

## FOR THE RECORDS

### Learning About Your Ancestors by Recreating Historical Garments

One interesting and inspiring way to learn more about our ancestors is to recreate the clothing and fashions that were popular during their lifetimes. There are many resources and databases accessible in the History and Genealogy Department of the St. Louis County Library that can assist you in your research project. For example, the Women's Periodicals of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century, 1733-1844 database is a wonderful resource for locating primary sources about the history of women's fashion.

#### Case Study

The following is a case study for researching an ancestor from the early to mid-19th century. Rachel Vanzant was born in Rutherford County, North Carolina on 5 September 1793. She married David Walbert on 5 August 1812 in Barren County, Kentucky. To learn more about what she might have worn for her wedding in 1812, researchers can start by looking for extant examples of wedding dresses from that era.



"Suit (Italian) 1785-90." Metmuseum.org. Rogers Fund, 1926. [www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/84361](http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/84361).

#### Museum Collections

The Metropolitan Museum of Art has several photographs of the dresses in their collection from various time-periods. Searching the MET museum's website and digital collections online allows you to search for dresses and other garments from a specific era. Many of the photographs are in the public domain, so researchers can download the images and save them for their research. A gold Wedding Dress from 1812 is in the MET museum's online collection (Image 1). From this image, a researcher can locate a sewing pattern similar to this dress, or draft a pattern to recreate the dress. Further research regarding the materials and construction methods provides researchers with additional information about the society, people, and economy during that particular time-period in history.

## Sewing Methods and Construction

Reconstructing a historical garment helps researchers learn about the different materials, designs, and techniques used to make the garment. Some historical pattern companies provide historical details and background information about their patterns to assist with your reconstruction. Most garments prior to 1860 were sewn by hand. Therefore, in order to create a period accurate garment, it is helpful to learn various hand sewing stitches and techniques used in 1812. Bernadette Banner's book *Make, Sew, and Mend: Traditional Techniques to Sustainably Maintain and Refashion Your Clothes*, is currently available in e-book format at the St. Louis County Library. In her book, Banner teaches readers about the different hand stitches needed to create a period-accurate garment without a sewing machine. Print editions are also available for checkout at various SLCL locations. (Call no. 646.2 B219M) (Image 2).

## Sewing Materials: Fabric, Tools, and Notions

Learning about the materials used to make historical garments also helps researchers learn about the availability of different types of materials throughout history. One of the factors that influenced the types of materials used to make garments was the availability of materials in different geographical locations. Common fabrics used during the 18th and 19th centuries included materials made from naturally derived materials such as cotton, linen, and wool. The thread used to sew and construct garments was typically linen, silk, or cotton.

## Sewing Patterns

An important step in constructing garments is drafting a pattern. Today, many companies produce sewing patterns that make it easy for people to follow along and create garments for a specific size. However, there were many different approaches used by dressmakers and tailors throughout history. It is still possible to find copies of Victorian era sewing manuals and instruction guides that teach how to draft, sew, and construct a garment according to Victorian standards. Victorian sewing standards were strict in regards to the length of stitches, as well as the size of pleats and darts.

There are many historical sewing pattern companies today. To find a pattern that is historically accurate, look for one that includes instructions regarding historical sewing techniques. When searching for a circa 1812-style pattern search with keywords such as, Regency Era, as well as the year range. The year range that would work for a dress or design similar to the one found in the MET museum is 1810-1820. Distinctive style characteristics of dresses from this era include a high waist and long A-line skirt. The evening dress style often had short, puffed sleeves, while long sleeves were more common for day dresses (Image 3). Additional style details include a square neckline and short bodice. Common fabrics used for dresses of this style and time-period include silk satin and silk taffeta. Silk organza or lightweight cotton fabric was a popular choice for the lining of the dress.



Image 1: "Wedding Dress (American), 1812." [Metmuseum.org](https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/90503). Gift of Prudence S. Regan, in memory of Prudence Rindell Sanford, 1980.  
[www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/90503](https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/90503).

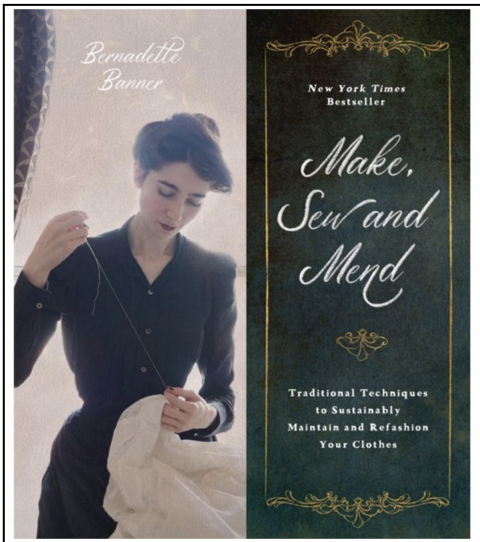
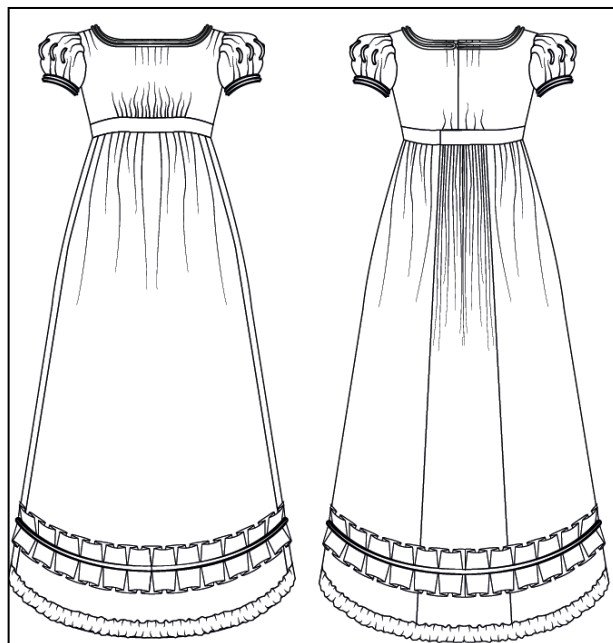


Image 2: Banner, Bernadette. *Sew, Stitch, and Mend: Historical Techniques to Sustainably Maintain and Refashion Your Clothes*. Page Street Pub Co, 2022. Call no. 646.2 B219M.

### Hand Sewing

The historically accurate hand stitching techniques needed to recreate a Regency Era dress include the back stitch/prick stitch, buttonhole stitch, overcasting stitch, catch stitch, and fell stitch. Other useful sewing and construction techniques that are still in use today, but that would still allow for a period-accurate dress include a gathering stitch, basting, and flat lining. Banner’s book describes all of these hand-stitching techniques in detail. The instructions include high-quality photographs that are immensely helpful for readers who want to use and apply these techniques for their own recreations. The History and Genealogy Department is also hosting a class at the Daniel Boone location on Friday, March 31, 2023 at 2:00pm to learn some of these historical sewing techniques. More details regarding the class and registration will follow.

The process of researching, designing, and constructing a period-accurate garment provides researchers with a wonderful glimpse into the past. While we cannot go back in time and experience history first-hand, it is possible to learn historical trades, techniques, and methods that help us gain a greater understanding of our ancestors. The amount of time and materials needed to make a dress in the 19th century helps researchers develop a deeper understanding of why our ancestors made clothing to last more than one season. Studying clothing construction throughout history also helps researchers learn about the domestic sphere in which women often operated. It is challenging to find historical records about the domestic lives of our ancestors. Therefore, learning about our ancestors through their material culture, such as food, clothing, and other artifacts, provides other valuable resources for further research and study.



1810-1815 Evening Gown Line Drawings  
Kohlberger, R., *Black Snail Patterns no. 0422, Evening Dress 1810-15*, pg. 13.



**SPOTLIGHT ON FOLD3 CITY DIRECTORIES**

Several cities' directories can be found on the Fold3 database. Fold3 can be used at any St. Louis County Library Branch, and local patrons may access it from home with a valid library card. The city directory was the forerunner of the phone book. Individual entries usually include the head of household, address, occupation, and sometimes spouse. City directories can be useful for tracking down ancestors between census years.

The St. Louis City directories span the years 1863-1923 on Fold3. The St. Louis County Library's History & Genealogy Department has other years in print or on microfilm, as well as directories for St. Louis County. For more information on using city directories, see the PastPorts article, "City directory research strategies" at [slcl.org/sites/default/files/09\\_2017.pdf](https://www.slcl.org/sites/default/files/09_2017.pdf). A list of the St. Louis directories at H & G can be found here: [slcl.org/content/city-directories-missouri-st-louis-city-and-county](https://www.slcl.org/content/city-directories-missouri-st-louis-city-and-county).

The Fold3 database contains the following city directories:

- Baltimore
- Boston
- Brooklyn
- Buffalo
- Chicago
- Cincinnati
- Cleveland
- Dallas
- Denver
- Des Moines
- Detroit
- Ft. Wayne
- Indianapolis
- Kansas City
- Los Angeles
- Louisville
- Memphis
- Milwaukee
- Minneapolis
- New Orleans
- New York
- Newark
- Philadelphia
- Pittsburgh
- Providence
- Rochester
- San Francisco
- St. Louis
- St. Paul
- Toledo
- Washington DC
- Various other cities

**HOLIDAY CLOSURES**

All SLCL locations will be closed on Saturday, December 24 (Christmas Eve), Sunday, December 25 (Christmas Day) and Monday, December 26 (Christmas Day observed).

All SLCL locations will be closed on Sunday, January 1 (New Year's Day) and Monday, January 2 (New Year's Day observed).

All SLCL locations will be closed on Monday, January 16, in honor of Martin Luther King Day.

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

Current and past issues can be downloaded from the web at [slcl.org/pastports](https://www.slcl.org/pastports).

**Contact us:**

History & Genealogy  
 St. Louis County Library  
 Temporary Location—Daniel Boone Branch  
 300 Clarkson Rd.  
 Ellisville, MO 63011

314-994-3300  
[genealogy@slcl.org](mailto:genealogy@slcl.org)  
[www.slcl.org/genealogy](http://www.slcl.org/genealogy)

# H&G Classes & Programs

The following History & Genealogy are offered for January, 2023:

## Beginning Genealogical Research

Monday, January 9, 6:30 pm, Virtual

Newspapers are excellent sources of genealogical and historical information, and digitization has made them more widely available. Explore the information you can find in newspapers and how to access our most popular databases. Adults. Registration required.

## Exploring Ancestry Library Edition

Tuesday, January 24, Virtual

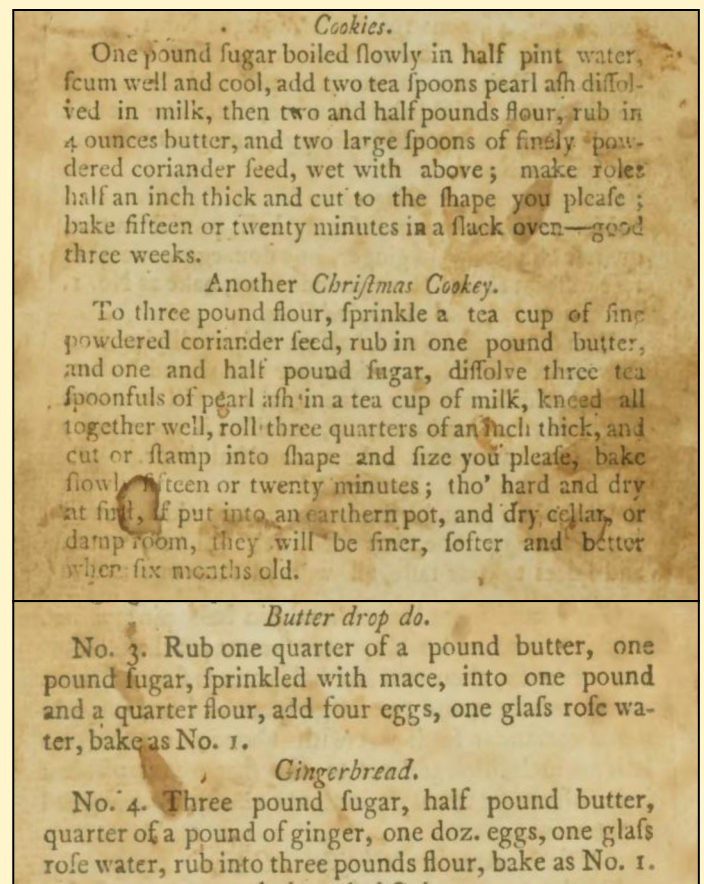
The Ancestry Library Edition database is a powerful tool for genealogical research. Find out how to search it and take advantage of its many records. Adults. Registration required.

Register at [slcl.org/events](https://slcl.org/events).

Recordings of our most popular classes can be found at [slcl.org/genealogy/virtual-classroom](https://slcl.org/genealogy/virtual-classroom).

## HISTORICAL COOKING

'Tis the season for cookies, and here are some cookie offerings from *American Cookery, Or the Art of Dressing Viands, Fish, Poultry and Vegetables, and the Best Modes of Making Pastes, Puffs, Pies, Tarts, Puddings, Custards and Preserves, and all Kinds of Cakes, from the Imperial Plumb to Plain Cake, Adapted to this Country, and all Grades of Life* by Amelia Simmons, published in 1796. The entire cookbook is available on [Internet Archive](https://www.archive.org/details/american-cookery-or-the-art-of-dressing-viands-fish-poultry-and-vegetables-and-the-best-modes-of-making-pastes-puffs-pies-tarts-puddings-custards-and-preserves-and-all-kinds-of-cakes-from-the-imperial-plumb-to-plain-cake-adapted-to-this-country-and-all-grades-of-life) for free viewing. Happy historical cooking!



## 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—A list of microfilm available in the H&G collection can be viewed [online](#).
- 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.

### 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](mailto:genealogy@slcl.org).

# STLGS Events

## Monthly Meeting: Ask Louie at Your Service!

Saturday, January 14, 10:00 am, Webinar

Speakers: Ask Louie Team + Associates

Bring the team your questions concerning basic researching, immigration, and naturalization, Irish, German, and Jewish genealogy, technology, orphanage care in St. Louis, and many more. Our experienced genealogists will try to provide answers. Help us prepare by sending in your questions before the meeting to [askLouie@stlgs.org](mailto:askLouie@stlgs.org).

## German SIG Meeting: Maps Answer German Research Questions

Wednesday, January 18, 7:00 pm, Hybrid

Speaker: Carol Whitton, CG

Maps describe land ownership but also help answer common research questions. Learn how to use maps to find such details as where an ancestor's church was located or to determine whether U.S. friends and neighbors might have been acquainted in the old country. This meeting will be held at the Oak Bend branch of St. Louis County Library.

## Irish SIG Meeting: Your Chance to Ask Those Questions

Tuesday, January 24, 7:00 pm, Webinar

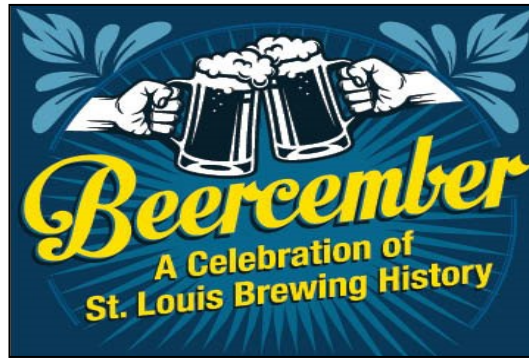
Speakers: Mike Bridwell, Carol Hemmersmeier, & Kay Weber

Join us with your questions and comments regarding our favorite but sometimes frustrating pastime, Irish research. Hopefully, we can help with some of those rock walls! This meeting will be livestreamed via Zoom only.

See [stlgs.org](http://stlgs.org) for more information.



A big thank you to all who attended “Beercenter.” The evening’s offerings included samples from Narrow Gauge, 2nd Shift, and Third Wheel breweries, a home-brewing demonstration with ingredients provided by Steampunk Brew Works, presentations on St. Louis brewing history from Cameron Collins and Chris Naffziger, a brewers’ round table discussion, and music by the Gaslight Squares. We look forward to seeing you at next year’s event! Photos courtesy of the [St. Louis County Library’s flickr page](#).



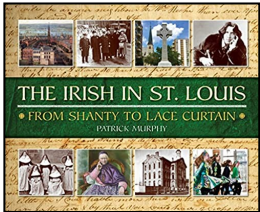
# NEW Books

PATRICK MURPHY

## The Irish in St. Louis: From Shanty to Lace Curtain

Reedy Press  
R 977.866 M978I

It took a long time before St. Louis finally accepted its Irish population. When the first waves of Famine Irish arrived on the landing in the 1840s, the city was appalled by their poverty. As subsequent waves of Irish fled political oppression after the Civil War, anti-Catholic sentiment sparked bloody riots in which the Irish gave as good as they got. But after seven centuries of enslavement in their own country, nothing would stop them from creating a place in their adopted city.



The story of their assimilation is as multifaceted as the Irish character itself. *The Irish in St. Louis* introduces us to a range of St. Louis Irish, from priests like Timothy Dempsey and Charles Dismas Clark (the “Hoodlum Priest”) to gangsters from the Bottoms Gang and Egan’s Rats. We meet artists and revolutionaries, entrepreneurs, and entertainers. It takes us to the rough and tumble neighborhoods of 19th-century Kerry Patch and Dogtown, where immigrants and their children forged paths into the city’s mainstream while preserving their Irish identity.

JAY GITLIN, ROBERT MICHAEL MORRISSEY, AND PETER J. KASTOR

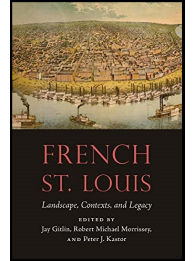
## French St. Louis: Landscapes, Contexts, and Legacy

University of Nebraska Press  
R 977.866 F876

A gateway to the West and an outpost for eastern capital and culture, St. Louis straddled not only geographical and political divides but also cultural, racial, and sectional ones. At the same time, it connected a vast region as a gathering place of peoples, cultures, and goods. The essays in this collection contextualize St. Louis, exploring French-Native relations, the agency of empire in

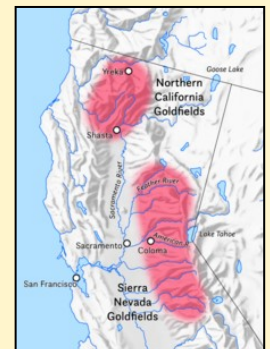
the Illinois Country, the role of women in “mapping” the French colonial world, fashion and identity, and commodities and exchange in St. Louis as part of a broader politics of consumption in colonial America. The collection also provides a comparative perspective on America’s two great Creole cities, St. Louis and New Orleans. Lastly, it looks at the Frenchness of St. Louis in the nineteenth century and the present.

*French St. Louis* recasts the history of St. Louis and reimagines regional development in the early American republic, shedding light on its francophone history.



## This month in history

The California Gold Rush began on January 24, 1848, when James W. Marshall discovered gold nuggets at Sutter’s Mill in Coloma, California. Approximately 300,000 people from all over the world made their way to California, some of them traveling through St. Louis to get there. Peak immigration took place in 1849, hence the term, “Forty-niners.” This changed the face of California, which became a state in 1850. Miners extracted over 750,000 pounds of gold, or over 2 billion dollars worth from the “golden state” during the rush, which lasted through the mid-1850s.





## SLCL HISTORY PROGRAMS

The St. Louis County Library's Department of Adult Services, Reference Department, or Branch Libraries are presenting the following history programs:

### History of Cemeteries

Various times and locations

Through library resources, follow the emergence of cemeteries, global historical practices, and how they changed how we bury and memorialize our dead. Discuss cemeteries as valuable repositories of local history and cultural artifacts, and how to begin designing your own burial plot. Adults.

### Route 66

Various times and locations

US Highway 66, popularly known as Route 66, became one of the most famous roads in the United States. Delve into the history of the first all-weather highway linking Chicago to Los Angeles, and discuss the legends and the facts that continue to maintain the fame of the road. Adults.

### History of the Beatles: The Boys from Liverpool

January 11, 7:00 pm, Samuel C. Sachs Branch

Explore the musical development of the Beatles. Map their musical style through its changes from skiffle and rock to studio-based experimentation. Investigate the cultural influences that shaped them and look at their influence on the world. Adults. Registration recommended.

### Virtual Program: Herbs Used in the Civil War

January 18, 2:00 pm

Presented by St. Louis Herb Society

Discover the role herbs played in the Civil War. Adults. Registration required. Participants will receive Zoom information via email immediately after registering.

### Now That's Entertainment

January 19, 2:00 pm, Samuel C. Sachs Branch

Remember the "Golden Age" of entertainment with movie stars like Cary Grant, Katharine Hepburn, Bette Davis and Judy Garland? Those hilarious comedians like Jack Benny, Burns and Allen, W.C. Fields and others? We've brought them all back! Adults.

### Beyond the Gates: African Americans at Bellefontaine Cemetery

January 19, 6:00 pm, Lewis and Clark Branch

Presented by Bellefontaine Cemetery. Open in 1849, Bellefontaine Cemetery has been open to all since its inception. Learn about the history of the African Americans laid to rest in this local and rural cemetery. Adults.

For more information and to register, visit [slcl.org/events](https://slcl.org/events).

## Of Note

The staff of the History & Genealogy Department at the St. Louis County Library would like to wish our readers a safe and happy holiday season.

Here are some of our statistics from 2022:

244 hours—telephone reference

394 hours—email lookup requests

740 hours—in-person reference

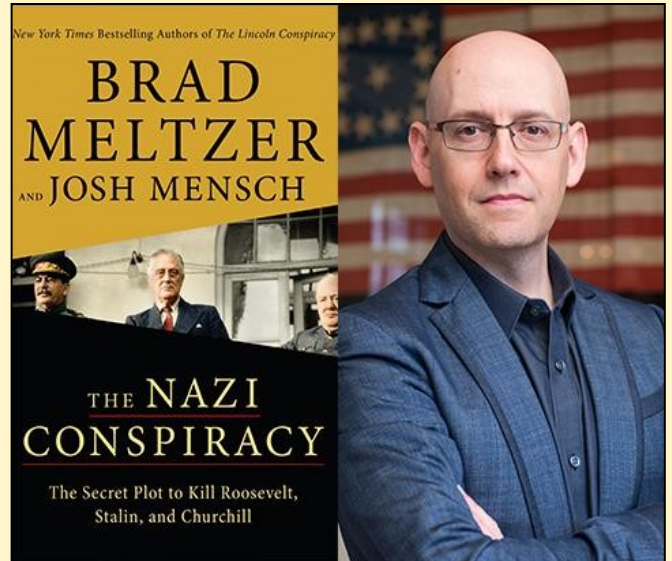
130,000 books, along with microfilm and other items, moved to temporary locations during the month of June

We look forward to bringing you new articles, useful classes, exciting programming, and a continued high level of customer service in the new year. With a little luck, we may even be able to bring you a new building!

# WESTFALL

POLITICS & HISTORY SERIES

SLCL Authors @ the J and the Westfall Politics & History Series Present Bestselling Author and Historian Brad Meltzer, author of “*The Nazi Conspiracy: The Secret Plot to Kill Roosevelt, Stalin, and Churchill*”



Thursday, January 19, 2023 7:00 pm, doors open at 6:30 pm

The J’s Staenberg Family Complex Mirowitz Performing Arts Center, 2 Millstone Campus Drive, St. Louis, MO 63146

(Seating is limited, early arrival is recommended)

Bestselling author and historian Brad Meltzer shares the little-known story of a Nazi plot to kill FDR, Joseph Stalin, and Winston Churchill at the height of World War II. In 1943, President Roosevelt had a critical goal: a face-to-face sit-down with his allies Stalin and Churchill. This first-ever meeting of the Big Three in Tehran would decide some of the most crucial strategic details of the war. Yet when the Nazis found out about the meeting, their own secret plan took shape—an assassination plot that would’ve changed history. A true story filled with daring rescues, body doubles, and political intrigue, “The Nazi Conspiracy” details the pivotal meeting that changed the course of World War II and almost led to a world-shattering disaster. See [www.slcl.org/authors](http://www.slcl.org/authors).

## Shelf life

### SAMPLINGS FROM THE PRINT COLLECTION

Do you have ancestors who lived in St. Louis during World War I? If so, you may want to take a look at *St. Louis and the Great War* by S. Patrick Allie (R 977.866 A436S). This book discusses St. Louis during this period and contains many photographs of people, advertisements, uniforms, and many other subjects. Topics of discussion include the culture of St. Louis at the outbreak of the war, life on the home front, how St. Louis supported the war effort, and how those who did not return are remembered. There are circulating copies of this title available, as well as a reference copy that can be viewed at History & Genealogy at the Daniel Boone Branch.

