

FOR THE RECORDS

From Survey 2675 to suburbia The history of the St. Louis County Library Headquarters property

The history of any parcel of land tells a story, and the ground the St. Louis County Library Headquarters sits upon is no exception. It reflects the vivid, complicated, and sometimes tragic narrative of the community.

The St. Louis County Library District obtained the property that is currently located at 1640 S. Lindbergh in 1956 for \$55,000. It was to become the headquarters for the district, replacing the first library headquarters at 6814 Natural Bridge Road. The district purchased the land from E.W. Francis & Company, a real estate company that initially intended to build a subdivision named Clay-Lind Estates. Correspondence between the company and the library board at the time emphasized the enthusiasm that Ladue Village had for the development of the library. In the summer of 1958, construction began on land whose human history goes back centuries.

Early European settlement: Charles Chartres' New Madrid claim

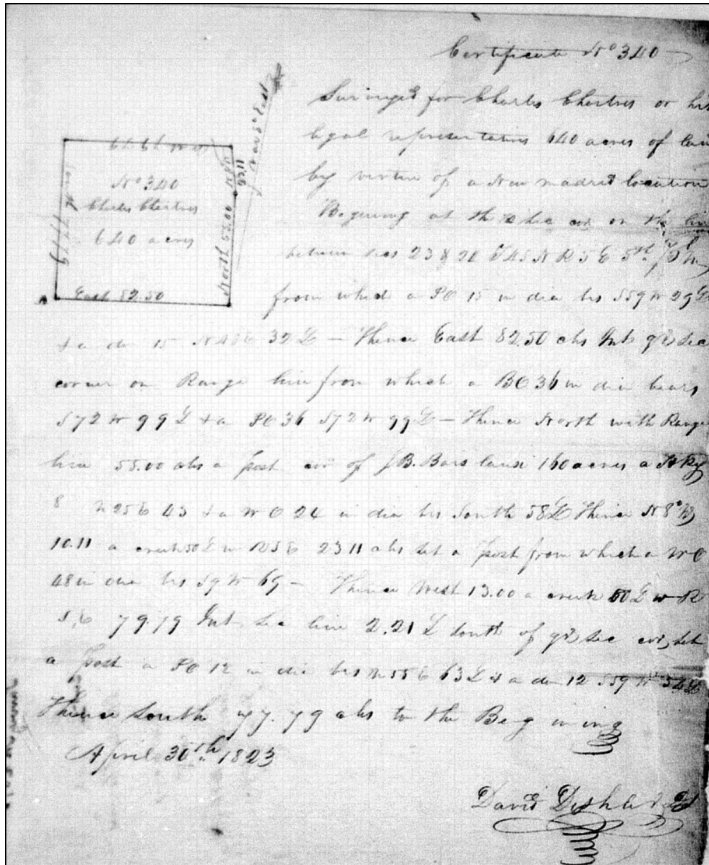
The region was originally occupied by Native Americans of the Mississippian culture, followed by the arrival of French and Spanish colonists in the 18th century. The first owner of the property under American rule was Charles Chartres, a teacher from New Madrid, Missouri. When his property suffered damage from the devastating New Madrid earthquakes of 1811–1812, he received a certificate valid for 640 acres of land from the U.S. government as compensation. This was the maximum allowed under the first large-scale disaster relief act passed by the federal government in 1815, the War of 1812 having delayed enactment.

According to the act of February 17, 1815,¹ the law compen-



Section of the 1838 *Atlas of the City and County of St. Louis...* (Dupré) showing Charles Chartres' New Madrid claim 340. A Google Map overlay shows the library Headquarters location and other current features. The parcel is bounded by Conway Rd. (north), Warson Rd. (east), Litzsinger Rd. (south) and Lindbergh Blvd. (west).

sated the owner of earthquake-damaged property with any of the public lands of the territory authorized for sale. This compensation had to be equivalent to the amount of acreage that had been lost. In return, the government received title to the damaged property. The landowner was obligated to provide proof of ownership of the New Madrid property, as well. Chartres had previously proven his ownership in front of the Board of Land Commissioners and Bates' Confirmation of Extensions, because he had acquired the property under French rule. Having proven that his land had sustained dam-



The original U.S. Surveyor General's 1823 survey of the land on which the St. Louis County Library Headquarters building sits. Survey 2675 is located in Sections and 24 of Township 45 North, Range 5 East in St. Louis County's Central Township.

age and having submitted sufficient evidence, Charles Chartres was granted a New Madrid certificate, number 340, on October 27, 1822 and the location certificate for 640 acres was approved April 21, 1823.

With the location certificate, Chartres was able to apply to the Surveyor of the Public Lands for a survey in Township 45 North, Range 5 East in St. Louis County. The survey, number 2675, is still referenced in current real estate records. It took place April 30, 1823 and is described in Field Notes, Vol. 9, page 93 and recorded in the Record of Private Surveys. The library building is located within the survey in the northeast quarter of Section 24 of Township 45 North, Range 5 East.

The rocky period of land speculation

Chartres likely never lived on the property to which he was

entitled. Thomas Brady and John McKnight, merchants and land speculators from Virginia, bought the rights to the New Madrid certificate on October 28, 1817 in a deed located in Vol. F, page 469 of the St. Louis County land records. The transfer states that Charles Chartres resided in Monroe County, Illinois at the time of the sale. A portion of the land (200 arpents, or approximately 170 acres) went to George Tennille, a lawyer from New Madrid. His involvement is curious. It is not clear what his relationship was in the affair; perhaps it was compensation for facilitating the transaction. Tennille and Stephen F. Austin, the founder of Texas, were in partnership at the time. According to Austin's "Concerning Land Speculations" in his Memoranda, he made a verbal agreement with Tennille to "furnish me with all the claims he can get which I am to locate for our joint benefit."

The New Madrid claims became synonymous with fraud as notice of the government program reached St. Louis first and many speculators rushed to New Madrid before residents became aware of the government relief extended to them. By offering a pittance for their damaged property, speculators were able to profit on the ignorance of the landowners. George Tennille wrote a forceful letter in defense of St. Louisans buying up the certificates in the Missouri Gazette and Public Advertiser on October 5, 1816. He stated that the residents of New Madrid had been notified of the relief act via public notices and that no outsiders had come to town prior to these notifications. Nevertheless, only a small percentage of the certificates were issued to the original landowners. In addition, some new claims conflicted with previous land rights which led to litigation, the last of those claims being settled in 1862. Despite—or perhaps because of—Stephen F. Austin's large debt to him, Tennille later moved to Texas to be part of the "Old 300" group of families that formed Texas' first Anglo-Saxon colony. He lost his ownership of the 200 arpents in survey 2675 in a lawsuit in Saline County where he had moved after acquiring yet another New Madrid certificate for land. The suit, brought by Joseph Heslep, was finally resolved in 1826, the same year Tennille moved to Texas.² Tennille also had New Madrid certificates for land in Boone County, Missouri, which he also sold.

John McKnight and Thomas Brady did not take up residence on the land either. Thomas Brady died of natural causes in Ste. Genevieve in 1821. John McKnight suffered a violent

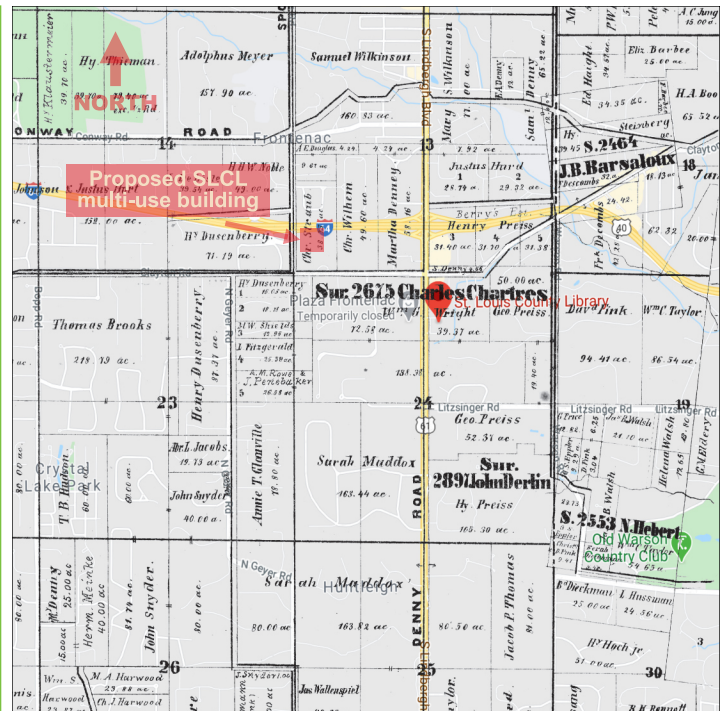
death. While on a trading expedition in the Southwest along the Upper Arkansas River, he was killed by members of the Comanche tribe and robbed of the goods he planned to trade. This 1823 event precipitated debt claims against his estate, one of which was a suit brought by the heirs of Moses Carr. The case was settled in the St. Louis Circuit Court when Robert McKnight, the administrator of the estate, agreed to sell John McKnight's real estate holdings to satisfy his outstanding debts. One hundred fifty arpents were sold to William Truesdell in April of 1826 for the sum of \$15. Truesdell later purchased 320 more acres from the estate in February 1832, ending the McKnight family's ties to the land.

Truesdell was the son-in-law of William Berry, who owned property to the north of Survey 2675 in the area now occupied by the Schnucks supermarket at 10275 Clayton Road. Berry, a veteran of the Revolutionary War from Virginia, acquired 80 acres from the U.S. government in 1831. Samuel Denny, Berry's other son-in-law from Kentucky, also owned land adjacent to the survey but eventually purchased 72.58 acres within its boundaries. Lindbergh Boulevard was formerly named Denny Road after Samuel Denny, who also owned property along Spoede Road, site of the proposed new St. Louis County Library multi-use building.

Pro-slavery farmers and pro-Union German immigrants

With the exit of the land speculators, serious farming began to take place. The early farmers were mostly native-born Americans who had moved to the area for the promise of land, like the Berry and Denny families. They acquired their property through public lands sales from the United States government. Coming from pro-slavery states like Kentucky and Virginia, they brought slaves with them to build their homes and farm the land. In 1850, William G. Wright purchased the property where the library is located today. He and other farmers in the area grew potatoes, wheat, corn and orchard fruits, and raised cattle, sheep, chickens and pigs. Farm products included wool and butter, and some neighbors produced honey.

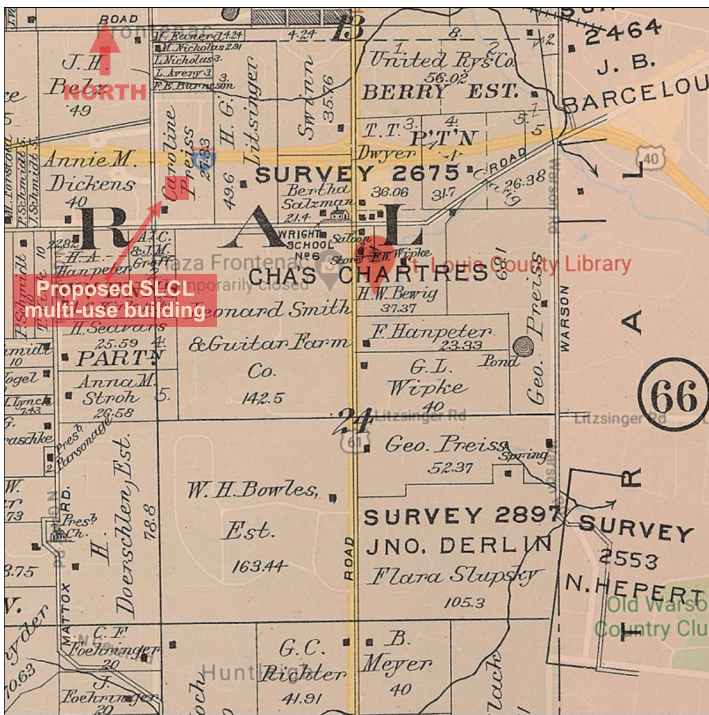
By the late 1830s, German farmers also began buying land in the area. In contrast to their Anglo-Saxon neighbors, [the Germans settler generally didn't employ slave labor and were instrumental in support of the Union in the Civil War](https://) <https://



Section of Pitzman's 1878 Atlas of the City and County of Saint Louis, Missouri with Google Map overlay showing Survey 2675.

bit.ly/2WvUMPW>. George Preiss, a native of Alsace-Lorraine, was one example. The Preiss family accumulated several hundred acres of land and is likely the source of the name for Price Road, as the German pronunciation of "Preiss" is similar to the English "Price."

Owning land on both sides of Clayton Road, the Irish-born Timothy T. Dwyer farmed and had many business pursuits over the course of his life. During the Civil War, he served in the Confederate Army, reportedly returning penniless. Captain John W. Smizer enlisted him and he served 3 years in Company I of the 10th Missouri Infantry. While serving as a private, he was assigned the extra detail of blacksmith for his company, preparing him for his post-war occupation. On June 8, 1865, he was released from Camp Allen in Louisiana, where he was briefly held as prisoner, and made his way back to St. Louis. He eventually owned a blacksmith and wagon shop, a general store, and later became involved in real estate speculation. He also served as postmaster. Until 1936, when the city of Ladue was incorporated, the area carried the name of Dwyer. Dwyer died in 1914 leaving the residence at Clayton and Denny Road to his wife.



Section the 1909 Atlas of Saint Louis County with Google Map overlay showing Survey 2675.

A violent incident

In 1869, Dwyer and several of his neighbors were party to the events surrounding the death of a sixteen-year-old African American boy named Anthony Coleman. Coleman was accused of making suggestive comments to Dwyer’s wife while she was traveling down Denny Road to Kirkwood in a light mule wagon. Georgianna (née Musick) told her husband that in addition to his comments, Anthony held her mule to prevent her from continuing, and according to Timothy Dwyer, ordered her out of the wagon. She repelled him by whipping the mule, frightening Anthony into letting go.

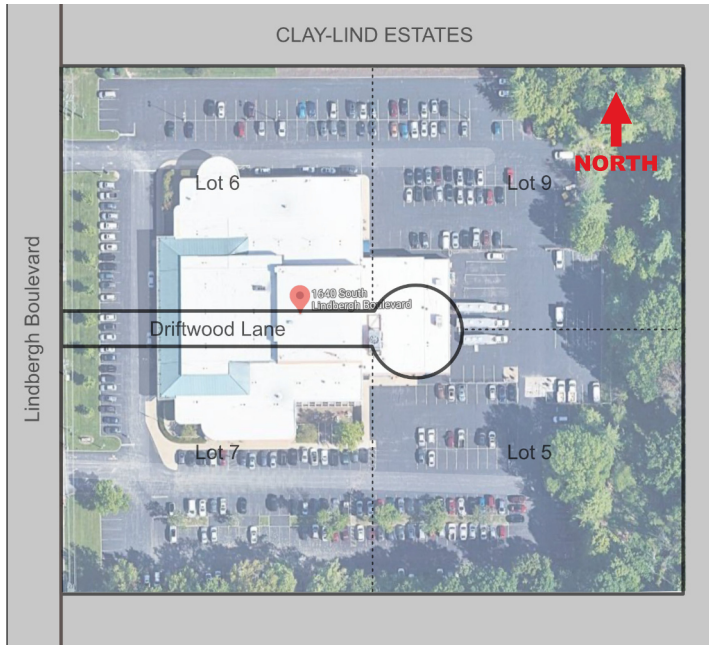
The next day, Dwyer and two Denny brothers, Andrew and William, confronted Anthony at the home of his employer, William F. Taylor, and arrested him. They brought him back to the blacksmith shop where a crowd of approximately 20-30 people of both races had gathered, according to accounts by William G. Wright, landowner of the library property at the time. He testified that Anthony had told him he had made “indecent proposals and had intended to execute them.” He also claimed that Timothy Dwyer wanted to shoot Anthony but that he had dissuaded him and encouraged him to take him to

St. Louis. Anthony attempted to escape but was recaptured. The accusers created a plan to take him to jail in the City of St. Louis; however, they didn’t leave immediately. Instead, they waited until near nightfall to begin the trek down Clayton Road. The delay was supposedly due to the attempted escape and to the illness of William Denny’s wife, requiring him to check on her welfare. Farrar Coleman, Anthony’s father, wanted to ride along with them but was told there wasn’t room for him, despite the fact that William Denny was dropped off after a half mile at his home. They had promised to go slowly enough for Farrar to follow along with another African American man on horseback. It is unclear from testimony if they were able to keep up with the wagon for the entire journey.

When the group was approximately three-quarters of a mile west of Skinker’s Road, the men claimed they were surrounded and fired upon by a group of strangers. Andrew Denny said he was blinded by the flash of a pistol in front of his face. The strangers demanded the prisoner and pulled Anthony off the wagon. Denny and Dwyer professed that they couldn’t tell if the attackers were Caucasian or African American nor what their intent was. They urged their horses on to escape, and when they approached a police station—the Wedge House at Market and Laclede—they asked for assistance from an officer there. Officers Rockow and Rice went with them to investigate. When they arrived 100 yards east of the incident’s location, they searched the vicinity for any of the mob that may have been hiding in the area or any bodies that were left behind. They found no one, but when they reached the site of the skirmish, Anthony Coleman was lying in Clayton Road, having died from two gunshot wounds originating from two different pistols. As they were unable to identify the perpetrators who had attacked him, there was no indictment. The Globe-Democrat referred to the event as “another instance of lawless criminals punishing crime,”³ as the newspaper found Denny’s and Dwyer’s accounts lacking in credibility.

From farmland to suburbia

As the nineteenth century progressed, the larger parcels of land were increasingly subdivided and sold, many to German farming families. Several marriages occurred between the sons and daughters of the neighboring Wipke, Hanpeter and Preiss families. They continued to farm into the twentieth



A drawing based on a survey of Clay-Lind Estates recorded in Plat Book 61, p. 25 of the St. Louis County Land Records Office. When Driftwood Lane was vacated, the change was recorded in Book 3791, p. 60. An image from Google Maps shows the location of the present-day Headquarters building in relation to the plat features.

century, with many of the farms referred to as “truck farms.” One member of the Wipke family, Fred W., obtained a dram shop license, and at the turn of the century, a saloon license. He had bought the Dwyer family general store, built in the mid-1800s, and converted it to a restaurant and saloon at the corner of present-day Lindbergh and Clayton Road. In 1955, it was demolished to make way for Schneithorst’s restaurant and cocktail lounge.

In addition to farming, wealthier St. Louisans built summer homes in the area as an escape from the noise and dirt of the city. By the 1930s, the area still had farms, but other businesses and family residences were becoming more common. The 1930 census taken at the beginning of the Depression shows farmers in the area but also lists one family as “campers and squatters.” The head of household is identified as a laborer, possibly working on a farm in the area. The population was rapidly increasing during this period, and construction of luxury homes was underway. The villages of McKnight, Ladue and Deer Creek joined forces to thwart the efforts of Clayton to annex them. In 1936, these three com-

munities incorporated as Ladue, thereby eliminating the threat of a Clayton takeover. The 1940 federal census records show that farmers were no longer found in the area. The neighborhood of Huntleigh Woods had been established by then, and with St. Louis Country Club within the municipality’s limits, Ladue was on its way to achieving a reputation for luxury living.

Clay-Lind Estates and St. Louis County Library Headquarters

In the 1950s, the E.W. Francis Realty Company bought the land where the library is presently located with the intent to create a subdivision named Clay-Lind Estates. An indenture filed in Deed Book 3220, page 311 at the St. Louis County Recorder of Deeds, named trustees, laid out restrictions and covenants for the subdivision and designated it as a private street, unless a majority of lot owners voted otherwise in the future. One of the indentures also specified that only families of “wholly Caucasian descent” could own homes in the subdivision. Although the Supreme Court limited racially restrictive housing covenants in 1948 in the case *Shelley v. Kraemer*,⁴ these covenants persisted. The decision held that these covenants weren’t unconstitutional; therefore private parties could voluntarily follow them but they were not legally enforceable. In 1968, the Fair Housing Act banned all discrimination in housing based on race, but the covenants still remain in records filed in recorder of deeds’ offices across the country. In 1956, the library purchased lots 5, 6, 7, and 9 of what was already platted as Driftwood Lane. The other street, Blaytonn Lane, was developed for housing.

Today, the use of this parcel of land continues to evolve. Schneithorst’s restaurant closed on December 24, 2019 after 63 years of operation. St. Louis County Library has plans to replace Headquarters with a new building and build a new multi-purpose building at the corner of Spoeede and Clayton Roads.

Despite ongoing change, one constant is the mission of the St. Louis County Library. It continues to serve a diverse population while providing access to information on innumerable topics, as well as creating outreach programs designed to meet the needs of the communities within the library district.

Notes

1. Chapter 45, "An Act for the relief of the inhabitants of the late county of New Madrid, in the Missouri territory, who suffered by earthquakes" (U. S. Statutes at Large, Vol. 3, p. 211).
2. Saline County Circuit Court, Vol. A, p. 60).
3. "The Negro Murder." *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*. September 15, 1869.
4. Shelley v. Kraemer, 334 U.S. 1 (more) 68 S. Ct. 836; 92 L. Ed. 1161; 3 A.L.R.2d 441

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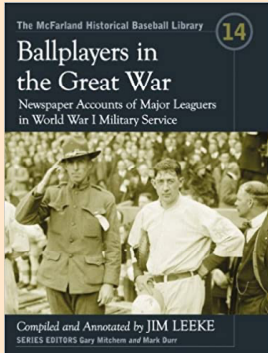
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A SAMPLING FROM
THE PRINT COLLECTION

Shelf life



Ballplayers in the Great War: Newspaper Accounts of Major Leaguers in World War I Military Service (Call no. R 796.357 B193), compiled and annotated by Jim Leeke, is a great resource for anyone researching the United States' involvement in World War I. Leeke features several famous baseball players

who enlisted or were drafted in World War I between 1917 and 1919. By December 1918, 64 percent of National League ballplayers were serving on active duty.

Several newspaper articles were featured in *The Stars and Stripes*, as well as other daily papers. The newspaper accounts highlight homecomings and service announcements, in addition to articles commemorating the lives of ballplayers who lost their lives serving in World War I. Articles on soldiers, sailors, marines, and aviators are included in separate chapters of the book. Researchers will find this helpful when researching specific ballplayers and military involvement. Leeke's annotations also provide great insight into the attitude of society towards the ballplayers and their participation in World War I. Some articles also include photographs of the baseball players.

Included in the compilation are famous names like Ty Cobb and Branch Rickey. In addition to details about military service, the articles also include stories about the ballplayers who continued to play baseball in the military. This collection of articles not only gives readers a glimpse into the lives of famous ballplayers during World War I, but also sheds light on the decisions and lives of Americans living during this time in history.

Of note

St. Louis County Library offers remote services during closure

St. Louis County Library branches are currently closed, but staff are available via email, text and chat to answer questions and provide assistance. A variety of electronic resources, such as databases, ebooks, magazines, movies can be used at home for free with a valid St. Louis County Library card. [See the complete list of services on the library's Virtual Branch page](https://www.slcl.org/virtual-branch) <<https://www.slcl.org/virtual-branch>>, or call 314-994-3300, 9:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Ancestry Library Edition now available by remote access

Patrons with valid St. Louis County Library cards living in the metropolitan area can now access Ancestry Library Edition remotely temporarily. [Access the database by logging on from the library's website](https://bit.ly/2zk7Gss). <<https://bit.ly/2zk7Gss>>. Most other library databases for genealogical research are available remotely. [View the full list](https://bit.ly/2WEGGMi) <<https://bit.ly/2WEGGMi>>.

H&G lookup service continues during library closure

The History & Genealogy Department continues to respond to lookup requests by email. Requests are accepted for indexed sources in print and microfilm format or if an exact citation is provided.

- [Print materials are listed in the library's online catalog](http://webpac.slcl.org) <webpac.slcl.org>.
- [Indexes to microfilm sources are listed on the library's website](https://www.slcl.org/finding-guides) <<https://www.slcl.org/finding-guides>>.

A limit of three lookup requests per email applies. H&G

**History & Genealogy
classes and programs
have been canceled
through June 2020.**

cannot do general research. [Please see the lookup guidelines posted on the library's website](https://bit.ly/3dPK6n2) <<https://bit.ly/3dPK6n2>>.

Although H&G normally tries to answer inquiries within 10 business days, please allow additional time while the library is closed.

Genealogical conferences go virtual

The St. Louis Genealogical Society's virtual conference features four lectures from nationally-

known lecturer Judy Russell and additional presentations from local speakers. [See the lecture schedule and register on the society's website](https://stlgs.org/events/family-history-conference) <<https://stlgs.org/events/family-history-conference>>.

The National Genealogical Society's virtual conference features one day of live lectures on May 20 and on-demand content beginning July. [See the NGS website for complete information](https://conference.ngsgenealogy.org) <<https://conference.ngsgenealogy.org>>.

Genealogy blogs and newsletters



Blogs and newsletters are great sources for research tips and discovering new online resources. The following are a few H&G staff picks.

■ [StLGS News Flash](http://stlgs.blogspot.com) <<http://stlgs.blogspot.com>>

Even if you cannot claim St. Louis ancestry, this blog by the St. Louis genealogical Society offers information anyone can use.

■ **New England Historical Genealogical Society**

NEHGS offers two digital publications through American Ancestors. [The Weekly Genealogist](https://bit.ly/2L5rsKR) <<https://bit.ly/2L5rsKR>> is an online newsletter offering society notes, American Ancestors database updates, and news from the genealogical

community. [Vita Brevis](https://vitabrevis.americanancestors.org) <<https://vitabrevis.americanancestors.org>> is a blog featuring essays by NEHGS expert staff members.

■ [Eastman's Online Genealogical Newsletter](https://blog.eogn.com)

<<https://blog.eogn.com>>

A general interest genealogical newsletter that often highlights new online sources.

■ [The Legal Genealogist](https://www.legalgenealogist.com)

<<https://www.legalgenealogist.com>>

Judy Russell is the Legal Genealogist, a professional researcher and well-respected speaker at genealogical conferences. She uses her background as an attorney to address legal and copyright issues affecting genealogical research and offers professional research tips.

■ **Popular magazines**

Subscription magazines often publish free online newsletters offering tips for researching and publishing your family history.

Moorhead Magazines, publisher of *Your Genealogy*, *Internet Genealogy*, and *History Magazine*, offers a free email newsletter. [View an example](https://bit.ly/2LaNXOw) <<https://bit.ly/2LaNXOw>> and [sign up to receive it in your inbox](https://bit.ly/3dtzCc7) <<https://bit.ly/3dtzCc7>>.

Familytree Magazine will send you a free weekly email newsletter when you create an account. [View an example](https://bit.ly/2YK7ywh) <<https://bit.ly/2YK7ywh>> and [sign up to receive it in your inbox](https://bit.ly/2WAHyBp) <<https://bit.ly/2WAHyBp>>.

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Contact us:

History & Genealogy
St. Louis County Library
1640 S. Lindbergh Blvd.
St. Louis, MO 63131

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