair, before Ferris had it disassembled in the spring of 1894 and reassembled in 1895 at a permanent home near Lincoln Park on Chicago’s north side. The wheel’s new placement met with harsh backlash from north side residents who “didn’t want ‘undesirable industrialism invading their residential area’” (Anderson, 75). The ensuing legal challenge to cancel the Ferris wheel’s permit, the high cost of reassembly, and an economic depression resulting in poor attendance caused the wheel to lose money until the Ferris Wheel Company filed for bankruptcy in November 1896. In April 1900, Luther Rice, still handling operations for the wheel, announced he would be receiving bids from parties interested in purchasing



Figure 4: A 2-wheeled Observation Roundabout built by William Somers on the Atlantic City Boardwalk, circa 1892. Source: Ferris Wheels: An Illustrated History.



Figure 5: A passenger on the Ferris Wheel in 1904 captures this photo of the wheel cars in midair and the landscape beyond. Source: “Indescribably Grand:” Diaries and Letters from the 1904 World’s Fair.

the wheel for scrap. In the meantime, the wheel would continue to operate in Lincoln Park, as Rice continued to post advertisements for it in Chicago newspapers (Figure 7). After 3 years, it was announced in the Chicago Tribune on June 7, 1903, that the wheel had been sold for \$8,150 to the Chicago House Wrecking Company. The Ferris wheel’s new owners did not intend to dismantle it for scrap, however. Instead, they had the Ferris wheel shipped piece by piece in 178 freight cars and rebuilt in St. Louis, at a cost of around \$265,000, to become the centerpiece of the next great world’s fair, the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition.

At the St. Louis World’s Fair, the wheel once again became profitable, recouping its relocation costs within four months. Part of this can be attributed to the great view the wheel provided of the entire fairgrounds, which the Chicago House Wrecking Company took full advantage of in its promotion. Renamed the Observation Wheel, each car now came with an “aerial guide,” who pointed out to guests the various points of interest of the fair below as well as natural landmarks such as the Ozarks and Mississippi and Missouri Rivers, all of which could be easily seen from the wheel. Similarly, the wheel provided an excellent bird’s-eye view of the illuminated lights of the fair that came at night. In Chicago, the Ferris wheel had never been popular at night; the most popular time for rides there were the twilight hours before full dark. In St. Louis, however, the



Figure 6: The Ferris wheel towered far above every other structure at the 1893 Columbia Exposition. Source: *Ferris Wheels: An Illustrated History*.

illumination made the wheel a must-see and the nighttime view it provided became a key part of people's recollections of the fair (Figure 8). As one reporter put it, "Eye has not seen nor ear heard a more striking spectacle than the night view of the great Exposition from the top of the Ferris wheel" (St. Louis Republic, July 17, 1904).

The wheel also served as an important part of St. Louis society nightlife. Prior to the fair's opening, the Chicago House Wrecking Company announced they would, for an hourly rate, be making cars of the wheel available for private parties, an announcement that was "discussed on all sides, and is nightly proving a subject of conversation in the best clubs in the city" (The Inter-Ocean, April 3, 1904). The gimmick was fully embraced by the public and many prominent citizens of the day used the wheel for parties and meetings. On October 12, 1904, for example,

Mrs. E.J. Stokes of St. Louis held a lavish dinner party with dancing accompanied by a full orchestra in one of the cars. Charitable and government organizations also made use of the wheel to host official functions. On June 21, the city hosted a banquet to honor boiler inspector G. W. Branch. On July 5, Indiana delegates to the Democratic National Convention held a meeting on the wheel for several hours. The Chicago House Wrecking Company itself even used the wheel on September 20 as the venue for a meeting with the fair's executive commissioners to discuss the purchase of some of their buildings after the fair's conclusion. Many of these parties and meetings took place in cars number 19 and number 29. No. 29 became known as the "banquet car," but no. 19 became especially famous as the venue of another kind of gathering, one that someone doing St. Louis genealogy might take an interest in.

Love is in the Air

With its spectacular view of the fairgrounds and nighttime display, the Observation Wheel became a very popular place for weddings. During the Chicago fair, Luther Rice received many requests from couples wanting to marry in one of the Ferris wheel cars when it reached the highest point. Rice turned them all down, but allowed two marriages to be performed in his office when the couples told him they already had marriage licenses. By contrast, the Chicago House Wrecking Company encouraged marriages on the wheel by outfitting car no. 19, which quickly became known as the "wedding car," specifically for that purpose. The Company outfitted the car with a full-size piano and 215 incandescent

lights, and even supplied a minister to perform the ceremony. As advertised in a write-up in the St. Louis Globe-Democrat, "All you need is a license and a ring" (St. Louis Globe-Democrat, June 21, 1904). The first marriage on the wheel took place on May 28 between Eddy Rogers and Florence Benton of Wamego, KS. Couples from all over the country in town for the fair even took out marriage licenses in St. Louis City and County for the opportunity to be married 264 feet in the air (Figure 9). By the fair's close on

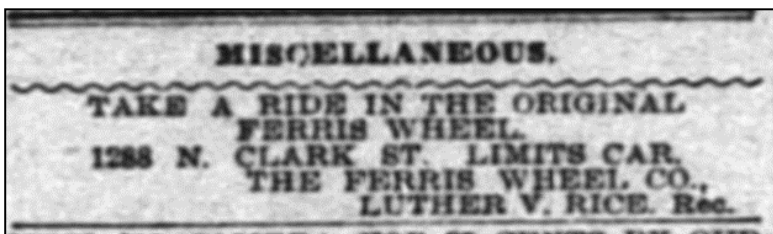


Figure 7: An advertisement for Ferris wheel rides in Chicago while Luther Rice was trying to sell it. Source: *The Inter Ocean*, July 1, 1900.

December 1, it was reported that around 50 marriages had been performed on the wheel.

Some couples took the concept of marriage on the Observation Wheel a step further and made their weddings even more unique. On July 16, it was reported that John Craven, a performer with Col. Cummins's Wild West Show, and his fiancé Dollie Coffman of Salina, KS, rode on horseback into car no. 19 and married, still on horseback, when the car

reached its highest point. On October 4, Martin Good of New York City and Estelle Clayton of Wayne County, MO, had their wedding in the open air on top of car no. 19 on a special platform constructed by the Chicago House Wrecking Company. The party assembled on the platform for the wedding included the couple, minister, best man, maid of honor, and four witnesses. Professional photographer R.R. Whiting of Cincinnati was engaged to photograph the event and took his position on the car ahead of them. As popular as the Ferris wheel weddings were at the fair, not everyone was

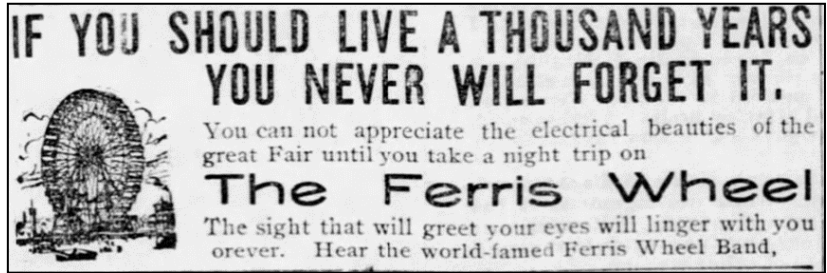


Figure 8: This newspaper advertisement for the wheel at the 1904 World's Fair emphasized the great nighttime view of the grounds it offered. Source: St. Louis Post-Dispatch, July 5, 1904.

pleased with them. Fr. J.J. O'Brien of St. Margaret's Church, St. Louis, said in a sermon, "I can not [sic] have patience for these newfangled ways of getting married in a Ferris wheel, a dirigible balloon or on a stake wagon advertising a dentist's business of extracting teeth. Marriage is holy and should be performed in God's holy house by proper people" (St. Louis Globe-Democrat, March 19, 1908). Regardless, the popularity of the Ferris wheel marriages in 1904 shows that unconventional weddings are hardly anything new and don't be surprised if one pops up in your family history.

The Destruction of the First Ferris Wheel and the Hunt for the Axle

After the World's Fair, the Chicago House Wrecking Company sought to sell the Observation Wheel to Coney Island. Given the high cost of moving the wheel from Chicago to St. Louis, however, the Coney Island buyers told the company they would only take it if they covered the relocation costs. With the cost of relocation estimated at \$166,000, they ultimately decided it would be more cost-effective to destroy the wheel and sell the metal for scrap. On January 13, 1906, the Observation Wheel took its final revolution with Chicago House Wrecking Company Superintendent W. G. Bennett, who had overseen the wheel's operation at the fair, and two others as its sole passengers. Finally, on May 11, 100 sticks of dynamite were detonated at the wheel's foundation and the structure considered the greatest engineering marvel since the Eiffel Tower was reduced to a pile of twisted metal (Figure 10). A large crowd gathered to watch the spectacle, and for them the destruction marked the end of St. Louis's finest hour. As one reporter said, "With the great Ferris Wheel [sic] a tangled mass of junk...the glories of the greatest World's Fair have departed" (St. Louis Post Dispatch, May 14, 1906).

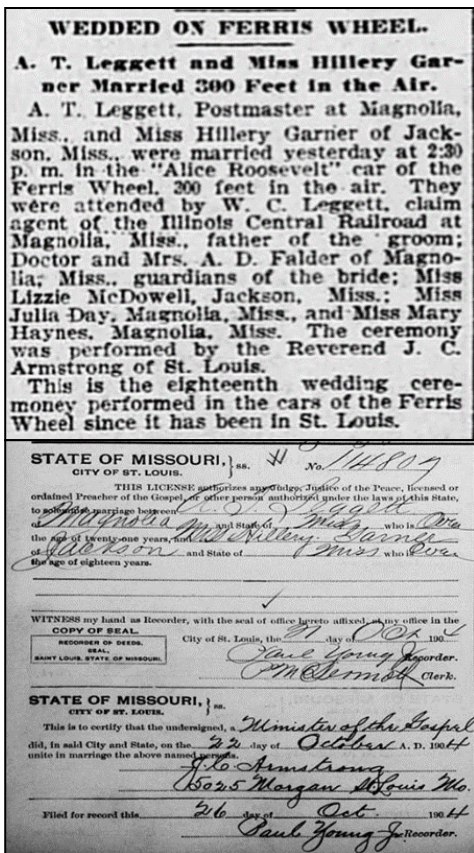


Figure 9: A newspaper article featuring a couple who married on the wheel, along with their marriage license. Source: St. Louis Republic, October 23, 1904; St. Louis Marriage Licenses, FHL #528147.

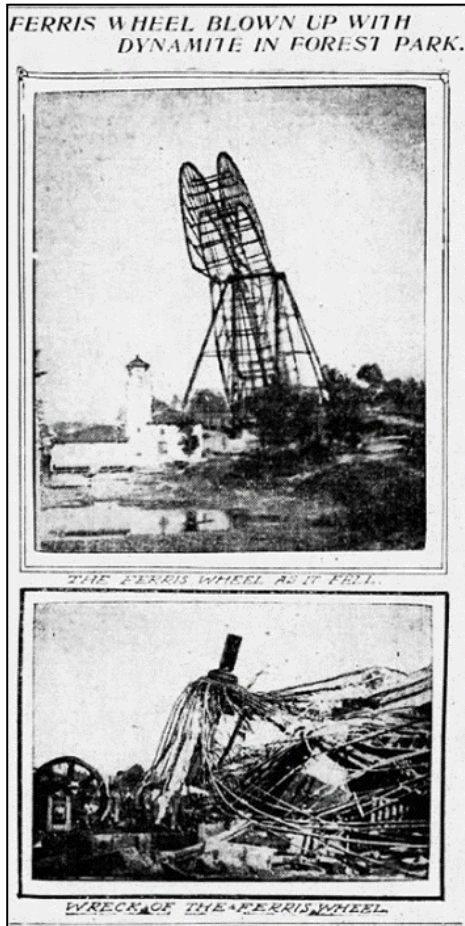


Figure 10: Newspaper photos documenting the destruction of the wheel as it happened. Source: *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, May 12, 1906.

The original Ferris wheel and its role in the 1904 World’s Fair would gradually fade from the public consciousness as the decades passed and smaller wheels became commonplace. In January 1943, however, something happened that would not only revitalize the public’s memory of the fair, but solidify the Ferris wheel as an essential part of St. Louis folklore. Upon hearing that scrap metal was being collected for use in World War II, 82-year-old William Jones of St. Louis came to the War Production Board (WPB) with a tip. Jones, who had worked on the demolition of the wheel, claimed that the wheel’s axle was too heavy to be removed with the rest of the scrap back in 1906. Instead, Jones said, the axle was covered up where it lay and that it should still be buried beneath the eighth-hole fairway of the public golf course in Forest Park. Given how much scrap the 70-ton axle could yield for the war effort, Pelham Turner of the WPB’s salvage division and St. Louis City Engineer Paul Brinkman scoured the course with a metal detector and picked up readings of metal on the ninth-hole fairway. On January 27, 1943, parks department laborers began digging a trench on the spot and the project quickly attracted a daily crowd of spectators who had their own thoughts on the location of the axle (Figure 11). While the digging was underway, a rule was made that golfers could remove balls they shot into the trench at no penalty to their scores. Some people said the workers were digging in the wrong spot and offered conflicting information as to the axle’s true location. One man said he remembered the axle being buried 100 yards south of the dig site, while another said 300 yards northeast. One 50-year old man, who claimed to



Figure 11: William Jones examines a bolt buried at the golf course dig site. Source: *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, January 28, 1943.

have been present at the demolition and had returned to the site for several days afterward, said he remembered the axle had been cut up with a blowtorch and shipped back to Chicago. For others, however, the hunt for the axle simply brought back fond memories of the fair and the Observation Wheel. A man named William Hoffner, who had been 14 years old during the fair, told the crowd how he had seen a daredevil slide down a cable from the wheel’s axle by his teeth and about his memories of other attractions near the wheel. The dig turned up several old bolts and other smaller pieces of metal, but the axle was never found. By the second week of February 1943, the search seems to have been called off, as newspaper coverage of it abruptly stops. Though it ended in failure, the hunt for axle did have the effect of reviving the public’s memories of the Ferris wheel’s connection to St. Louis, a connection that continues today.

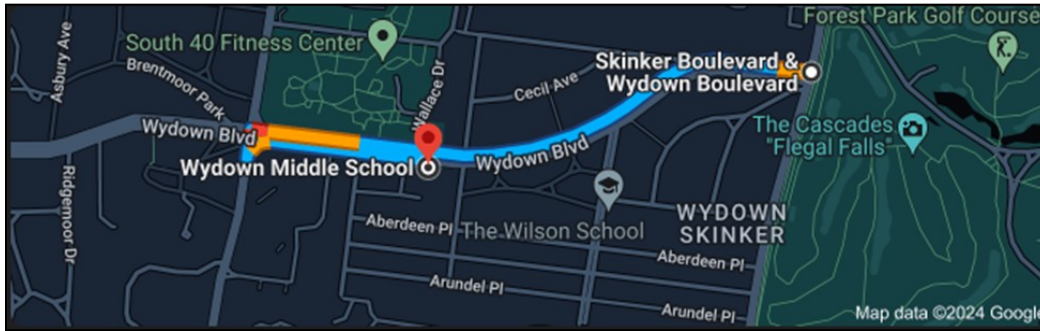


Figure 12: A map showing the axle's rumored burial site near the Skinker-Wydown intersection at the edge of Forest Park and the Wydown Middle School property hypothesized as the burial site by Jeff Todisman. Source: Google Maps.

The Wheel's Continued St. Louis Legacy

The original Ferris wheel has continued to serve as an important symbol of the 1904 World's Fair and St. Louis in the public imagination. Arguably, the most enduring is the buried axle, with new attempts at locating it taking place periodically since 1943. In May 1999, KDNL Channel 30 even staged a broadcast TV special to try to locate the axle using ground-penetrating radar. The equipment detected something near the intersection of Wydown and Skinker Blvd., close to where the Ferris wheel stood in 1904, which seemed to be the approximate size of the axle. When the team dug at the site, the object turned out to be an old sewer or water pipe. Prior to the special, however, the station received multiple calls with various theories as to the axle's location, just as the 1943 team did. The legend of the axle has also managed to stay alive as part of family histories. In 2011, Jeff Todisman of Maplewood said that his father discovered a large piece of metal on the grounds of Wydown Middle School when working on its expansion in the 1980s. After investigating further, Todisman "managed to find an account about a man whose grandfather owned a livery stable and was hired to drag the axle into a swampy area in a new housing development across Skinker Boulevard," an area now on the Wydown Middle School property (Krekeler). The construction of a new school building on the property in 2011 provided the opportunity to determine if the axle was buried on the property, but it was not found there either (Figure 12). According to Mike Truax, president of the 1904 World's Fair Society of St. Louis, it is very unlikely that the axle is actually buried anywhere in St. Louis. In an interview with the Post-Dispatch, Truax said that recently discovered records from the Chicago House Wrecking Company confirm it was moved to Chicago and "was cut up for scrap about 1919, when acetylene torches improved to cut the hardened steel" (St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Nov. 20, 2022). Regardless, as long as people continue to retell family stories about the World's Fair and the Ferris wheel, the legend of the axle is likely to endure as an essential piece of St. Louis folklore.

While the original Ferris wheel and the World's Fair are now long gone, St. Louis continues to honor their legacy. In 1984, the city of New Orleans hosted their own World's Fair and constructed a 180-foot Ferris wheel, the tallest in the U.S. at the time. When the fair closed, the wheel was dismantled and was going to be sent upriver to Minnesota. The barge company contacted Six Flags Mid-America (now Six Flags St. Louis) with an offer to sell them the ride. Six Flags opened the wheel under the name Colossus at their park in 1986, where it stands to this day. Its placement in the 1904 World's Fair section of the park serves as a constant reminder of the Ferris wheel's place in St. Louis's past. The 200-foot tall St. Louis Wheel at Union Station opened in 2019. Couples have married on the Union Station wheel, just as couples did on the original wheel more than a century ago. All of this ensures that Ferris wheels, especially the original, will continue to be an icon of St. Louis for years to come.

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SPOTLIGHT ON

ST. LOUIS CATHOLIC RECORDS

History & Genealogy at the St. Louis County Library has the resources you need to begin researching your St. Louis Catholic ancestors! Explore the following links:

[Guide to St. Louis Archdiocesan Parish Records](#)

This PDF document lists all of the St. Louis Archdiocese parishes. Information given about each one includes the sacraments, dates, and FHL film number, making it easy to access the records on FamilySearch.org. Head to the catalog and enter the film number to begin browsing.

[Interactive Map of the Archdiocese](#)

This wonderful map, created by Alicia Detelich, shows all parishes, both open and closed. It is useful for identifying the church your ancestors may have attended depending on where they lived. Tip: Open up the map alongside a Google map. Find the address on the Google map, then use reference points to locate it on the parish map.

[Catholic Priests in St. Louis, Missouri, 1841-1900](#)

This list, compiled from Catholic and city directories, is useful for locating a church marriage record using the priest's name found on the civil marriage record. St. Louis civil marriage records can be found at FamilySearch.org.

[Index to the History of the Archdiocese of Saint Louis: A Condensed History of the Catholic Church in Missouri and Saint Louis; Material Progress and General Resources and Biographical Sketches and Portraits of Prominent Citizens](#)

This is an index to a comprehensive book of prominent Catholics in St. Louis history held by History & Genealogy. Requests for pages can be made using our [Lookup Request form](#).

[Catholic Parish Jubilee Histories](#)

H&G holds microfilm copies of parish jubilee histories for congregations in eastern Missouri. Some are in German, Polish, and Czech. Jubilees are parish celebrations that may include a history of the church, list of clergy, church club members, and more.

View more St. Louis Catholic genealogy resources at www.slcl.org/research-learn/genealogy/catholic-church-records.



Take a sneak peek at St. Louis County Library’s new Digital Archives! While still under construction, the site already contains hundreds of digitized records including Missouri yearbooks, St. Louis newspapers, St. Louis City and County directories, burial certificates, maps and atlases. The site will continue to grow as items are digitized and added to the collection. Upcoming enhancements include search query performance and quicker search results. Explore the archives at slcl.recollectcms.com/.

This project is supported by the Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act as administered by the Missouri State Library, a division of the Office of the Secretary of State.

FLICKR UPDATE



CLARK FAMILY BRANCH



Work continues to progress on the Clark Family Branch, the future home of History & Genealogy! Photos courtesy of the St. Louis County Library Flickr account ([flickr.com/photos/slclevents/albums/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/slclevents/albums/)), March 8, 2024.

H&G Classes & Programs

The following History & Genealogy classes and programs are offered for April 2024:

SLCL Databases for Genealogy Research

Monday, April 8, 6:00 pm, Daniel Boone

Discover the variety of genealogical databases that can be used free at the library and at home with your St. Louis County Library card. Adults. [Registration required.](#)

Exploring FamilySearch.org

Thursday, April 11, 10:00 am, Weber Road

FamilySearch.org is a free website offering access to millions of records for genealogy and family history research. Learn how to search for ancestors, navigate the catalog, and take advantage of other features. Adults. [Registration required.](#)

Using the Missouri Historical Society's Local History & Genealogy Index

Monday, April 22, 2:00 pm, Oak Bend

Not only does the Missouri Historical Society preserve history, they make it easy to find! Explore the index and how to find information about your St. Louis ancestors with Dennis Northcott, Archivist at the Missouri Historical Society. Part of National Preservation Week. Adults. [Registration required.](#)

Basic Conservation and Cleaning of Grave Markers

Tuesday, April 23, 2:00 pm, Cliff Cave

The stones that mark the graves of our loved ones serve to identify their final resting places for hundreds of years to come. Receive instruction in proper cleaning techniques, gaining permission, and selection of equipment/supplies for saving the stones within cemeteries. Part of National Preservation Week. Adults. [Registration required.](#)

This Smells Like Basement! Recovering and Preserving Old Family Documents

Wednesday, April 24, 6:30 pm, Daniel Boone

Photos and family documents are often stored with convenience in mind, rather than preservation. Learn remedies for common preservation woes, including best practices, materials to purchase, and some low-cost solutions for removing that lingering storage smell. Part of National Preservation Week. Adults. [Registration required.](#)

First Families of St. Louis

Thursday, April 25, 2:00 pm, Virtual

Do you have early St. Louis ancestors? First Families of St. Louis is a lineage society whose objectives are to identify, recognize, and archive the lineage of historical St. Louis families for the future. Learn about how to apply, the documentation needed, and more. Speaker: Viki Fagyal of the St. Louis Genealogical Society. Part of National Preservation Week. Adults. [Registration required.](#) Participants will receive Zoom information via email immediately after registering.

Preservation @ Florissant Valley

Friday, April 26, 10:00 am-1:00 pm, Florissant Valley

A History and Genealogy staff member will be available to assist with scanning and saving old pictures and documents. Up to 20 items permitted, 8 ½ x 11 or smaller. Attendees should bring a flash drive, are responsible for their own items, and may arrive at any time. Wait times may vary depending on scanner availability. Adults. [Registration required.](#)

Visit sclcl.org/events-classes to see all St. Louis County Library programs.

NEW Books

The History & Genealogy Department has recently catalogued family history books associated with the following surnames:

Bakke
 Banneker
 Delph
 Fanning
 Graves
 Hackman
 Haynes
 Hickman
 Hollinger
 Hollnagel
 Horvath
 Keegan
 Loftness
 McMillen
 Minster
 Neiburg
 Ortnr
 Osterhoudt
 Owens
 Sinclair
 Tull
 Uradnik
 Vick
 Witthaus
 Zukowski

Find your surname in the St. Louis County Library catalog slouc.na2.iivega.com/. Reference books may be requested and viewed at the H&G temporary location at the Daniel Boone branch. Circulating books may be put on hold and picked up at your nearest SLCL branch. If you are not located in the St. Louis area, books that are part of the National Genealogy Society's book collection may be requested through your local library's ILL department.

OF NOTE

History & Genealogy will be moving into our new building (Clark Family Branch, formally Headquarters) at 6140 S. Lindbergh Blvd. sometime this spring/summer. While no firm date or details have been determined at the time of this publication, stay subscribed to PastPorts and check our website and social media for updates!

Website: slcl.org

Facebook: facebook.com/STLCoLibrary

Instagram: instagram.com/stlouiscountylibrary/

X: x.com/slcl

THIS MONTH IN HISTORY

One of the most famous places of rest in the St. Louis area is Bellefontaine Cemetery. In March, 1849, banker William McPherson assembled a group of other prominent citizens to found the Rural Cemetery Association of St. Louis. They wanted to establish a new cemetery outside of the city limits to accommodate the growing needs of the city. Many were also convinced at the time that city cemeteries posed a health risk. The group purchased the 138 acre Hempstead farm along the road to Fort Bellefontaine. The association hired landscape architect Almerin Hotchkiss to develop the design. The first burial took place on April 27, 1850. Bodies from older graveyards in the city were also moved to the cemetery. Many important St. Louisans are buried there, including Adolphus Busch, Susan Blow, and James Eads, just to name a few. Over 87,000 people are buried at Bellefontaine, with room for more to last 200 years. For more information or to schedule a tour, see bellefontainecemetery.org/.



SEARCH TIP

Are you looking to find your European immigrant ancestor on a passenger list? If so, Ancestry Library Edition has a search for that! From the homepage, click on "Search," then "Immigration & Travel," and then "Passenger Lists."

You then have the option to narrow the search further by choosing a port. Unless you are absolutely sure which at which port your ancestor arrived, you may want to stop narrowing at this point. Many a researcher has assumed an ancestor arrived in New York City, only to find out they actually arrived in Baltimore, New Orleans, Philadelphia, Boston, or even a Canadian port and crossed over the border!



SLCL HOTSPOTS



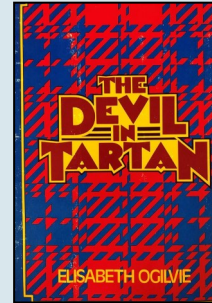
St. Louis County Library now has bookable hotspots!

Need internet access on vacation, when traveling for work, or for an online interview? You can now book a hotspot for a specific period of time through the myTurn portal at slcl.myturn.com/library/.

These are great for sharing online family history information at family reunions!

FICTION FINDS

Did you know that you can find genealogy in fiction? Check out this title:



The Devil in Tartan

By Elisabeth Ogilvie

A cozy mystery novel that centers around a woman working on the genealogy of a Scottish family, complete with accents, flashbacks, and murders.

Type: Cozy Mystery

Availability: Print

Recommended by an H&G staff member!

Other titles:

Murder Once Removed

By S.C. Perkins

Type: Cozy Mystery, First in Series

Availability: Hoopla Audio, Libby eBook, print

Death on the Family Tree

By Patricia Houck Sprinkle

Type: Cozy Mystery

Availability: Hoopla eBook

A Killer in the Family

By Gytha Lodge

Type: Thriller, DNA Science

Availability: Libby eBook/Audio, print

Access these and others in the SLCL catalog at slouc.na2.iivega.com/

History & Genealogy Services

The following H&G services are free and available to researchers who are unable to visit the library.

Lookup service

H&G can provide photocopies, prints, or digital scans of many library materials from indexed sources or when given a specific citation:

- Up to 30 pages from one book or one article from a journal issue. Staff can also photocopy or scan tables of contents and index pages.
- Microfilmed records
- Print outs from database records if patrons cannot access the database at home.
- Please use the [online lookup request form](#) to submit requests.

*Some items may be temporarily unavailable due to construction

Print collection

More than 27,000 books in the collection can be checked out. The entire collection is included in the library's [online catalog](#). Books with call numbers that do not begin with "R" are available to check out. Patrons can request books online or by calling 314-994-3300.

*Some items may be temporarily unavailable due to construction

Research guidance

H&G staff members can provide research assistance by phone and in person.

Book-a-Genealogist

Researchers encountering brick walls or who would like assistance in developing a plan to achieve specific research goals can schedule a consultation with an H&G staff member. Requests can be made using the online [Book a Genealogist form](#).

Database access

Many library [databases](#) can be used at home by St. Louis County Library card holders living in the metropolitan area. For more information, please contact the History & Genealogy Department at 314-994-3300 or genealogy@slcl.org.

STLGS Events

The St. Louis Genealogical Society presents the following events:

Monthly Meeting: Disasters and Catastrophes

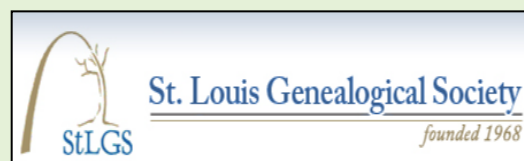
Saturday, April 13, 10:00 am, Grant's View/Hybrid
Sponsored by the St. Louis Genealogical Society. Cholera, tornadoes, fire. . . all of these disasters have devastated St. Louis but have also brought about improvements to our city and other cities around the globe. Learn about the Great Fire of 1849, the 1896 and 1927 St. Louis tornadoes, transportation disasters, and more!

Ireland Reaching Out (irelandxo.com)

Saturday, April 27, 1:00 pm, Virtual
Ireland Reaching Out is an all-volunteer organization on a mission to unite all of Ireland's diaspora. Having an Ireland XO account is completely free. By following your parish/county of origin, you may be surprised at who you may meet! Learn about the benefits of joining this "meet and greet" program. Featured Speaker: Jane Halloran Ryan, CG.

StLGS monthly and SIG meetings are free and open to the public!

See stlgs.org for more information and to register for virtual programs.



Registration is now open for the National Genealogical Society's 2024 conference! The 2024 event is all virtual, and is great for both beginning and veteran researchers. Expert speakers will present 50 lectures with live questions and answers. Topics include records, methodology, AI, DNA, and more. Visit conference.ngsgenealogy.org/ for more information and to register.



2024 VIRTUAL FAMILY HISTORY CONFERENCE
EXPANDING POSSIBILITIES
 16-18 MAY



History & Genealogy at the St. Louis County Library is home to the National Genealogical Society's book collection.

PastPorts is published by History & Genealogy at the St. Louis County Library

Subscribe at scl.org/pastports. Current and past issues can be downloaded from the web.

Contact us:

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 St. Louis County Library
 Temporary Location: Daniel Boone Branch
 300 Clarkson Rd.
 Ellisville, MO 63011

314-994-3300
genealogy@slcl.org
scl.org/genealogy

PARDON OUR DUST

The St. Louis County Library has recently upgraded its website. The History & Genealogy page can be accessed by clicking on "Research & Learn," and then "History & Genealogy." Unfortunately, some of the H&G links have been broken during the upgrade process. Please be patient as our hardworking SLCL technology team works to get everything back on track. Please contact H&G at 314-994-3300 or genealogy@slcl.org for help locating any of our online materials.



National Preservation Week

Event Schedule

Oak Bend Branch

Using the Missouri Historical Society's Genealogy and Local History Index

Monday, April 22, 2:00 p.m.

Not only does the Missouri Historical Society preserve history, they make it easy to find! Explore the Index and how to find information about your St. Louis ancestors with Dennis Northcott, Archivist at the Missouri Historical Society.
Adults. Registration required.

Cliff Cave Branch

Basic Conservation and Cleaning of Grave Markers

Tuesday, April 23, 2:00 p.m.

The stones that mark the graves of our loved ones serve to identify their final resting places for hundreds of years to come. Receive instruction in proper cleaning techniques, gaining permission and selection of equipment/supplies for saving the stones within cemeteries.
Adults. Registration required.

Daniel Boone Branch

This Smells Like Basement! Recovering and Preserving Old Family Documents

Wednesday, April 24, 6:30 p.m.

Photos and family documents are often stored with convenience in mind, rather than preservation. Learn remedies for common preservation woes, including best practices, materials to purchase and some low-cost solutions for removing that lingering storage smell.
Adults. Registration required.

Virtual Program

First Families of St. Louis

Thursday, April 25, 2:00 p.m.

First Families of St. Louis is a lineage society whose objectives are to identify, recognize and archive the lineage of historical St. Louis families for the future. Learn about how to apply the documentation needed and more with Viki Fagyal of the St. Louis Genealogical Society.
Adults. Registration required.

Florissant Valley Branch

Preservation @ Florissant Valley

Friday, April 26, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

A History & Genealogy staff member will be available to assist with scanning and saving old pictures and documents. Up to 20 items permitted, 8 1/2 x 11 or smaller. Attendees should bring a flash drive, are responsible for their own items and may arrive at any time. Wait times may vary depending on scanner availability.
Adults. Registration required.